

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**1 March 2000**

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**Wednesday, 1 March 2000**

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. A. Chamberlain) took the chair at 10.03 a.m. and read the prayer.

**PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS  
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources), by leave, introduced a bill to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE  
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources), by leave, introduced a bill to amend the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 with respect to the making of lists and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY  
VICTORIA (AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources), by leave, introduced a bill to amend and rename the Renewable Energy Authority Victoria Act 1990 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**CORPORATIONS (VICTORIA)  
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs), by leave, introduced a bill to amend the Corporations (Victoria) Act 1990 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**PROSTITUTION CONTROL (PLANNING)  
BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs), by leave, introduced a bill to amend the Prostitution Control Act 1994 in relation to the amendment of planning permits and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**HIRE-PURCHASE (AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs), by leave, introduced a bill to amend the Hire-Purchase Act 1959 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**BLF CUSTODIAN**

**46th report**

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) presented report dated 28 February 2000 given to Mr President pursuant to section 7A of BLF (De-recognition) Act 1985 by the custodian appointed under section 7(1) of that act.

Laid on table

**PAPERS**

Laid on table by Clerk:

Fair Trading and Business Affairs Office — Report of Director to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, 1998–99.

Financial Management Regulations 1994 — Order in Council of 1 February 2000, pursuant to Regulation 11.

**PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES**

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — I move:**

That, pursuant to the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968, the undermentioned committees be required to inquire into, consider and report on the following:

- (1) Economic Development Committee
  - (a) The export opportunities for Victorian rural industries, with a particular emphasis on —
 

the identification and demand for niche rural products in overseas markets;

Victoria's strengths in niche rural industries;

the level of support provided to niche rural industries by state and commonwealth governments;

the use of information and communication technology;

the role of statutory agriculture bodies in developing and promoting niche industries overseas;

the sale of Victorian food and agriculture products abroad and an examination of barriers or impediments;

and to report by 31 December 2001.

- (b) The incidence of youth unemployment in Victoria and options for promoting employment growth over the coming decade, with a particular emphasis on —

youth unemployment frequency in metropolitan, outer growth, regional and rural areas;

youth employment needs in Victoria;

the role of state and local government in helping generate employment opportunities for young people;

innovative initiatives implemented in other jurisdictions to address youth unemployment and the effectiveness of such initiatives;

social, economic and industrial matters specific to unemployed young people;

differing incidence of unemployment amongst male and female young people;

unemployment in migrant and non-English-speaking-background communities;

and to report to Parliament by 31 December 2001.

- (2) Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

The Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 and to report, by 30 June 2001, to Parliament on its recommendations for a clearer and improved act.

- (3) Road Safety Committee

The needs for road and bridge construction and maintenance initiatives in rural Victoria, with the aim of reporting to Parliament, by 30 June 2001, on options for infrastructure projects that improve road safety and best meet community needs.

- (4) Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee

The incidence of crime in Victoria and to report every six months to the Parliament on levels of crime, areas of emerging concern and (where suitable) options for crime reduction or control.

- (5) Environment and Natural Resources Committee

- (a) The allocation of water resources for agricultural and environmental purposes, with a particular emphasis on the prospects for and impacts of making water savings, and to report to Parliament by 30 November 2000.

- (b) To inquire into the sustainable management of the Victorian abalone and rock lobster fisheries, with particular emphasis on management and enforcement practices and the royalty regime, and to report to Parliament by 31 December 2001.

- (6) Law Reform Committee

The future need for court facilities and court-based legal services in regional and rural Victoria, and to report to Parliament by 30 June 2001.

The aim of the motion is to ensure that parliamentary committees continue on the path of entering into a new era of public consultation on key issues before the state. The motion ensures that eight separate references are given to the all-party committees of Parliament — under the structure that was unanimously agreed on in the last days of last year — and that references will be investigated over a period of months or years involving wide community consultation and, one hopes, will provide productive suggestions for action by Parliament and the government.

The Liberal and National parties believe the parliamentary committee system can be and should be constantly improved. They are pleased with their track record of ensuring that over time that was the case. The new committee structure introduced in 1992 was a substantial improvement on the committee structure that existed in the 1980s. The committee structure that was introduced in 1999 was a further improvement on that committee structure, and although we believe the 1999 proposals should have gone further, we have welcomed the fact that there was all-party agreement on establishing those committees.

The act provides for references to be given to parliamentary committees by Governor in Council, which is the executive arm. Alternatively references can be given by either house of Parliament. The opposition is now taking the opportunity — about four or five months after the state election — to provide references to the all-party committees. It is extremely concerned that parliamentary committees have been sitting idle for months on end without any work to do. It is inexcusable that it took so long to appoint them and inexcusable that it has taken so long to provide them with references. Indeed, the executive arm, the Governor in Council, moved only last Tuesday to give references to those committees. I believe some were put through Governor in Council yesterday and are yet to

be published in the *Government Gazette*, so I cannot confirm the detail.

That means the government had no sense of urgency about providing references to the all-party committees. References should have been given to the committees in the first weeks of December 1999 at the very latest. It is now 1 March and members of the opposition find we have to give the substantial work to those committees.

It should come as no surprise to the government that either house of Parliament has the right to provide the references because it is in the government's own legislation. Therefore the opposition is doing so. Because the government has been so slow in providing references the opposition was encouraged to do so. However, our references have been circumspect. They are broad, genuine and the ones that merit all-party investigation.

I will briefly go through the references, with the exception of the reference to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee of which I am a member. I do not want to pre-empt any consideration, apart from saying something that I believe is factual. The reference the opposition is suggesting for the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee is, ironically, to review the Parliamentary Committees Act. There will be all-party agreement among those who have looked at the act. To put it in non-legal terms the act is a dog's breakfast. Most of the empowerment clauses are in the definition section which makes it extremely hard for anyone to analyse. It certainly meets the definition of being unclear, and it will be in the interest of everyone to inquire into the provision of a clearer act. That would be some of the work of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I will say no more on that reference.

The first major reference to the all-party Economic Development Committee is to enquire into export opportunities for Victoria's rural industry. The opposition believes the all-party committee is extremely well positioned to do that research. The time frame set to do this work is not short; it is expected that the work will be done this year and next year. The opposition looks forward to a full report or, if necessary, interim reports on the issues that particularly affect niche rural products that need to find overseas markets. The committee could examine what the state can do in collaboration with industry and government agencies to assist in boosting the already good levels of rural exports. It could focus on identifying the demand for niche rural products in overseas markets where Victoria as a state could punch above its weight in

getting export results. Victoria has a particular capacity to win export markets in niche areas.

The second reference proposed for the Economic Development Committee is to inquire into youth employment and unemployment, the need for jobs for youth, the role of state and local governments in helping to generate employment opportunities and pursuing innovative initiatives that have been developed in other jurisdictions that might help the state reach some conclusions about programs over the next decade in this important field.

It would be fair to say that governments of all persuasions have dealt with the issue of youth employment. However, it is timely to have a far-sighted inquiry that seeks people's views of what should be done during this decade on the important factors that lead unfortunately to youth unemployment and the important ideas that fortunately lead to the generation of jobs for Victoria's young. The aim is for the committee report to be completed by the end of next year.

The suggested reference for the Road Safety Committee is an inquiry into the needs for road and bridge construction and maintenance initiatives in rural Victoria. Once again honourable members would be united on the fact that over the past years, and certainly to date, people living outside metropolitan Victoria have shown interest in learning how to deal with the physical transport needs of their communities. It arises partly because of the use of rural roads for business purposes, for freight, for the short or long transport of products both within Victoria or from Victoria to other states. Therefore rural infrastructure has an integral role in the overall wellbeing of the rural community.

The opposition would like the committee to report to Parliament by 30 June 2001 on options for infrastructure projects that can improve road safety and best meet community needs. It therefore envisages the committee widely canvassing community opinion, local councils and other authorities on what can be done to advance road and bridge infrastructure projects that will reduce the incidence of road trauma and road accidents involving cars, trucks, farm vehicles or any other users of the system and therefore lead to a better environment in country Victoria that will have both social and economic benefits.

It is an important issue and I know many willing people will want to come forward to give evidence on an infrastructure agenda for coming years. I am not suggesting in any way that this work is not being undertaken by excellent agencies such as Vicroads, and

indeed by previous ministers. The time is right for an all-party sounding board to be created that allows input on road and bridge construction and maintenance issues. The opposition believes this will be a positive addition to the debate.

The fourth issue is a reference to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee to inquire into the incidence of crime in Victoria. That is very important. From my earliest years in this chamber I can remember debates about crime statistics: how they are collected, how relevant they are, how accurate they are, and how contemporary they are. I look forward, perhaps as a result of the inquiry, to Parliament receiving regular briefs from an all-party committee on what issues are confronting the state in crime and crime prevention, the incidence of crime per se, and also various components of the crime statistics. The six-monthly reports that we are calling for will be of immense value to state parliamentarians in an area where the Parliament has direct control, where the state has a heavy responsibility both legally and in terms of leadership, and where the extra information the committee may be able to provide will answer many questions asked by honourable members.

Fifthly, we recommend two separate references for the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. It is also an all-party committee and for the first time in the history of the state Parliament has an Independent member, Mr Ingram, the member for Gippsland East in another place. This committee has always had an important brief and it is highly logical, given the enormous community debate about water resources and entitlements, and the more specific issue of environmental flow down the Snowy River, that an all-party committee examine the allocation of water resources for environmental and agricultural purposes and to particularly emphasise and study how to achieve water savings, including the prospects for making water savings, the costs, and the impacts and flow-on effects.

Obviously we are all drawn to the view that Victoria will be better off if water can be saved through the elimination of evaporation or of leakage from channels. The state then has to make the call on how that saved water is allocated and where it goes. To achieve a rounded and productive conclusion the state has to ensure there is significant community input from people in the irrigation sector, people with profound and legitimate environmental concerns, and people who are involved in regulation and management of water. It is obviously an important and urgent issue and we hope the committee can report to Parliament on the issue by 30 November this year.

A second inquiry with a longer time frame is suggested, covering the period ending 31 December 2001, into the sustainable management of the Victorian abalone and rock lobster fisheries. The opposition hopes the committee will particularly emphasise management enforcement practices and the royalty regime for the fisheries. It is keen that this inquiry start soon. I will leave the detail to others.

The sixth area into which the opposition seeks an inquiry relates to the work of the all-party joint house Law Reform Committee.

**Hon. M. M. Gould** — A good committee.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — I agree with the Leader of the Government that it is a good committee. The aim of the Law Reform Committee is to study changes to legislation or common law in Victoria and we hope it will inquire into the future needs for court facilities in regional and rural Victoria, with a view to seeking public submissions on the availability and placement of court facilities in non-metropolitan areas and getting a genuine understanding of the needs for court facilities in 2000 and beyond. We also hope it will examine court-based legal services in regional and rural Victoria — that is, those services that are directly associated with the availability and presence of a local court. It is envisaged that the committee report to the Parliament by 30 June 2001.

Without doubt those inquiries are in the public interest and will advance the level of knowledge made available to individual MPs and to the Parliament as a whole. Without question, they prove the contemporary relevance of parliamentary committees to investigate issues that otherwise may go unattended or may have a low priority in the eyes of the public sector. Most importantly, they assist us in taking the next step in constantly improving the parliamentary committee structure and show that the upper house, by initiating the inquiries, is yet again playing a valuable role in ensuring that work can be done to help the parliamentary system.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — You did not do it in the last session.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — In the last session the former government did not starve the committees of references as the Bracks government has done over the past four months. I deeply regret the extraordinary time between the establishment, with all-party support, of the current parliamentary committees and the provision of references to those committees. The government did not move in December; the government did not move

in January; and we believe it only just moved in the dying days of February and perhaps early March to give those committees references. The highly professional staff of the committees were left without work straight after the election. Immediately after an election there is always a period where they are on hold, but because the new committees were not even reappointed until late December, despite our vigorous objections, they were lying dormant. Many of the committees have had little work to do.

The opposition is more than happy at any time to have references given to the committees by the executive arm of government, or by the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council. We could not move to give references in the last session of Parliament because we did not sit after the committees were created. They were created on the last or second last day of the Parliament. We are moving at the earliest opportunity to create references. Today is the very first opportunity that has been available to us.

Last December the government had the opportunity to provide references to the committees, but it did not do so. It did not have references as a priority — or perhaps, as with many other matters involving the government, it did not have its eye on the ball. It could have moved in January to formally announce the references.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — We would not have been able to find anybody from your side; they were all on holidays.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — I am more than happy to respond to the interjection which, with respect, shows the ignorance of the honourable member.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** interjected.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — If you had said it, it would not have offended me, given its source. You have to accept the truth.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — Ditto.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — Mr Theophanous, you cannot complain that a committee did not meet when the government had not given it a reference; you have to give it a reference first. Any of our committees would have been happy to meet on a reference had there been any references on which they could have met.

**Hon. G. R. Craige** — You cannot meet when you haven't got one.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — There were none.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — It shows your ignorance about how committees work.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — Before Mr Theophanous makes any more sweeping statements about the inadvisability of taking holidays over January, I suggest he consult with his frontbench. I can tell you, Mr Theophanous, that we were around a helluva lot more in January than was your frontbench — and we were happily doing our work.

In conclusion, I am pleased to have moved the motion on behalf of the Liberal Party and the National Party. The motion's contents are constructive and genuine and will be of value to the state as well as more specifically to Parliament. I look forward to the government's response. It should have little difficulty with the topics in the suggested references. The opposition looks forward to the committees being able to do their work, along with the other work they may have on board.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** (Jika Jika) — The government does not oppose the motion. I shall make a few comments about it and offer a suggestion that I hope the opposition will adopt.

The motion is nothing more than a political exercise by the opposition to suggest it has an interest in the topics the subject of the motion. The opposition was aware yesterday, because I made Mr Lucas in particular aware, that the government had references before the Governor in Council. I provided Mr Lucas with a copy of the references the government has provided to the Economic Development Committee.

**An Honourable Member** — Afterwards.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — That is not true. Before any debate had occurred in this place yesterday I provided information to Mr Lucas about references going to all committees. The opposition was aware yesterday that the government was providing references to its committees.

In debating the motion it is important to recognise that the Leader of the Opposition has made a point about pre-empting consideration by a committee. It is important that I reply to his assertion. I do not see it as inappropriate for members of Parliament to debate committee terms of reference here.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — Even for the committee they may be on?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — To take your argument to a logical conclusion, Mr Birrell, it would be inappropriate for members on a committee to vote

on a reference proposed by the house. You are suggesting that people can vote, but if they can vote on a reference it would be absurd to say they could not contribute to the relevant debate. Having said that, I am clear about my role on committees — I am on two committees — and the role of all committee members. Once a reference has been provided to a committee by the Governor in Council or by one of the two houses of Parliament it is the role of all members on a committee to seek to complete their inquiry into that term of reference to the best of their ability. I will adopt that approach to any reference this house gives to a committee of which I am a member or to any reference provided to the committees by the government.

Given the nature of the suggested references included in the motion — generally speaking, I do not have a problem with any of them — it is nothing more than an attempt by the opposition parties to regain some of the credibility they lost in regional Victoria after decimating it during their time in government. The former coalition government never wanted to have committees examining the suggested references in this motion. It did not want committees to look at unemployment or at what was happening with investments and services in rural Victoria because it knew the answers would reflect poorly on it. Having decimated rural Victoria the opposition parties now seek to pretend they have an interest in rural Victoria, which is why the opposition has included its suggested references in the motion.

The Parliamentary Committees Act defines references that are to go to committees. I make a distinction between an upper house committee and a joint standing committee. The act specifies that when a reference comes from either the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly it takes precedence over a reference from the Governor in Council. The opposition knew that the government was preparing and had prepared references. The motion is nothing but a cheap attempt to have the opposition's suggested references dealt with by committees before the government's references are on foot.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — How long were we supposed to wait?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — Let's put to one side the fact that the motion was moved for no reason other than for the political purposes of the former coalition — now called the partnership, I believe.

It is also clear, on looking at the dates when the reports of the committees are to be made, that the motion signifies nothing more than the unpreparedness of

members of the Liberal Party and National Party to do some solid policy work of their own. They are seeking to use parliamentary committees so that in the lead-up to the next election they can draw on some sort of policy. They are clearly incapable of undertaking their own consultations; they would prefer that the resources of government committees are used for that. They are incapable of developing their own policies; they prefer that an executive officer in a publicly funded committee do the policy work so that they might be able to pinch a bit here and there and scramble together something that might look like a policy in the lead-up to the next election. That is the motivation behind the motion.

I address the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition about the parliamentary committees sitting idle — which I think were the words he used. For a start, that is a significant slur on at least one committee of which I am a member — as is the Honourable Bill Forwood — that is, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. That committee has met a number of times over the past three or four months.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — So has SARC.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — Yes, but you did not differentiate between them and the others and say, 'Other than the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, the others sat idle'. You simply said that all the parliamentary committees are sitting idle.

An enormous amount of work has been done by the PAEC on preparation of reports on existing references. Members of that committee have had a number of debates in trying to get through some of the legacy of the former chairman of that committee, Mr Forwood, on at least one of its references. Both he and the committee had produced draft reports, and he had modified the committee report. The committee had to undertake a significant amount of work to try to produce a useful draft report on the commercial-in-confidence reference.

I make another point about the comment that the parliamentary committees are sitting idle. Mr Birrell might be able to direct such a charge against the committees controlled by the government but I ask him to consider that the opposition controls at least one committee — that is, the Economic Development Committee.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — There are four of them — but they still need references.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — As the deputy chairman of the Economic Development Committee, I



approached the chairman and sought a meeting last year. I specifically indicated to him that the meeting was to provide an opportunity for members of the committee to discuss what might be appropriate terms of reference so that we could make some recommendations or suggestions that might go to and be taken up by the government.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — In late February?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — No, last year.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — The government did not want to move until the last minute; you know that.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I approached Mr Lucas, the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, about having a meeting in December of last year. The purpose of the meeting that I asked for was to discuss possible references by the committee to be put to the government. I am not saying that Mr Lucas did not do the right thing because I understand that he actually made an attempt to get the committee together for that particular meeting. However, a number of members — but certainly not one on the government side — did not want to meet. They said ‘It’s all too hard; we’ve got Christmas coming up; it’s all a bit difficult, so we’re not meeting’.

I persistently asked the chairman of the committee to have a meeting earlier this year to discuss possible terms of reference for the committee that could be agreed upon by the government and the opposition. Ultimately the meeting was arranged by Mr Lucas, the chairman of the committee, for 3 March — that is, this Friday. That was the earliest date on which he could arrange a meeting of the Economic Development Committee. Mr Lucas was well aware that the opposition was going to come in here with some terms of reference for that committee.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — The government could have moved in December, January or February.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I do not know of which committees Mr Birrell has been a member or how he operated on committees, but I do know what has happened in committees of which I have been a member. Usually the members of the committee discuss possible terms of reference — that is, members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and every other committee of which I have been a member meet to discuss possible terms of reference. Then they send the chairman off to discuss with the government whether it is an appropriate term of reference.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** interjected.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I am responding to you about the committees you control. You are making the criticism.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** interjected.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — You have accused the government of leaving parliamentary committees sitting idle. I am pointing out that for the committee that the opposition controls and of which I am a member you were not prepared to take any action whatsoever to bring about a meeting to discuss references to go to the government.

Mr Birrell is an absolute hypocrite in putting the motion before the house. If the opposition really wanted to do something about references, Mr Lucas would have attempted to have a meeting and have the committee work out some references.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — Why didn’t you give some ideas to the government for references?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — How do you know that I did not?

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — Why didn’t it act?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — Again I point out that not only I but other government members of the Economic Development Committee had been thinking about references. I had been trying to get Mr Lucas to arrange a meeting to get some discussion going and that turned out to be impossible. Obviously, Mr Lucas and the other opposition members of the committee had their own agenda. They did not want to discuss government references because they were planning to grandstand in this house by putting forward their own references at the first available opportunity.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — Tell us about the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I am sure that members of other committees would be happy to address any issues you might have about those committees. I am referring to the committee of which I am a member and which the opposition controls and about which nothing has been done but to stifle any attempt by government members to get a reference up.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — Rubbish. The government gives the reference, not the committee.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I have explained it before, but in case you are thick I will tell you again.

**Hon. D. G. Hadden** interjected.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — He obviously does not understand. I will explain it again: the tradition and convention are that committees discuss possible references which are put to government.

Every attempt I made to get the discussions going on the Economic Development Committee, which you, Mr Birrell, controlled, failed because of your actions. The government has provided the Economic Development Committee with two exciting references, and I provided Mr Lucas with copies of them.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — When did they go through?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I am unsure of the exact time. I know they went to Governor in Council yesterday morning. I hope committee members will take them up. The reference to the Economic Development Committee states that it will:

assess the impact on the Victorian economy of the GST on the competitiveness of small and medium-size businesses with particular reference to regional Victoria, including an examination of:

- I LPG prices;
- II petrol prices;
- III electricity prices;
- IV compliance costs; and
- V the cost of government services.

The committee is to report by the first day of the spring 2000 parliamentary session.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — The Leader of the Opposition may not care about the impact of the GST on petrol, liquefied petroleum gas, electricity prices or government services and how they affect rural Victoria and the Victorian economy, but the government cares. That is why it is giving the committee a reference to report back at the beginning of the spring session shortly after the introduction of the GST. Then the government can take appropriate action to alleviate some of the adverse effects of this unfair tax on Victorians.

The second reference is to:

- (a) assess the impact on the Victorian economy of structural changes in:
  - I banking;
  - II postal communications;
  - III municipal services, including the reduction in the number of municipal outlets due to the recent municipal amalgamations);

- IV public transport; and
- V employment services.

- (b) Assess the impact of the withdrawal of the above service (including the reduction in the number of municipal outlets during the recent municipal amalgamations) on small and medium-size towns.
- (c) Report by the first day of the spring 2001 parliamentary session.

I challenge any opposition member to say that he or she does not think it is important for the government to ask a parliamentary committee to assess the impact on the Victorian economy of those changes. Honourable members know that the closure of banks in rural Victoria and the closure of postal services together with the reduction and closure of commonwealth employment services in rural Victoria has had an effect, especially on the economies of those small and medium-size towns.

This as an important reference. The Bracks government has done more for rural and regional Victoria in its short period in office than the previous government did in seven years in office when it ripped the guts out of regional Victoria. One of my colleagues will go through some of the positive things that have been done in the regions, including the increase in investment in rural Victoria since the Bracks government came to power. The Bracks government has provided more than \$500 million.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — Tell us one new one?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I am happy to read them out. I was going to leave it to my colleague to go through them. I may keep you thinking, Mr Forwood, and let my colleague read them out. I have a list of eight investments in rural Victoria. I am sure there are others in the pipeline.

The government does not oppose the motion. However, I propose to move an amendment to paragraph (1)(b) in relation to the two matters on which I have focused. I have no difficulty with providing export opportunities for Victorian rural industries. The committee will deal with that according to the terms expressed in the motion. I am sure a whole range of export opportunities can and will be found by the present government. There are probably opportunities for the committee itself to investigate some of them.

Paragraph (1)(b) deals with the incidence of youth unemployment in Victoria. It is of concern that that issue has been neglected. Before proposing the amendment I shall recount a recent trip I took to Shepparton where I was involved in discussions about

the rural health centre that has been built. Melbourne University is involved in that significant initiative and has been at the forefront of establishing a facility in the area to provide significant educational and employment outcomes in the region. During my stay I also had meetings with the Aboriginal community, which is trying to help itself create a culture of achievement among young Koori and Aboriginal people particularly through its football and netball associations.

Work is being done with the tertiary institutions to try to bring that about. Honourable members who know the Shepparton area would probably be able to recount stories of the problems faced by Aboriginal youth. I understand there is a population of some 6000 Aboriginal people in the Shepparton region, so it is significant. I was told during my visit that the unemployment rate among young Aboriginal people is 70 per cent. There is a significant school drop-out rate, and that is accompanied by a very high level of youth unemployment among Aboriginals. That should be of concern to all of us, and I dare say there are probably similar examples elsewhere in Victoria.

For the reasons I have outlined, as an amendment to the last point of paragraph (1)(b) of Mr Birrell's motion, I propose to move:

In paragraph 1(b), after "Unemployment in migrant", insert "Aboriginal communities".

The amendment simply adds the word 'Aboriginal', so that it reads:

Unemployment in migrant, Aboriginal and non-English-speaking-background communities.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! I note the amendment inserts the words 'Aboriginal communities'.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — We need the word 'communities' only once, so that it reads 'migrant, Aboriginal and non-English-speaking-background communities'.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I am happy to move that way; if the opposition is happy for me to just put 'Aboriginal', that is fine. The point of the amendment is that I am seeking to insert the word 'Aboriginal' in the term of reference.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The amendment circulated around the chamber has 'Aboriginal communities'.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I realise that. With your indulgence, Mr Deputy President, and for the

purposes of better English, I am happy for it to be just the word 'Aboriginal', in which case the term of reference would read:

Unemployment in migrant, Aboriginal and non-English-speaking background communities.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Is that understood by the house?

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — Yes. It's one word, isn't it?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — Yes. In order to be clear, I now move:

That the expression "Aboriginal" be inserted after "Unemployment in migrant" in paragraph (1)(b).

I hope the amendment will be accepted. People who move around regional Victoria understand that a very significant and special problem is associated with youth unemployment among Victorian Aboriginal communities. I might also say this is not a problem that is necessarily present only in rural Victoria. A sizeable Aboriginal community exists in my electorate and it also experiences many of the problems we have discussed today. If we are to identify a particular set of communities in a term of reference, as Mr Birrell has done in his motion, I see no reason why we should not also identify the Aboriginal community, which also has special problems with which the committee might want to deal.

In conclusion, I point out the government will not oppose the motion. However, it seeks a slight amendment to include Aboriginal communities. I make it clear that under the act the Economic Development Committee is obliged to take references by resolution of the Legislative Council or by order of the Governor in Council published in the *Government Gazette*. However, unlike the broader legislation that applies to joint parliamentary committees, the legislation that applies to the Economic Development Committee does not specify any priority for the two terms of reference.

Consequently, if this motion is passed, the committee will have four terms of reference to deal with: two that come from the Council and two that are coming from the government. Therefore, that committee will either be extremely busy or it will have to prioritise its terms of reference. I point out that an earlier date of completion applies to the terms of reference from the government on the impact of the goods and services tax, given that the GST is being introduced in July. Under normal circumstances the committee would certainly have to put in a considerable amount of effort to get a report to Parliament in the next session on that reference.

I hope the committees are able to produce some worthwhile work in these areas. The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, with which I have been mostly associated, has a tradition of producing worthwhile reports to Parliament, and I hope other committees will also follow that tradition.

The government supports the motion. However, the priority of particular terms of reference will have to be dealt with either by the committees themselves or through further discussion. I hope we can just get on with it and get some worthwhile committee work for the benefit of the community.

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** (North Eastern) — I support the motion wholeheartedly, but it is unfortunate that the house has had to sit through another example of Mr Theophanous's breathtaking hypocrisy, seriatim. It is absolutely amazing. He says he is not opposing the motion, that he has no problem with the references, but that they are a political exercise.

I should have thought those two claims were mutually exclusive. If Mr Theophanous believes the terms of reference are a political exercise, how can he not have a problem with them? But he has said he endorses the terms of reference going to the committees. I do not believe Mr Theophanous can then turn around and characterise the activities of the opposition in moving the motion as a political exercise. On the other hand, the two references by the Governor in Council that have suddenly materialised — possibly yesterday; we are not too sure they got to the Governor in Council yesterday — are clearly designed as a political exercise. The GST reference, taking note of its subsets in particular, is pinpointed and designed to in some way provide a means of belting the opposition and more particularly the federal government around the head over the GST.

As is often the case with Mr Theophanous and other members of his party, they are too smart by half. I am quite confident that the committee under the chairmanship of Mr Lucas, properly doing its job and taking into account all ramifications of the nation's new tax system, will report that the GST is of tremendous benefit to the nation and to small businesses, particularly in rural Australia. The new tax system sets the scene for the nation to make its way in the world in future. Mr Theophanous should be careful because he has dug quite a hole for himself to fall into.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** interjected.

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** — Again Mr Theophanous contradicts the line he ran half an hour ago, first saying

that members ought to be able to comment on the references going to committees and now accusing me of doing so and saying I should not — another indication of Mr Theophanous's muddled thinking.

Mr Theophanous said that if someone can vote on a matter he or she should be able to speak on it, too — if that person happens to be a member of the committee to whom the reference is directed. I should have thought there is a world of difference. Anyone can vote on a reference to a committee — that is, vote on the subject that has been put to the committee for examination — but clearly if a committee member stands up in the house and makes a statement in debate prior to hearing all the evidence being put to the committee by various witnesses, that member may well find himself or herself in a compromised position. I should have thought Mr Theophanous would have thought through the logic of his argument a little more clearly and found it wanting yet another time.

Then Mr Theophanous ran the line that he had been trying to get the Economic Development Committee to meet so it could discuss proposed references to put to the government. I did not come down in the last shower. Having sat in the house for years and listened to the partisan politics of Mr Theophanous, I could not honestly believe Mr Theophanous would want to go to a committee that his party does not control and discuss proposed references for the committee to take to the government. He would not do something like that! He would go directly to his own government and party to attempt to get a reference before the committee that would suit his purposes.

I am left with only two conclusions. Firstly, Mr Theophanous did not take the references to his own government, or if he did it rejected them; or, secondly, because it is in such turmoil, it did not get around to doing anything about his proposal until 29 February. That is my scenario. That is what Mr Theophanous was attempting to do, but the government failed to act until the 11th hour.

The government has been in office for nearly six months now. Honourable members know what happened in the spring session. The Presiding Officers, particularly the President of this chamber, being accountable for committee expenditure, were beside themselves waiting for the government to act to appoint members to committees because the Presiding Officers had staff who did not know whether they had jobs: staff members did not know whether their contracts were to be terminated or extended. The government sat on its hands until the last moment. Then it agreed to go along

with the committees, and members were appointed on the last or second-last day of the session.

Committee staff have been sitting idle ever since, with the two exceptions to which Mr Theophanous alluded — the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee and the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. Of course those committees have something to do because by their very constitution they have an ongoing reference, but the rest of the committees, with their highly paid staff, have basically not had a productive job to do for nearly six months. That is a disgrace, especially coming from a government that went to the people saying it would eliminate waste and run an efficient administration. The government ought to be ashamed that a vital part of the democratic process of the state has lain idle for so long.

I am a great supporter of the parliamentary committee system. It is a valuable part of democracy under the Westminster system. Victoria's committee system has served the Parliament and the people extremely well for many years. It is always open to improvement. Significant improvements were made in 1992, and further improvements were made with the amendments to the Parliamentary Committees Act last year.

I see the committee system as having a range of features that all assist in making for accountable government. The committee system can assist in achieving bipartisan support of a resolution regarding some great issue in the community. One such issue was dealt with by the Social Development Committee. It inquired some years ago into dying with dignity, a very emotive subject that gave rise to deep divisions on both sides of the house and within parties; yet the committee was able through a public inquiry to distil the many points of view and bring to the Parliament a report signed off by the three parties represented. That issue was put to bed for some time because the committee did its work extremely well.

The committee system enables ideas to be tested. Someone might put forward a strong view on an issue and it might have widespread currency in the community because on the surface it sounds pretty good. Such an issue might not be able to be resolved satisfactorily through debate on the floor of the chamber, but if the matter is sent off to committee through mature consideration all points of view can be brought together, often enabling an idea to be tested, perhaps adopted or put aside as not feasible.

The committee system enables solutions to problems to be identified in a calmer atmosphere than is often possible in the cut and thrust of debate on the

parliamentary floor. It also enables public input and consultation. All governments talk about consultation. Consultation means different things to different people, but the committee system is the ultimate form of consultation. Not only does it enable people to put their points of view on the public record, it enables their opinions to be tested in the public arena and full note to be taken of what people are saying.

Also it gives members of the public every opportunity to put a great deal of thought into their submissions if they wish. A submission is not just some off-the-cuff comment based on a street poll. The committee system invites, indeed compels, witnesses to come forward with a well-considered and thought-out submission to the committee. To that extent it serves the purposes of consultation between government, the Parliament and the people of Victoria in a satisfactory way.

Another thing the committee system does for democracy is that it enables members of Parliament, be they recent arrivals or those who have been here longer, to become better acquainted with issues with which they are unfamiliar. Honourable members might think they know a fair bit about most subjects, but clearly most of them have only a passing knowledge of many. We do not know the details of some of the complex issues facing society. From my experience on many committees I have found that it is an ideal way for members of Parliament to gain experience and knowledge of many issues with which they are unfamiliar.

The committee system also has another aspect, small maybe but also important. It enables the people to see politicians working cooperatively. By and large, that is what people want. They want members of Parliament to run the state and run it well, but often Parliament is portrayed as a bear pit, with the two sides always at each other's throats. By its nature, question time tends to convey that impression. However, by enabling committees to travel around the state and have public hearings, the committee system gives people the opportunity to see members of Parliament working together in a very constructive and forthright manner. It gives the people confidence in the system and in Parliament. It also gives much more credibility to the decisions that are reached by the committee and ultimately adopted by the government of the day because the process has been seen to be fair, rigorous and bipartisan as against a debate where sides are taken for a political purpose of the day rather than for the long-term view.

For those reasons I am a very keen supporter of the committee system. As I mentioned, I have had the

privilege of serving on a number of committees. My first in 1973 was the then Road Safety Committee. Before my period of service with that committee it had made some landmark recommendations that were subsequently taken up by the governments of the time. With the possible and unlikely exception of Malawi I understand that Victoria was the first jurisdiction in the world to make the wearing of seatbelts compulsory.

I am the first to admit that as a young man I had grave misgivings about being tied into a motor vehicle; if it tipped over, how was I going to get out if it caught fire? I was not the only one. However, I do not think anyone would now contest that the compulsory fitting and wearing of seatbelts in motor vehicles has been one of the most extraordinary successful road safety initiatives anywhere. Yet a parliamentary committee took the irrational position that people such as me might have had at the time through misunderstanding or preconceived ideas and moulded that into a recommendation that has now become second nature to us all as we get into motor vehicles and automatically pull on seatbelts.

That same committee did much work on drink-driving laws and the introduction of random breath tests — again, a very touchy subject that attracted considerable privacy and civil libertarian considerations. However, in a bipartisan way the committee was able to bring all those conflicting and competing ideas together and make a recommendation that the government of the day felt confident in taking up and putting into legislation. It was another landmark decision in road safety initiatives.

I was also privileged to serve for three years with the former Public Works Committee, which considered, investigated and overviewed the great infrastructure projects of the state such as, in the time I was on it, the building of another power station in the Latrobe Valley and the construction of Dartmouth Dam in north-eastern Victoria. They were extraordinarily important infrastructure projects for Victoria. The committee provided a parliamentary overview of what engineers wanted to do, what certain statutory authorities might have wanted to do, and it enabled the details to be teased out and people who might be affected either through land acquisition or whatever to have their say in a public forum. In that way it was demonstrated to the people that this was a public works in the interest of the state as a whole and any detriment to individuals, although unfortunate, was able to be acknowledged and accepted for the greater good.

The Public Works Committee did other useful work in terms of natural disasters. Before I became a member, I

well remember the committee carrying out an inquiry after the 1974–75 floods in northern Victoria. The committee carried out the northern rivers inquiry. Only last week, 25 years after that committee reported, a constituent came into my office and spent almost the whole day reading the minutes of evidence given to that inquiry and its report. It is interesting that 25 years later that evidence still has currency and is of interest when considering issues that are ongoing today.

All would remember the Public Bodies Review Committee established by the Cain government. That committee did a great deal of good work, especially in the water industry. I do not think there is any way that Victoria could have moved away from having about 340 tiny water boards, or trusts as they were then called, had not the all-party Public Bodies Review Committee travelled the state hearing evidence and points of view so that at the end of the day it could say authoritatively, ‘In this day and age it is totally inefficient to have 340 water trusts in this state. We ought to run the show better’. The committee recommended that the number of water trusts be reduced, and that number has been reduced even further since. The committee was the catalyst that got water reform under way in this state and, to that extent, served Parliament very well.

These days committees are far better resourced than previously. When I was a member of the Public Works Committee that great old-time public servant, Hughie Caffrey, was the secretary, and the only member of staff. He had an office in the old Treasury building and a part-time typist to prepare the committee reports from drafts. From my recollections as a member of the Road Safety Committee, it had only a secretary. That was the times.

Because of that the committees did not turn out lengthy reports. We did not have photocopying machines or things like that, and the reports were much more sparse. I do not think they were any less relevant than the reports that are turned out now; although, if I do have one criticism of today’s reports it is that they tend to be far too long. With better staffing, technology and whatever, very lengthy reports are written. They are good reference documents but perhaps not as thoroughly read as they ought to be and once were.

However, the committees are now extremely well resourced so Mr Theophanous should have no fear that they will be overwhelmed by references coming from Governor in Council or from this chamber. The committees and their staff will not be particularly fazed by having two or three inquiries on foot simultaneously. They have the capacity and the staff. In some respects it

is useful to have more than one reference going at once because at times an inquiry may not be able to proceed because a witness may not be available or the membership may not be able to visit a particular site for some time. I do not see any drawback in committees having more than one reference. A full workload will keep the staff and membership of the committee on their toes. They see that the Parliament has high expectations of the committee and they need to be assiduous in getting on with the job. I look forward to that happening.

I have also served on a number of other committees. I will not refer to them all. I was on the former Workcare committee. That was an interesting exercise under the former Cain government when the workers compensation scheme was in diabolical trouble. I served briefly on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, the former Social Development Committee and for a brief time on the Economic Development Committee. From my wide experience I can say that the committee system serves the Parliament well, but it can only serve the Parliament well if it has references. The sad part, of course, is that five months have gone by when the committees have not had any references at all.

I support all the references Mr Birrell has proposed for the committees. The first, in paragraph (1)(a), concerns niche rural products in overseas markets. That is an extraordinarily important subject for Parliament to consider. In Victoria there is no doubt that opportunities exist for value adding to our rural products and for identifying and pursuing niche markets. We have moved away from the commodity producers that we once were — we no longer rely on wool, wheat, barley and meat. They are still important, but it is clear that the real money and the real future is in some different, high-value products. An inquiry such as this will be of great value in identifying those opportunities, but more particularly in demonstrating to some farmers existing opportunities which may have been overlooked. I give the example of my own family farm which produced traditional products for 100 years — wool, grain and meat. We are now growing tomatoes, which would not have been contemplated even five years ago. Yet there was an opportunity for a niche market into the supermarkets — and one hopes it will be a tremendously successful initiative.

I refer the house to the Ovens Valley, which is in the electorate of the honourable member for Benalla in the other place. The Ovens Valley has been turned into a real Garden of Eden. From the days when it was principally tobacco growing and beef producing, it now produces grapes, hops, chestnuts, vegetables and

flowers. Very little tobacco is still grown there and not much beef, but it has become a tremendously productive part of the state. That has other spin-offs, not the least being tourism. It is a very attractive part of the state to visit now because of its variety. The committee should look at the Ovens Valley and the adjacent King Valley, which has also seen similar expansion.

**Hon. E. G. Stoney** interjected.

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** — Mr Stoney reminds me of the rail trail. Mr Stoney should be given the credit for the rail trail through the Ovens Valley. It was opened the other day by the Minister for Transport. It is probably on the list of the things the next Labor speaker will read out as initiatives of the Labor government for country Victoria. Notwithstanding that the money was put forward by the previous government, largely at the behest of Mr Stoney, we will wait to see whether it is claimed as a Labor initiative. Nevertheless, Mr Stoney and I were pleased that the Minister for Transport came up and officially opened it. It is a tremendous asset.

I agree with Mr Theophanous that unemployment, particularly for youth, is a particularly pressing issue, especially in some of our smaller country towns. It has been a problem that governments of each complexion, in all states and federally, have been searching for a solution for some time. A committee inquiry will not go astray and may point in some useful directions.

I refer to the proposed reference to the Road Safety Committee on rural bridges. Although last year's road toll was the second lowest on record — and that is an achievement of which the community should be proud — the community also believes it is still too high and there is some way to go. Bearing in mind that many fatalities in country Victoria occur close to the victim's home, for whatever reason — and I will not go off on a tangent canvassing what the reasons may be — with the decline in the standard of bridges, particularly on local roads in country Victoria, there is grave risk of the road toll creeping up again. There are many bridges, I would suggest in the hundreds, that are now a century old, of timber construction, in poor order, too narrow for modern day traffic densities and speeds, and yet beyond the capacity of municipalities to replace under their own funding arrangements. One should bear in mind that under the rather peculiar road funding arrangements that apply in the nation, the state government is by and large not responsible for local roads. It is the responsibility of the municipalities using their own resources plus what they might get from the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Clearly, they are under-resourced to replace road bridges.

A recent *Sunday Herald Sun* article drew attention in clear photographic form to the disgraceful state of some of those bridges. The article included James Bridge in the Shire of Moira in northern Victoria, of which I am familiar. I commend the newspaper for highlighting that issue. It is one I have been trying to get up for some time, and I am not the only one. It is useful that it goes off to the committee.

**Hon. Andrew Brideson** interjected.

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** — I take on board Mr Brideson's interjection that the committee will be happy to examine it because we need to find the mechanism to assist local government to replace those bridges. I have been advocating for a long time that we should be spending, say, \$40 million or \$50 million a year on helping local government replace those bridges. With a rough figure of half a million a bridge — most would cost a lot less than that but the odd one would cost \$1 million — we could build 80 or 90 bridges a year. If we were replacing 80 or 90 bridges a year in rural Victoria, in three or four years it would make a devil of a difference to road safety in this state. The challenge before the committee will be to decide how that sort of funding may be garnered. I look forward to hearing the committee's thoughts on that issue.

An initiative that I was able to take as roads minister was the introduction of the Better Roads program. Bearing in mind that the state government is not responsible for local roads, the last thing I wanted was to step in and assist on local roads if that meant our federal colleagues, of whatever hue, simply stepped back the equivalent amount of dollars with no change in the net results. I was able to introduce an initiative through which the state could assist if it were demonstrated that an action of the state government was having an impact on local roads. That useful initiative provided about \$3 million or \$4 million a year for local roads, but it needs to be vastly expanded. I throw it over to the committee to determine how that aim may be achieved.

Rather than continuing seriatim with each of the references I turn to the motion's proposed reference on water to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. The supply of water is and will be the most pressing issue facing Australians now and for some time into the future. We are the generation at the coalface at the time in history when we have reached the situation in which we are drawing from our rivers and streams the maximum amount of water for consumptive use. From here on, especially in the Murray–Darling Basin — it may apply beyond that, but bearing in mind that a large proportion of Victoria is in

the Murray–Darling Basin — existing and new water uses must be applied via a trading mechanism, through buying or acquiring existing entitlements, not by issuing fresh entitlements for new diversions, because the resource is fully committed.

That, of itself, is an issue not widely enough understood by the populace at large. Certainly too few people yet understand the great benefits that the water trading market will bring to agriculture and, through that, to the state as a whole in getting better efficiencies for water use in Victoria. The reference to the committee can flush out the issues.

Another useful aspect of that reference is that it will enable the committee to demonstrate the value of irrigation to Victoria. Were it not for irrigation the standard of living of every Victorian would be much lower than is currently enjoyed. When one looks at what irrigation provides to the state — whether it be in the Goulburn Valley, Sunraysia, Gippsland or wherever — one comes to realise Victoria is a wealthy state because of irrigation. Yet many people who are not directly associated with it believe irrigation is environmentally unfriendly, that it causes salinity and that it is ruining the land. That is not the case. But obviously improvements can be made.

To understand that, one has only to look at the situation in the Goulburn Valley, where water is scarce this year, as it was last year. Dairy production there has increased despite the region having less available water this year. People are focusing better on ways of doing things. The reference to the committee will assist in getting those messages across to the population at large. It will also enable the committee to look at what savings can be made generally across the board, where they should be applied and, more particularly, how much the savings will cost, because everything has a cost.

Sometimes I fear that the community believes we can go out and easily save 300 000 megalitres of water. I do not believe we can. We may be able to save 50 000 megalitres easily and cheaply, but every megalitre beyond that figure will become increasingly expensive to garner. That must be balanced against the alternative use.

The committee has a tremendously good opportunity to flush all those aspects out and to return to Parliament with a bipartisan and considered response.

I support the motion. I wish the members on the various committees who will receive the references an interesting time in hearing evidence and conducting



their inquiries. I look forward to constructive reports coming forward in due course.

**Hon. G. W. JENNINGS** (Melbourne) — I am happy to spur on Parliament's committees to deal with the various terms of reference that will come to them shortly and to recognise the merits of the terms of reference that have been proposed, developed and gazetted by the government, and of those the subject of the opposition's motion.

I look forward most importantly to the committees sitting down to reflect on the timing of those references and inquiries given to them. If anything divides the house today it is the priorities given to the various terms of references and the government's concern about demands placed on committees now that, in a number of instances, a multiplicity of terms of reference may have been developed.

All the government's terms of references had been gazetted prior to Parliament resuming yesterday and to the notice of motion now before the house being moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The opposition has deemed Parliament should have this debate. It is probably unfortunate that the opposition has formed that view and that in some ways the committees could get off to a rocky start in trying to juggle the various priorities in the terms of reference coming before them.

I agree with every member who has contributed to the debate that there is merit in the terms of reference proposed by the government and in the motion. There is a degree of duplication within the references that will be sent to the committees. In some cases the suggested terms of references the subject of the motion are subsets of the terms of references already developed and gazetted by the government.

During my contribution to the debate I will highlight and give examples of the references given to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Law Reform Committee. Both suggested references in the motion are subsets of the terms of reference the government has already developed and gazetted for investigation by the committees.

I shall deal with the references currently being considered in this debate in the order in which they appear in the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The motion proposes two references to the Economic Development Committee. I acknowledge both references have much merit and are worthy of consideration of the committee and Parliament, but I remind the house that two references have already been prepared and gazetted by the government that equally

deal with significant issues. The references prepared by the government certainly warrant immediate investigation by the committee as they impact significantly on the whole of Victoria, and particularly on rural communities.

Given that my contribution follows that of the Honourable Bill Baxter in which he expressed concerns about the community, the terms of reference developed by the government to be referred to the Economic Development Committee relate to significant issues about reductions in services and the associated costs that may be inflicted on Victoria's regional communities.

One of the terms of reference developed by the government is about the reduction in banking services and postal communications, the decline in municipal services, concerns about the loss of public transport opportunities for Victorian citizens in rural and regional communities, and unemployment services.

The government wants that term of reference to be considered by the Economic Development Committee and to be reported on by the first day of the spring 2001 parliamentary session. The government would be concerned if the work of the parliamentary committee proposed in notice of motion no. 1 were undertaken at the expense of the government's very worthwhile term of reference being investigated and reported on by the committee.

Similarly, another term of reference that the government proposes impacts significantly on Mr Baxter's constituents — that is, the effect of the GST on petrol prices. I imagine it is a burning issue and of vital concern to his constituents. I am certain they would be enthusiastic about the Victorian government being able to develop an appropriate response to lessen the burden that falls on Victorian citizens in regional Victoria in the costs being imposed on them by petrol and LPG prices, the impact of electricity prices, the compliance costs that businesses may have in conforming with the GST, the cost of federal or Victorian government services, and determining whether a tax impost will apply to services provided by various tiers of government, particularly in those communities that may be bearing the brunt of economic uncertainty in regional Victoria. Members of the government are vitally concerned about those issues and assume Parliament is vitally concerned about them. As a consequence the government has developed those terms of reference for consideration by the Economic Development Committee.

I have already indicated that the government considers the two references for the Economic Development Committee proposed in the opposition's motion are worthy of consideration and investigation and reporting back by the Economic Development Committee. However, as I said, the government would be concerned if they are undertaken at the expense of detailed analysis and reporting back of the government's references.

I put on the record my concern particularly about the reference about the opportunities for niche marketing of various products including value-added products. I echo Mr Baxter's words about the importance of developing export markets, but I am concerned about where the work will take place — that is, whether much of the work of the committee will take place in the northern hemisphere during the southern winter. I am a bit concerned that there will be two southern winters in the time frame of the terms of reference and that the substantial body of work of that committee may take place in the northern hemisphere in a much warmer climate. The government would be concerned if that is the intent for the major work program and schedule of the committee. I put on notice that the government would like to ensure that the committee has a consistent work pattern and anticipates that the substantial body of work could take place within Victoria. Government members of the committee will be very mindful that the government would prefer that to be the nature of its work program.

On the reference about youth unemployment, the government is vitally concerned about the legacy of Victorian young people and the youth unemployment situation inherited by the government. That has been a vital concern of the incoming Bracks Labor government since it was elected in September last year. I am certain it is of concern to all Victorians that more than 70 000 young people in Victoria are unemployed and that they comprise approximately one third of all those unemployed in Victoria. The most recent ABS labour force survey statistics indicate that in January of this year in metropolitan Melbourne 20.1 per cent of young people between the ages of 15 and 19 years were unemployed and in country Victoria that percentage was 20.5 per cent. Also in January of this year, of those in the age bracket 20 to 24 years in metropolitan Melbourne 10.1 per cent were unemployed and for country Victoria the figure was 10.9 per cent.

The good news is that some of those figures have actually fallen over the period January 1999 to January 2000. I do not take undue credit for the government for the reduction in those figures but it is clearly a priority of the government to do whatever it can to reduce the

incidence of youth unemployment. A number of initiatives have been developed and will be implemented by the Bracks Labor government. I alert the house to look out for some significant announcements on the immediate horizon on initiatives to impact on youth unemployment in Victoria. I am happy to report that when the committee addresses its reference on youth unemployment it will be able to consider the impact of a number of initiatives introduced by the government. They will, one hopes, make positive contributions to the reduction of youth employment and add to the capacity of the school base to facilitate job opportunities, create a number of traineeships in both the public and private sector, and add to the opportunities for apprenticeships for young people. The government will be considering specifically the introduction of a young persons employment hotline, which will be a consolidated service — that is, a one-stop shop approach — for young people to locate jobs. It will augment the work that is being undertaken by the jobs network and the various employment services that have been contracted out by the commonwealth government — with dubious success. The government will be doing its bit to augment those services and on some occasions will step in to overcome some black holes in the implementation of the jobs network regime.

I wish the committee well in being able to reconcile the various demands that may be imposed upon it. It will have two significant references developed by the government and another two significant references if this motion is agreed to. I urge the committee in its deliberations to apportion priority particularly to the impact on rural and regional communities in Victoria, which is a key concern for members of the opposition and certainly the government in satisfying its undertaking to ensure that all Victoria grows and that all Victorian citizens are protected in service delivery and in government intervention in reducing prices and doing whatever it can to reduce the burden that falls on citizens in rural and regional Victoria.

The second reference deals with the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. During the debate Mr Birrell said he would refer to a matter of fact under which the committee works. He then proceeded to describe the operating practices of the committee as a dog's breakfast. If that is true, what is the criteria for determining that fact? He was drawing a long bow by saying it could be objectively quantified. The working practices of the committee may be hamstrung by the lack of clarity in the act and the imposition that it places on members of the committee.

The third reference concerns the Road Safety Committee. The government is concerned about the potential considerations of that committee given that it has revived an ongoing term of reference about unroadworthiness. The government encourages the committee to conclude its term of reference. I echo the contribution of Mr Baxter about the committee reviewing the status of various roads and bridges, and that funding and responsibility falls within the jurisdiction of local government. The government is confident that the committee can walk a fine line of jurisdictional responsibility. Although the government has an interest to ensure that all roads and bridges in Victoria provide safe passage for Victorian citizens and visitors, it does not wish to be embroiled in an interjurisdictional debate or dispute.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** — The committee may be able to find a way through those matters.

**Hon. G. W. JENNINGS** — I echo Mr Baxter's concern. It may not be an easy task. It should not be entered into in the spirit of creating priorities for pork-barrelling purposes or for short-term political expedience. The projects identified for funding must be for the immediate and long-term benefit of all Victorian citizens and in accordance with what the government would expect the committee to come up with.

I refer to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. The work of committees being used for overt political purposes is a concern. As all honourable members are aware a major priority of the Bracks government was the establishment of an expert drug advisory committee chaired by Dr Penington to advise the government and to work with the community to implement locally defined strategies to deal with the impact of drugs on individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities. Dr Penington did a significant amount of work on behalf of the Kennett government and made significant recommendations on how to deal with current and emerging issues associated with the impact of drugs at various levels, from individuals to the community and the state level.

It is hoped that expert committee can advise the government, its agencies and local communities on implementing viable strategies to deal with the impact of drugs in the community in a way that is not confronting but in a conclusive, considered fashion that brings the community with the government. It is hoped it is sponsored in such a way that effectively deals with the various ways drugs impact on family and community life.

The government is concerned that the ongoing six-monthly reporting of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee may cut across the work of the government-sponsored expert committee. It may not conflict with strategies determined at the local level, but it is important for the committee to be mindful of the detailed consultation, dialogue and policy development that has been undertaken by it and the relevant government agencies to ensure that it is not at cross-purposes and does not use the issue in a partisan way to take pot shots at the work of those community organisations and individuals who may be working cooperatively with the government-sponsored framework.

That should not deny the committee the opportunity to examine particular matters. I do not wish to argue against the prerogative of the committee to investigate such matters, but I alert opposition and committee members to terms of reference that may lead to conflict in the approach the government may wish to take in resolving the significant issues that affect the lives of so many Victorians.

As Mr Baxter said, references to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee about water resources deal with the most significant issues the state is confronting. The provision and management of water systems and infrastructure, maintenance and the protection of environmental flows are some of the most profound issues of the day.

Indeed, it may involve some of the most significant infrastructure investment decisions in the water management area that the state will confront in the next decade. Because of the significance, gravity and breadth of the issues and their impact on all aspects of Victorian life, the government would be within its rights to be a bit concerned about the timing of the report by this committee — it is required to report by 30 November this year. That seems to be a relatively short time frame in which to deal with such significant terms of reference, given the gravity of the subject matter — which both sides of the house have acknowledged — involving ongoing investment in infrastructure and the impact on the lives of all Victorians. Some alarm bells are ringing about the short period in which the committee has to consider these significant issues.

**Hon. W. R. Baxter** — They might need to seek an extension, but you have to concentrate their minds in the first instance to get on with it.

**Hon. G. W. JENNINGS** — The government is very happy to support any efforts to concentrate

people's minds on this significant issue. The second reference to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee is inadequate compared with the reference which has been prepared by the government and which has already obtained Governor in Council approval and been gazetted, so there is already a reference to the parliamentary committee. The government's approach was to review all fisheries management issues in Victoria. I am advised there are 22 different fisheries of significance in this state, of which the abalone and rock lobster fisheries are only two. In a sense, the specific reference proposed in this motion is a subset of perhaps the 10th order of the reference that has been developed by the government.

In regard to focusing the minds of committee members, it is of interest that the time frame for completion of the government-instigated inquiry into all fisheries is shorter than the time frame proposed in the motion.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** — Is it long enough?

**Hon. G. W. JENNINGS** — That is the question to which we should perhaps turn our minds. If the opposition is prepared to enter into dialogue on this issue or to consider it, I point out there are many fishers in Victoria who have multiple licences that apply over various fisheries, and to isolate abalone and rock lobster fisheries may not do the subject justice when considering the activities of various fishers, particularly commercial fishers, across the state. The government would be enthusiastic in its urging of the committee to consider the broader terms of reference and their applicability to that committee to make a significant difference in fisheries management, rather than what the government believes would be an inadequate reference as proposed in the motion.

The proposed terms of reference for the Environment and Natural Resources Committee do not do justice to the subject and the committee would be better to consider the broader terms of reference prepared and already gazetted by the government.

I give a similar response on the terms of reference the motion proposes for the Law Reform Committee. It proposes that the committee inquire into the future need for court facilities and court-based legal services in regional and rural Victoria and report to Parliament by 30 June 2001. Again, that is a subset of the terms of reference that have been developed by the government and sent to the committee. In fact, the terms of reference gazetted by the government for inquiry, consideration and report by the first day of the autumn 2001 parliamentary sittings include:

- (a) The accessibility and adequacy of legal services in regional and rural Victoria and to examine the effect of any lack of services in these sectors of the community. In particular, to examine the accessibility and adequacy of —
  - (i) legal aid facilities and services including Victoria Legal Aid, community legal centres and pro bono services;
  - (ii) court and tribunal facilities and services;
 including the location of courts in light of population shifts —

that is the subset in the motion —

appropriateness of current circuit arrangements ...

- (b) how access to the services referred to ... may be improved through the use of current and emerging technology.

As I have said to the house, the reference developed by the government is more substantial than the one proposed in Mr Birrell's motion. Obviously it is not the intention of the government to oppose the motion, but I point out to the house that the reference developed by the government has more applicability and deals with a wider range of matters than if the terms of reference proposed in the motion stood alone.

The government's concerns relate to the adequacy and coverage of the terms of reference; whether they will deal with the issues as comprehensively as will the terms of reference the government has prepared; and whether there is potential for the committees to be working at cross-purposes in relation to some major initiatives which the government is undertaking and seeking to implement or which may fall into the category of running into jurisdictional areas that may be of concern to the committee and Parliament.

The government is assuming that, in their wisdom, the committees will be able to deal with the complexities of those issues, but I believe it is very important that as they commence their detailed work program they are mindful of all those aspects in establishing what we hope will be a harmonious working relationship within all the committees. It is the government's key intention to have the committees form a vital part of the policy development and accountability processes in Parliament. We certainly hope the committees will not be bogged down by disputes over priorities of terms of reference that come before them and that they will be able quickly to agree on the priority to be afforded to those terms of reference.

As I said at the start of my contribution to this debate, it is unfortunate that the house is having this debate today,

but the opposition has deemed it is a debate we had to have. It would have been preferable to have the acknowledgment by Parliament and the committees of the terms of reference that have been determined and gazetted by the government prior to Parliament sitting and for the committees to embark on a work program in a considered fashion that would mitigate against the potential for there to be any conflict within the committees.

Having said that, I am confident that the committees themselves will be able to resolve those issues and develop an appropriate work program and establish the relative priorities of the multiple terms of reference they have before them.

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** (East Yarra) — It is with great pleasure that I support the motion moved by the Honourable Mark Birrell. Parliamentary committees play an important part in the life of Parliament. Mr Baxter's contribution to the debate was valuable, bringing with it his long experience in Parliament and his experience with the different configurations of parliamentary committees and their activities over that period.

Before moving to the specifics of the references I shall reflect on my experience of parliamentary committees. In the last Parliament I was a member of the Family and Community Development Committee, the successor committee to the committee mentioned by the Honourable Bill Baxter — namely, the Social Development Committee, a committee with a long and proud history of tackling often difficult issues. I wish to briefly expose to the house some of the wonderful work the committee did in the last Parliament and the bipartisan way in which it drew the community together in a constructive way.

Through much of the last Parliament the committee's reference, through the former Minister for Health, the Honourable Rob Knowles, was to inquire into planning for positive ageing. The gamut of government and community activity was considered and recommendations were made to the Parliament, the health minister and other parts of government on how the community might handle the changes occurring within the community's make-up.

To highlight the importance of joint parliamentary committees and, more recently, single-house committees in the form of the Economic Development Committee working in a harmonious and community-focused way, I praise the work of a number of Labor members of the Economic Development Committee, particularly Caroline Hogg, a great

stalwart. The committee moved around rural Victoria, taking somewhere between 400 and 500 submissions. That committee was in close touch with the community.

At my local electorate level there was an enormous number of inquiries and much discussion, including public forums, bringing forward much information. Such a model is adopted by many parliamentary committees and successfully reflects the views of the community through the activities of committee members, with their spread of knowledge, interests and backgrounds.

I note discussion today of the need for committees to visit rural Victoria. I am pleased that a number of references given to parliamentary committees have a significant focus on rural Victoria. In the last Parliament the Family and Community Development Committee spent a lot of time in the North Eastern Province of Bill Baxter and Jeanette Powell and more particularly in Shepparton talking to people in the Aboriginal community. Committee members were pleased to hear contributions from people from all over Victoria.

Returning to the discussion the house is engaged in today regarding the details of the terms of reference set out in the motion, I point out that it is a little rich of the government to criticise or in any way question the opposition on its decision to put forward those references. It is a lengthy period since the government was sworn in — my quick calculation is 144 days — yet we are still having such discussions! It is unfortunate that parliamentary committees have been unable to fully focus on their work for that lengthy period.

It is worth reflecting that 50 days had elapsed before the government finally agreed to establish parliamentary committees in a sensible manner. In that 50 days \$338 000 of government money has been wasted. Highly trained committee staff have had to sit by quietly, unable to move forward with the valuable work they could be doing for the community.

**Hon. W. R. Baxter** — That would be debilitating for committee staff.

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** — It would be debilitating. Trained and competent staff could be lost because of that hiatus. After that 50-day period the opposition was able to convince the government to move forward with changes to the Parliamentary Committees Act and to establish parliamentary committees. It is worth noting that reforms were introduced in 1992 and that in

previous parliaments the government moved forward quickly to establish parliamentary committees.

To date the cost to the community of the government's delay in establishing parliamentary committees and parliamentary committee references is well over \$1 million — noting that committees have only just been given their first references and will receive more references from the house after today's debate. Based on my calculations, I believe parliamentary committees cost the Victorian taxpayer about \$8000 a day to run and about \$12 000 a working day. Committees make an important and worthy contribution, but that contribution is not so worthy when committees are not active. That adds up to a figure of well over \$1.1 million. It is an enormous waste of taxpayers' money and a cost to Victorians. That money could have been much more productively spent if the government had got off its tail and moved forward quickly to establish parliamentary committees.

It is ironic that the government has been so tardy in taking such steps in light of the rhetoric heard before the election. The community was told of the need to reform the parliamentary structure and to make parliamentary committees more active and relevant. It is a point of agreement between the government and the opposition that there is a need for incremental reform in committee activities. There is always a need to ensure committees are relevant. The opposition has always been prepared to listen to suggestions regarding changes that will make committees serve the community better. Having said there has been enormous waste, I am pleased that Parliament is at the point where it can move forward to the consideration of sensible references.

It is worth returning to some of the comments made by speakers opposite in recent times. Let us consider the difficulties some members opposite have expressed about the motion before the house. While not opposing that motion, the Honourable Gavin Jennings and the Honourable Theo Theophanous have clearly commented that they are not happy with a number of the references and have concerns about certain aspects of the references. They are experiencing the monitoring of the government. The government is being scrutinised and shown up as inadequate and tardy in its handling of parliamentary committees.

Parliamentary committees are part of the scrutiny and monitoring process that is so important to the Parliament. One of the roles of parliamentary committees has been and always will be to monitor and scrutinise executive government. The Honourable Glenyys Romanes in her inaugural speech in the

chamber drew heavily on comments made before the election. She made the point that the establishment of standing committees to review legislation and monitor executive government was important.

I note that ALP policy documents released before the election spoke of integrity in public life and of introducing a more effective committee system to monitor executive government. That is an important point and one with which the opposition agrees. One only wonders why it has taken 100 days for the government to get to the stage where it has not only established parliamentary committees but also given them references.

I suggest the coded and guarded concerns expressed by the Honourable Gavin Jennings are a reflection of the fact that the government is trying to escape scrutiny. He made specific comment on a number of the references that are part of today's motion and that counterpoise recent references given by the government. He argued that there may be some overlap and duplication and that the focus might not be quite right. All that is debatable, but again it is evidence of the government of which he is a part being afraid to be closely and openly scrutinised. It is important that honourable members look at the comments of members opposite in that light and see the true motives and concerns that are so much a part of the government's fear of openness, scrutiny and transparency.

I will turn my attention to the specifics of the motion and the references to the parliamentary committees. The Economic Development Committee has been given two references, one of which is to assess the export opportunities of Victorian rural industries with particular emphasis on the different factors listed. They are important references. Nothing is more important than ensuring that Victoria's rural industries are strengthened in the ways suggested in the reference as possible examination points.

It is important to realise that Victoria is still suffering from the legacy of the Cain–Kirner years, and youth unemployment is still too high in Victoria. The Victorian economy has grown very strongly over the past seven years and has been a great creator of jobs for both youths and people of other age groups. However, it is important to state that late last year, around the time of the election, employment levels reached their highest point in the state's history with almost 300 000 more jobs than in 1992. It is crucial to make that background the starting point. Victoria is still suffering the legacy of the late 1990–92 period and the need to build the economy from that point onwards. The seven years since 1992 have been very successful, but more needs

to be done. Unemployment is still too high — I do not think anyone in this house would disagree with that — so the reference to the Economic Development Committee is very important.

The reference given to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC) is perhaps one of the more important. It may seem to be dry and esoteric, but the operation of the Parliamentary Committee Act is an important topic. It may be necessary to accept at face value the good intentions of the house in referring a matter to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

I hope the committee will look at the operation of both state and federal parliamentary committees in Australia. The Senate has been quoted as an example in many discussions about parliamentary committee reform. It has a very effective committee system that is worthy of close investigation as part of SARC's reference. I could not say that it is the committee system the government should adopt, but parts of that committee system would be worthy of consideration by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

When considering ways to improve the operation of the Parliamentary Committees Act the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee should examine the need for adequate funding. It is important to adequately fund committees. I note that on many occasions parliamentary committees have been limited in their ability to inquire into and examine certain topics by the need for adequate funding.

During the past several days I have examined the budgets of parliamentary committees throughout comparable states in Australia and at the federal level. In 1997–98 the Victorian parliamentary committee budget for joint investigatory committees was about \$3.2 million — a significant figure but one that gives the community big value. The Senate spends nearly \$5.5 million annually on parliamentary committees and the House of Representatives about \$6.5 million. According to its 1997–98 annual report the New South Wales Legislative Council, which has an important scrutiny role, spends \$4.71 million on its parliamentary committees, which is the sort of level Victoria might consider a guide. The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee might well spend some time looking at the adequacy of committee support and staff to ensure the smooth and adequate operation of the Parliamentary Committees Act and to ensure it gets not only good value but the best achievable outcomes at a reasonable cost for Victorians.

The Road Safety Committee reference has been alluded to a number of times. The Honourable Bill Baxter's erudite contribution about bridge construction and maintenance is very important. The argument put forward by the Honourable Gavin Jennings that there would be some boundary, federal or state issues misses the point and is, again, an attempt to sidestep the main issue. Mr Baxter gave examples of how it was possible to find development and construction programs that would deliver good roads to rural Victoria in a way that would not cause jurisdictional difficulties but would maximise the benefits to communities, which is the task of the Road Safety Committee. The task is to move forward smoothly without getting into jurisdictional issues in an unconstructive way but in a way that provides the best benefits for rural Victorians.

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee reference is also very important. I listened carefully to the concerns put forward by the Honourable Gavin Jennings that the references are ill-founded. The committee has every right to scrutinise a government and look at the performance of its agencies and the way programs are impacting on the community. To imagine that such actions should be in some way nobbled or reduced is of considerable concern. The examination of crime levels and programs to prevent crime is a very important role for the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, and I commend the Honourable Mark Birrell for bringing that reference to the house.

The references to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee are, again, most important. The Honourable Gavin Jennings once again questioned any overlap or duplication and mentioned the figure of 22 when talking about the range of fisheries. I am not an expert in that area and I accept that Victoria has 22 different fisheries. However, the fact that the government has given a reference to that committee and that there may be some points in common between those references is not necessarily a bad thing. The house is making a statement about what it believes is important. The house is operating in that context in a bipartisan way and making clear its belief that the issue is important and needs to be looked at. It may have to be dovetailed with the activities of the other references and that is fair enough. Parliamentary committees are sufficiently mature and understanding to work their way through any references that may in some way overlap. The fact that the house has taken that stance and said that the issue is important may re-emphasise the importance that is placed on rural industries and a number of other aspects of rural Victoria. That is not a bad thing.

I refer to the comments made by the Honourable Theo Theophanous and others in the house earlier about the workload of committees. Parliamentary committees are hardworking and are more than able to handle and manage several references constructively. In short, the committees can talk and chew gum. I have no doubt the parliamentary committees I have served on and others will handle those issues.

I am a member of the Law Reform Committee. I do not wish to make a precise set of comments about the reference other than to say that I am sure the Law Reform Committee will do a good job and will operate in a constructive and bipartisan way.

The government has been tardy in this area and wasted a great deal of government money — more than \$1.1 million — by initially delaying the establishment of committees and finally delaying making suitable references. I am pleased the house has taken it upon itself to propose a series of important references. I am pleased the government has chosen not to oppose those references and I wish the committees well as they serve the Victorian community and move forward constructively.

**Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA** (Melbourne West) — I am pleased to be a member of the Economic Development Committee. As a new member of Parliament it will be the first committee that I have served on. After listening to my colleagues from both sides of the house who have a great deal of experience in working on committees, I am looking forward to the parliamentary committee work. I have an understanding of some of the depth and breadth of the work committees have undertaken.

I refer to comments from opposition members about the government being slow to move in establishing the terms of reference for committees. I agree with Mr Theophanous that attempts were made to get an early meeting of the Economic Development Committee so that it could consider references and find areas that both sides agreed would be valuable references. Those attempts failed. The failed attempts were no fault of government members of the committee.

I am surprised at the references that have been put up by the opposition. As a member of the committee I am prepared to accept any references it is given to consider, and I will work hard to carry out the responsibilities and the functions of the committee. However, I am surprised because there is some cynicism about the opposition putting up a reference for the Economic Development Committee to consider opportunities for

export from rural industries in Victoria. It had seven years in government and did very little for regional Victoria except to slash and cut services. One has only to recall the number of schools that were closed under the previous government. Some 178 schools in the country were closed, 12 hospitals were closed and compulsory competitive tendering was put in place across Victoria, which slashed thousands of jobs from rural and regional Victoria. There were cuts to community services, to the public service, and reductions in transport opportunities and options in rural Victoria.

As the previous government embarked on cuts and slashes to regional Victoria, it sat back while its mates in Canberra closed post offices and Commonwealth Employment Service offices, and sold off half Telstra — and it now plans to sell the rest of it. Opposition members know as well as I what the total sale of Telstra will mean to rural Victoria. It will mean it will withdraw services. The National Party, part of the then coalition government but now just a partner, sat by while that happened.

Part of the reference to the Economic Development Committee goes to unemployment and youth unemployment. It is surprising that the opposition is putting this up as a reference when one considers its track record of youth unemployment. During the life of the previous government more than 70 000 young Victorians were consistently unemployed. That represented almost one in three of Victoria's total unemployed. Prior to the government taking office in September 1999, the regions with the highest youth unemployment — that is, from the age of 15 to 25 — were north-east Melbourne with 20.5 per cent, Mornington Peninsula with 19.9 per cent, south-east Melbourne with 19.5 per cent, and the Goulburn–Ovens–Murray region with 19.3 per cent. Since September last year youth unemployment rates have fallen significantly in most of those regions.

The previous government had a record for implementing policies that had huge effects on the development or lack of development in rural and regional Victoria and which directly affected unemployment. The Kennett government was not about developing opportunities for communities. It was not about seeking out development, but the reverse. Under the former government communities were attacked in rural and regional Victoria, there was a loss of confidence, and the unemployment rates rose.

One needs to look no further than the September election last year to gauge what rural and regional Victorians thought of the coalition's treatment of them



when in government. One has only to consider the results in rural and regional Victorian seats. There was no longer any confidence in the Kennett government and people were no longer prepared to have it govern. The former government lost the Legislative Assembly seats of Seymour, Ballarat East, Ballarat West, Ripon, Geelong, Bendigo East, Gisborne and Narracan.

I refer to the neglect of rural Victoria in building investment activity under the previous government. Rural Victoria accounts for about a third of Victoria's population, yet under the Kennett government building activity in rural Victoria accounted for just over 18 per cent of the total of Victoria's building activity. Even when one examines the Kennett government's spending on public building, rural Victoria received just under 14 per cent of the total invested. While the current opposition put up references for the Economic Development Committee to examine issues such as unemployment in rural and regional Victoria, particularly youth unemployment, it has a legacy that cost it dearly politically at the last election because of its treatment of rural and regional communities and the impact that treatment had on the economy, on investment and on employment rates.

No wonder the opposition's motion proposes terms of reference for the Economic Development Committee's investigation.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — In reply, Mr Deputy President, I am pleased to wind up the debate and to thank honourable members for their contributions. I am pleased the government has made it clear it does not oppose the motion, and the opposition agrees with the government's proposed minor technical amendment.

I was pleased to hear the comments of the Honourable Theo Theophanous, who did not have a problem with the references to be given to the committees. His agreement demonstrates that the references are genuine and proper, and are the types of references that should be given to committees. They should have been given by the government to the committees several months ago.

When the opposition parties were in office, despite being busy and dealing with a huge agenda, they never failed to ensure committees had references at the right time. Certainly after a change of government the former coalition government never left the bulk of committees standing idle waiting for references.

The opposition has moved at the first available opportunity to provide the suggested references to the

parliamentary committees. That will be good for Parliament and Victorians, and is another indication of the relevant role of the upper house in performing such work. Therefore, I welcome the house's support for the motion. The opposition will support the minor amendment to add words to the motion.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Amended motion agreed to.**

**Sitting suspended 12.54 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Electricity: Yallourn dispute

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to the recent electricity crisis. The minister told the house yesterday that she received early notice on Wednesday, 2 February, that the situation could possibly lead to a shortage of electricity supply. I ask the minister why, unlike the South Australian government, she failed to give a day's notice to the public of this electricity crisis?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — As even a casual observer of the Victorian and South Australian electricity systems would know, they are not comparable. The Victorian electricity system has access to load shedding in the form of the Alcoa aluminium smelters which puts it in a different situation from the South Australian system. If the opposition has questions about decisions the South Australian government took, perhaps they would like to put them to the South Australian government.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — In relation to the comprehensive answer I gave to the house yesterday, I do not wish to change any part of my answer. Yesterday I indicated to the house that the advice to the government on the Wednesday was that the electricity situation was tight, that there were adequate supplies of electricity at that point and that further reductions in the capacity of the system could lead to difficulties and they could arise, as I outlined yesterday, as a result of a whole range of factors, including the weather and breakdowns. Perhaps the opposition — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister is entitled to answer her question without being harassed by members of the opposition.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — Perhaps the opposition is rather better at forecasting the weather than everybody else seems to be.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — If they are, perhaps they might like to go into the forecasting business — I assure them they could make a lot of money.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — The government advised the public at the earliest opportunity — when it was advised by Nemmo that load shedding was to occur — and that was the appropriate thing to do.

I remind the house of the other points I made yesterday, when I indicated that the procedures that were followed by the Victorian government in the situation were entirely in accordance with the protocols signed off by the former Kennett government.

### **Industrial relations: wage claim**

**Hon. R. F. SMITH** (Chelsea) — Will the Minister for Industrial Relations inform the house of what action the Bracks government intends to take in response to the ACTU's wage claim in support of low-paid workers across Victoria?

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Victorian government supports the ACTU's living wage claim. We support it because we want to help the state's lowest paid workers. To look after disadvantaged workers who need a genuine wage increase is the right thing to do. The Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmanian governments have joined with the Victorian government in support of the claim. It is interesting to note that they represent more than 80 per cent of the Australian work force.

The ACTU claim is for a \$24-a-week pay rise for Australia's lowest paid workers covered by federal awards under the Workplace Relations Act. If successful, it will take the minimum federal award up to \$409 per week, which equates to a lousy \$10.77 an hour. This government's view is that the Australian Industrial Relations Commission should consider the ACTU claim on its merits and the fact that in the past year Australia has had a good national economic performance and that the forecast for this year is similar.

I contrast the Bracks government's approach to the national wage case when compared with what the opposition did when they were in government. The

Australian Industrial Relations Commission has determined ACTU living wage claims on three previous occasions — that is, in April 1997, April 1998 and April 1999. The current case is based on the fourth claim that has been put to the commission. What did the opposition do when they were in office? They opposed the living wage claim! All they were prepared to support was a lousy \$8-a-week pay rise. How could workers achieve a great deal out of an \$8-a-week pay rise that is help them to feed their children by putting on food on the table, or to pay for medicines? When the opposition was in government its members rejected the claim and neglected Victorian workers.

The government maintains that those workers should receive a fair and reasonable wage increase. The ACTU living wage claim will raise the living standards of the lowest paid employees.

It is important to remember that workers on federal awards cannot achieve other pay increases through enterprise bargaining. They are not executive members, or members of Parliament who have received pay increases.

Once again the commonwealth has announced that it will oppose the Australian Council of Trade Unions living wage claim. It is a disgrace that once again the conservative state governments and the federal government oppose such a claim. I am certain that if the opposition were in government today it would have Mr Reith at the commission opposing such a claim once again.

The full bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission will hear the matter, and it is anticipated it will make a decision by April this year. The government hopes the commission will give a fair decision on the wage claim and support the lowest paid workers in Australia, unlike the previous government and the commonwealth government.

### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — The Minister for Energy and Resources informed the house of the advice she allegedly received in February on electricity shortages. Did she receive any advice or warning in January that there was the potential for electricity shortages as a result of the industrial dispute in the Latrobe Valley?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I understand the opposition wishes to shift responsibility as much as possible from the system it put in place when it privatised the electricity industry in Victoria.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The house is doing itself a great disservice by such an attitude. The minister has been asked a question and she should be allowed to answer it.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — The reason the opposition wishes to shift attention from the system it put in place is that it did not see fit to ensure that the contracts required generators to provide electricity to Victorians. As has already been outlined in this place, the government was made aware last year when it came into government of the industrial situation, which goes back to May of the previous year under the previous government.

The government was well aware of the industrial situation from the time it first came into government. That of itself was not sufficient to cause difficulty in providing electricity capacity in Victoria. I have explained to the house on a number of occasions that it required a number of other events, including the weather.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to desist.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — It also included two further breakdowns that occurred in the first week of February.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — On a point of order, Mr President, this is the second day in a row that we have listened to the minister squirm her way around simple questions.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! On the point of order!

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — The question is specific: it deals with the events in January and asks the minister a specific question. I ask you, Mr President, to ask her to answer the question.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Members know the rules about answers to questions. The minister always has the right not to answer a question. If the minister seeks to answer a question it must relate to the question. The minister must be responsive to the question. In this case the minister has not responded to the question, which was whether she received certain advice on warnings in January this year. I invite her to address the question.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I have indicated to the house that the government was aware from the time it

became a government through until the first week of February of the industrial situation and the implications that had for capacity in the Victorian electricity system.

### Active Living

**Hon. G. D. ROMANES** (Melbourne) — Will the Minister for Sport and Recreation advise the house of recent initiatives that seek to promote active living activities for older people?

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I jointly launched Active Living — Getting Better with Age on 27 January with the Minister for Aged Care. The program includes a video and a booklet. The video, which is available free at selected video retailers, promotes an active lifestyle, better health, better fitness and better social networks. Being active takes many forms, such as walking, golf, swimming and mowing the lawn. Physical fitness can be achieved at any age. I invite all honourable members to find some time in their hectic schedules to walk to their local video stores and consider obtaining copies of *Active Living — Getting Better with Age*. Exercise for only 20 minutes a day, three days a week will help lose some of the excess pounds.

### Electricity: Yallourn dispute

**Hon. G. R. CRAIGE** (Central Highlands) — Yesterday the Minister for Industrial Relations stated that a number of ministers, including herself, received early notice on 2 February of the possible electricity shortage. How were ministers so advised and will the minister release that advice publicly?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — It is interesting to hear opposition members paraphrase what I said yesterday as opposed to what I actually said. Yesterday I indicated that I was advised on Wednesday, 2 February, of the tightening supply situation. The government was not advised of shortages of electricity supply until the following day. It is not an accurate representation of my statement to the house. The advice to the government was on Wednesday, 2 February.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — On a point of order, Mr President, we are in a difficult situation in not being able to quote *Hansard*. On page 5 of *Hansard* yesterday the minister said something along the lines of:

I started by indicating that there was early notice on Wednesday, 2 February, to a number of ministers, including myself, that the situation could possibly lead to a shortage of supply.

I suggest, Mr President, without offending standing orders, that that is an exact representation. Mr Craige asked the minister to indicate how that notice was given to her and whether she will make it public.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Perhaps I should clarify the position: members cannot refer to the current session in relation to, say, debates, but they may do so for this purpose.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — What I indicated to the house was that Nemmo — the National Electricity Market Management Company — advised the government; the advice was passed on to me that there was a situation where, if there was a further deterioration in the capacity of the system, there would be a difficulty. Those circumstances had not arisen at that time. That advice was received by telephone.

**Hon. Philip Davis** — On a point of order, Mr President, this question is important in terms of the advice received by the minister. We have specifically asked whether the minister will release the particulars of the advice, and I do not think she has addressed the question before the house.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister has addressed the nature of the advice. As she has just indicated, it was given to her by telephone. I do not uphold the point of order.

### **Small business: advisory council**

**Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS** (Jika Jika) — Will the Minister for Small Business inform the house what action the Bracks government is taking to fulfil its election commitment to establish a small business advisory council?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Small Business) — I am pleased to announce that the government is fulfilling a clear election commitment. It has placed advertisements in the daily newspapers and also the major regional newspapers to encourage a wide spread of applicants — not only from industry sectors but from throughout Victoria — to ensure the council is able to reflect the needs of small business right across the state. It has also placed advertisements in some of the ethnic newspapers to ensure the council is representative across the variety of ethnic communities, as well as businesses across industry sectors and women representing small business.

### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. R. M. HALLAM** (Western) — I remind the Minister for Energy and Resources that she has told the house that she was advised of the electricity shortage on the morning of Wednesday, 2 February; again on the evening of that day; and again on the morning of Thursday, 3 February. I make the point that the public were totally unaware of the impending crisis. I ask the minister: when did she advocate that a public warning be issued?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The government was advised on Thursday that there was an impending shortage of supply. Up until that point advice to the government was in relation to breakdowns in the system and the industrial situation. It was not of an impending shortage of supply. That advice did not occur until the Thursday, and at that point the government acted to advise Victorians as quickly as possible.

### **Better Pools**

**Hon. D. G. HADDEN** (Ballarat) — Will the Minister for Sport and Recreation outline to the house the government's commitment to the Better Pools program?

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — As the house may or may not be aware, the Better Pools program is funded from the Community Support Fund. The government has accessed an additional \$6 million over three years to bring the entire sum to \$26.7 million over four years.

**Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips** — On a point of order, Mr President, the standing orders on questions without notice provide that members should ask ministers questions only where the information is not readily available. The minister has written to all members of the chamber with this information about the program.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! It is a technical win. Strictly speaking, the honourable member is right, but the practice of the house over many years has led in a slightly different direction. So, I do not wish —

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — What! You do not uphold the standing orders?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! It is not in the standing orders. I do not reject the point of order. The honourable member has made his point.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** — The key to the point I am making — this should be very pertinent to the members who represent rural and regional Victoria, and this is why I am reinforcing it in the house — is that the government has introduced a stepped funding ratio, recognising that rural communities have difficulty raising the substantial amounts of money often required to match the government contribution. That means the ratio is 3 to 1 for the metropolitan region, 2 to 1 for the outer metropolitan region, and — this is the real key for members of the house — 1 to 1 for rural pools.

Regional Victoria has responded significantly. I remind honourable members that if they have constituents or local councils that are interested in participating, applications close on 31 March. I just wanted to remind honourable members of the program's significance to rural and regional Victoria.

**Minister for Energy and Resources: pecuniary interests**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — I ask the Minister for Energy and Resources: why did you fail to lodge a pecuniary interests return, and why are you the only minister to breach this key act of Parliament?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — That return was lodged some time ago.

**Environment: greenhouse effect**

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** (Geelong) — I ask the minister — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** — I direct my question to the Minister for Energy and Resources.

**Hon. K. M. Smith** — On a point of order, Mr President — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! You are too late; you should have raised it before.

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** — Will the minister inform the house how the Bracks government intends to address the issue of global warming and the greenhouse effect?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The government has made a clear commitment to showing leadership in relation to greenhouse issues in this state. Over coming months it intends to develop a comprehensive greenhouse

strategy for Victoria. The government will work closely with industry in the state on the development of that strategy. It will also work with the commonwealth to ensure we acquit our responsibility under the federal strategy at the same time.

However, the government is not waiting for strategies to be put in place; it is getting on with a number of initiatives. In the first instance, it has already committed an additional \$17.5 million to enhance the activities of Energy Efficiency Victoria in accordance with its election commitment to do so.

In addition the government will reform Energy Efficiency Victoria into the Sustainable Energy Authority and in so doing provide a clear charter regarding greenhouse gas reductions, which presently it does not have. The government will also be taking a clear leadership role in the activities of government in meeting its commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. Those initiatives are further illustration that the government is getting on with the job of implementing its election commitments as quickly as possible.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — By leave, I move:

That so much of the standing orders as require answers to questions on notice to be delivered verbally in the house be suspended for the sitting of the Council this day and that the answers enumerated be incorporated in *Hansard*.

The question numbers are 180, 189, 191, 194 and 195.

Motion agreed to.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Drug reform strategy

Message received from Assembly seeking concurrence with resolution.

Assembly's resolution:

The Legislative Assembly acquaint the Legislative Council that they have agreed to the following resolution:

That

- (a) there be referred to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee for inquiry, consideration and report all records (including minutes of evidence) of the previous committee, presently under the control of the Presiding

Officers, of the lapsed inquiry into the implementation of the government's drug reform strategy originally referred to that committee by order in council dated 25 June 1996, in order to determine which of those records (other than confidential submissions and minutes of evidence taken in private) of the previous committee that could be made available to Dr David Penington, AC, Chairman of Drug Policy Expert Committee for his personal use; and

- (b) the present committee is required to finally report to the Parliament by 14 March 2000; and
- (c) on the final report of the present committee being made to the Parliament, a copy of all records identified by the committee in the report as being records which could be made available, be made available for Dr Penington's personal use as soon as possible by the Clerk of the Parliaments and these records are not to be released or published by Dr Penington in any way or form.

with which they desire the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations)** — I move:

That the Council concur with the Assembly and agree to the said resolution.

I wish to advise the house that the resolution from the Assembly is as a result of a request from Dr David Penington, chairman of the Drug Expert Policy Committee, to have access to the records of the parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee.

In the 53rd Parliament the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee was undertaking an inquiry into the implementation of the government's drug reform strategy and had not completed this inquiry when the Parliament was dissolved in August last year. The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee was reappointed in this Parliament; however, the government has decided not to renew this reference of the parliamentary committee in light of the similar inquiry being undertaken by Dr Penington.

In December last year the Speaker received a request from Dr Penington to have access to the records of the lapsed inquiry of the parliamentary committee. Under the provisions of the standing orders of both houses and the Parliamentary Committees Act, those records are not available because the report was never tabled in the Parliament.

Naturally wishing to assist Dr Penington, the government sought ways to make those records available to him, in a manner that accords with the practices and rules of the house. It was found that this could be achieved only by the Parliament referring to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee an inquiry

to consider and report on the records of the previous committee — now under the control of the Presiding Officers — which should be made available to Dr Penington for his personal use. Tabling a report on this inquiry in the Parliament satisfies the requirements of the standing orders of both houses of Parliament and the Parliamentary Committees Act.

I acknowledge that the resolution is very unusual. However, I am sure that honourable members will understand the necessity to observe the practices and rules of the Parliament and will support the resolution.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Resolution agreed to.**

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### Answers

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra)** — Pursuant to standing order 71AA, I wish to raise matters concerning unanswered questions on notice with the ministers. I make it clear that, pursuant to that standing order, I have written to the relevant minister to advise him that, in the absence of receiving an answer to question 150, I will be pursuing the matter in the chamber. I also wish to indicate that some of my colleagues have informed me they are also pursuing unanswered questions on notice.

By way of brief preamble, under this paragraph of the standing orders, which on my motion was inserted in the standing orders when we were last in opposition and which we honoured strongly when in government, there is an expectation that ministers will answer questions on notice in their names or representing ministers in another place after 30 calendar days. In the past both sides of the house have endeavoured to do that, and in most cases that has been done with a minimum degree of fuss.

I raise the issue not out of anger but as an indication that the opposition will be keenly pursuing in particular answers to questions directed to ministers in this chamber as well as to ministers in another place. This is an important power of the Legislative Council, modelled on the power held by the Australian Senate. It has been used under the Cain and Kirner governments, the Kennett government and now the Bracks government.

**An honourable member interjected.**

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — The interjection from the President is orderly but I might say of my own volition that the Legislative Assembly does not have that power. Indeed, most lower houses have not subjected themselves to the requirement, but upper houses have. As a former leader of the government and manager of government business in this place I can say the amount of work involved in ensuring that questions are answered often drove me to distraction; it is extreme. But it is legitimate that there be answers to questions on notice. The alternative is questions sitting on the notice paper forever, completely devaluing the scrutiny process and frustrating constituents who have come to us seeking answers to questions.

Therefore I ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning why question 150 standing in my name has not yet been answered. I wrote to the minister on 22 February, indicating I was seeking an answer. Unless I am mistaken, no answer of any type has been provided. I do not think I am mistaken. The minister wrote to me on 15 February, saying the question had been redirected to the Minister for Planning. I wrote to him on 22 February and indicated the question was specifically sent to him in his capacity as Minister assisting the Minister for Planning, for which he was separately sworn in by the Governor and for which he is a separate minister. Minister Madden holds two distinct commissions and portfolios. While one may be lesser compared with the other, that is not known yet because the aim of the question is to find out what the minister does in his capacity as Minister assisting the Minister for Planning. I believe I am due an answer from the minister, and I seek a response from the minister.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister assisting the Minister for Planning) — I thank the honourable member for the reminder of that question. I have passed on the question directly to the senior minister for that portfolio in another place, and I shall inquire about the progress of the reply.

I am assisting the minister in planning to provide supplementary information until that reply arrives. The role is one of assistance only. Those roles relate to administrative duties, meeting with delegations, launches and other activities directed to me by the minister.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I am not sure whether the ministers understand that although they are acting in a sense as agents — in this case it has been pointed out that you have two capacities — there is an obligation to honour the requirement of the house, even though it

means badgering someone else. Otherwise it can lead to a debate in this house.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — I have asked identical questions of all ministers in this house who have the title of minister assisting. In the case of the Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover I received an answer from the Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover which did not refer the matter to the Minister for Workcover, but did provide me with an answer relating to that minister's responsibilities, for which I am thankful.

I asked an identical question of the Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development, and the Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development provided me with an answer that did not refer the matter to the Minister for State and Regional Development, for which I am thankful.

On the precedent of the behaviour of your ministerial colleagues in this chamber, I ask that you as an individual provide the answer to question 154. I welcome advice that on the next day of sitting you will provide me with a written answer to the question.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister assisting the Minister for Planning) — I guarantee that I will supply the Leader of the Opposition with an answer to that question on the next day of sitting.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** (Monash) — I also raise a matter regarding the adherence to standing order 71AA and the Minister for Small Business. I, too, placed a series of questions on the notice paper as is permitted by the rules operating in the house. The standing order makes it clear that such questions should be answered within 30 days. The questions I specifically refer to are questions 19, 66, 102 and 170. All were addressed to the minister and were in order. Further, I wrote to the minister on 23 February advising that I would be seeking the tabling of those answers in written form in the house on the next day of sitting, which was yesterday, given that the 30-day period as allowed under the standing orders had elapsed.

Despite that I did not receive written answers to those questions and, as I stated in my letter to the minister, I now seek to formally pursue the matter. I ask that the minister provide answers to the questions forthwith.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! You are seeking an explanation of why the answers have not been forthcoming.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — I seek an explanation from the minister as to why those questions have not been answered.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I have had my office triple-check questions on notice to ensure they have been answered. I am sorry those appear not to have been answered. I was of the belief after triple-checking that all my questions had been answered. I will ensure that Mr Katsambanis is given answers as soon as possible.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** (Monash) — On the same subject of answers to questions on notice, I address my next query to the Minister for Industrial Relations and refer her specifically to questions 17, 64, 100, 168. I do not wish to take up the time of the house for too long, suffice it to say that I also wrote on 23 February to the minister concerned advising her that I would be expecting — as is allowed for and in fact is mandated in the standing orders — answers to all questions that I raised with the minister, given that the 30-day period for answering the questions had expired. Despite that, the answers to the questions I just referred to, 17, 64, 100 and 168, were not provided. I seek an explanation from the minister.

**Hon. M. M. Gould** interjected.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — Minister, the questions were addressed to you, and under the standing orders you are obliged to provide answers. I seek an explanation from you, Minister, as to why those answers were not provided.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! By way of interjection the minister asked whether the questions were to her directly or representing another minister.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — Representing.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I take note of the comments made by the Honourable Peter Katsambanis. He would appreciate, as I know honourable members on the other side would appreciate, the difficulties of getting lower house colleagues who, as the Leader of the Opposition explained, do not have a similar rule to answer questions within the time frame. I will endeavour to do once again what I have done on a number of occasions, which is to hustle up my lower house colleagues to get a response to the Honourable Peter Katsambanis on the next day.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I would like to have a similar clarification from Mr Katsambanis as to whether those questions

were directed to me or directed towards another minister through me.

**Hon. P. A. Katsambanis** — They were mainly addressed to the Minister for Women's Affairs.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** — Thank you.

**Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER** (Silvan) — On the same matter and pursuant to standing order 71AA I have had five questions on the notice paper since 16 December last year that have remained unanswered. Four of those — 192, 193, 196 and 197 — were asked of the Minister for Energy and Resources in her capacity representing the Minister for Environment and Conservation. Question 205 was asked of the Minister for Sport and Recreation in his capacity representing the Minister for the Arts. I ask for an explanation from those ministers as to why those questions have remained unanswered.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank the honourable member for his question. I will check with my colleague in the other place and inquire as to the progress of the reply and ensure that he has a message by the next day of sitting.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** (Monash) — I refer again to the non-answering of questions on notice according to standing order 71AA. I address my query to the Minister for Energy and Resources. It concerns questions 18, 46, 65, 101 and 169. I appreciate that again they may well be questions relating to ministers in the other place. However, it should be placed on record that ministers of the Crown are sworn to uphold all the rules relating to parliamentary procedure, including the rules relating to this house and the standing orders. I call on the minister to explain yet again the reasons why those questions have not been answered.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I take it from the way the question was asked that those questions were asked of a minister I represent in this place. I will be very pleased to follow those matters up with the responsible minister and to table a response to the questions on notice that he has referred to.

**Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER** (Silvan) — I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation for his explanation but I did not receive an explanation from the Minister for Energy and Resources as to why four of those five questions have remained unanswered.



**The PRESIDENT** — Order! In future the house should just deal with one issue at a time. Did the minister hear the point? Does she wish to respond?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — Mr President, I am very mindful of rising to my feet only when I am given the call. I did indeed hear the honourable member's earlier reference to some questions asked of me in my capacity representing the minister in another place. I will endeavour to obtain a response to those questions as soon as possible.

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — Under standing order 71AA I seek an explanation from the Minister for Energy and Resources in her capacity representing the Minister for Environment and Conservation in another place. I too have questions that are unanswered — namely, 186 and 188. I wrote to the minister on 23 February seeking an explanation for the questions not being answered within 30 days. I seek an explanation.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — In answer to the question, I will follow up those matters with the Minister for Environment and Conservation and forward a reply to the honourable member.

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** (East Yarra) — I ask the Minister for Industrial Relations in her capacity representing the Premier about question 209, dealing with the entitlements of Independent members of Parliament. When will there be a response to that question, which exceeds 30 days?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! That is a matter you have written to the minister about?

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** — Yes.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Honourable David Davis referred to question on notice 209. I will refer that to the Premier and endeavour to forward a response to the honourable member as soon as possible.

## PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS (AMENDMENT) BILL

### *Second reading*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 provides a comprehensive and contemporary level of protection for the welfare of animals kept or used in a wide variety of circumstances.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 to:

1. Provide for the Governor in Council to make codes of conduct on the recommendation of the minister; and
2. Ensure the safety of dogs whilst they are being carried on motor vehicles and on trailers attached to motor vehicles.

The amendments reflect the government's objective of ensuring the welfare of animals is fully supported by legislative controls.

I shall provide some background to the bill and information about the two proposals included in the bill.

The first proposal relates to section 7(1) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, and simplifies the process for making a code of practice under this section.

The current provisions of the act require the minister to seek approval from the Governor in Council to prepare a code of practice. Following Governor in Council approval, the minister makes the code, seeks further approval from the Governor in Council for the code which is then tabled in the Parliament for 14 sitting days. Finally, the code is gazetted at which stage it takes effect.

The proposed amendment will allow the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister to make a code of practice. The code would not be required to be returned to the Governor in Council, but would proceed directly to the Parliament for the statutory 14-day exposure period. In this way an unnecessarily complicated procedure will be simplified, without removing the necessary checks and balances.

The second proposal relates to section 15A of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, which provides for the welfare and safety of dogs on moving trucks.

When administering this section of the act, there has been difficulty in interpreting the meaning of 'truck' and 'open tray'.

With respect to interpreting the term ‘truck’ there was no definition in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the definition of truck in the Road Safety Act 1986 was used. However, under the Road Safety Act 1986 the definition of truck was restrictive in that it only covered vehicles which exceeded 4.5 tonnes gross vehicle mass, thereby excluding utilities which were originally intended to be included in the legislation.

The problem with the definition of ‘open tray’ is that it can have more than one meaning, including a tray with or without sides and with or without a top, thus leaving the administration of this section of the act open to legal challenge. The intent of section 15A of the legislation was to protect dogs being conveyed on utility type vehicles.

To clarify the vehicles to which section 15A applies, it is proposed to remove reference to ‘truck with an open tray’ and to refer instead to a ‘motor vehicle with a tray’. Definitions of a motor vehicle and a tray are proposed with a ‘motor vehicle’ being defined as ‘having the same meaning as in the Road Safety Act 1986’ and a ‘tray’ being defined as a ‘part of a motor vehicle behind the cabin that is an open compartment and is principally constructed to carry a load’.

Through the use of the wording of ‘motor vehicle’ and ‘tray’ consequential changes will be made to subsections of 15A to ensure that this section of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 can be effectively enforced.

The bill proposes a transitional provision which preserves existing codes of practice and allows the Governor in Council to vary or revoke them as if they had been made by the Governor in Council.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) on motion of Hon. Bill Forwood.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Second reading*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 to bring the act into line with the

current parliamentary practice that primary legislation should not be amended by subordinate legislation.

Sections 5 and 10 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 allow the schedules of that act to be amended by a Governor in Council order. They therefore provide for the act to be amended by subordinate legislation. The bill before the house will rectify this anomaly by replacing the process in the existing act with a new process which provides for statutory lists which can be made, amended and repealed by a Governor in Council order. Concerns about the listing process have contributed to the current hold-up in listing threatened flora and fauna. This bill will help to ensure that the listing of threatened flora and fauna and potentially threatening processes will occur smoothly in the future.

The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 establishes a legal and administrative framework to promote the conservation of Victoria’s native flora and fauna. It provides a range of procedures that can be used for the conservation, management or control of flora and fauna and the management of potentially threatening processes.

A key part of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 is the establishment of three lists as schedules to the act. Schedule 1 includes taxa of flora and fauna that are not to be conserved. There is only one taxon listed in schedule 1 — human disease organisms. Schedule 2 contains a list of taxa or communities of flora and fauna that are threatened, while schedule 3 lists potentially threatening processes. Taxa, communities and processes can only be listed after the minister has considered a recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Committee and after the committee’s preliminary recommendation, final recommendation and the minister’s decision have been advertised. Public comments are invited at the preliminary recommendation stage.

Approximately 300 taxa and communities of flora and fauna have been assessed and listed in the schedule 2 of the act as threatened taxa or communities of flora or fauna. There have also been 22 processes which have been listed in schedule 3 as potentially threatening processes.

Currently, the schedules to the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 can be amended by an order made by the Governor in Council. Whilst this was clearly the intention of the legislation, it is now considered inappropriate for an act that has been enacted by Parliament to be amended in this way.

The bill includes a list of all taxa, communities and processes that have previously been through the recommendation process in the act and added to schedules 1, 2 and 3. This would mean that Parliament would ratify previous listings. Items that have been included in schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the act could then be included on the new lists without having to go through the recommendation process for a second time and, consequently, there would be no uncertainty about the contents of the new lists.

The bill provides for commencement to occur by proclamation. An order made by the Governor in Council which lists all items contained in schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the bill will therefore be able to be made on the same day that the bill commences. This will ensure that threatened flora and fauna will continue to be protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 throughout the transition from the current lists to the new lists.

I would like to assure the house that the bill will not diminish the status of items listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. The responsible minister will only be able to amend the lists after considering the recommendations of the scientific advisory committee. The recommendations of the scientific advisory committee and the decisions of the responsible minister will continue to be advertised in statewide and regional newspapers and in the Victorian *Government Gazette*. An order made by the Governor in Council which makes, amends or repeals any taxon, community or process will continue to be published in the Victorian *Government Gazette*.

The bill also amends the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 to ensure that the new lists will be made freely available to the public at Department of Natural Resources and Environment offices in Melbourne and in regional centres. The lists will also be made available on the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's Internet site.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) on motion of Hon. Bill Forwood.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## RENEWABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY VICTORIA (AMENDMENT) BILL

### *Second reading*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill provides for the establishment of a Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria (SEAV) through amendment of the Renewable Energy Authority of Victoria Act 1990. This is an important step in implementing the government's commitment to reform Energy Efficiency Victoria and establish a Sustainable Energy Authority in pursuit of a comprehensive strategy for greenhouse gas reductions and the development of renewable energy systems.

The role of SEAV is captured in the authority's new objective, which is to 'facilitate energy efficiency and the development and use of renewable energy to achieve environmental and economic benefits for the Victorian economy and contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions'.

Internationally and within Australia, the need for effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has become more and more apparent over the last 15 years. Underpinning this is the growing recognition in the scientific community that the enhanced greenhouse effect, particularly through the emission of carbon dioxide from the combustion of fossil fuels, will have a discernible impact on our climate.

Community interest in and concern regarding the greenhouse effect is also at an all-time high, with recent surveys indicating that 75 per cent of Victorians want to find out more on how to help the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Funding of \$17.5 million over four years has now been provided to fund the new measures to be implemented by SEAV. This is in addition to the existing budget allocation for Energy Efficiency Victoria of approximately \$5 million per annum.

The success of existing programs which are being undertaken by organisations, particularly Energy Efficiency Victoria, is acknowledged and will underpin the work of the Sustainable Energy Authority. For example, the Energy Smart Business program and the Greenpower Accreditation and Facilitation program have both achieved important results in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

However, with greater recognition of the threat of global warming, it is imperative that government makes a greater commitment to greenhouse gas reductions through energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The amendments to the Renewable Energy Authority Victoria Act enable us to do this by clearly specifying the greenhouse gas reduction objectives of the Sustainable Energy Authority, signalling to the community and industry that the government's intention is to lead Victorians towards a sustainable energy future.

It is estimated that current energy efficiency and renewable energy programs of EEV will assist industry and the community to achieve reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 2.6 million tonnes over the next 10 years, and the additional savings from the new SEAV activities will build on and add significantly to these levels.

In addition to the environmental benefits generated, the establishment of SEAV and greater commitment to sustainable energy will clearly generate economic benefits for Victoria.

The sustainable energy industry makes a significant economic contribution, and this contribution has the potential to grow strongly. For example, a study undertaken by the New South Wales Sustainable Energy Development Authority in 1999 showed that since 1996 industry sales in the sustainable energy industry in New South Wales had grown by more than 20 per cent per annum, creating more than 1000 new jobs.

The growth rate in the sustainable energy industry was also found to be greater than in other significant industry sectors such as tourism, information technology and manufacturing.

The development of renewable energy is also expected to provide employment opportunities in regional Victoria. It is estimated that up to 75 per cent of jobs created in developing Victoria's regional renewable energy resources would be local jobs.

I will now turn to the particulars of the bill.

The amendments to the REAV Act include those changes necessary to the name, objectives and functions of the authority to reflect its enhanced roles and responsibilities.

The important new objective of the Sustainable Energy Authority will be to facilitate energy efficiency and the development and use of renewable energy to achieve

environmental and economic benefits for the Victorian community and contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

This bill also provides for some overdue updating of the authority's financial delegations to enable it to operate more flexibly. In particular: the amount of expenditure before ministerial approval is required is increased from \$100 000 to \$250 000, in line with equivalent departmental approvals; and the authority will be empowered to lend or grant money to a person or body up to \$25 000 in one year without consent of the minister, to facilitate the administration of grants programs.

In conclusion, the establishment of SEAV, as proposed in this bill, will make a significant contribution to the Victorian economy and Victoria's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by building on current programs and enhancing our capacity to facilitate the use of energy efficiency and the development and use of renewable energy.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) on motion of Hon. P. R. Hall.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## **CORPORATIONS (VICTORIA) (AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Second reading*

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Corporations (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill before the house arises from the government's commitment to its obligations under the corporations agreement that is to ensure a consistent scheme for the regulation of corporations and securities throughout Australia.

On 20 October 1999 the commonwealth Parliament passed the Corporate Law Economic Reform Program Act 1999 (known as the CLERP act). The CLERP act implements major reforms to the fundraising, takeovers, directors' duties and accounting standards provisions of the Corporations Law. The act will commence operation on 13 March 2000.

The provisions of the CLERP act will apply in Victoria by virtue of section 7 of the Corporations (Victoria) Act 1990 (the Victorian act). Section 7 provides that the

Corporations Law set out in section 82 of the Corporations Act 1989 (commonwealth), as in force for the time being, applies as a law of Victoria.

Section 7 of the Victorian act brings about the result that any amendment to the corporations act by the commonwealth Parliament (like the CLERP act) will operate to amend the Corporations Law as it applies as a law of Victoria without any action on the part of the Victorian Parliament being required.

One of the reforms resulting from the CLERP act will be the reconstitution of the Corporations and Securities Panel so that it becomes the sole forum for the resolution of takeover disputes during the takeover bid period.

The CLERP act will add sections 659B and 659C to the Corporations Law. They will operate to ensure that the Corporations and Securities Panel is the main forum for resolving disputes about a takeover bid until the bid period has ended.

However, the object of these provisions is contrary to the effect of section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975 (Victoria) which establishes the power and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

When the CLERP act commences operation on 13 March 2000, section 7 of the Corporations (Victoria) Act will purport to render sections 659B and 659C part of the Corporations Law of Victoria from that date and hence alter or vary section 85 of the Victorian constitution. However, section 85(5) of the Victorian constitution will operate to deny sections 659B and 659C any such operation.

The bill operates to validate sections 659B and 659C by including a provision in the Corporations (Victoria) Act which specifically refers to them and which is enacted according to the requirements of subsection (5) of section 85 of the Victorian constitution.

If the relevant sections are not effective as part of the Corporations Law of Victoria, the role of the Corporations and Securities Panel will be compromised with the prospect of significantly increased litigation during the takeover bid period. This will also impact upon the national scheme and have a negative effect on the future regulation of corporations and securities.

### **Section 85 statement**

Clause 3 of the bill inserts new sections 56A and 56B into the Corporations (Victoria) Act 1990. The proposed new section 56B provides that it is the

intention of section 56A to alter or vary section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975.

I therefore make the following statement under section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975 of the reasons for altering or varying that section.

Subsection (1) of the proposed new section 56A provides that proceedings in relation to takeover bids or proposed takeover bids except as otherwise provided by section 659B of the Corporations Law of Victoria may not be commenced in court before the end of the bid period.

Subsection (2) of proposed new section 56A provides that the powers of a court under the Corporations Law of Victoria in relation to conduct that contravenes that law are limited as provided by section 659C of that law.

Sections 659B and 659C operate to restrict the role and powers of the Supreme Court of Victoria in relation to takeover disputes during the takeover period.

There are several reasons for the variation to the application of section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975. Firstly, the variation gives effective operation in Victoria to sections 659B and 659C which will become part of the Corporations Law of Victoria on 13 March 2000, and will thus help to minimise the use of litigation to delay or disrupt takeovers. Secondly, it complies with our obligations under the corporations agreement to ensure uniformity in the application of the Corporations Law in all states and territories. And finally, the variation will allow this government to deliver an effective scheme for the regulation of corporations and securities to all Victorians.

This bill is the product of consultation with the commonwealth and the Solicitor-General for Victoria.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) on motion of Hon. P. R. Hall.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## **PROSTITUTION CONTROL (PLANNING) BILL**

*Second reading*

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Prostitution Control (Planning) Bill will ensure a legislative framework that limits the impact of prostitution on the community and environment. In particular, the bill will close a loophole that permits brothels to increase their room numbers without consideration of important limitations on the placement and expansion of brothels.

This loophole came to light following the Supreme Court's interpretation of the effect of the Prostitution Control Act 1994 on the amendment of brothel permits. Part 4 of the Prostitution Control Act 1994 imposes limits on brothel size and location, including a six-room limit on the number of rooms in a brothel used for prostitution. The Supreme Court's decision has, however, made it clear that these limits do not apply to decisions to amend brothel permits granted before part 4 commenced on 14 June 1995.

The effect of the decision is that brothels operating under permits granted before 14 June 1995 could continue to expand without reference to the Prostitution Control Act 1994 and, potentially, well beyond the six-room limit. Brothel operators may presently be preparing to take advantage of the effect of the decision to increase in size. Such growth is clearly at odds with the desirable containment of prostitution.

Further, the government has received legal advice that the Prostitution Control Act 1994 does not constrain the amendment of permits granted after part 4 of the act came into force. This means that a brothel originally limited by its permit to six or fewer rooms could, by obtaining an amendment to its permit, actually expand well beyond the six-room limit. Again, this is clearly undesirable.

The bill ensures that any decision to amend a brothel permit is made with regard to the limits imposed on brothel size and placement by the Prostitution Control Act 1994.

Transitional provisions in the bill ensure that any applications presently before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to amend brothel permits are decided in accordance with the limitations in the Prostitution Control Act 1994.

The bill is consistent with, and advances, the policy objectives of the Prostitution Control Act 1994, to reduce the impact of prostitution and brothels on the community and environment.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) on motion of Hon. P. R. Hall.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## **HIRE-PURCHASE (AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Second reading*

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill before the house will extend the operation of sections 24 and 25 of the Hire-Purchase Act 1959 until 30 June 2003.

Section 24 of the act allows courts to vary or cancel hire-purchase agreements for farm machinery that are considered to be harsh and unconscionable.

Section 25 of the act allows courts to grant a 12-month moratorium on the repossession of farm machinery, to allow farmers extra time to remedy breaches of hire-purchase agreements.

Most of the act was repealed by the Hire-Purchase (Further Amendment) Act 1997. However, as a saving for farmers, that act retained the application of sections 24 and 25 to hire-purchase agreements for farm machinery entered into within two years of the commencement of part 2 of that act. This period expires on 1 April 2000.

At that time, the saving provisions were considered necessary to protect farmers because of the erratic nature of farming income.

The retention was expressed to be for only two years to allow time to conduct a review of appropriate statutory protection regarding farming finance generally.

However, in the meantime the commonwealth inserted section 51AC into the Trade Practices Act 1974, which came into operation on 1 July 1998.

Section 51AC prohibits unconscionable conduct in business transactions and would encompass credit dealings between farmers and financiers regarding farm machinery. It sets out wide criteria for assessing unconscionability and the courts have wide powers to compensate small traders, such as farmers, for a breach of the provision.

The extension will allow time for the testing in the courts of section 51AC so as to enable an assessment of whether it, rather than sections 24 and 25 of the Hire-Purchase Act or any other proposal, provides

better protection for farmers in their business dealings with financiers.

It is likely to take several years for section 51AC to be sufficiently tested in the courts and for a clear picture to emerge of its effectiveness.

In the meantime, the government will not allow the protective provisions of the Hire-Purchase Act to lapse without there being an adequate alternative for farmers.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) on motion of Hon. P. R. Hall.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

### Address-in-reply

**Debate resumed from 29 February; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) for adoption of address-in-reply.**

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Gippsland) — I welcome the opportunity to respond to the address given by His Excellency the Governor, the Honourable Sir James Gobbo, at the opening of the first session of the 54th Parliament delivered to members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly on 3 November last year. I pay tribute to His Excellency, Sir James, and Lady Gobbo for their continued fine work for the people of Victoria. It is pleasing to see that Sir James Gobbo and his wife undertake many country visits, as did their predecessors. They are always welcome in country Victoria.

The address-in-reply debate is always interesting because it sets out the general direction of the government for the 54th Parliament. One of the advantages of speaking at this late stage of the debate is that it gives me an opportunity to review the performance of the government and to assess the commitments and promises it has made to the people of Victoria. I have never known an address-in-reply debate to extend for such a long period, but there has been the Christmas break and we are now into the fifth month of the new government. As I said, this debate gives me an opportunity to assess whether some of the commitments made through the vehicle of the address-in-reply by His Excellency have been met by the new government

I take the opportunity of reviewing the government's performance in some of my shadow portfolios, in

particular sport and recreation and youth affairs. I shall comment on some of the issues that will affect Gippsland Province in the near future.

As disappointed as honourable members were on this side of the house with the election results, we have accepted the outcome and now intend to fill our role on the opposition benches with diligence, commitment and, where appropriate, vigour. Our role in opposition is twofold — firstly, to ensure that the new government delivers on its commitments in its election policies, and secondly, to ensure that the government governs Victoria in a responsible and proactive manner that promotes fairness and justice and, importantly, creates a climate of confidence and economic development in the state. I concede that some people have said the previous government did not get full marks for fairness, equity and justice. That is not a concession on my behalf, but some would argue it. However, no-one could mount a valid argument against the previous government for the efforts it put into creating a climate of confidence in the state that led to a record level of investment and economic activity.

In the newspaper this morning the Commonwealth Grants Commission said Victoria was the highest taxing state when the Kennett government first came to office but that it is now well below the national average. As a result of the economic activity and boom in Victoria there will be a reduction in the grants made available to the state. While that may not please us greatly it is an indication that the past seven and a half years of the Kennett government were excellent ones and added to the positive financial position of the state. Victorians have much to thank the Kennett government for, and we hope now the new Labor government can continue with the good work the Kennett government did in providing incentive and confidence to ensure that that activity within the state continues. I do not wish to dwell on the past today and go over the record of the Kennett government, but importantly Victorians are looking to the future.

I shall comment on the future and examine some of the promises and commitments given by the new government in its platform policies prior to the election. I shall also examine some of the issues that will impact upon my province.

Firstly, I turn to the area of sport and recreation. I am pleased that the minister is in the chamber to hear my comments. The sport and recreation portfolio normally does not generate controversy because both sides of politics share the same aims, such as increasing participation, encouraging more women to be involved in sport and recreation activities, as well as those with

disabilities, and improving facilities. It is not always a controversial area because sports policy is more often than not about who has the best ideas.

Both parties put forward good ideas prior to the election. Many of the policies put forward by the Labor Party prior to the election were policies that we on the opposition benches have no difficulty supporting. Most of them are bipartisan policies, but our job in opposition is to ensure that the people of Victoria have those promises delivered. My role as shadow minister is to keep the government honest and to ensure those commitments are delivered.

I shall refer to the Labor Party policy prior to the last election called 'Building Victoria's sporting life' and examine some aspects of its promises that should have been delivered within this time frame of four and a half months in government. As yet there does not appear to be much activity.

I shall talk about those areas where I believe the government should have at least made some impact during its early months in government. The first, Waverley Park, has already been the subject of extensive debate in this chamber. All honourable members know that a strong plank in the sport and recreation policy of the Labor Party was the retention of Waverley as an Australian Football League (AFL) venue. The policy states:

Labor will use the powers available to state government to help keep AFL Park Waverley as an AFL venue and we will work with local government, football clubs and business to enhance the site as a community sporting and recreational precinct.

The opposition has no difficulty supporting that concept. We would like to see Waverley kept as an AFL venue and hope the Labor government keeps its promise. The policy also states:

Preliminary legal advice indicates that the state government has substantial powers to save Waverley Park from closure. These include the power to rezone the land as a site of significance to the community, and powers under the MCG trust and Docklands Authority acts to limit the number of games at these venues to enable more fixtures to be scheduled at Waverley.

That contradicts the Premier's claim that the matter is one for the AFL and that the state government has no role to play.

The policy repeatedly emphasised that the Labor Party would demand that Waverley Park be kept as an AFL venue. That is the first broken promise in sport and recreation that I put on the record today.

The AFL recently announced that the last fixture match to be played at Waverley Park would be the Ansett Cup semifinal between Melbourne and Essendon held last Saturday week. The AFL said there would be no more matches. The future of Waverley Park remains an unresolved issue. I note this morning's newspapers report the AFL intends to proceed to sell that facility. As I said, that is the Labor government's first broken promise in the sport and recreation area. The retention of Waverley Park as an AFL venue was a major plank of the Labor Party's policy and it has certainly failed to keep that commitment.

I move to some other areas of the sports policy which I have not mentioned before in debate in this house. Under the heading 'New rights for sports spectators and players' the policy document states:

Labor will stand up for the rights of spectators and players to sport and recreation through:

legislating to outlaw and control ticket scalping ... and  
establishing Sports Fans of Victoria to act as a unified voice for the interests of the sports fan.

I am happy to be corrected at any time, but I cannot recall any legislation coming through Parliament in the past four and a half months to outlaw and control ticket scalping. Also, I have not heard of the establishment of an organisation called Sports Fans of Victoria to act as a unified voice for the interests of sports fans.

They are not by any means major initiatives. One would think that if the government were serious about implementing policy quickly — indeed, the Minister for Energy and Resources said in response to the last question without notice asked today that the government was keen to move quickly to fulfil commitments made in its election policy platform — it would be easy to put in place those two very modest initiatives, yet we have heard no mention of either of them.

Under the title 'Spectator behaviour' the policy document states:

Labor will increase fines for ground invasions and severe misbehaviour at sporting events.

Once again, no legislation has passed through the house on that matter. I am not sure whether it requires legislation, but I would have thought there would have to be some formal statutory process to enable the increasing of fines for ground invasions. It is not as though there has not been a need for such action. Indeed, at one of the one-day fixtures during the cricket board's summer season a match was terribly interrupted at the MCG by fans throwing missiles onto the ground



and causing a 15 or 20-minute disruption of play. One would have thought that would have provided the perfect vehicle for the government to launch an initiative as described in this policy statement, but again nothing has been mentioned about it, even though there has been ample time to do something.

I turn now to another part of the Labor government's policy entitled 'A national footy tipping competition'. I was always a bit bemused by that because footy tipping competitions have always been around, some organised and some ad hoc. I know it is also possible to bet on the football through one of the professional betting organisations in Victoria. However, the policy states we will have a new form of gambling:

Labor will help to provide a secure funding base for our cash-strapped sports sector by establishing a national footy tipping competition.

Labor believes that in any form of sport betting the owners of the product and the members of the community should be the major beneficiaries. This is not happening at present.

It goes on to say:

Labor's national competition will provide a weekly prize of \$300 for tipping eight winners and between \$20 and \$30 for tipping seven winners, all for a \$2 entry fee.

Importantly, it talks about the revenue that will be raised through the initiative:

The first 70 per cent of the projected revenue will be allocated to health portfolio expenditure. The profile of this expenditure will be \$14.58 million over three years from 2000-01 to 2002-03.

The residual of the projected income will be allocated to sports medicine ... and women in local sport ...

For sports medicine, this additional expenditure will be \$4.6 million in total over three years and women in local sport will total \$1.662 million.

The opposition has no problems with the new Labor government investing money in sports medicine, health and women-in-sport programs. However, the Labor Party made a promise that moneys would be available — \$4.6 million for sports medicine and \$1.662 million for women in local sports participation — and because of the failure of the government to put in place the national footy tipping competition, those initiatives will not take place. That is another broken promise in sport.

I think the government has even tried but failed to get the national footy tipping competition up this season. We wonder what will happen in the future. Already the projects for some of those sports initiatives cannot be

delivered. That represents the fourth broken commitment in sports policy.

The fifth point I mention is sport in schools. Having been involved in sport and also as a schoolteacher in the past, sport in schools is an initiative that I thoroughly support. The Labor Party's policy document states:

Labor will place a greater emphasis on sporting activity within the school curriculum. We will lift the amount of time spent by all schoolchildren in organised sport and recreation to those recommended in the Moneghetti report of 1993.

Labor will also increase teaching resources so that teachers will be able to improve their physical education teaching skills.

That is a fine initiative, but there has been no movement in that regard either. No direction has been given to schools to provide in their curriculums more opportunities for students to participate in sport. As I said earlier on another point, I am happy to be corrected on these matters, but certainly all the schools with which I deal daily have never received any such direction. That is the fifth broken commitment in sports policy.

Another area of the policy is titled 'A lawn bowls centre in Melbourne's east'. The minister is aware that I have had some interest in this issue before, having raised the matter in an adjournment debate prior to the Christmas recess. The Labor Party's policy states:

Labor will allocate \$1 million for the establishment of an international lawn bowls centre in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

We have heard nothing about this initiative either. I am happy to let the minister inform me of any progress on the matter, but nothing has happened since I raised the matter on the adjournment and he said he was happy to meet with the group of people on whose behalf I had raised it in the house. With Melbourne's Commonwealth Games looming I would think the proper planning processes would have to be put in place quickly if the centre is to be established before the Commonwealth Games.

I have already spoken about the world-class sports medicine facility in Melbourne. Because of the government's failure to establish the national footy tipping competition it seems we will not have the promised facility.

Another two policy commitments relate to swimmers. The first is guaranteed support for surf lifesaving. Under the heading 'Support for lifesaving' the document states:

High-quality beach safety has been the proud boast of generations of Victorian lifesavers. A Labor government would be keen to support their ongoing work and to specifically extend their ability to operate a longer lifesaving season.

Labor will extend the surf lifesaving season by an additional four weeks in recognition that many Victorians continue to need patrolled beaches in February each year.

That is also an admirable objective, particularly considering we have just gone through our hottest February on record and many people have used the beaches during that time. Did the government extend the surf lifesaving season? Were extra funds provided by the government to extend the excellent work done by the lifesaving clubs around the coast? Not one cent has been allocated to Victorian surf lifesavers, local councils or clubs to assist them in extending the season.

Four and a half months is adequate time to put those initiatives in place. We are not talking about huge sums of money; those commitments should have been delivered by this summer, and the new Labor government has failed to do that.

The same can be said of its promised family-friendly beaches. Once again I put the minister on notice by asking a question on notice in late November, prior to the start of December and the summer season. The Labor policy states:

Labor will identify, in conjunction with local councils and lifesaving clubs, 20 family-friendly beaches ensuring they are given every support to meet the standards required for greater safety and convenience.

I am happy to support that, but if something is promised it must be delivered or it must be judged as a failure. Absolutely no action has been taken on that initiative this summer, and once again I claim the government has had plenty of time to put in place at least the processes to work towards identifying and establishing what it has called family-friendly beaches. At the very least the minister should be able to release the guidelines for the establishment of those beaches. I would think there would be keen competition by local governments around Victoria on this issue. Local governments will want their bays, inlets and ocean-facing beaches on the Victorian coastline to be classified as family-friendly beaches, thereby receiving the extra assistance promised to make them family-friendly beaches.

I ask the minister what will be the processes to establish and identify the 20 family-friendly beaches. As I mentioned, there will be keen competition. Local governments will want to know about the process so they can put in early bids and ensure their place in the

consultation process that determines which of Victoria's many beaches will be identified as being family friendly.

I shall leave the sports policy area at that point. I could have gone through every aspect of that portfolio but have chosen not to. To be fair to the government, many of its policies will require time to be implemented. One would not expect them all to be achieved within four and a half months, but some of the commitments I have mentioned have failed already — for example, AFL park, the extension of the lifesaving season and the identification of family-friendly beaches. Labor has missed its deadline. AFL park has missed its deadline completely. It would be a fair judgment that the government should have acted on other commitments by now but has not. Judgment on many other aspects of policy will be reserved for the years to come.

The other area of my shadow portfolio is youth affairs. I welcome the announcement by the Minister for Youth Affairs just last week regarding the establishment of the Office of Youth Affairs. Although I was unable to attend the launch at Parliament House of the new Office of Youth Affairs, I appreciate that an invitation was extended to me. In the near future it might be appropriate for the minister to provide me with a briefing on the operations of the Office of Youth Affairs. In the past he kindly provided me with a briefing on the sport and recreation portfolio, but I have not pushed the issue of youth affairs, giving him time to get the office in order. Now that it is in order, I would appreciate a briefing on the operations of the youth affairs portfolio, perhaps over the next few weeks while Parliament is sitting.

I will be watching keenly over the next 12 months how the government implements what it terms the Youth Pledge — a policy the Labor government presented in the area of youth affairs. Providing a better VCE program for young people, more apprenticeships and traineeships, a youth employment line, school-to-work plans and cheaper public transport for tertiary students, among others, were commitments given in Labor's youth policy.

I will not dwell on those areas but must make a quick comment regarding a better VCE. I was pleased to read in Labor's policy that the government is to extend the vocational education and training in schools program, otherwise known as the VET program. That is recognition of the success of that program. That immensely successful program, introduced under the Kennett government, provides opportunities for young people completing their VCE to take part in and complete VET courses, giving them accreditation

towards TAFE courses beyond the secondary school level.

According to the last figures I saw, the Gippsland region had the highest participation rate in VET programs of any in the state. In the Gippsland region 21 per cent of year 11 students and 12 per cent of year 12 students were participating in VET programs. The great thing about those programs is the outcomes. Unemployment has been the subject of some discussion in the house today. The last study completed 12 months ago showed that, of students who participated in VET programs, only 6 per cent were unemployed statewide. The figures are similar in Gippsland. The unemployment figure of students who have participated in VET programs is a mere 4 per cent. If more students can be encouraged to participate in VET programs where appropriate, the outcomes will speak for themselves. I welcome that initiative. I will be watching closely to see to what level the government can honour its commitment to extend VET programs in schools. I am happy to support such an initiative at any time.

The government should have acted on its commitment to cheaper public transport for tertiary students. When tertiary students returned to classes last week, was there any reduction in the cost of concession cards? Absolutely none. If that is a central component of the youth policy of the Labor government, that should have been put in place in the four and a half months in which Labor has been in government. That is a failure; the opposition will reserve judgment on other commitments.

I have mentioned just some of the areas that fall within my shadow portfolios. The Governor's speech outlined some of the government's plans for the next four years. I have looked at the speech in a little more detail in the areas of particular interest to me, and some of the early signs are not all that encouraging.

I shall now comment on some of the big-ticket issues in my electorate of Gippsland Province, commitments about which representatives of the area and the state government need to be careful to honour. Commitments were given in the Governor's speech to assisting people living in rural and regional Victoria. The Gippsland region is probably no different to most other regions around Australia; it is very reliant on its natural resources and, in particular, best-practice use of natural resources. The Gippsland region above any other has a broad range of natural resources, of which brown coal is probably the most famous. That has been used for the best part of a century in generating electricity to meet the state's needs. Gippsland is also blessed with a wealth of timber resources, which for

100 years has provided significant employment in the area. Gippsland has a high agricultural output. Agriculture remains one of the key industries if not the key industry in the Gippsland area. Natural gas is another natural resource that has assisted greatly with the development not only of Gippsland but also Victoria as a whole. All honourable members would know that Victoria's major natural gas resource is the offshore drilling in Bass Strait off the Gippsland coast.

Water is probably our most precious natural resource, not only for Gippsland but for Australia as a whole. Having asked what issue is most frequently raised with me as a member of Parliament in my electorate, people are often surprised when I reply that it is issues associated with water — not education or health — whether it be a lack of water because of drought, excess water because of floods, irrigation water, catchment and management works, ground water, sea water or lakes. That is why I say water is our most precious resource. Gippsland would be very rich in that resource were it not for decisions taken many years ago to create significant diversions of water from the Gippsland region.

Not many Melburnians recognise that most of the water they drink and use is taken from the Thomson catchment and would normally flow from the Thomson River and its tributaries into the Gippsland Lakes. Therefore a significant amount of water that would flow into Gippsland has been harvested and redirected in the case of the Thomson to Melbourne. In East Gippsland, 75 per cent of the Snowy River water is directed to New South Wales. The vast majority of that catchment would flow through East Gippsland and down the Snowy River had it not been for man-made interference in harvesting that water.

Most would recognise the benefits for New South Wales, and in terms of irrigation it is an important benefit; nevertheless that water has been redirected away from the Gippsland area. Water remains a precious resource and it will be one of the big ticket items not only for the present government but for future governments who for many years will have to deal carefully with the problem.

In terms of using natural resources, under the period of the Kennett government significant developments occurred in Gippsland. To pick a couple of examples, in the dairy industry Bonlac opened a new \$100 million dairy processing operation in Darnum, West Gippsland, and Murray-Goulburn, another major processor, undertook considerable extensions to operations in Leongatha and Maffra. National Foods also established

a processing plant in Morwell. All that occurred during the period of the Kennett government.

At least two new timber mills were established during that same period, one at Morwell and another at Yarram. Considerable investment took place in existing timber mills across the Gippsland region and there was also significant investment of about \$330 million in the Maryvale mill between Traralgon and Morwell.

Natural gas, another natural resource, is the source of another big development currently taking place — the construction of the eastern gas pipeline that will link Longford to Sydney. Construction is well under way and will be completed within 12 months. It will provide a significant economic boost to the people of East Gippsland. While most of Victoria enjoys natural gas reticulation, people in East Gippsland do not. Not one town in East Gippsland has natural gas reticulation, but with the construction of the eastern gas pipeline I am sure towns such as Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Orbost and perhaps a few other towns such as Cann River will come on line as well and share the benefits of reticulated natural gas. That will be a positive benefit to the people of Gippsland.

As I said, all that happened under the Kennett government. The big question is: what will happen under the Labor government? People are wary. They do not know what is in store for them. Certainly in four and a half months no major developments of natural resources have occurred, but I will reserve judgment for one or two years time and see the record of the new government.

I shall also comment on issues involving natural resources that will potentially impact on my electorate. On those sorts of issues I sound a warning. The government must be very careful about them because each one requires government involvement and decision making. It is important to get the balance right between the environmental needs of the region and the need for economic activity and employment.

I will talk briefly about the Snowy River water allocation, the Environment Conservation Council's current inquiry and the regional forest agreement process which it is hoped will be signed off shortly. I place on record that I welcome the Labor government's commitment, as I welcomed the commitment of the previous coalition government, to the achievement of a return of 28 per cent of the original flow back to the Snowy River. That means a volume of something like 320 gegalitres of additional releases down the Snowy River. I support that, and during the public inquiry conducted by Robert Webster for both the New South

Wales and Victorian governments I was pleased to make a personal submission supporting a return of those volumes of water down the Snowy River.

In my submission I argued that the extra water required for environmental flows down the Snowy could be achieved by efficiency savings in the distribution of irrigation waters in both the New South Wales and Victorian systems. Indeed, the National Party's position is that it is happy to support the required additional environmental flow of 320 gegalitres so long as there is no reduction in the water rights currently available to irrigators in Victoria. The National Party believes that water can be made up through efficiency savings and there is no need for anybody to lose.

The previous Victorian government had already identified that it could achieve Victoria's share of those savings. It is recognised that Victoria uses 25 per cent of the irrigation water and New South Wales 75 per cent from the Snowy catchment. Therefore, if we are talking 320 gegalitres, New South Wales has to find 75 per cent of the required water and Victoria 25 per cent or 80 gegalitres. The coalition government recognised that that could be found. I am pleased that the current Labor government is also seeking to ensure that the figures are correct and an 80-gegalitre saving can be achieved in the Victorian distribution system.

The problem will be for New South Wales to find its 75 per cent or 240-gegalitre share of the water required. I understand the New South Wales government is looking into the matter and has produced a report. I am told it was compiled by somebody called Brewster. I am told also that the Brewster report is available and being shared by the energy resources ministers in both states and that the report identifies savings of only 140 gegalitres. If those reports are accurate, New South Wales is still well short of its component.

Through the vehicle of this debate I put on notice to the minister my request that she provide an update on the discussions between Victoria and New South Wales. We all share the same objective about improving the environmental flows down the Snowy.

Finally, the National Party shares the objective of getting the extra 320 gegalitres down the Snowy River. It believes governments in both New South Wales and Victoria are in a position to sign off on at least half that amount now. That is why the National Party recently called for the immediate commitment to release an extra 15 per cent, which is roughly 160 gegalitres, down the Snowy and do further work to find the extra water required. As I say, we share common objectives on that issue and it remains a challenge for the new Victorian

government to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of both the people of Gippsland and the irrigators in northern Victoria and New South Wales. That is the challenge the present government took up by virtue of the commitments it made before the election. Honourable members on this side will therefore watch the issue closely to see how it is delivered.

The second natural resource issue I comment on is the inquiry currently being conducted by the Environment Conservation Council (ECC) entitled 'Marine Coastal and Estuarine Investigation'. The council has made a draft report available for public comment. The inquiry has been going on for the best part of nine years. It was initiated under former Premier Kirner, so it started under a Labor government, has gone for the seven and a half years of the coalition government, and is continuing under a Labor government. The ECC is to submit a final report to the Labor government by 30 June.

If the draft recommendations become the final recommendations significant areas of marine national parks will be created around Victoria's coastline. Five marine national parks are proposed along the coast of my electorate alone. Some would argue that because the total of 12 marine national parks represents only 6 per cent of Victoria's coastline, that is only a small area. However, they are the prime areas for marine habitat. That is why the ECC views them as so important and why the commercial fishers, recreational fishers and individuals in my electorate also regard them as important. The creation of marine national parks will mean one will not be able to fish either commercially or recreationally in those areas.

The report identifies some but not all the effects that will have. It makes an estimate of the loss in commercial catch but makes no estimate of the loss in recreational catch or flow-on recreational activity within the region. It will reduce the resource in the eastern section of the abalone industry by almost 10 per cent, which it will not be able to find anywhere else — that represents several million dollars worth of raw product. If one takes into account the processing and handling costs once the product is beached, one recognises that the multiplier effect is far more significant.

During the summer at a public meeting in Mallacoota it was estimated that if the local fishery had to reduce its processing amount by 10 per cent it would make its operation in Mallacoota marginal. Mallacoota is a small town. The major employer is the abalone co-op which employs 30 or 40 people. If that processing has to be

relocated to another processor, 30 to 40 people in Mallacoota will lose their jobs.

The proposals also have an impact on rock lobster fishing and other commercial fin fishing. It is not estimated in the report, but if recreational fishing is excluded from some of those choice areas, people will not visit the region and will go elsewhere. They will probably bypass East Gippsland and fish off the New South Wales coast. These are prime recreational places. Many of the communities rely on the recreational fishers to patronise their caravan parks, hotels, et cetera. If the draft recommendations of the Environment Conservation Council report are accepted there is a fear that there will be a serious detrimental impact on the economy of the coastal towns in Gippsland in particular, but also in western Victoria. I admit I have not had a lot of involvement with the communities in western Victoria.

I attended five public meetings organised by the ECC at the end of January and the start of February and the reaction of the local community is strong in opposition to the creation of marine national parks. I put the government on notice that if the recommendations are accepted by the government in their draft form, they will have a disastrous impact on the communities I represent. It will be a complete contradiction of some of the principles the government announced in the Governor's speech in terms of trying to assist regional and rural Victoria. The proposals will not assist us in any way at all.

The last issue I raise is the proposed regional forest agreement (RFA) for Gippsland. The regional forest agreements were agreed to by federal and state governments to provide some resource security to the timber industry, and at the same time to ensure that adequate care is taken to protect the environment — that is, creating reserves and reservations of certain species to maintain an appropriate balance between environmental needs and the needs of the timber industry.

Victoria has already signed off on the East Gippsland forest agreement and also the Central Highlands forest agreement. Currently agreements for western Victoria and Gippsland are being negotiated. If the proposals in the current Gippsland agreement form are signed off by the state and federal governments, which have joint responsibility, it will reduce the resource availability by 9 per cent in the Gippsland region of the forest management area, and it will increase the existing reserve system by 265 000 hectares or 51 per cent. The report states that if the recommendations are accepted there will be a direct reduction of 51 jobs in sawmills

throughout Gippsland. That is the number of direct sawmill jobs. It does not take into account the jobs of the forestry contractors felling trees and carting the product back to the sawmills. It does not take into account the value-adding process, such as those who take the dry timber from the Gippsland region to places all over the world. And it does not take into account the multiplier effect of the loss of those employment jobs. It has been reliably estimated that the real job loss will be 350.

I certainly cannot tolerate it, nor can the National Party, and I do not think the Labor Party should tolerate a decision that means the loss of 350 jobs in Gippsland. It should not be tolerated when there are means by which we could achieve the objectives of the RFA — that is, making the appropriate amounts of reserves of certain timber species — without having to reduce the resource available for timber operators. There are three areas where we could obtain the resource, keep the resource we need and achieve those reservation objectives.

The first is to consider Gippsland as a whole. Rather than consider it as three distinct parts — East Gippsland, Gippsland and Central Highlands — if the current level of reservations across Gippsland is taken as a whole, the minimum criteria required by the federal and state governments can be achieved. In East Gippsland in particular there is an over reservation of timber. There is a vast number of national parks in East Gippsland and not so many in the Gippsland area. If the region is taken as a whole, there would be enough reservations to achieve those minimum criteria and there would be no need for resource reduction.

The second way of achieving the required resource is by considering the area of timber that cannot be logged because of the Code of Forest Practices. I understand the current report takes no account of those areas of timber stands that will never be harvested because they are not allowed under the Code of Forest Practices, which does not allow timber to be cut within certain distances of gullies, streams, catchment areas or over certain gradients. Those areas have not been taken into account in the compilation of the report.

The third area that could make more resource available is the consideration of both private and Crown landholdings in the Strzelecki Ranges. To date, those areas have not been included as parts of the area considered for reservations, but the private landholdings, some of the Crown landholdings in the Strzelecki Ranges and the areas within the holdings which cannot now be logged because of the Code of Forest Practices, could release an additional resource for the timber operators in Gippsland.

I put the government on notice about the three issues that affect our natural resources and will have a bearing on employment opportunities and the economy of Gippsland in general. Firstly, the government has many challenges ahead of it in trying to resolve the Snowy River issue. Secondly, the Environment Conservation Council report must be considered because of its link with marine national parks. A decision will need to be taken on that issue by 30 June. I hope the government takes into account the real economic impact that may have on the Gippsland community.

Thirdly, there is some urgency in resolving the Gippsland regional forests agreement, because it must be signed off by 31 March; otherwise the export woodchip licences will expire. A new agreement will lead to a continuation of the export of woodchips. Some people think forests are cut down for woodchips. That is far from the case. Woodchips are an essential by-product of timber operations, without which many mills would not be viable operations.

I thank the Governor for his address to Parliament on 3 November last year. I pay tribute to the great work he and his wife are doing for the people of Victoria. In conclusion, the government has not made an auspicious start in its first four and a half months in office. It has been put on notice: the opposition parties will be watching and will play their role as an opposition to ensure the government delivers on its promises to provide responsible government for Victorians.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** (Monash) — It is a pleasure to contribute to debate in reply to the speech delivered in this house late last year by His Excellency, the Governor of Victoria, Sir James Gobbo. Enough time has elapsed since then to enable the new government that had been sworn in prior to the Governor's speech to settle into its role as the government of Victoria. I calculate that today is day 133 of Labor's occupation of the Treasury benches.

It is worthwhile reflecting on the changes that have taken place in Victoria in that time — changes that appear to me, and probably to the majority of Victorians, to be leading us into the unknown and in many ways are a return to the bad days of the 1980s. Victoria is experiencing industrial disputation, massive disinvestment in the state and a resultant decline in the levels of employment. That leads to a decline in our standards of living which, in the main, had been addressed and corrected in the seven years of the Liberal–National coalition government.

When the Bracks Labor government took over in Victoria in October last year the state was certainly in

extremely good shape. The former government had achieved the highest level of employment in the state's history. The crippling debt levels of the late 1980s and early 1990s had been brought under control. Debt had been reduced from \$32 billion in 1992 to \$6 billion in 1999, and the level was continuing to fall. Victoria was a thriving and vibrant state that was attracting not only new investment but new settlers from interstate and overseas. Victoria was known as a place that was open for business; it was a good place in which to do business. It was creating new job opportunities that led to the highest levels of employment in Victoria's history and to a significantly increased standard of living for the vast majority of Victorians.

We can talk until the cows come home about the reasons for the change of government and whether the change was justified, but there is little value in pursuing that line of argument. We must accept that after the election of 18 September last and the negotiations with the Independents who had been elected to the other place, the three Independents saw fit to form a partnership with the minority Labor government.

The government has taken over a state in a completely different set of circumstances from those facing the Kennett coalition government after its election in 1992. The Bracks Labor government has been presented with an extraordinary opportunity for an incumbent government. Its opportunity is to govern with a large budget surplus, a stable economy and significantly reduced unemployment. The Bracks Labor government has been provided with the opportunity to continue the gains of the past seven years and to continue to make Victoria a place where people want to live and do business.

Unfortunately, in the main that opportunity has been mishandled in the 133 days following the swearing in of the Bracks government. If the pattern established by the Bracks government continues it will be a case of opportunity lost and opportunity thrown away to the detriment of Victoria and its citizens.

We need to start ringing the alarm bells. The government has not come into office to mop up the pieces or to deal with significant fiscal issues, as the Kennett government had to do with a haemorrhaging budget deficit. It has not had to deal with burgeoning debt levels, unemployment levels or a crisis in investor confidence. Quite the converse: the Bracks government faces positives in each of those areas and it should not drop the ball.

A sense of vision and leadership is required. I was disappointed to hear the Governor deliver the speech

written for him by the Premier and his advisers because despite the many programs, initiatives and motherhood statements it contained, the vital ingredients in any program a government intends to implement in the next Parliament and which should be spelt out in a Governor's speech are a sense of vision, leadership and direction. Around the community there is no doubt that among the most valuable attributes of the Kennett coalition government to which Victorians refer so frequently was its sense of direction and vision.

I do not mean a vision for next week, next month, the next press release or the headlines of the next day's newspapers but a vision of where we want to position our state, where we want to go as a state and where we want to take our citizens. We must take our citizens with us if they are to share in the vision and its fruits for the long-term benefit of all Victorians. That is what I found completely lacking in the government's statement delivered through the good offices of the Governor. That implies no disrespect or comment on the Governor because he is a fine man, but it is a negative remark on how the new government started off.

During the 133 days since it came to office, things have continued to run away from this government. It is quite clear that in many ways the members of the government were ill prepared to take over the Treasury benches. But having got there, rather than take a deep breath and consider what they are going to do in the best long-term interests of the state, it is quite clear that they are running on a combination of vested interests, pet projects and certainly as captives of a union agenda.

The industrial disputes that have flared since October highlight that situation. They have created a crisis of confidence in those looking to invest in this state. The government demonstrated a lack of leadership and control and at the end of the day a lack of resolve in the energy crisis. It led to Victorians finding out about power restrictions either just as they were being implemented or a few moments before they were to be implemented, rather than having adequate forewarning so that people could prepare their homes and businesses. According to reports that came into my office, people requiring electricity for emergency purposes to operate respirators, dialysis machines and other medical equipment in their homes were all disadvantaged as a result of the government's inaction or lack of resolve in tackling the electricity crisis.

In a number of other industrial disputes the government has sat on its hands. Before Christmas, I raised the spectre of the Colonial Stadium, a brand-new investment in Docklands, providing a state-of-the-art

facility that was to attract new events to Melbourne as well as provide a home for some of our most popular recurring events such as football matches, not being ready in time. The minister scoffed at the suggestions I made and said there would be no delay despite any lingering industrial disputes. Time has passed and we know that already events scheduled at Colonial Stadium — that is, the AFL's preseason matches — did not go ahead. The opening date of the stadium has been rescheduled to next week, the first week of the football season. But even as I speak there is doubt that even that will be achieved, so sending another chilling message to the business community, international investors and people who want to hold events in this state that the reliability of the previous seven years of the former Liberal-National Party government has disappeared.

**Hon. N. B. Lucas** — Gone out the window.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — Gone totally out the window. That simply means a lack of investment in our state, resulting in loss of jobs and employment opportunities for our community.

It is said that the best thing one can do with one's mistakes is learn from them. I hope for the benefit of all Victorians that the government stops and thinks about its role in creating a positive environment for people to conduct business in Victoria, not allowing the trade unions to run rampant. But the signs are not good that this government has learned anything. The current log of claims of the building unions includes a request for a 26 per cent pay increase and a reduction in working hours at the same time — that is, a quarter more money for fewer hours worked, with no productivity offsets. It is no wonder that already Victoria is losing building projects. Mirvac has announced that the second stage of its development at Docklands will be postponed indefinitely because it appears that the building workers' log of claims would have added approximately \$40 million to the cost of that project, making the investment extraordinarily marginal and exposing the company to great financial risk if it went ahead with the project.

Government members have sat back idly on their hands. The government has shown no leadership through either the Premier or the missing Minister for Industrial Relations, to whom I will refer again later in my speech. The government has allowed the building unions to make the ambit claims that are scaring away the business investment that would mean new employment opportunities for all Victorians. Every time we hear of another project put on the backburner or stalled indefinitely we know that means fewer jobs for all Victorians. As I outlined four years ago in my

inaugural speech, that means less opportunity for Victorians to have a stake in their state through what is probably the most important social initiative that any government can implement — that is, a pro-jobs policy that enables all Victorians who want to work to do so and provide for themselves and their families and not be a burden on the state or anybody else. What the government must remember when it talks about its grand social planning and social policy ideals is that the best policy is one that enables every Victorian who wants to work to be able to find a job, not a policy that destroys job opportunities.

There has been more. The Virgin Airlines scenario indicates just how lacking in vision, direction and leadership the government is. The fact that Queensland's Premier Beattie was able to boast publicly that he stole the investment of Virgin Airlines from under Victorians' noses should have set huge alarm bells ringing for the Bracks Labor government because it dropped the ball. Peter Beattie made it clear in his comments that he thought he had no chance of snaring the investment because Victoria had the front running. But that was a Victoria under a positive, progressive regime that had leadership and vision and encouraged business investment — not a Victoria under the Bracks government.

Not only did Peter Beattie steal that investment opportunity from under our noses but he rubbed our noses in it by gloating about it and taking out a full-page ad in the *Age* a few days later, as has been referred to previously. The ad said 'Victoria, you've had your chance; you've blown it. Business investors, if you want to invest in a place that is open for business, come to Queensland'. He should gloat, because it represents investment in his state and his citizens and will create hundreds and possibly thousands of direct and indirect job growth opportunities in his state at the expense of Victoria. As Peter Beattie is a Labor Premier, it proved once and for all that just as amongst thieves there is clearly no honour among Labor Premiers when it comes to one-upping each other.

It was not enough that the government allowed industrial disputes to fester and ruin Victoria's national and international reputation with the business community or that it dropped the ball and allowed investments such as Virgin Airlines headquarters to go to Queensland. The government is now captive of a union and Labor lawyers agenda threatening Victorians with a blow-out in Workcover premiums. That will not advantage injured workers because employers will have to pay extra premiums to achieve the narrow idealistic aims of the Labor Party and the trade union movement and their friends, the Labor lawyers.



A meeting of union delegates at trades hall today called on the Bracks government not to limit its increase in Workcover premiums to a maximum of 2.18 per cent, as had been previously mooted. It is speculated that the current 1.9 per cent will now be 2.18 per cent. However, today's Australian Broadcasting Corporation's online news service says that the Trades Hall Council called on the Bracks government to lift its proposed cap of 2.18 per cent on Workcover premiums. Not only is it proposed to increase Workcover premiums by 15 per cent, the trade union movement wants to increase them even further. Workcover premiums are a tax on jobs; they are a compulsory protection for employers from compensation claims from employees. It is crucial to ensure that premiums are maintained at the lowest level. When premiums increase they are a further tax on the payroll and effectively a tax on jobs. An equitable Workcover regime should provide injured workers with reasonable, fair compensation and ready access to compensation. Increased premiums will make Victorian businesses uncompetitive which will bankrupt employers and drive new investors away from the state. That is what the Labor Party wants and what the Trades Hall Council today is calling for when it seeks to lift premiums beyond 2.18 per cent.

A negative message is being sent to all Victorians which highlights the government's lack of vision and direction. The government is simply a captive of its union masters. It is no wonder that takes us back to the dark days of the Cain and Kirner governments when people were flocking to the borders to leave the state. Investors shook their heads and said, 'Victoria is a rust bucket. We don't want to go there'. There is plenty of time for the government to act quickly if it has the guts to stand up to its trade union masters and say, 'We will govern not for trade unions but for all Victorians'.

Trade union membership continues to decline. When the Minister for Industrial Relations and the Premier run a union agenda it is clear they are supporting the interests of a small minority of employees. Recent figures show that trade union membership has reached a new low of 26 per cent of the Australian work force. It is clear that three-quarters of all Australian employees are not trade union members. I hope the government consults more widely than the trade union movement because it is only a minority group when it comes to employee rights and needs. The majority of employees have said that trade unions are irrelevant to their circumstances and that is why they have voted with their feet and not joined unions.

I remind the minister and the government that for too long the Labor Party has viewed employees simply as

those represented by the trade union movement. The opposition believes in supporting the rights of all employees, not the declining minority that belong to the trade union movement. There is plenty of time for the government to take steps to reverse the perception and reality of a new Victoria under a Labor government, but it should act quickly before the example of Virgin Airlines becomes a host of examples and before the employment gains achieved in seven years of coalition government are lost.

The opposition would prefer that employment continues to grow in the state and people continue to find job opportunities. I do not believe that will happen under a Bracks government. I hope, for the sake of all Victorians, that it will reverse its current policies so that unemployment does not spiral upwards. A lack of vision and direction was highlighted in the speech that was prepared for the Governor, but it does not stop at business investment, industrial relations and jobs growth; it is across the board.

It was illuminating to note that one of the new initiatives of the Bracks government in 2000 was to call for a summit to be led by the person who is best described as a summit junkie, Bob Hawke. Bob is going to be rolled out of retirement and brought in to chair a summit that will come up with new ideas for the Bracks government to implement. If that was not an admission of defeat and an admission that this government has no original ideas of its own, has no vision and certainly does not know in which direction to take this state, I do not know what is. For all his good and bad points, Bob Hawke is now being trotted out by Steve Bracks because the Premier has no ideas of his own. He has gone tapping on Bob's door and said, 'Bob, come along, let us have a talkfest, let us have a summit. You are the best at it. You are the summit king, the summit junkie. So let us get some friends together and throw around some ideas. As a result we might have a program or come up with a bit of vision and find something we can do that Victorians will love us for'. I hate to break it to the government —

**Hon. K. M. Smith** — They are not here.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — Government members are probably digging around, looking for ideas to go to the summit with. In 133 days of Labor government I have not seen anything new or original and certainly nothing that is positive and good for Victoria's future progress.

I wish the summit well. When you have a government totally bereft of ideas like this one is, any ideas from anyone will be welcome. As I said, I want the best for

this state and a good government that governs for the vast majority of Victorians and provides leadership and direction. I hope the summit gives the government some bright ideas. In fact, if it stopped the politicking and the grandstanding, and if its members stopped lapping up the shiny new white cars and the multitude of offices that some of the ministers seem to have, and listened to members on this side of the house, they might notice we actually have some ideas from which they could benefit.

**Hon. K. M. Smith** interjected.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — Yes, Mr Smith, some members are missing in action. Many of them are floundering. Meanwhile, the international community and people around Australia are saying, 'Look what has happened to the state of Victoria under Bracks! It was good a few short months ago'. One hundred and thirty-three days make a lot of difference, and once such perceptions start, they just keep on rolling like a snowball. Back in 1992 and 1993 one or two progressive actions created the positive juggernaut that just kept rolling and made Victoria the wonderful state it was throughout the middle and latter part of the 1990s. In the same way, the negativity that the Bracks government is sending out will be irreversible unless the government takes action straightaway.

One area that I wish to highlight in particular is that of information technology, communications and emerging e-commerce. We all say this government lacks vision and direction, but if it lacks vision and direction in all other areas, there is a complete black hole when it comes to ideas, knowledge and initiative in information technology and the new technologies emerging in the 21st century. Victoria is recognised worldwide as having been the leader in information technology over the past seven years. It was the first state to embrace the new economy, the electronic age, e-commerce, multimedia and information technology. It introduced programs into government departments and schools and promoted them to business — small, medium and large — throughout Victoria. It sent a message to the international community that Victoria was the place to come for technology companies of the future that would create investment and employment.

People flocked here from all over the world. Bill Gates held up our education system as being the leader of all education systems around the world in introducing young people to the new technologies that they will need to not only know but master if they are to be at the forefront of the new information age. Victoria had the first multimedia minister in Alan Stockdale, and as this area grew, his title was changed to reflect the move

from multimedia to a more encompassing role — information technology. Victoria had so much technology that significant international companies — Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, Netscape, IBM and many others — relocated parts of their operations to Victoria because they regarded it as the hub of information technology that would be growing into the future.

What happened? The Labor Party has come in and wants to take us back to the future — just like the movies that were popular in the 1980s. That was a time when the Labor Party was running the state and everything seemed to be going backwards — just as occurred in the Michael J. Fox movies. We have no minister for multimedia and information technology. That is the first negative signal to the community that this government simply does not understand information technology at all.

The government tells us the responsible minister is Mr Brumby, the Minister for State and Regional Development. He is also responsible for finance, a very large baton for a hopeful future Premier of the state. Lumped in among all those responsibilities and other things, including his own ego, is the portfolio of multimedia and information technology. One hundred and thirty-three days after he was sworn in as a minister, does Mr Brumby have a Web presence? No. Does he have an Internet site? No. Does he have any idea what is going on in information technology? He tried to tell us last year that he did: in the other place he read a ministerial statement, which contained many motherhood statements and platitudes but it was short on initiatives and substance.

Mr Brumby is floundering in this area — he has no idea. The information technology community is laughing and saying, 'My goodness! It's a whole new world in Victoria'. Alan Stockdale is no longer around. The Liberal-National Party government is no longer around, and the people who have taken over are Luddites. They probably do not even know how to press the button to turn on the machine, let alone being able to embrace the concepts of information technology, the emerging issues relating to e-commerce, and the adaptation of our retailers — especially small and medium-size businesses — to the new electronic era. They are unable to capture the vision that is required to be a leader and an exemplar in the world of information technology.

The government is taking this state backwards. Victoria is standing still as the world runs off without it. In its 133 days if one could highlight one area of complete change and turnaround from a positive go-forward

approach to one of no direction, vision or idea of where to take the state, it is information technology. It is the one area in which every single minister and every member of the government and the bureaucracy should be running around trying to catch up because everyone acknowledges that is the industry of the future. Whether or not we like it, information technology, electronics, e-commerce, the development of new and exciting ideas in artificial intelligence, data mining and so forth are where the future of investment and jobs lie.

Sending such negative signals about this state's attitude to information technology into the global marketplace will mean fewer job opportunities for Victorians and the export of our extremely talented pool of information technology specialists and of the emerging pool of children coming through the schools and universities who will be the new, talented whiz-kids of the information technology age. Those kids will not stick around. Victoria will be exporting its talent as has been the case in so many industries in this country so many times before. The government has turned its back on the most important new sector of the economy. Mr Brumby should feel shame and guilt and do something about the situation.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — He was part of the Guilty Party.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — He was part of the Guilty Party, and he will be part of the Guilty Party again. I hate to say I told you so and I hate to ring the alarm bells, but unless Victoria acts quickly the opportunities will disappear, not for a week, not for a month, not for a decade but forever. Victoria was ahead of the pack in information technology and investment in new industries, but now it is standing still. In a rapidly changing world, standing still while the rest of the world is running at a million miles an hour means that every single day Victoria is going one step backwards towards oblivion.

I do not want to sit back and watch Victoria become a black hole, a forgotten state, a rust-bucket state hanging on to vestiges of old industry while the rest of the world is moving on. That is why the Kennett Liberal-National government placed so much store on getting the people of this state ready to embrace the information age, and that is why it is critical that the Bracks government reverse the trend it has followed in its first 133 days of government.

In industry circles in Victoria and the rest of the world people are already saying, 'Tut-tut. They knew what they were doing, but the new mob has absolutely no idea'. If the government wants to model itself on the

Blair government — many of the Victorian government's ministers like to think of themselves as being in a Blair-type government — it should look at how that government embraced the positive ideas of the previous government and is embracing information technology.

But Labor does not need to look as far as that. It should look at that friend of the Labor Party in Queensland, Peter Beattie, who is bragging about stealing Virgin Airlines. He put up a big sign and said, 'Information technology — if Victoria does not want it, we will have it'. I mentioned in the house late last year that the Queensland government has set up a fund to poach new and existing information technology investment from Victoria and other states. Unless the government does something about that, it will be left behind.

Last week or the week before Minister Brumby made an announcement entitled 'Go for IT', read as 'Go for it'. He announced a small round of funding to address critical shortages of experts in the information technology field. When Mr Brumby was challenged as to where those shortages exist — all honourable members would acknowledge there is a great shortage of experts in the area of e-commerce, information technology and multimedia — and what specific jobs were not being filled in Victoria, the response was a total blank. Mr Brumby was supposedly announcing initiatives to meet that critical shortage and address the bottlenecks, but he is mouthing platitudes and motherhood statements, picking up buzz words and demonstrating in the process to the world at large that he has no idea, that he is simply a Johnny-come-lately jumping on the bandwagon.

**Hon. K. M. Smith** — You have to use his full title.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — We might call him Johnny-Brumby-come-lately to satisfy the likes of the people now occupying the Treasury benches. The negative signals going out to the world do not augur well for Victoria.

I repeat: there is time. It has been only 133 days. We need some real initiatives and some demonstration from the government that it is committed to taking Victoria into the new information age rather than sitting back, watching it happen and reacting. The person who goes first, shows leadership and initiative and is prepared to take a stand wins. While the rest of the world is progressing, those people who cower back and wait to see which way the wind is blowing — to see which way the newspaper headlines are taking them, which way their mates, community groups, friends and

everybody else wants them to go, and how it is weighing up on the scales — will be caught short.

Again, it is not the government that suffers. It will be the people of Victoria who suffer in the process because they will miss out on investment opportunities, job opportunities and an increased standard of living. The people of Victoria will be made to feel like second-class citizens in a world that is travelling at a million miles an hour away from them.

I call on the government and Mr Brumby as minister responsible for multimedia and information technology to start spending some time thinking about the area and working on a new plan that will continue to keep Victoria at the forefront of new developments and not leave it as part of the pack struggling to catch up.

Mr Deputy President, I notice that you have now taken the chair. I have not had the opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment.

Already there is media speculation about what will happen in the Bracks cabinet. Mr Brumby probably would not know about this because the article I am reading from is from an online magazine called *Crikey*. It appears there are already predictions of a reshuffle. The article states:

The clear talent imbalance on the Bracks frontbench means a reshuffle is likely later this year — factions permitting.

Out: Monica Gould

Bracks thought he was being clever putting Monica Gould in a 'safe' portfolio — after all, Kennett had legislated industrial relations away to the federal government, hadn't he? Wrong! IR is, and will continue to be, a crucial job and Gould is not up to it.

Let's be honest. Media speculation — —

**Hon. C. C. Broad** — Did you write it yourself?

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — I certainly did not write it myself. If time permitted I would read the many other things said about other ministers. The point I want to make is that it is clear that this is not idle speculation. A *Herald Sun* headline on page 18 of yesterday's newspaper reads, 'War in the Bracks Labor Party'. If members opposite want traditional media coverage, it is starting to talk all this up. The disturbing point — —

**Hon. C. C. Broad** interjected.

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — Before the minister interjects she should listen to this. The really disturbing point is that information provided to me is that the article in *Crikey*, which is attributed to Hugo

Kelly, Stephen Mayne and various *Crikey* friends, was run past senior Bracks government advisers before being published to check its accuracy.

If that is the case and the Bracks government advisers are speculating about the demise of ministers it should be put on record that Monica Gould and Keith Hamilton are not mentioned for promotion. Nor is Richard Wynne. It is a sorry state when government advisers are freely speculating with their friends about the demise of government ministers. We will all wait and see when the reshuffle takes place. But it does not augur well for you, Minister.

In closing, Mr Deputy President, I once again thank the Governor for gracing us with his presence and delivering his speech on behalf of the government. I reiterate that in that speech the government highlighted its vacuum of ideas and lack of vision and leadership for this state. In the 133 days since the government was sworn in it has continued to demonstrate its failings — its lack of vision, leadership and preparedness to take decisive action. That has been demonstrated in spades. It is not too late. For the benefit of all Victorians I call on the government to wake up to itself, change tack and start governing for all Victorians. If it does not, the opposition will be here to keep government members honest and accountable.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland).**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Adjournment

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 14 March.

**Motion agreed to.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

### Nursing homes: stamp duty

**Hon. J. W. G. ROSS** (Higinbotham) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources, representing the

Treasurer in the other place, to the recent changes in the amounts of stamp duty payable on the sale of nursing homes. The issue was brought to my attention following recent nursing home sales where the amount of stamp duty levied increased significantly. Contracts of sale on nursing homes generally dissect a component of goodwill from the freehold, which includes the value of the commonwealth nursing home bed authorities as well as the general reputation of the organisation and other intangibles.

It has always been the custom of the State Revenue Office not to levy stamp duty on goodwill. However, from a number of recent transactions it appears clear that stamp duty will be levied on that component of goodwill, which appears to be a change of policy. Hitherto the price of goodwill was always reflected in the price asked for the freehold. As honourable members will be well aware, many nursing homes are desperately in need of capital injections and the entry of new entrepreneurs into the industry. Additional transaction costs on the sale of nursing homes have the effect, obviously, of inhibiting new entrants to the field as well as depreciating the amount of capital available for upgrading of fabric and infrastructure.

I ask the minister to take up the matter with the Treasurer and advise whether the change of policy will be implemented. Will she provide me with a reassurance that changes in policy will not be detrimental to the service and quality of infrastructure in nursing homes?

### **Schools: airconditioning**

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** (Geelong) — I raise with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, representing the Minister for Education in the other house, concerns about temperatures in schools. Since school resumed in late January I have been contacted by many parents from across my electorate of Geelong Province expressing concern about the adverse effect the extreme hot weather conditions are having on the learning environment in classrooms. I understand the former Minister for Education, Phil Gude, announced at Leopold Primary School a year ago that the Kennett government would fund the airconditioning of state schools. That was a year ago; yet he did nothing about it over the winter. He had eight months to do something about it but did nothing, causing school students to sweat it out this summer.

I ask the Minister for Education to explain what she is doing about making sure that is carried out so I can contact the state schools in my electorate.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** — Unlike Phil Gude, the current minister is a person of action, not words. I ask her to inform the house what she is doing to make sure state school students and teachers do not have to sweat out the summer next year.

### **Fishing: bag limit**

**Hon. G. R. CRAIGE** (Central Highlands) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources to the bag limit review that commenced some 12 months ago. I understand recreational fishing groups anticipated that much more would have been done, especially from November last year. However, nothing has happened and there is now a sense of concern, especially among recreational fishers who have not only an interest in conserving stock but also a belief that certain species require conservation values placed upon them as well. That is what the review was all about.

I know the minister is fully aware of this as she is acknowledging that she has seen the review that is on her desk, in her office or somewhere. The review sought to establish new regulations for two important areas. One was the special conservation of fishing stock and the other was stock protection for certain reasons, in particular the status of fish stock. The areas examined during the review included special conservation for certain species such as Murray cod and Macquarie perch. Recreational fishers — I am the holder of a recreational licence — recognise the need to ensure that conservation values are placed upon those species.

Not only were we concerned as a group, but we were also concerned about the status of certain fish stocks — for example, the Australian bass and river blackfish fall into that category.

An article in the November 1999 *Victorian Fisheries Recfish Newsletter* indicated that the draft regulations and the regulatory impact statement (RIS) for the proposed changes would be released for a further round of public comment before the end of 1999. We are now well and truly into 2000 and nothing is out there in the marketplace. This report needs to be circulated and the RIS and regulations need to be put together. I ask the minister to release immediately the review for the conservation, protection and status of the stock that I have mentioned and that the RIS be formed as a matter of urgency.

### **Braybrook: housebreaking**

**Hon. S. M. NGUYEN** (Melbourne West) — I raise with the Minister for Small Business, as the representative in this place of the Minister for Housing, recent articles in the local and daily press reporting a number of incidences of robberies and burglaries in the Braybrook area. While this relates to local policing, it is important to note the matter involves a whole-of-government approach including the City of Maribyrnong, Neighbourhood Watch and the Department of Human Services. Will the Minister for Housing indicate what action her department has taken to address this important issue in the suburb of Braybrook?

### **Schools: late enrolment**

**Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON** (Waverley) — I raise with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, as the representative in this place of the Minister for Education, a serious matter concerning a year 7 student who has severe emotional problems. He is required to visit the Alfred psychiatric unit one day a week. Prior to the adjournment debate I spoke to the minister and said I wished to keep the name of the student confidential. I will pass the name on to the minister after I have given the facts to the house.

I need to outline some chronology here but in brief this student with severe emotional problems has not commenced school this year. We are now 30-plus days into the school year and the student will not be commencing until 6 March. It is an absolute travesty that this student has been denied his education for the first vital month of 2000.

The mother approached me on 13 December last seeking some advice on which school her son should attend. I should add that in the previous three years I have helped get integration assistance for this student, so I know the family relatively well. On 14 December my office called the relevant schools. One school said it could not take this student as it could not effectively teach him because of his problems. The start of the school year was on 27 January. On 2 February the principal of the Mount Waverley Secondary College was called by my office to confirm that the mother had approached the school. The principal said that the student was not enrolled and he did not want to commit himself to taking this student because he would have to be put on a waiting list as there were no vacancies at the school and there were other students that had priority.

On 4 February the mother came to my office to ascertain if I could assist. Again I rang the people at the

school to try to prompt them. On 10 February the mother informed me that she had contacted the region and that nothing would be done instantly. On 11 February I contacted the appropriate officer of the region. He told me he was expecting to meet with some school principals, including those from Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley, regarding the student's enrolment, and it had been confirmed on that date that the student should go to his neighbourhood school, which was Glen Waverley Secondary College.

On 16 February the mother approached my colleague in the other place, Mr Ross Smith, but he referred her back to me because I had been doing all the work. On 18 February the regional officer contacted me with the news that he had informed the principal of Glen Waverley to take the student on the basis that he was in the school's catchment area. The mother was to be contacted by the eastern region on the following Tuesday or Wednesday, as the school had not been fully consulted. On 24 February the region informed Glen Waverley Secondary College, so one week had elapsed before the school was contacted. I give credit to Glen Waverley Secondary College because it acted almost immediately. It has now enrolled the student and will take him on 6 March.

The delay is unthinkable and I demand an explanation from the minister. I demand an inquiry into why this whole situation occurred. At the very least I demand that the minister, who we heard from the Honourable Elaine Carbines is a woman of action — in this case she has been a woman of total neglect and inaction — give an apology to the mother of the student concerned. It is an appalling state of affairs.

### **Forest industry: western Victoria**

**Hon. D. G. HADDEN** (Ballarat) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources, who represents the Minister for Environment and Conservation in another place, to the fact that the independent panel appointed by the government to receive submissions about the western Victoria regional forest agreement has received about 750 submissions from persons affected by the RFA. The time frame for the submissions to be received by the independent panel expired on 25 February. The western Victoria regional forest agreement is to be signed off between the federal and state governments on 31 March. That time frame was extended by three months as it was.

I have been approached by constituents in my electorate, including small businesses, local government, timber industry contractors, mill owners, employers and employees who have felt constrained by

the short time frame within which to lodge their submissions on a very important issue of forest and timber industry within my electorate. I ask the minister to seek from her federal counterpart and the independent panel either an extension of time or an agreement to consider late submissions.

### **Mount Hotham: underground powerline**

**Hon. E. G. STONEY** (Central Highlands) — I seek the assistance of the Minister for Energy and Resources. On Thursday, 4 November, I raised with the minister the Mount Hotham proposed underground powerline between Mount Beauty and Mount Hotham. The minister said at the time that the Minister for Environment and Conservation was:

... considering final approval in a way that is compatible with the best interests of the park.

It is now March and no decision has been made. Eastern Energy cannot build the powerline this year because of restrictions imposed before the approaching winter season. Therefore, the Mount Hotham ski resort will be liable to electricity failures. The old powerlines, with their technical flaws, will be subject to lightning strikes. Eastern Energy has demonstrated conclusively that a second line must be run to the resort.

Mount Hotham contributes about \$100 million annually to the Victorian economy. It is a modern, up-to-date, go-ahead resort; it is Victoria's highest ski resort. It is important to note that Falls Creek's alternate underground powerline and the one experiencing technical difficulties both run through the Alpine National Park.

I assume the minister has not lobbied the Minister for Environment and Conservation in the other house on this issue. In her capacity as Minister for Energy and Resources I ask the minister to tell her counterpart in the other place that she should decide as a minister, not as an old friend of some interest groups who may be pressuring her. I ask the Minister for Energy and Resources to make those representations on behalf of all Victorians.

When she speaks to the Minister for Environment and Conservation the Minister for Energy and Resources might paint a small picture.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The honourable member can raise only one matter on the adjournment debate.

**Hon. E. G. STONEY** — It is pertinent, Mr Deputy President. I ask the minister to explain to the Minister

for Environment and Conservation the implications of 200 or 300 people dangling on ski tows on a Saturday afternoon in a blizzard with no electricity to the mountain and no prospect of its being reconnected for a number of days.

### **Olympic Games: Yiannis Kouros**

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** (Jika Jika) — The matter I direct to the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation relates to a constituent of mine who is also a prominent sportsperson. I am sure many honourable members would have heard of the ultra-marathon runner Yiannis Kouros. It has been brought to my attention that the application of Yiannis Kouros to carry the Olympic torch prior to the opening of the Sydney Olympic Games has not been accepted.

**Hon. M. T. Luckins** interjected.

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — You may think it is funny. When I met with him Yiannis said he had applied to be part of the event. For the benefit of honourable members I point out that Yiannis Kouros was voted no. 7 in the top 10 runners in the millennium by *Runners World* magazine. That magazine calls him the world's greatest ultra-runner. Yiannis could not compete in any Olympic Games because they have no events suitable for his distance running expertise. He holds world records on the track at every distance from 200 kilometres to 1000 kilometres as well as events ranging from 12-hour to six-day runs. He also holds the 1000-mile record on the road.

He has broken George Littlewood's 96-year-old six-day world record and the 48-hour record on the road. His achievements are significant. He is considered a remarkable athlete not only by the Greek community of which he is a member but by the broader community. He is probably the only person I know who would actually be able to run the full distance that the Olympic torch is to travel throughout Victoria. However, I do not ask the minister to organise such a run for Yiannis.

It would be a source of great pride for many people, particularly the Greek community, to see him carry the torch during the Olympic Games torch procession to Sydney — perhaps he could run up Lonsdale Street, the heart of Melbourne's Greek community. I ask the minister to make inquiries to see whether his New South Wales counterparts can do something for Yiannis Kouros.

**ALP: fundraising dinner**

**Hon. B. N. ATKINSON** (Koonung) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to an article in the Maroondah *Mail* under the headline ‘ALP moves on east’. It reports on a dinner that the ALP held and which the Premier attended on 18 February at La Porchetta restaurant.

**An Honourable Member** — At \$1000 a head?

**Hon. B. N. ATKINSON** — No, it was priced at only \$30 a head. The function was organised by a number of people from the ALP in the eastern suburbs, including Sue Craven, who unsuccessfully stood as a candidate for Bayswater at the last election and was a failed candidate on another occasion. She sought to take the opportunity to impress the Premier and a number of other cabinet ministers on the importance of the eastern suburbs.

The article quotes a number of failed ALP candidates from the eastern suburbs, including Peter Bertolus. It also says the function was held to raise funds to support Labor candidates.

I ask the minister: was the \$30-a-head function raising funds to support Labor candidates in the forthcoming local government elections in the eastern suburbs? I ask the minister to advise or confirm whether she attended the function as one of the leadership group of the ALP, or which of her ministerial colleagues attended the function. I am sure the caviar was not as good at the recent dinner as it would have been at the \$1000-a-head function!

What is the ALP policy on standing and supporting candidates from the eastern suburbs at local government elections?

**GST: small business**

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** (Monash) — The matter I direct to the attention of the Minister for Small Business concerns the minister’s recent statements to the house about the new tax system and the implementation of the goods and services tax. The sum total of her actions and those of her department in assisting small businesses in Victoria with their problems on the implementation of the GST was to hand out through her department the literature produced by the federal government and the Australian Taxation Office.

It is clear from comments made by the minister here and outside this place that she uses her office as Minister for Small Business not to assist small

businesses in the implementation of the GST but to score cheap political points for the Labor government by taking every opportunity to denigrate the introduction of that tax.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — If you are patient I will get to my question. I heard you in basic silence and I expect you will hear me out.

It has come to my attention that in early February, as part of the her attempts to denigrate the GST and to act as a de facto member of the federal Labor Party in that regard, the minister met with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia. Subsequent to that meeting, on 11 February the institute sent a memo to all its members that read in part:

The minister sought from the institute and its members assistance in providing anonymous but real-life hardship cases which she could draw upon in making representations to her federal counterparts. Particularly, she drew reference to unresolved GST questions, cash-flow issues, price tagging and GST barriers that stop or slow businesses from growing.

The memo went on to request that members of the institute forward any such queries to the institute for collation and production to the minister as soon as possible with a view to passing on the messages to the minister so that she could clarify them for the institute’s members.

I ask the minister: following her meeting with the institute and the request made by it to its members, what issues about the implementation of the new tax reform of the federal government have been referred to her from the institute and what representations has she made on behalf of the institute to solve those issues?

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Before calling the next member, I point out that after consideration of the issue referred to by Mr Atkinson and certainly in view of the manner in which it was raised, I do not consider it to be a matter of government business, and therefore must rule that issue out of order.

**ALP: fundraising dinner**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — The matter I raise with the Minister for Energy and Resources follows on the issue I raised during the adjournment debate last night. If the minister’s chief of staff was at table 64 at the \$1000-a-head dinner held by the ALP late last year, at which the majority of people were from the Thiess group of companies — that is, Thiess Environmental Services, Thiess Contractors and Thiess Infracore — would the minister care to inform the



house who actually did pay for her chief of staff's dinner that night?

### **Schools: capital works**

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** (South Eastern) — I raise a grave issue, although not as grave as that raised by Mr Forwood. I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, representing the Treasurer. I refer to a document tabled yesterday, entitled *Public Sector Asset Investment Program*, and ask the minister to raise on my behalf with the Treasurer the amount of money that has been cut back in a number of areas, promises that were given and budgets that were set in place during the previous government. As they were budgeted figures, I would have thought that they would be implemented at that funding. I refer to four issues, although they are all embraced in the same concern.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Smith, you are stretching things by raising four issues.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I am not raising four matters; it is one matter with four sections. The first is the Bass Valley Primary School, which was allocated \$1.563 million. The figures in the document show that it has been cut back by \$48 000 to \$1.515 million. The next one is the Newhaven Primary School — —

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, it is quite clear from what the honourable member is raising that he is flouting the advice you just gave him. He is in fact referring to four separate circumstances or issues. It is fair enough for him to have raised the first one, but if he is going to ask for answers about four separate cases, that would be outside the standing orders and it has not been the practice during the adjournment debate in this house.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — On the point of order, I agree with Mr Theophanous that if Mr Smith was doing what Mr Theophanous suggested it would be outside the standing orders. But I suggest to you, Mr Deputy President, that what Mr Smith is doing, as he introduced it, is referring to a document entitled *Public Sector Asset Investment Program*, which was tabled in the house yesterday, and asking that a matter be raised with the Treasurer about the programs listed in that document. He is raising one matter about a change in capital works programs; he is not raising significant issues about other aspects of the document, which runs to more than 115 pages. It is proper for him to raise for referral to the Treasurer one topic — that is, the capital works budget. It is not at all unusual to give significant examples when raising only one matter. Mr Smith

wants to raise only four examples to support raising one topic and he is entitled to do so.

I ask you for your mercy, Mr Deputy President — he is a plumber, not a lawyer. If he has not explained himself in a satisfactory manner, my comments on his behalf are that he is raising only one matter.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — Further on the point of order, I do not have any difficulty with the way that the Leader of the Opposition has put the issue. However, there is a problem if when raising an issue a member simply goes on with example after example to try to illustrate a point. As I understood it, Mr Smith was going to ask for a response from the minister in each of those cases; he was not going to ask an overall question.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — He is giving details about each of those areas, seeking in each case to find out what action has been taken by the government and an explanation of that action. If he is seeking an overall answer to the capital works budget, he can ask that in a general sense, making it clear that he is not seeking specific answers to all the examples that he seeks to raise.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The point of order has been well debated. In allowing the Honourable Ken Smith to finish his question, let us see where it leads if he uses the points he is making as an example. However, if he requests four separate answers, that is clearly over and above the standing orders on the issue. I will allow Mr Smith to continue his contribution. I believe that he was giving four examples and not seeking four specific answers on the matter.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I thank you for that ruling, Mr Deputy President. I did address the matter to the Minister for Energy and Resources, who is representing the Treasurer, the signatory to the document.

The examples I am giving are proof of some of the difficulties that will be faced in the future. The Newhaven Primary School was promised \$1.932 million and is now to get \$1.706 million, which is a cutback of \$226 000, and that sum will not allow the school to be completed.

The original allocation for the Wonthaggi TAFE campus of \$1.4 million has been cut by \$100 000 to \$1.3 million.

Today I received a telephone call about the cutbacks at the hospital in Korumburra. Originally \$3.4 million was allocated for the project but that has been cut to \$1.8 million, which will be nowhere near enough to extend the health services in the Gippsland area. How can the Treasurer justify cutting back funds in the crucial areas of need in education and health?

### **CFA: firefighters dispute**

**Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN** (Chelsea) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Industrial Relations. During yesterday's adjournment debate I referred to the industrial campaign waged by the United Firefighters Union against the Country Fire Authority. I directed the attention of the minister to 13 industrial bans that were enforced by the United Firefighters Union on 22 February.

In her response she stated that I was apparently unaware that those 13 bans had been lifted. She said negotiations and discussions between the parties had been taking place and that the bans implemented on 22 February had been lifted.

I direct the attention of the minister to volume 8 of bulletin no. 35 of the United Firefighters Union dated 26 February entitled 'EBA negotiations update'. The closing sentence states:

Industrial bans and limitations as listed in bulletin no. 26, dated 22 February 2000 will be suspended from 1800 hours, Saturday, 26th February 2000, with the exception of the following bans ...

It lists seven bans, including, among other things:

Stop-work meetings to be held as required; during such time no work is to be performed.

UFU barriers to be placed on the appliances and stations.

No internal firefighting in respect to structure fires to be undertaken unless there are seven competent firefighters on scene.

Considering that ministers in this chamber have to give thought to detail and respond to serious, intricate matters, I ask the minister to reflect on her response to me during yesterday's adjournment debate. Will she provide an explanation on the next day of meeting?

### **Narre Warren–Cranbourne Road: upgrade**

**Hon. N. B. LUCAS** (Eumemmerring) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources who represents the Minister for Transport in the other place. It concerns the point where the Narre Warren–Cranbourne Road crosses the Gippsland railway line. For many years discussions have been

held about the need to provide a grade separated crossing at that intersection. In the early 1990s there was much discussion about how that could be funded. The road over the railway line will have to be duplicated, necessitating expenditure in excess of \$10 million. The project was promised by the government prior to the last election. Since the election I have taken up the matter with the Minister for Transport, who assured me that the project will be pursued. Will the minister advise the house when the project is expected to commence and when it will be completed? Narre Warren is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and safe roads should be provided. The matter will only become worse in the future.

### **CFA: firefighters dispute**

**Hon. I. J. COVER** (Geelong) — The matter I direct to the attention of the Minister for Industrial Relations follows on from a matter raised by Mr Boardman regarding the industrial action taken by the United Firefighters Union. The minister told the house that all bans had been lifted last Friday. As foreshadowed by Mr Boardman, honourable members may have an explanation to the contrary in the future.

I am gravely concerned, as are many in the Geelong community, by the non-reaction of firefighters at the Corio fire station last Friday evening when an incident occurred at the Shell refinery. Among the firefighters who refused to attend the Shell incident was the failed Australian Labor Party candidate for South Barwon and current mayoral aspirant for the City of Greater Geelong, Cr Michael Crutchfield.

Apparently the chief fire officer telephoned Cr Crutchfield personally and pleaded with him to attend the serious situation at Shell, but he refused. One wonders whether he refused to attend because of the industrial action. According to the minister, the answer is no because she said yesterday that all bans had been lifted last Friday.

I am confused, as is the Geelong community. I hope Cr Crutchfield will get around to explaining his behaviour to the people of Geelong before the vote for Geelong mayor is taken next Wednesday. What action has the minister taken to ensure that industrial action such as that which occurred last Friday at Corio is not repeated and thus public safety is not jeopardised?

### **Minister for Energy and Resources: pecuniary interests**

**Hon. R. M. HALLAM** (Western) — I raise with the Minister for Energy and Resources a question posed

to her by Mr Forwood earlier today about her failure to lodge a pecuniary interest return. In her response she said she had since lodged the return. However, the question posed to the minister was not whether she had lodged a return after the statutory deadline but rather about the circumstances surrounding the breach of the statutory responsibility, which she has since acknowledged. I invite the minister to explain to the house how the breach occurred and how she is the only minister to breach the rules.

### Small business: survey

**Hon. W. I. SMITH** (Silvan) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Small Business about the trend in the state regarding business confidence. One never wants to talk down what is happening in the state. I refer the minister to the Yellow Pages *Small Business Index* of 29 February which says that confidence among Australia's regional small business proprietors has fallen to its lowest levels for nearly six years. Also, the governments of South Australia and Victoria have experienced the most significant decline in support.

Today at 11.30 a.m. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures were issued for retail trade in Victoria. In an article today the *Australian Financial Review* said that following a long period of growth, the trend estimate has decreased for the past three months. The other retailing, hospitality and service industries were the major contributors to the decline. It is the first time in six years that falls in retail sales have occurred. The ABS states:

... this is the first time there have been consecutive falls in retail sales in three years.

As a result, the long-term trend now shows sales falling for the first time since mid-1996.

The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry issued a press release today expressing concern at the retail sales figures. What policies will the minister institute to reverse this trend to give small business confidence in Victoria?

### Electricity: Yallourn dispute

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** (East Yarra) — Will the Minister for Energy and Resources advise the house about the written advice from Yallourn Energy concerning industrial relations issues and the threat to electricity supply? When did the minister reply to the correspondence she received, and will she provide the house with copies of that correspondence?

### Senior Citizens Week

**Hon. R. A. BEST** (North Western) — I raise an issue for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, who is the representative in this place of the Minister for Transport. Most honourable members would be aware that Senior Citizens Week takes place from 19 to 26 March. One of the main features of the week is the provision to elderly citizens of free rail transport. The pamphlet that most honourable members would have in their electorate offices states:

Holders of Seniors Cards are entitled to free country travel on Sunday 18 March, Tuesday 21 March, Wednesday 22 March, Thursday 23 March and Saturday 25 March.

Seat reservations will be needed for most longer distance train and coach services but not for the private rail services between Melbourne–Warrnambool and Melbourne–Shepparton.

Seat reservations will open from 10.00 a.m., Tuesday, 29 February 2000, at major country and metropolitan stations.

As the pamphlet says, the reservations opened at 10.00 a.m. yesterday, but my office has been contacted today because people from the Pyramid Hill area in particular have been unable to book seats on the trains for travel during Senior Citizens Week. It appears only 10 seats are available in each of the carriages on the Swan Hill train. That train has only four carriages and there is only one train per day. Therefore, people travelling from Swan Hill, Kerang, Pyramid Hill, Boort, Cohuna, Dingee, and Bendigo will have difficulty in travelling during Senior Citizens Week. More seats must be made available to senior citizens during that week.

The situation is that all the entertainment appears to be concentrated mainly in the Melbourne area, so passengers from further north must come to Melbourne if they want to participate. There should be an opportunity for elderly citizens to participate in Senior Citizens Week. The minister still has about three weeks to resolve the issue. I encourage the minister to make more seats available on the particular train I mentioned as well as on other lines across country Victoria so that elderly citizens throughout the Victorian country community can participate in Senior Citizens Week.

### Planning: Bayside scheme

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** (Higinbotham) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, in his capacity as the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning, the Bayside planning scheme gazetted last week by the minister, particularly the question of heritage controls within that planning scheme.

The matter is of major concern to the local community, particularly the heritage controls. The planning scheme totally overrides the specific resolutions of the Bayside council in both intent and desire. In a press release dated 24 February the mayor of Bayside, Cr Harwood, states:

I am particularly concerned that the minister has acted without any consultation or discussion with council on an issue which he is well aware is of considerable concern to this community.

The issue must be put in context. One of the first publications released by the planning minister in December 1999 was the document entitled 'Ministerial powers of intervention in planning and heritage matters'. It is specific and outlines criteria for ministerial intervention. The first is that the matter will be one of genuine state or regional significance — the Bayside heritage controls are hardly that. Other criteria include: the matter will be the introduction of an interim provision — the planning scheme was hardly that; the matter will raise issues of fairness or public interest; and the matter requires coordination to facilitate decision making by more than one agency.

It is a mystery to me, the Bayside City Council and most Bayside residents why the minister has chosen to intervene in this area in total contradiction of his policy statement and the principles set out in December last year. The only reason we can surmise is that the minister probably understands that it is hardly likely that Bayside will ever vote for the Labor Party, so he is quite unconcerned about offending the voters. He seems to use his powers fairly selectively, and obviously he feels no compunction about intervening because he does not have any empathy with that constituency, which has never voted for the Labor Party in its life and is hardly likely ever to vote for it.

I ask the minister to investigate the matter further and inform the council and the house which criterion enabled him to intervene. I ask him also to provide any further advice he may have had when he made the decision to intervene so that this matter can be cleared up with the Bayside council and community and the decision can be given some credibility. The intervention by the minister in a very important area of planning smacks of total hypocrisy and treats municipal councils and their resolutions with total disdain.

### **Monash Medical Centre**

**Hon. M. T. LUCKINS** (Waverley) — During the adjournment debate yesterday I asked the Minister for Industrial Relations what role she had taken to resolve the dispute involving the HSUA — Health Services

Union of Australia — and the Southern Health Care Network in my electorate. The dispute resulted in the cancellation of 80 elective surgery procedures and hundreds of patients having to eat junk food during the period of the dispute over some days.

The minister said in her reply, which I read in *Hansard* today and which I shall paraphrase, that she had talked to the union and encouraged it to go before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to resolve the dispute.

I ask the minister to advise the house of the date of that discussion with the union and to justify why she failed to act as an honest broker in the dispute. By failing to discuss the dispute with the Southern Health Care Network she has confirmed that her close relationship with the union movement has disenfranchised the employer — in this case a public hospital — and hundreds of patients at Monash Medical Centre in my electorate.

### **Burgundy Street–Rosanna Road intersection: traffic management**

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** (Templestowe) — I wish to raise an issue with the Minister for Energy and Resources representing the Minister for Transport in another place. The intersection of Burgundy and Jika streets in Heidelberg is about 50 metres east of the Burgundy Street–Rosanna Road intersection. By traffic standards the intersection is very close to the busy Rosanna Road and Banksia Street.

The intersection area is controlled by a keep-clear sign on the pavement. The intention is to allow traffic flowing from the Beverley Road area through to Burgundy Street to turn right into Rosanna Road. It appears the sign is often disregarded by traffic going in both directions, thereby blocking access to vehicles travelling from the Banyule district of Heidelberg, View Bank and Rosanna East.

The problem is aggravated by heavy usage by southbound traffic of Rosanna Road, with traffic turning left into Burgundy Street to gain access to Banksia Street and the eastern suburbs. I am told there is an unacceptable bank-up of traffic along Burgundy Street, going all the way back to Banksia Street through Jika and Dora streets and along Beverley Road, which goes back to the parklands area.

I have been told that the bottleneck causes extremely lengthy delays, especially in the morning and afternoon peak-hour traffic. Turning right into Burgundy Street towards Rosanna Road has been described to me as an

almost impossible task. Traffic often has to wait for three or four traffic light changes at Rosanna Road. In some instances people have to take a far longer, circuitous route, turning left instead of right, to avoid the delays. Those who travel that route daily, especially parents taking children to creches and schools, feel very exposed to danger.

I am told the matter has been raised with Banyule City Council, and it has washed its hands of the problem, saying it is a Vicroads matter. I ask the minister to ask the Minister for Transport to investigate the cause of the congestion that gives rise to the traffic condition that concerns many residents in the Banyule, View Bank and Rosanna district and to take steps to introduce traffic control to remove the bottleneck, which is causing quite a degree of anxiety and danger, not to mention the inconvenience to residents in the area.

### Schools: Albert Park

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation as representative of the Minister for Education in the other place. Last month a very successful St Kilda Festival was held in the heart of the Monash Province. I encourage anyone who has not done so to attend the festival, located on Acland and Fitzroy streets and the Upper Esplanade. It is a wonderful day.

While at the festival I came across a brochure that John Thwaites had put out on the day — John Thwaites, the local member, could not see fit to be there celebrating with his constituents. He must be very busy being Minister for Health, Minister for Planning and Deputy Premier. A brochure he released on the day states:

Bracks Labor government is delivering a \$60 million capital works program for schools and an increase of \$50 million for 1000 extra teachers.

Can the minister outline how much of that increased funding is being spent in the minister's own electorate of Albert Park and how the funds have been allocated?

### Government advertising

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Eumemmerring) — I raise for the attention of the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier in another place, a newspaper advertisement that appeared on page 28 of the *Herald Sun* on 31 December last year. The full-page advertisement is titled 'The events that shaped our state' and was placed by the state government. I am advised by the *Herald Sun* that the approximate cost of such an advertisement is around \$25 000.

That interesting advertisement lists in chronological order some of the events that have taken place in Victoria and shaped its past. I was somewhat perplexed at what had been included in the section that described the 1980s and 1990s. The events for the 1980s included the commencement of the Landcare program and the opening of the debt-laden Melbourne Tennis Centre, both initiatives of the ALP government.

The events for the 1990s included Joan Kirner becoming Premier and the VFL becoming the AFL. Where are the achievements of the 1990s? Where are the achievements of the Kennett government? For example, where is the mention of the opening of the Melbourne Exhibition Centre? Where is the mention of the completion of the South Eastern Arterial? Honourable members on this side remember the traffic lights, even if members opposite do not. The list goes on.

The Labor government had an opportunity to use that advertisement to present a balanced and accurate reflection of Victoria's past. Instead it chose to waste up to \$25 000 of taxpayers' money on a shameful piece of political advertising.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips is now debating the issue. I ask him to please put his adjournment issue.

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** — I ask that the Premier inform Victorians what criteria were used when the events were selected for the advertisement and why the major achievements of the Kennett government were not included.

### Australian institute for depression

**Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER** (Silvan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Industrial Relations, representing the Minister for Health in another place. The minister is aware that I am a vocal advocate for the establishment of the Australian institute for depression in Melbourne and have been for some time. The minister will also recall this was a key initiative of former Premier Kennett last year and was lauded widely as a groundbreaking initiative at the time.

On 24 November last year I asked the Minister for Health whether he would pursue and proceed with the establishment of that important institute in Victoria. On 5 December I was pleased to read in the *Herald Sun* an article headed 'Labor backs Jeff's depression plan', stating that a spokesperson for the Minister for Health, Mr Thwaites, had said the project was a high priority for the government and that negotiations with the

federal government would be continued. The spokesperson further said:

The project certainly hasn't been scrapped. The minister believes it has a lot of merit, but we are still only at the talking stage.

Honourable members can imagine my surprise when on 20 December I received a letter from Minister Thwaites in response to my query in this place. In that letter he failed completely to commit to pursuing the institute with the federal government and the Prime Minister or to pursuing funding from the federal government.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** interjected.

**Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER** — Public comments indicated he was supportive of the project. Obviously that was not the case in the minister's mind.

I am advised by the office of the federal Minister for Health and Aged Care that Minister Thwaites has contacted neither him nor the Prime Minister. He has not written to pursue the project. Indeed there has been no contact from the Victorian Minister for Health.

The minister should not need to be reminded that the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Carr, is aggressively pursuing the project and the federal funding associated with it. He is making public calls for the commonwealth to move it to New South Wales. He has also written and spoken personally to both the Prime Minister and the federal health minister.

My concern is that the Victorian health minister does not realise there is a real danger Victoria will miss out on this important initiative — another initiative that Victoria will miss out on. Again I ask the minister to urgently move to secure that important project and its establishment in Victoria and to make the necessary personal representations to the federal health minister and the Prime Minister on the matter. Further, will he ask the Premier to do the same thing?

### **Parliament: ministerial responses**

**Hon. E. J. POWELL** (North Eastern) — I ask the Minister for Small Business, representing the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Aged Care in another place, about the time taken for ministers to respond to questions and, more importantly, the quality of the response that is finally received.

In early November I was contacted by Mr Les Wynne, who is the president of the Goulburn Valley Association of Independent Retirees. I then received a deputation from GVAIR, with a copy of a letter the association had written to the Minister for Transport on

1 November 1999 requesting a meeting with him to talk about travel concessions for rural seniors on buses and trains. The association was also concerned about inequities such as the fact that Victorian metropolitan Seniors Card holders currently have a seven-day-a-week concession on travel but Victorian country seniors are limited to just three days a week — Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Currently the Seniors Card holders in regional New South Wales and Queensland have a seven-day-a-week concession, and I believe Victoria's rural senior travellers should have that as well.

On 15 November I wrote to the Minister for Transport alerting him to the issue and asking for a deputation in support of the independent retirees. On 22 November I received a response from the minister's office saying that he acknowledged receipt of the letter, that the matter was receiving attention and that a response would be forwarded as soon as possible.

Having heard nothing for about two months, on 25 February I again wrote to the minister asking for a deputation and bringing the matter back to his attention. I said the independent retirees were now urging other rural members to get involved.

Honourable members can imagine my surprise and anger when on 28 February, just three days later, I and the independent retirees received a response three months after my letter was sent and four months after the letter from the independent retirees was sent. The response states:

On behalf of the Minister for Transport I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 15 November 1999 concerning the above matter.

Your comments have been noted. The matter you have raised is within the responsibility of the Minister for Aged Care, the Hon. Bronwyn Pike, MP. The letter has therefore been referred to Ms Pike for consideration and direct response to you.

I therefore ask that when the Minister for Aged Care receives my letter, as well as that of the independent retirees, she act upon it responsibly and straightaway receive a deputation, because the seniors in rural Victoria are getting very angry.

### **Fishing: rock lobsters**

**Hon. R. H. BOWDEN** (South Eastern) — I seek the assistance of the Minister for Energy and Resources as the minister representing the Minister for Agriculture and Resources in the other place on a matter concerning the rock lobster harvesting industry in the eastern zone

of Victoria and specifically constituents of mine in the fishing fleet based out of San Remo.

For several years there has been growing concern and doubt over the state government's forward policies for access and control mechanisms for rock lobsters in the eastern zone. The fishermen who work out of San Remo are in close consultation with their colleagues in other ports in the eastern zone and are concerned that their views are not being accurately conveyed by industry channels to the minister's office. They have asked me to advise the minister of their increasing concern.

The fishermen do not want quotas. I repeat: they are signalling very clearly that they do not want quotas. They would prefer a negotiated range of input controls. Will the minister give an undertaking to specifically seek inputs and receive a delegation directly from eastern zone rock lobster fishing operators when considering future access policies?

#### **Whitehorse: street hardware**

**Hon. G. B. ASHMAN** (Koonung) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources, representing the Minister for Transport in another place, to the fact that people who have travelled along Whitehorse Road through Nunawading and Mitcham will have noted that the Whitehorse council has painted all the street hardware a dark green. Although it is aesthetically pleasing and softens the landscape, it presents problems to transport using that major arterial road.

Based on contacts from a number of locals and my own observations, I think the painting of some of the street hardware dark green does present problems. I have noted that at the intersections of Whitehorse and Springvale roads and Mitcham and Whitehorse roads in particular the poles that carry the traffic signals have been painted dark green. They were formerly painted either yellow or the amber colour that most traffic control signal poles are painted. On a dark night the poles are now not visible. When the lights turn to amber they blend into the street lighting and are not visible either. A similar difficulty occurs with the green and red lights blending into the advertising lighting on the adjoining retail properties, which creates a significant problem.

I suggest that the visibility of all traffic signal poles needs to be addressed because, as all honourable members know, it is not just the lights that give motorists the message; they pick up other signals that indicate they are approaching intersections or areas where there are traffic signals. It is therefore my view

and that of my constituents that most of the intersection poles should be left galvanised or painted yellow to clearly identify the major intersections.

I understand the collision rate at the intersections has increased since the poles were painted green. I ask the minister to investigate whether that is so and whether Vicroads believes the intersections are less visible because of the dark green poles. If so the Whitehorse council should be instructed to return them to the original yellow colour.

#### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources to the February electricity crisis. The Minister for Industrial Relations has acknowledged that the government constantly monitored the supply of electricity and that the cabinet major incidents committee was monitoring the situation for some time. Further, the Premier acknowledged that regular meetings of the cabinet committee on major incidents were held on the matter. Notwithstanding the minister's reluctance to respond earlier today to a question about advice received in January on those matters, will she advise the house when the major incidents committee of cabinet first met on the threat to the electricity supply?

#### **Industrial relations: wage claim**

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — I refer the Minister for Small Business to the Victorian government's submission to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in February that sought a \$24 per week increase in minimum award rates in Victoria. The Minister for Industrial Relations made a proud boast today of how the government was, not surprisingly, supporting the Australian Council of Trade Unions on that matter.

I am interested to know two things. Firstly, given the enormous impact that such a wage rise will have on the costs of operating small business in this state, was the Minister for Small Business consulted before the Victorian government made that submission? Secondly, before the submission was lodged by either the minister's department or officers, was there any assessment of the impact of such a generous suggestion from the government for increasing the costs of small business, therefore enabling the minister to argue for some balance between the needs of employees as against the cost of that action for businesses?

## Responses

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Honourable Cameron Boardman raised an issue with me about a response I made during the adjournment debate last night. I reiterate the statement I made last night and again today — I think he generally referred to what was in *Hansard* and I direct him back to *Hansard*. I stated clearly that my response was based on advice I had received about the fact the bans had been lifted and that was the response I stand by. Last night the advice I had was that the bans had been lifted. I have received further advice today that there have been some administrative bans put in place. Last night when I gave the response it was quite clear. I indicated the advice I received — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — I said the advice I had received was that the bans had been lifted.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — The advice I received was that the bans had been totally lifted.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — Mr Deputy President, I advised the house that the bans had been totally lifted on the Friday and that I had been advised that the bans had been lifted, that negotiations were continuing and there was one outstanding matter to be negotiated.

The Honourable Ian Cover — —

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — Where did you say it?

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — It says it in *Hansard*, which I do not want to quote.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, I make it quite clear that we will give leave to the minister to quote *Hansard* if it assists her. We certainly believe it would be advantageous for her to be able to give us an indication as to what she is quoting from and where she said it, because I have *Hansard* in front of me and I do not believe what she has told us is true. If she wants leave to quote from *Hansard* we will certainly provide leave.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! On the point of order, leave is granted if the minister wishes to use that avenue.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — Mr Deputy President, I am advised — —

**Hon. I. J. Cover** — Start from where you said, ‘The Honourable Cameron Boardman’.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — The sentence before.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — I said:

The Honourable Cameron Boardman raised the matter of the bans imposed on 22 February by the United Firefighters Union for Country Fire Authority full-time firefighters. The Honourable Cameron Boardman is unaware that those bans were totally lifted last Friday. Negotiations and discussions between the parties continued over the weekend and yesterday. I am advised that negotiations have been taking place between the CFA and the relevant department ...

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — That is not what you said.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — That is from *Hansard*. You gave me leave to read *Hansard*. That is what I said:

I am advised that negotiations have been taking place between the CFA and the relevant department, that those bans have been lifted and that there is only one outstanding issue, which I am advised will be resolved very shortly.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — You misled the house.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — I did not mislead the house. I said quite clearly that:

I am advised that negotiations have been taking place ...

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. G. R. Craige** — Let’s look at *Hansard*, play the tape back and listen to what you said.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order!

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — The Honourable Ian Cover raised an issue about the bans that were in place and asked what action I had taken. I have been involved in the negotiations and discussions between the CFA and the United Firefighters Union and my office was in touch with Minister Haermeyer’s office, which has been directly involved in negotiations in that matter.

The Honourable Maree Luckins raised an issue she raised last night about industrial action that has taken place at the Southern Health Care Network. As I indicated to the public and to the house, we took the honest broker approach and spoke with the unions to encourage them to stop their industrial action and to try to reach a consensus or an outcome that was satisfactory to the employers or if that was not possible, to go to the commission to seek a negotiated outcome, which is what happened and is what I told the house yesterday.



**Hon. M. T. Luckins** — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, my question to the Minister for Industrial Relations was quite specific. I asked her to justify why she had not engaged in discussions with the Southern Health Care Network in the dispute and why she favoured the union, why she did not intervene and what action she took in the dispute. I ask the minister to answer my question.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! On the point of order, the mover of the point of order has clearly defined her question but it is up to the minister to answer it in the way she sees fit. I invite the minister to resume.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — Thank you, Mr Deputy President. As I indicated, it was the union taking the industrial action and I wanted its members to get back to work. My office was in touch with them and encouraged them to reach a consensus with the Southern Health Care Network or to go to the commission and seek a resolution to the dispute. That is what it was about, not to take sides but to seek a resolution to the dispute. The dispute was resolved and the parties are back at work.

The Honourable Andrew Olexander raised an important issue he wished me to take up with the Minister for Health, an issue he has raised previously in the house. I will refer that matter to the Minister for Health and ask him to respond to the honourable member.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The first issue raised with me was from the Honourable John Ross, a question to the Treasurer on a matter of stamp duty on the sale of nursing homes, and in particular the goodwill component of transactions and whether stamp duty should apply to those transactions.

**An Opposition Member** — We cannot hear you.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — The honourable member expressed concern about the impact that this may have on investments — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Minister, you need to speak up, please.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I cannot help it if some opposition members have trouble hearing.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister will never be heard with that noise in the chamber. Silence. I ask the minister to speak up.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — It is a pity that some honourable members' federal colleagues do not have the same level of concern that Dr Ross has for what goes on in nursing homes, but in relation to his request I will certainly ask the Treasurer to provide advice on the situation and ascertain the policy.

The next question, from the Honourable Geoff Craige, concerns bag limits and a review of recreational fishing. He expressed a great deal of confidence about what reports he believes are sitting on my desk, which is very interesting. The last time I looked at my desk there was no such report sitting on it, but I have no difficulty in establishing the progress of that report, which commenced under the previous government. I have no difficulty in releasing reports in accordance with the government's commitment to greater democratisation of government.

The Honourable Dianne Hadden directed to the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation the concerns of her constituents about regional forest agreements and the time available for them to lodge submissions. She asked that the minister request the commonwealth minister to extend the time available for her constituents to make submissions. I shall pass on that request to the minister.

The Honourable Graeme Stoney referred to the powerline to the Mount Hotham ski resort. He made a number of incorrect assumptions. He assumed that I have not met with the company. I have met with the company and ensured it had the opportunity to make its case directly to the responsible minister, the Minister for Environment and Conservation — —

**Hon. E. G. Stoney** — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, I believe I said the minister had not met with Minister Garbutt.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! My recollection is that that is correct, that is what the Honourable Graeme Stoney said.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — In addition to meeting with the company and ensuring it could make its case directly to the responsible minister, the Minister for Environment and Conservation in the other place, I have also met with the company, the minister and the department responsible for providing advice to the minister. I will further advise the minister that the matter has again been raised by the honourable member and seek her advice.

The Honourable Bill Forwood asked about the attendance of my chief of staff at a fundraising function. I have provided information on that matter

earlier. It is entirely in accordance with my practice that members of my staff attend such functions with me. If the honourable member has questions about my chief of staff, he should direct them to her.

The Honourable Ken Smith asked me to direct to the attention of the Treasurer the lengthy subject of the public sector investment program.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — That is in a report on the capital works program of the previous government which, I understand, was delayed because of the election. The honourable member has requested the Treasurer to provide advice about variations to the program. I will direct that request to him.

The Honourable Neil Lucas directed a matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport in the other house. Mr Lucas has apologised for his early departure from the house to attend an important function. He referred to the railway crossing on the Narre Warren–Cranbourne Road, a matter he has already discussed with the minister. He seeks further advice from the minister about the expected completion date of the project. I will pass that on to the minister.

The Honourable Roger Hallam asked about my pecuniary interests return. I could make a special plea about my particular circumstances at that time. However, I do not think that in any way detracts from my responsibility to lodge that return in time. I did so at the earliest opportunity. I believe there is nothing untoward about that return.

The Honourable David Davis asked about communications with Yallourn Energy and advice about the industrial relations situation at the company. He requested details of correspondence on that matter. Public discussions have been held with the company about its industrial relations stance and potential implications for supply in January. He asked me whether the company is to provide details. That is a matter for the responsible minister.

The Honourable Ron Best directed to the attention of the Minister for Transport his concern about the availability of seats for country rail trips during Senior Citizens Week. He requested the minister to increase the number of available seats. I will certainly pass that on to the minister.

The Honourable Carlo Furletti asked that the Minister for Transport in the other place investigate the traffic situation at the intersection of Burgundy Street and Rosanna Road, Heidelberg, and access to the

intersection from Beverley Road. He expressed concern about that location. He asked the minister whether action could be taken to resolve that bottleneck. I will pass on his request.

The Honourable Ron Bowden directed a matter to the attention of the Minister for Agriculture, but I believe it was directed to me, about the eastern zone rock lobster harvesting and the concerns of fishers, particularly in the far east of that zone. I have already met with several groups from the eastern zone on this matter. I was asked if I would seek input directly from the fishers. I have already done so. I urge all fishers to make submissions in response to an offer made by the previous government about allocating quotas in fisheries. I am looking forward to receiving a report.

The Honourable Gerald Ashman asked the Minister for Transport about the green colour of traffic light poles and other matters to do with visibility and photographic controls at certain intersections in Mitcham. He asked the Minister for Transport to investigate whether the change in the colour of traffic control signal poles is having some impact on the rate of motor vehicle accidents. I will pass on that request to the minister.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** interjected.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — You raised all these matters!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — The Honourable Philip Davis requested advice about the timing of a cabinet meeting at the time of the electricity crisis in January. That is covered by cabinet-in-confidence considerations and will remain confidential.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Small Business) — The Honourable Sang Nguyen directed to the attention of the Minister for Housing his concern about robberies and break-ins in the Braybrook area and the need for a cooperative approach from the council and the Minister for Housing to tackle the problem. I will pass that on to the minister.

The Honourable Peter Katsambanis referred to an email forwarded to him following a meeting between me and representatives of the Institute of Chartered Accountants about the introduction of the goods and services tax. The meeting discussed cases of hardship because of the introduction of the GST. In the meeting the representatives referred to their clients having difficulty in dealing with GST compliance and cost issues.

They emailed members asking whether they could provide information. I am interested in cases of hardship as a result of compliance costs. I repeat: I intend requesting the federal minister responsible for small business to take up these matters with the federal Treasurer so that additional packages of assistance can be made available to small businesses that are suffering because of the imposts of the GST. I would be happy to receive such information from opposition members. Opposition members could also seek to do it themselves with business people who are suffering under the burden of the compliance costs that come with the implementation of the GST. To date I have not heard from the institute about its progress. I will follow up the matter.

The Honourable Wendy Smith referred to lack of confidence in the small business sector, a national trend about which we all should be concerned. The speculation about interest rates is not helping retail sales, although the slump in rural Australia does not appear to be as significant in rural Victoria. In today's *Age* Dr John Marsden is quoted as saying that Victoria is not so bad. I do not know that the sample is large enough to make that assessment, but that is his comment. The government is conscious of the need to promote small business in regional and rural Victoria.

The Honourable Jeanette Powell raised for the attention of the Minister for Aged Care in the other place the Goulburn Valley Association of Independent Retirees and the delay in receiving letters about extending a concession from three days a week to seven days a week. I shall raise the matter with the minister to ensure the member receives a quick response.

The Honourable Mark Birrell raised a matter about the living wage increase and the minimum award case before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. He asked whether I was consulted or whether any assessment was carried out by the department for a submission. To my knowledge there was no request of the department to provide such a brief and the decision was a decision of the cabinet.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The Honourable Elaine Carbines referred to airconditioning at Leopold Primary School. I shall refer the matter to the Minister for Education in the other place.

The Honourable Andrew Brideson asked a question about a year 7 student having emotional problems and undertaking treatment. He was also concerned about the enrolment dates at the secondary school involved. I will

raise the matter with the Minister for Education in the other place.

The Honourable Theo Theophanous raised the matter of Jiannis Kouros being a potential torch bearer for the Olympic Games. It would be marvellous for such an inspiring athlete to carry the torch in and around Melbourne, which has the third largest Greek community in the world. It would be inspiring not only for Melburnians and Victorians but also the Greek community at large. I shall raise that matter with the coordinating body.

The Honourable Chris Strong asked about the Bayside planning scheme and the Heritage gazetting of a number of properties in that scheme. The matter was raised with me at an urban planning summit last Friday by a representative of the Bayside City Council. Those concerns are being addressed, and I shall refer the matter to the Minister for Planning in the other place.

The Honourable Andrea Coote asked about the extent of the capital works program for schools in her province. I shall raise that matter with the Minister for Education in the other place.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 6.47 p.m. until Tuesday, 14 March.**



**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.*

*Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.*

*Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.*

*The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

**Tuesday, 29 February 2000**

**Premier: FOI record management**

- 1. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): What record management procedure has the Premier implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process, the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Treasurer: FOI record management**

- 2. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What record management procedure has the Treasurer implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Treasury and Finance maintains a paper based filing system. The document management policy of the Department classifies electronic documents (including e-mails received by and generated within the Department) as official business documents in the same manner as paper based documents. Under this policy electronic documents are required to be produced in hard copy and attached to department files as paper documents, where they record decisions, policy, issues or action taken within the Department.

Instructions concerning this policy are available to all staff members via a central database.

This policy ensures timely identification of and access to all relevant documents required to meet the Department's obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

In addition, as part of a longer term document management strategy the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria

(PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Multicultural Affairs: FOI record management**

3. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): What record management procedure has he implemented within the Victorian Multicultural Commission to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian Multicultural Commission currently maintains its own comprehensive record management procedures in relation to its documents. In addition to this, a range of documents can be accessed electronically through the Commission's web page at [www.muticultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.muticultural.vic.gov.au).

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process, the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Health: FOI record management**

4. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

The Department of Human Services has protocols in place to ensure that good record management practices are adhered to.

### **Planning: FOI record management**

5. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable,

accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Infrastructure has a comprehensive records management program in place, using RecFind as its records management system, managing both documents and files, supported by comprehensive policy and practices guidelines.

The records practices are those that existed prior to the formation of the current Government, and are constantly being reviewed and updated. The Freedom of Information Manager has access to all records that currently exist in the records management system.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Transport: FOI record management**

6. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Infrastructure has a comprehensive records management program in place, using RecFind as its records management system, managing both documents and files, supported by comprehensive policy and practices guidelines.

The records practices are those that existed prior to the formation of the current Government, and are constantly being reviewed and updated. The Freedom of Information Manager has access to all records that currently exist in the records management system.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Energy and Resources: FOI record management**

7. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources: What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Since the Department of Natural Resources and Environment was formed in 1996 all records have been centralised and maintained on the Departmental RecFind system. Good records management practices have been fostered by conducting training courses in metropolitan and regional locations and convening regular meetings of records staff.

The Department follows the guidelines laid down by the *Public Records Act 1973* and the Public Records Office Standards for the Management of Public Records and has issued procedures for Central Records Management, Records Disposal and E-mail and Internet Electronic Media which set out approved records management practices.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**State and Regional Development: FOI record management**

8. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development: What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Finance: FOI record management**

9. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:



The Department of Treasury and Finance maintains a paper based filing system. The document management policy of the Department classifies electronic documents (including e-mails received by and generated within the Department) as official business documents in the same manner as paper based documents. Under this policy electronic documents are required to be produced in hard copy and attached to department files as paper documents, where they record decisions, policy, issues or action taken within the Department.

Instructions concerning this policy are available to all staff members via a central database.

This policy ensures timely identification of and access to all relevant documents required to meet the Department's obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

In addition, as part of a longer term document management strategy the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **State and Regional Development: FOI record management**

10. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Treasurer: FOI record management**

11. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Assistant Treasurer): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Treasury and Finance maintains a paper based filing system. The document management policy of the Department classifies electronic documents (including e-mails received by and generated within the Department) as official business documents in the same manner as paper based documents. Under this policy electronic documents are required to be produced in hard copy and attached to department files as paper documents, where they record decisions, policy, issues or action taken within the Department.

Instructions concerning this policy are available to all staff members via a central database.

This policy ensures timely identification of and access to all relevant documents required to meet the Department's obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

In addition, as part of a longer term document management strategy the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Local Government: FOI record management**

12. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Local Government): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

#### **ANSWER:**

The Department of Infrastructure has a comprehensive records management program in place, using RecFind as its records management system, managing both documents and files, supported by comprehensive policy and practices guidelines.

The records practices are those that existed prior to the formation of the current Government, and are constantly being reviewed and updated. The Freedom of Information Manager has access to all records that currently exist in the records management system.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Workcover: FOI record management**

13. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for WorkCover): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

#### **ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian WorkCover Authority utilises the "TRIM" computer based records management system for managing all corporate information ie. files, documents, storage boxes etc.

All compensation claim file electronic information is contained within the "ACCtion" data base system, which is currently managed by CSC Australia and is available in full to the Authority through its own data warehouse system should it be required under FOI.

Electronic records are kept on the Authority's file servers where they are backed up on a regular basis and are available on-line to users as required. The Victorian WorkCover Authority is examining policies and procedures to capture and store electronic records in such a way that they are readily identifiable and accessible, including monitoring projects involving the use of new technology currently being conducted by the Victorian Government.

### **Transport: FOI record management**

- 14. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

#### **ANSWER:**

The Department of Infrastructure has a comprehensive records management program in place, using RecFind as it's records management system, managing both documents and files, supported by comprehensive policy and practices guidelines.

The records practices are those that existed prior to the formation of the current Government, and are constantly being reviewed and updated. The Freedom of Information Manager has access to all records that currently exist in the records management system.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Community Services: FOI record management**

- 15. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

#### **ANSWER:**

The Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

The Department of Human Services has protocols in place to ensure that good record management practices are adhered to.

**Education: FOI record management**

16. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows

The Department of Education, Employment and Training's 1999 *Recordkeeping Policy and Guidelines* advises staff to print essential electronic documents and attach the hard copy to relevant files. An additional 1999 document *Interim Guidelines for the Management of Electronic Mail Messages* provides a checklist for staff to determine the retention or disposal of electronic mail messages.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily available.

In 1998 the Department of Education won the inaugural Sir Rupert Hamer Records Management Award.

**Industrial Relations: FOI record management**

20. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Treasury and Finance maintains a paper based filing system. The document management policy of the Department classifies electronic documents (including e-mails received by and generated within the Department) as official business documents in the same manner as paper based documents. Under this policy electronic documents are required to be produced in hard copy and attached to department files as paper documents, where they record decisions, policy, issues or action taken within the Department.

Instructions concerning this policy are available to all staff members via a central database.

This policy ensures timely identification of and access to all relevant documents required to meet the Department's obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

In addition, as part of a longer term document management strategy the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Workcover: FOI record management**

21. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for WorkCover: What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian WorkCover Authority utilises the “TRIM” computer based records management system for managing all corporate information ie. files, documents, storage boxes etc.

All compensation claim file electronic information is contained within the “ACCtion” data base system, which is currently managed by CSC Australia and is available in full to the Authority through its own data warehouse system should it be required under FOI.

Electronic records are kept on the Authority’s file servers where they are backed up on a regular basis and are available on-line to users as required. The Victorian WorkCover Authority is examining policies and procedures to capture and store electronic records in such a way that they are readily identifiable and accessible, including monitoring projects involving the use of new technology currently being conducted by the Victorian Government.

**Police and Emergency Services: FOI record management**

22. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Justice currently has sound records management practices, which meet Public Record Office Victoria standards and requirements.

Through its Online Services area, the Department of Justice has initiated the development of a comprehensive Knowledge Management Framework, a component of which will be to acquire and implement an Enterprise (electronic) Document Management System across the Department.

A project has commenced to develop an up-to-date Document Management Strategy, which will support the acquisition and implementation of an EDMS. The outcome of this project will be that all electronic documents generated and/or received in the Department of Justice will be captured, discovered, stored and archived in a long term format, in accordance with the provisions of the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) and the Public Record Office Victoria ‘Standard for the Management of Electronic Records’.

To support this the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the VERS developed by the Public Record Office in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Agriculture: FOI record management**

23. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Agriculture): What record management procedure has he implemented

within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Since the Department of Natural Resources and Environment was formed in 1996 all records have been centralised and maintained on the Departmental RecFind system. Good records management practices have been fostered by conducting training courses in metropolitan and regional locations and convening regular meetings of records staff.

The Department follows the guidelines laid down by the *Public Records Act 1973* and the Public Records Office Standards for the Management of Public Records and has issued procedures for Central Records Management, Records Disposal and E-mail and Internet Electronic Media which set out approved records management practices.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Aboriginal Affairs: FOI record management**

24. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

The Department of Human Services has protocols in place to ensure that good record management practices are adhered to.

**Attorney-General: FOI record management**

25. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Justice currently has sound records management practices, which meet Public Record Office Victoria standards and requirements.

Through its Online Services area, the Department of Justice has initiated the development of a comprehensive Knowledge Management Framework, a component of which will be to acquire and implement an Enterprise (electronic) Document Management System across the Department.

A project has commenced to develop an up-to-date Document Management Strategy, which will support the acquisition and implementation of an EDMS. The outcome of this project will be that all electronic documents generated and/or received in the Department of Justice will be captured, discovered, stored and archived in a long term format, in accordance with the provisions of the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) and the Public Record Office Victoria 'Standard for the Management of Electronic Records'.

To support this the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the VERS developed by the Public Record Office in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Manufacturing Industry: FOI record management**

26. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry): What record management procedure he has implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Racing: FOI record management**

27. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Racing): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: FOI record management**

28. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

The answer to this question has been incorporated within the response to Legislative Council Question No. 16, a copy of which is attached.

**Sport and Recreation: FOI record management**

29. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation: What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Planning: FOI record management**

30. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning: What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.



**ANSWER:**

The Department of Infrastructure has a comprehensive records management program in place, using RecFind as it's records management system, managing both documents and files, supported by comprehensive policy and practices guidelines.

The records practices are those that existed prior to the formation of the current Government, and are constantly being reviewed and updated. The Freedom of Information Manager has access to all records that currently exist in the records management system.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Gaming: FOI record management**

31. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The record management procedures for the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority are contained in the Authority's Administration Manual, a looseleaf system of indexed instructions issued to all staff upon induction and updated from time to time as required. This Manual states the policy that the official records of the Authority are to be kept in paper form on hard copy files which are centrally registered and controlled. Matter related e-mails are to be printed to create a permanent paper record for the file. This Manual also advises staff that e-mails and other electronic documents are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and that, when responding to a request concerning a Freedom of Information application, staff must search their systems for relevant e-mails and provide them in hard copy format for consideration in the Freedom of Information process.

**Major Projects and Tourism: FOI record management**

32. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Multicultural Affairs: FOI record management**

- 33. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs): What record management procedure has he implemented within his department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

#### **ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian Multicultural Commission currently maintains its own comprehensive record management procedures in relation to its documents. In addition to this, a range of documents can be accessed electronically through the Commission's web page at [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au).

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process, the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

### **Housing: FOI record management**

- 34. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing): What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

#### **ANSWER:**

The Government is currently assessing its capacity to further ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

The Department of Human Services has protocols in place to ensure that good record management practices are adhered to.

**Small Business: FOI record management**

35. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business: What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that there are good record management practices that exist within the Department of State and Regional Development.

The Victorian Government is currently assessing its capacity to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that Freedom of Information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

As a part of this process the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) developed by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Consumer Affairs: FOI record management**

36. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: What record management procedure has she implemented within her department to ensure that all documents in electronic format are readily identifiable, accessible and immediately available to ensure that any freedom-of-information applications can be processed in a complete and timely manner.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Justice currently has sound records management practices, which meet Public Record Office Victoria standards and requirements.

Through its Online Services area, the Department of Justice has initiated the development of a comprehensive Knowledge Management Framework, a component of which will be to acquire and implement an Enterprise (electronic) Document Management System across the Department.

A project has commenced to develop an up-to-date Document Management Strategy, which will support the acquisition and implementation of an EDMS. The outcome of this project will be that all electronic documents generated and/or received in the Department of Justice will be captured, discovered, stored and archived in a long term format, in accordance with the provisions of the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) and the Public Record Office Victoria 'Standard for the Management of Electronic Records'.

To support this the Department of Infrastructure is currently piloting the VERS developed by the Public Record Office in conjunction with the CSIRO. The main aim of this strategy is to capture and preserve electronic records in such a way that they are readily accessible in the long term.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: TAFE college and Hon. Paul Keating**

38. **THE HON. R. H. BOWDEN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): What are the details of the agreement or arrangements between the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE and the Honourable Paul Keating, former Prime Minister of Australia, indicating the — (i) responsibilities; (ii) timing of the contract; (iii) area of activities; and (iv) reimbursement.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (i) The responsibility of the Honourable Paul Keating is to promote the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE as a provider on a commercial basis, of training programs in overseas countries.
- (ii) The timing of the contract is from August 1999 and is to continue by mutual agreement with Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.
- (iii) The areas of activities include:
  - high level representation of the Institute's overseas interests;
  - endorsement of the Institute's overseas interests;
  - occasional meetings with Institute senior and international staff;
  - Inspection of selected Institute facilities and briefing sessions as requested; and
  - contribution to media releases by way of photo opportunities or occasional comment.
- (iv) The reimbursement is \$20,000 per annum for a two-year period plus travel and accommodation costs which are directly related to the services supplied to the Institute. Payment is made on provision of invoices to the Institute.

**Premier: electronic service delivery**

- 39. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): What target dates have been set within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998.

The Brack's Government has not changed target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

**Treasurer: electronic service delivery**

- 40. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What target dates have been set within the department of Treasury and Finance and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998 as follows:

- Provision of all tenders on the Internet – December 1998
- Availability of all Public Forms electronically accessible – December 1998
- High volume information on the Internet – December 1998
- All Government publications on the Internet – December 1999
- Conduct of all Government purchasing electronically – December 2001
- All transactions online – December 2001

The Brack's Government has not changed these target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

### **Multicultural Affairs: electronic service delivery**

- 41. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): What target dates have been set within the Victorian Multicultural Commission and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the— (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998.

The Brack's Government has not changed target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

### **Health: electronic service delivery**

- 42. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): What target dates have been set within the Department of Human Services and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

The target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998 as follows:

- Provision of all tenders on the Internet – December 1998
- Availability of all Public Forms electronically accessible – December 1998
- High volume information on the Internet – December 1998
- All Government publications on the Internet – December 1999
- Conduct of all Government purchasing Electronic – December 2001
- All transactions online – December 2001

The Brack's Government has not changed these target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

**Ports: electronic service delivery**

- 43. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources: What target dates have been set within the Department of Infrastructure and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all government purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

The target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998 as follows:

- Provision of all tenders on the Internet – December 1998
- Availability of all Public Forms electronically accessible – December 1998
- High volume information on the Internet – December 1998
- All Government publications on the Internet – December 1999
- Conduct of all Government purchasing Electronic – December 2001
- All transactions online – December 2001

The Brack's Government has not changed these target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

**State and Regional Development: electronic service delivery**

- 44. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): What target dates have been set within the Department of State and Regional Development and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Government Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998 as follows:

- Provision of tenders on the Internet – December 1998
- Availability of Public Forms electronically accessible – December 1998
- High volume information on the Internet – December 1998
- All Government publications on the Internet – December 1999
- Conduct of all Government purchasing – December 2001
- All transactions online – December 2001

The Bracks Government has not changed these target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

**Education: electronic service delivery**

- 45. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): What target dates have been set within the Department of Education, Employment and Training and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows

The target dates for the delivery of online services were established by the former Government as part of a program entitled Online Government 2001. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998 as follows:

- Provision of all tenders on the Internet - December 1998
- Availability of all public forms electronically accessible - December 1998
- High volume information on the Internet - December 1998
- All Government publications on the Internet - December 1999
- Conduct of all Government purchasing electronically - December 2001
- All transactions online - December 2001

The Brack's Government has not changed these target dates established by the former Government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

**Attorney-General: electronic service delivery**

- 47. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): What target dates have been set within the Department of Justice and each of its agencies for the achievement of delivery of services electronically in relation to the — (i) provision of all tenders on the Internet; (ii) availability of all public forms electronically; (iii) provision of all printed information on the Internet; (iv) conduct of all department purchasing electronically; and (v) conduct of all transactions online.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The target dates for the delivery of on-line services were established by the former government as part of a program entitled Online. There has been a progressive schedule of implementation since December 1998 as follows:

- Provision of all tenders on the Internet – December 1998
- Availability of all Public Forms electronically accessible – December 1998
- High volume information on the Internet – December 1998
- All Government publications on the Internet – December 1999
- Conduct of all Government purchasing electronically – December 2001
- All transactions online – December 2001

The Brack's Government has not changed these target dates established by the former government. The provision of departmental services online is dependent on what the department deems appropriate through conducting an audit of possible services to be delivered electronically. Some transactions may not be placed online as they have been assessed as not suitable for electronic delivery.

**Premier: equal opportunity employment**

48. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): Will the Premier provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Treasurer: equal opportunity employment**

49. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): Will the Treasurer provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

No preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**Multicultural Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

50. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Victorian Multicultural Commission, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.



**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Health: equal opportunity employment**

**51. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Planning: equal opportunity employment**

**52. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Transport: equal opportunity employment**

**53. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Ports: equal opportunity employment**

**54. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**State and Regional Development: equal opportunity employment**

**55. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Finance: equal opportunity employment**

- 56. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

No preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

### **State and Regional Development: equal opportunity employment**

- 57. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Assistant Treasurer: equal opportunity employment**

**58. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Assistant Treasurer): Will the Assistant Treasurer provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

No preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**Local Government: equal opportunity employment**

**59. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Local Government): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Workcover: equal opportunity employment**

**60. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for WorkCover): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian WorkCover Authority has never given, nor will it in the future, give preferential treatment on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**Transport : equal opportunity employment**

**61. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Community Services: equal opportunity employment**

**62. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Education: equal opportunity employment**

**63. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Education, Employment and Training, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education, Employment and Training has established employment processes that are consistent with the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* (the Act).

In accordance with sections 15 and 20 of the Act, agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Further, section 7 of the Act requires agency and public sector heads to establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided and employees have a reasonable avenue for redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

In relation to staff selection, the Department of Education, Employment and Training's priority remains to ensure that the best person for the job is selected through a process that is open, transparent and procedurally fair.

Selection of staff in the Department of Education, Employment and Training is determined solely on the basis of merit assessed in relation to the selection criteria of the job to be filled.

Ministerial staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Industrial Relations: equal opportunity employment**

67. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am unable to provide a response, as the Department of State Development does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

**Workcover: equal opportunity employment**

68. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for WorkCover: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian WorkCover Authority has never given, nor will it in the future, give preferential treatment on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**Police and Emergency Services: equal opportunity employment**

69. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Justice, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further, sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Justice and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.



In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Agriculture: equal opportunity employment**

**70. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Agriculture): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Aboriginal Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

**71. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Attorney-General: equal opportunity employment**

72. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): Will the Attorney-General provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Justice, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further, sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Justice and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Manufacturing Industry: equal opportunity employment**

73. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Racing: equal opportunity employment**

**74. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Racing): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: equal opportunity employment**

75. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Education, Employment and Training, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

The answer to this question has been incorporated within the response to Legislative Council Question No. 63, a copy of which is attached.

**Sport and Recreation: equal opportunity employment**

76. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Planning: equal opportunity employment**

77. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Gaming: equal opportunity employment**

**78. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

No preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**Major Projects and Tourism: equal opportunity employment**

**79. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Multicultural Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

- 80. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Victorian Multicultural Commission, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Housing: equal opportunity employment**

- 81. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given

to any employee within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff have and continue to be selected on merit.

**Small Business: equal opportunity employment**

**82. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Consumer Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

**83. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that no preference will be given to any employee within the Department of Justice, its agencies or the Minister's office on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further, sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Justice and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Premier: equal opportunity employment**

**84. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): Will the Premier provide a guarantee that within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance



- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Treasurer: equal opportunity employment**

- 85. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): Will the Treasurer provide a guarantee that within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

### **Multicultural Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

- 86. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Victorian Multicultural Commission, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Health: equal opportunity employment**

**87. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Planning: equal opportunity employment**

**88. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Transport: equal opportunity employment**

- 89. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Ports: equal opportunity employment**

- 90. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**State and Regional Development: equal opportunity employment**

**91. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Finance: equal opportunity employment**

92. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**State and Regional Development: equal opportunity employment**

93. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Assistant Treasurer: equal opportunity employment**

94. **THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Assistant Treasurer): Will the Assistant-Treasurer provide a guarantee that within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff,

promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**Local Government: equal opportunity employment**

**95. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Local Government): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Workcover: equal opportunity employment**

**96. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for WorkCover): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Staff selection processes at the Victorian WorkCover Authority are conducted on a merit basis and this will continue to be the case.

**Transport: equal opportunity employment**

**97. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Community Services: equal opportunity employment**

**98. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Education: equal opportunity employment**

- 99. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Education, Employment and Training, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Please refer to the response to Question No. 63, a copy of which is attached.

### **Industrial Relations: equal opportunity employment**

- 103. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am unable to provide a response, as the Department of State Development does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

### **Workcover: equal opportunity employment**

- 104. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for WorkCover: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Staff selection processes at the Victorian WorkCover Authority are conducted on a merit basis and this will continue to be the case.



**Police and Emergency Services: equal opportunity employment**

**105. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Justice, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further, sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Justice and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Agriculture: equal opportunity employment**

**106. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Agriculture): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Aboriginal Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

**107. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Attorney-General: equal opportunity employment**

**108. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): Will the Attorney-General provide a guarantee that within the Department of Justice, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further, sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Justice and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Manufacturing Industry: equal opportunity employment**

**109. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Racing: equal opportunity employment**

**110. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Racing): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: equal opportunity employment**

**111. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Education, Employment and Training, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Please refer to the response to Legislative Council Question No. 63, a copy of which is attached.

**Sport and Recreation: equal opportunity employment**

**112. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Planning: equal opportunity employment**

**113. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Infrastructure, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Infrastructure and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Gaming: equal opportunity employment**

**114. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Within the Department of Treasury and Finance, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

### **Major Projects and Tourism: equal opportunity employment**

**115. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Multicultural Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

**116. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Victorian Multicultural Commission, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

**Housing: equal opportunity employment**

**117. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing): Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Human Services, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff have and continue to be selected on merit.

### **Small Business: equal opportunity employment**

**118. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of State and Regional Development, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further sections 37(1)(b) and 39 the Act also provides that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

### **Consumer Affairs: equal opportunity employment**

**119. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: Will the Minister provide a guarantee that within the Department of Justice, its agencies or the Minister's office any decision to employ staff, promote staff or otherwise deal with an employee's employment relationship will not be determined in whole or in any part on the basis of membership of a trade union, political party or any other organisation.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:



Sections 15 and 20 of the *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998* ('the Act') provide that agency heads have all the rights, powers, authorities and duties of an employer and they must exercise these powers independently. Section 7 of the Act further provides that agency and public authority heads must establish employment processes that will ensure employment decisions are based on merit, employees are treated fairly and reasonably, equal employment opportunity is provided, and employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Further, sections 37(1)(b) and 39 of the Act also provide that the Commissioner for Public Employment may make Directions concerning the application of these principles. The Commissioner has made Directions entitled:

- Selecting on Merit
- Managing and Valuing Diversity
- Managing Under Performance
- Reviewing Personal Grievances
- Upholding Public Sector Conduct.

In exercising their responsibilities as employers, agency heads within the Department of Justice and public authority heads must comply with section 7 of the Act and the Commissioner's Directions.

In addition, Ministerial Staff are being selected on merit based on an open and transparent selection process. Terms and conditions of employment are to be negotiated with staff on a collective basis consistent with the Government's policy.

#### **State and Regional Development: 'A better deal for regional Victoria'**

**120. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister's press release of 9 November 1999, entitled "A Better Deal for Regional Victoria", what resources will the Victorian department, the New South Wales department and the Queensland department commit to the "alliance" and what criteria has the Minister set for determining the success of the "alliance".

**ANSWER:**

The Victorian Government will contribute to the Alliance through the existing resources of Multimedia Victoria.

The resource commitments of other State governments are a matter for their announcement.

The success criteria for the Alliance will be determined through further discussions with the New South Wales and Queensland Governments, but will directly relate to the objectives of the Alliance.

#### **State and Regional Development: eSign Australia**

**121. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister the Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development):

- (a). Has any State department assistance been given to eSign Australia; if so, what assistance
- (b). Did the Minister refuse to disclose details of such assistance to an ABC journalist at the Minister's press launch on 9 November 1999; if so, why.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Government has decided to continue the previous Government's policy of not disclosing assistance provided to companies on the basis that such disclosure disadvantages Victoria in competing for national and international investment.

**State and Regional Development: technology commercialisation program**

**122. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to Victoria’s Technology Commercialisation Program:

- (a) What funds will be made available under this program in the financial years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03 inclusive.
- (b) In respect of such funds what percentage will be given for —
  - (i) international marketing support;
  - (ii) strategic planning for growth;
  - (iii) intellectual property management; and
  - (iv) business packaging for investment.
- (c) As the stated main outcome of the program is a rise in the level of venture capital investment in innovative technological companies, what is the forecast rise of venture capital investment in Victoria attributable to the program by 1 July 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively.
- (d) What are the names of the “potential partner organisations” referred to in the Minister’s press release of 23 November 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) Funds of \$5 million per annum will be made available for the financial years 1999-2000 to 2002-2003.
- (b) The Department is currently in negotiation with potential partner organisations for delivery of the Technology Commercialisation Program which, once contracted, will assess the specific requirements of each technology business and determine the support to be provided on a market-tested case by case basis.
- (c) One of the desired outcomes of the Technology Commercialisation Program is an increase in the amount of venture capital available for the start-up phase of technology businesses. The support offered under the Technology Commercialisation Program will raise the quality of technology business investment deals on offer. The Department anticipates that this will lead to an increase in venture capital invested in technology businesses.
- (d) The Department is currently negotiating with a number of potential delivery organisations for elements of the Technology Commercialisation Program. While in negotiation the names and details of the delivery organisations are subject to a commercial-in-confidence agreement that formed part of the Department’s Expression of Interest process that began on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1999.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**123. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria”, that the department will assist “schools to properly resource the information technology needs of all their students and local communities”:

- (a) What is the Minister’s assessment of the resources needed to achieve this objective.
- (b) What computer to child ratio is sought by the department by 1 June 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively.

- (c) What additional budget will be applied to this purpose in the financial years 1999–2000 to 2002–03 inclusive.

**ANSWER:**

As part of the present Budget process, the Government is assessing what is needed to properly resource the information technology needs of schools. The target State average curriculum computer to student ratio was 1:5 by 30 June 2000. This target has already been surpassed. The budget to be applied to these purposes will be determined as part of the present Budget process.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**124. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria” that the department will “provide export development services through an online Electronic Export Assistance Centre”:

- (a) What budget will be available for this Centre in the financial years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03 inclusive.
- (b) What will be the form of the Centre.
- (c) What are the targets for delivery by the Centre.
- (d) What objectives will be set by the Centre and by what date should such objectives be achieved.

**ANSWER:**

Specifications for the Export Assistance Centre are currently being developed.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**125. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development: With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria” what steps and finance will be made available to meet his objective of wanting to “see more schools like Apollo Parkways Primary School and others”.

**ANSWER:**

As part of the present Budget process, the Government is assessing what is needed to properly resource the information technology needs of schools. Properly resourcing the IT needs of schools will support the objective of more schools achieving the benefits from technology usage, as schools like Apollo Parkways have done.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**126. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria” that the department will establish an “Information Community Technology Skills Taskforce” who will be appointed to the Taskforce and what budget will the Taskforce be given.

**ANSWER:**

As announced in “Connecting Victoria” I am in the process of establishing an Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Skills Taskforce to assist the Government to develop practical initiatives for joint implementation with the ICT industry, including specific examination of accelerated training programs, TAFE places, skilled migration, and promotion of technology-related business and career opportunities.

In 1999-2000 the Taskforce will be serviced from within Multimedia Victoria's existing budget.

**State and Regional Development: 'Connecting Victoria'**

**127. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister's statement "Connecting Victoria" what changes will be made to department outsourcing of department Information Technology operations.

**ANSWER:**

Many of the current IT Contracts established with the IT industry are long term arrangements, and as such are not due for review for many years.

Local companies will also be given the opportunity for participation in any new or reviewed IT projects

**State and Regional Development: 'Connecting Victoria'**

**128. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister's statement "Connecting Victoria" that the department "will bring new international business to Melbourne to help grow our local companies":

- (a) What programs will the department introduce or maintain to achieve this objective.
- (b) What targets has the department for the new international businesses in Melbourne by 1 June 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively.

**ANSWER:**

The Government will continue to develop new programs and refine existing programs to optimise the application of financial and human resources in its investment attraction program.

**State and Regional Development: 'Connecting Victoria'**

**129. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister's statement "Connecting Victoria" that the department will "promote the growth of high-tech clusters of firms and research institutions and encourage them in to locate in rural and regional Victoria":

- (a) What programs will be introduced or maintained to achieve this objective.
- (b) Which, if any, current high-tech clusters will be supported, and with what resources and targets.
- (c) What new high-tech clusters will be created by the department.
- (d) What practical assistance will be made available to encourage clusters to locate in rural and regional Victoria.
- (e) In what locations will such high-tech clusters be situated as at 1 June 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively.

**ANSWER:**

The Government will continue to develop new programs and refine existing programs to optimise the application of financial and human resources in promoting the growth of high-tech clusters in Victoria.

The Government will work in partnership with industry to build on existing high-tech clusters using a range of programs from a range of sources.

The Government will aim to establish new high-tech clusters through collaboration with industry partners. Project proposals will be assessed on a case by case basis.

The nature of assistance provided to projects will be assessed in conjunction with the project proposal.

The locations and timing of such projects will be determined by the nature of the industries involved.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**130. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria” that the department “will win major gains in employment across the whole of regional Victoria through its Regional Call Centre Attraction Centre”:

- (a) How many anticipated new call centres will be established in regional Victoria by 1 June 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively.
- (b) How many anticipated new jobs will be created in regional call centres by 1 June 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively;
- (c) How does this policy compare with that of the previous Coalition department.

**ANSWER:**

The Call Centre industry is a fast growing industry, the Government is therefore making every endeavour to maximise the opportunities for regional Victoria to participate in this growth. The Government will be working closely with Councils to promote regional Victoria as a destination for these types of activities.

The previous Government did not provide a dedicated program for the development of the call centre industry in regional Victoria.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**131. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria” that the department will establish a “High Tech Towns project (and) beginning with Ballarat and Portland, the department will work on establishing regional televillages”:

- (a) What is a televillage.
- (b) What budget will be allocated to this project in the financial years 1999–2000 to 2002–2003, respectively.
- (c) Is a “High Tech Town” the same thing as a “televillage”.
- (d) What are the criteria for the success of this program and each of its pilots.
- (e) When will assistance under this program be received by Bendigo, Mildura, Wonthaggi, Bairnsdale and Warrnambool, respectively.

**ANSWER:**

Hi-tech Towns” and “televillages” are the same in so far as they apply to “smart communities” – communities with a vision of the future that involves the use of information and communications technologies in new and innovative ways to empower residents, institutions and regions as a whole.

Two pilots have commenced in Ballarat and Portland. The Ballarat City Council has appointed a Project Manager for Ballarat and discussions have commenced with the Shire of Glenelg and Multimedia Victoria to define and determine scope of the televillages for these centres.

**State and Regional Development: ‘Connecting Victoria’**

**132. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the Minister’s statement “Connecting Victoria” that the department will help “everyone who wants to obtain an email address”:

- (a) How will the department help.
- (b) Will the provision of email addresses be free of charge and free of advertising.
- (c) What means for delivery of email will be used.
- (d) Will there be sufficient free access to the Internet to enable those who wish to access their email everyday to do so.

**ANSWER:**

One of the key themes of the *Connecting Victoria* Statement was to provide Victorians with improved access to and improved awareness of new technologies, including email. The *Connecting Victoria* document refers to several initiatives designed to improve access to and improve awareness of new technologies.

**State and Regional Development: online monitoring tools**

**133. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the online monitoring tools known as “web bugs” which allow advertising services companies to gather information from Web users without their knowledge, with the collected data then being deposited in databases where it is analysed and stored:

- (a) What steps are being taken by the Minister to alert Victorians of the dangers, if any, posed by these tools.
- (b) Are there any means whereby Victorians can protect themselves from the tools.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is strongly supporting the development of Commonwealth legislation to create a nationally consistent privacy scheme for the private sector. National legislation, which will prevent collection of personal information without the subject’s knowledge, is the best regulatory solution to privacy intrusive practices in the private sector.

**State and Regional Development: Internet facilities for indigenous community**

**134. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the department’s policy on

SkillsNet and public access to the Internet, what plans has the department to extend the Internet in the indigenous community throughout Victoria.

**ANSWER:**

The Skills.net program currently has two indigenous community projects, these are: (i) *Koorie Cousins* leader project — coordinated by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is in the process of establishing Skills.net venues at its centres across the State; and (ii) *Djeetgun Kurnai Women's Corporation* general project in East Gippsland which is run by the regional traditional indigenous women's community in Bairnsdale and Bruthen.

Whilst the Victorian Government's Skills.net program has generally targeted technologically disadvantaged groups, the expanded *Skills.net* program which was announced in *Connecting Victoria* will have a more specific focus on identified target groups which includes Victoria's indigenous community.

**State and Regional Development: multimedia development**

**135. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): In relation to the Minister's decision to remove Cinemedia from his responsibility to that of the Minister for Arts, will he make a commitment to Victorian multimedia producers that department financial support for multimedia developers will not be reduced.

**ANSWER:**

The Government strongly supports the development of a dynamic Victorian multimedia industry, the production of multimedia content for Australian and international consumers and maximisation of the economic and cultural benefits of new media arts and technologies to the State.

Whilst the Minister for the Arts has responsibility for Cinemedia, the Digital Media Fund (a payment made through Multimedia Victoria to Cinemedia for industry development purposes) has been retained by Multimedia Victoria.

The total amount of funding for multimedia development will not be diminished. Multimedia Victoria will continue to support industry development programs.

**State and Regional Development: electronic service delivery program**

**136. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): In relation to the Minister's speech in Canberra on 22 November 1999 in which he praised the previous Coalition department's award winning Electronic Service Delivery Program:

- (a) On what date will the Education, Transport, Tourism, Legal and Arts Channels go online.
- (b) What is the target for visitors to each channel in June 2000, 2001 and 2002, respectively, given the Minister's statement that the Business Channel, Land Channel and Better Health Channel received over 16,000 visitors in October 1999 and are growing at approximately 10% per month.
- (c) Given the Minister's comment that "we are committed to reducing the regional and rural price differential" of VicOne, what is the target for such reduction.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is proceeding with the Government Online program. The scope and development schedules for prospective channels are currently being determined in consultation with the respective customer groups.

MMV is currently establishing a project team to review the VicONE infrastructure and in particular examine ways of reducing the regional and rural price differential.

**State and Regional Development: Dr Bronte Adams, Multimedia Victoria**

**137. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): In relation to the speech given by Dr Bronte Adams, Executive Director of Multimedia Victoria to the Australian Interactive Multimedia Industry Association on 25 November 1999 and the report of the speech in the *Australian Financial Review* of 25 November 1999:

- (a) What instructions were given by the Minister or any other person to Dr Adams on the matters she could and should canvass in her speech.
- (b) What instructions or contractual terms or regulations apply to Dr Adams with respect to making comments on issues which may be part of political debate and/or political controversy.
- (c) Did Dr Adams predict “life would be easier for SMEs (small to medium size enterprises) under the Bracks administration as Labor was committed to giving small business better opportunities to compete for government contracts in the current information technology outsourcing environment”; if so, what are the targets that Multimedia Victoria or Dr Adams set for assessing whether SMEs gain government information technology outsourced contracts.
- (d) What advice did Dr Adams tender to the Minister in respect of the transfer of Cinemedia to the Ministry of Arts.
- (e) Did Dr Adams indicate “that the information technology agenda of the previous Liberal department would continue with added enhancement; if so, what are the added enhancements or deleted elements.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

No instructions were given. Dr Adams acted in accordance with normal public service guidelines. I have been informed that the report of Dr Adams’ speech in the *Australian Financial Review* of 25 November contained some inaccuracies. Dr Adams did not tender any advice to me or anyone else in Government in respect of the transfer of Cinemedia to the Ministry of Arts. I have been informed that Dr Adams highlighted a Victorian Government ICT agenda that included a strong commitment to local industry, developing ICT skills and increasing the availability and lowering the cost of access to regional and rural Victoria. This is consistent with my Statement to the Victorian Parliament on 11 November 1999.

**State and Regional Development: Digital Media Fund**

**138. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to an article in the *Age* of 30 November 1999 entitled “Multimedia Funding Goes It Alone” by Jenny Sinclair that “the development minister, John Brumby, said the move (of Cinemedia) would not affect multimedia, as the \$2.7 million Digital Media Fund would now be administered by Multimedia Victoria and that money flowing back from investments made by the fund’s precursor, the Multimedia 21 Fund, would also be managed by Multimedia Victoria”:

- (a) On what criteria will grants from the Digital Media Fund be made.
- (b) Who will judge the artistic merit of applications to the Digital Media Fund.



- (c) What total allocation was made under the Digital Media Fund in 1998–99 and what total allocations will be made in each of the financial years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03.
- (d) How will the money “flowing back” be administered.

**ANSWER:**

Applications to the DMF are assessed by an evaluation and advisory committee, which includes representation from a cross section of the industry appropriate for peer assessment.

Grants from the DMF are made against the criteria of quality, innovation and marketability. The weighting of evaluation criteria is dependent upon whether the applicant is seeking investment or grant funding.

Future allocation towards multimedia content development is currently under consideration.

**State and Regional Development: Chip Skills program**

**139. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): With reference to the statement in the *Age* of 29 November 1999 by Mr Stephen Kim, Chief Executive Officer of Acqutek, that the previous Coalition department’s Chip Skills Program has made Melbourne “the place to learn chip design skills in the Southern Hemisphere”:

- (a) Will the Chip Skills Program be maintained; if so, for how long.
- (b) What was the budget for the program in 1999–2000 and what is the proposed budget for each of the financial years 2001–02 to 2003–04 inclusive.
- (c) What targets have been set for the program in each of the financial years 2001–02 to 2003–04 inclusive.
- (d) What will be the respective roles of RMIT, Monash University, Latrobe University, Swinburne University of Technology and Victoria University of Technology in the program.
- (e) Which private sector organisations are, and will be, involved in the program.
- (f) What commitment has Acqutek made to the program.
- (g) What discussions have taken place with Siemens, Ericsson, Bosch, NEC and Toshiba, respectively about participation in the program.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is committed to continuing the Chipskills Program.

Several Universities have agreed to participate in discussions regarding the program. These discussions are ongoing.

Private sector involvement is and will continue to be an important part of the program. Several private sector organisations are involved in discussions regarding the program. These discussions are ongoing.

**State and Regional Development: Multimedia Victoria trade fairs and missions program**

**141. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Will the department maintain the “International Trade Fairs and Missions Program” of Multimedia Victoria; if so, what changes if any will be made.

**ANSWER:**

Yes.

**State and Regional Development: multimedia, information technology and telecommunications industries investment capital**

**142. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): What programs or publications will the Minister institute to take advantage of the Federal department's business tax reforms which should enable Victoria's multimedia, information technology and telecommunications industries to gain access to new sources of investment capital.

**ANSWER:**

The Government welcomes any changes that improve the access to investment capital for Victorian companies. Before deciding what the Government might do to take advantage of the proposed changes we will be assessing the Federal Government's own initiatives first.

**State and Regional Development: multimedia education programs**

**143. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development):

- (a) What is the department doing to address the critical skills shortage among small to medium size multimedia companies.
- (b) What support is the department giving to Swinburne University and industry based learning programs where students work for twelve months during their degree with a multimedia company.
- (c) What are the measures of success of these industry based learning programs and have they been achieved.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is establishing an ICT Skills Taskforce and will work closely with industry and education groups to develop timely and effective responses to the identified needs.

**Sport and Recreation: Victorian Soccer Federation**

**144. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation: In relation to the participation of women in the Victorian Soccer Federation:

- (a) What funding has the federation been allocated for the next three years and how is the funding divided over the three year period.
- (b) What method will be used in allocating the funds and is the funding allocated according to the proportion of women who participate in soccer with the Federation.
- (c) What specific programs and/or projects is the funding being put towards.
- (d) What reporting mechanism will be used to monitor the allocation of funds.
- (e) How many teams are there within the Federation and how many are women's teams currently.
- (f) Is there a target for the level of female participation; if so, what is it.

- (g) What other programs within the Sport and Recreation portfolio assist in the development of women's sport and will they be receiving similar levels of increased funding.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) Funding has been provided for the VSF to employ a part time Sport Development Officer (SDO) through the SDO Scheme, as well as two programs from the Future Directions Funding Program. These include a Referee Development Program and Women in Soccer initiatives. The table below provides details of this funding.

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>99/2000</b>	<b>2000/2001</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
SDO Scheme	8,000			Development Officer
Future Directions	15,000			Referee Development
Future Directions	15,000	15,000	15,000	Women in Soccer
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	

- (b) Funding is allocated to State Sporting Associations through an assessment of the organisation's membership size and financial status. Sports are classified into categories that enable SRV to more strategically target government monies to sports which have the capacity for membership growth and to undertake strategic projects. Allocations are also based upon the performance of the Association in undertaking key activities funded by SRV within the previous twelve months. This performance is assessed through regular progress reports to SRV and meetings with VSF officers. Funding is not allocated according to the proportion of women who participate in soccer with the VSF.
- (c) I have been informed that 6.6% of the VSF's registered players are women. In 1999/2000, almost 40% of SRV's funding to the VSF is specifically targeted to women's activities such as administration of women's soccer competitions, promotional programs within schools and the encouragement of synergies between men's and women's competitions. In addition, activities undertaken by the SDO have a focus on women/girls, as does the Referee Development Program.
- (d) State Sporting Associations are required to enter into contractual arrangements with SRV which outline clearly the key targets expected and performance indicators to assess the quality of the work undertaken. Funded associations report to SRV on a six monthly basis.
- (e) Membership details provided to SRV indicate that in the 1999 season there were 362 senior teams, 50 of which were women's teams. In addition, of the 460 junior teams, 21 were girls teams.
- (f) The VSF have advised that they have a target of a minimum of 10% growth each year in female participation.
- (g) Other programs that assist in the development of women's sport include :
- Sport development Officers
  - Regional Sports Assemblies
  - Country Action grants
  - VicTalent scheme
  - Development and implementation by SRV of projects such as the Women's Participation Project; and
  - Victorian Institute of Sport

SRV also supports a range of initiatives that address issues affecting women's participation in sport. These include an Active Girl's Breakfast, to be held on 29 March 2000 at Melbourne Park, a Mentoring Project, a Coaching initiative, and financial support for Womensport and Recreation Victoria, which provides strategic advice on issues affecting female participation.

**Sport and Recreation: Victoria Rowing Association**

**145. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation: In relation to the allocation of funds to the Victoria Rowing Association for rowing in schools:

- (a) What funding has been allocated.
- (b) Will this be ongoing funding or a one-off allocation.
- (c) How is funding allocated and is it reliant on a certain number of schools or students participating.
- (d) What reporting mechanism will be used to monitor this allocation of funds.
- (e) Will individual schools participating be given any additional funding to participate in the program.
- (f) Will schools be expected to provide the required sporting equipment to their students.
- (g) How many schools will be participating.
- (h) What proportion of males and females currently participate in rowing.
- (i) Will there be a target level of participation by female and male students.
- (j) What percentage of schools currently participate in rowing and what proportion are private and state secondary schools, respectively.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) Funding has been provided for the VRA to undertake management and administrative tasks, to employ a part time Sport Development Officer (SDO), and to undertake over three years a School Sport Development Program titled *Ready Row*. The table below provides details of this funding.

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>99/2000</b>	<b>2000/2001</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
Sport Development Program	8,000			Administration
SDO Scheme	8,000			Development Officer
Future Directions	15,000	15,000	15,000	School Sport Development Program
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	

- (b) Funding is provided to Victoria’s State Sporting Associations (SSAs) on an ongoing basis. SRV has committed \$30,000 to rowing to continue the School Sport Development Program for the period 2000/01 – 2001/02. Funding for core Sport Development activities and the employment of an SDO will continue to be made to the VRA through the Government’s State Sporting Association Development Program, subject to Budget appropriation and satisfactory progress reports.
- (c) Funding is allocated to SSAs through an assessment of the organisation’s membership size and financial status. Sports are classified into categories that enable SRV to more strategically target Government monies to sports which have the capacity for membership growth and to undertake strategic projects.

Allocations are also based upon the performance of the SSA to undertake key activities funded by Government within the previous twelve months. This performance is assessed through regular progress reports to SRV and meetings with officers from the Association. In relation to funding for school development projects, funding is provided based upon the type of work to be undertaken, the number of schools to be involved and the number of students participating.

- (d) SSA's are required to enter into contractual arrangements with SRV, which outline clearly the key targets expected and performance indicators to assess the quality of the work undertaken. SSAs report to SRV on a six monthly basis.
- (e) Funding is not allocated to schools directly, however costs associated with involvement in the project are subsidised through the government allocation to the VRA.
- (f) Schools are not expected to provide the required sporting equipment to their students.
- (g) 50 schools are participating in the School Sport Development Program in 1999- 2000. Over the three years to 2002, 30 new schools are expected to be involved in the program.
- (h) Details provided to SRV indicate that, in the age bracket of 14 – 17 years, 40% of male members and 60 % of female members participate in rowing through VRA affiliated clubs.
- (i) A target level of 5 % increase in the participation by female and male students has been set as a target of the School Sport Development Program.
- (j) There are currently 50 schools which participate in rowing in a formal basis through VRA events. Approximately 25% of these schools are government schools.

**Consumer Affairs: women and motor sales and repairs**

**146. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: In relation to a study carried out in Victoria and New South Wales on how women perceive they are treated in the area of motor sales and repairs:

- (a) What were the results of that study.
- (b) What action is the department taking in response to the study.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- There has been no joint study undertaken by Victoria and New South Wales into the issue of women consumers and the motor vehicle industry. However, the Victorian Consumer Law Centre released a report in 1997 entitled *Do Women Pay More?* which stated that, despite the earning potential of women and their decision making power within the family, women are still not receiving the same standard of service as men.
- At its meeting on 20 August 1999 the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs (MCCA) resolved to support a national project entitled 'Women as Consumers – Motor Vehicle Project'. MCCA directed the Standing Committee of Officials of Consumer Affairs (SCOCA) to seek participation from fair trading and consumer affairs agencies and women's policy areas of government to form a Working Party to gather/assess data and develop strategies to address discrimination against women by people in the motor vehicle industry.
- The Victorian Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs and Office of Women's Policy are represented on the national working group.
- The 'Women as Consumers – Motor Vehicle Project' is ongoing. It is anticipated that findings from the study will become available in August 2000.
- As part of the preliminary data collection phase, Victoria has completed a literature review and an audit of relevant legislation that regulates the motor vehicle purchase, service and repair industries.
- Discussions have been undertaken with the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC) to identify mutual research and promotional opportunities arising from the Women as Customers Project, Melbourne International Motor Show, and the Women's Automotive Network.

- Future activities include: collection and analysis of data from a range of sources, including Office of Fair Trading complaints data; consultations with women consumers and industry representatives in metropolitan and rural Victoria; and the development of strategies to address discrimination against women in the motor vehicle industry.
- While the initial focus of the project is on women, the benefits that would accrue from such an initiative may be extended to other groups who feel disadvantaged in this area, including older people and people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

**Transport: Parliamentary Secretary for Transport**

**147. THE HON. N. B. LUCAS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What specific responsibilities does Mr Matt Viney MP, Parliamentary Secretary of Infrastructure, undertake for the government.
- (b) Does he have authority to expend funds or otherwise commit public moneys.
- (c) Has he, or will he, be in contact with contractors or agents of the government; if so, for what purpose.

**ANSWER:**

(a) Mr Viney is no longer the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure.

At the time this question was asked, his responsibilities were to undertake transport related projects at the request of the Transport Minister.

At the time the question was asked, preliminary discussions were underway on the appropriate nature of each projects.

- (b) No.
- (c) No.

**Workcover: responsibilities of assistant minister**

**148. THE HON. M. A. BIRRELL** — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for WorkCover: Since the minister's appointment as Minister Assisting the Minister for WorkCover, what specific responsibilities or tasks has the Minister been allocated by the Minister for WorkCover, specifying in each case — (i) the responsibility or task involved; (ii) the date or dates when the responsibility or task was allocated; (iii) how this responsibility or task was communicated to the Minister Assisting; (iv) the duration of each responsibility or task; and (v) the precise nature of the work undertaken.

**ANSWER:**

As Minister Assisting the Minister for WorkCover, I am required to assist in administrative matters relating to the WorkCover portfolio as directed. Given the related nature of the Industrial Relations and WorkCover portfolios I regularly provide advice to the WorkCover Minister on industrial matters to ensure a consistent Government approach to workplace issues in Victoria. I have recently assisted the Minister for WorkCover with discussions he had in establishing a working party.

Given my dual responsibilities as Industrial Relations Minister and Minister assisting the Minister for WorkCover, I am currently considering possible options for reviewing that part of the Community Services Act that relates to the employment of underage children. This review could include consideration of legislative amendments and administrative arrangements affecting both the WorkCover and Industrial Relations portfolio.

**State and Regional Development: responsibilities of assistant minister**

149. **THE HON. M. A. BIRRELL** — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development: Since the Minister's appointment as Minister Assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development, what specific responsibilities or tasks has the Minister been allocated by the Minister for State and Regional Development, specifying in each case — (i) the responsibility or task involved; (ii) the date or dates when the responsibility or task was allocated; (iii) how this responsibility or task was communicated to the Minister Assisting; (iv) the duration of each responsibility or task; and (v) the precise nature of the work undertaken.:

**ANSWER:**

I have a range of general responsibilities across the state and regional development portfolio in my capacity as Minister Assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development. In addition to those general responsibilities, my ministerial colleagues and I have agreed that I will have particular responsibility assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development in the following areas:

- Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust
- Industry sectors of oil and chemicals, minerals processing and environmental and energy technology services.

My responsibilities for these matters are ongoing.

**Premier: Legislative Assembly business**

151. **THE HON. M. A. BIRRELL** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): Does the department intend to propose a change to the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders or Sessional Orders to allow opposition members' business to be conducted every Wednesday morning that the house sits; if not, why.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Government does not have any intentions at this time to alter the Standing or Sessional Orders of the Legislative Assembly to that already amended by the Government.

**Treasurer: senior executive service**

152. **THE HON. R. M. HALLAM** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Resources and Energy (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What was the total number of senior executive service members employed by the Department of Treasury and Finance as at 20 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Senior Executive Service was abolished in May 1995 and replaced by the Executive. The total number of Executives employed by the Department of Treasury and Finance as at 20 October 1999 was 100.

**Treasurer: State Revenue Office senior executive service**

153. **THE HON. R. M. HALLAM** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Resources and Energy (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What was the total number of Senior Executive Service members employed by the State Revenue Office as at 20 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Senior Executive Service was abolished in May 1995 and replaced by the Executive. The total number of Executives employed by the State Revenue Office as at 20 October 1999 was 8.

**Treasurer: staff**

**154. THE HON. R. M. HALLAM** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Resources and Energy (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What was the total number of staff employed by the Department of Treasury and Finance as at 20 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The total number of staff employed by the Department of Treasury and Finance as at 20 October 1999 was 386 (excluding Executives).

**Treasurer: State Revenue Office staff**

**155. THE HON. R. M. HALLAM** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Resources and Energy (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What was the total number of staff employed by the State Revenue Office as at 20 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The total number of staff employed by the State Revenue Office as at 20 October 1999 was 501 (excluding executives).

**Premier: web site user information**

**156. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Department of Premier and Cabinet or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.



The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Treasurer: web site user information**

**157. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Treasurer's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) Currently data from the department's website is collected and profiled through the use of software called 'Web Trends'. This software automatically collates information on the user's IP address when they access the Victorian Government website. This software is managed by the Government Information and Communications Branch. The information obtained from this software is limited to IP addresses, and therefore does not extend to identification of personal user information.

The current information allows for demographic information (such as the user's country) to be identified and is used by the Government Information branch to assess server performance. No personal information is recorded at all and the software is not used to collect names or details of commercial transactions. They are also not used to contact users.

- (b) The Government Information and Communication branch produces this information on a monthly basis. This information is collected from the Victorian Government site and not separated into individual departmental websites.
- (c) This information is provided to the Corporate Communications branch of the Strategic Management Division, Department of Treasury and Finance who use the information to assess the performance of the website and relevance of the information located on the website.
- (d) There are several sources of information in relation to Privacy and Data Protection. Multi Media Victoria has issued an Online Privacy Policy with guidelines on what the Departments' need to do to ensure they adhere to National Principles of Fair Handling of Personal Information.

**Multicultural Affairs: web site user information**

**158. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Victorian Multicultural Commission or by any other person on behalf of the Commission, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the Commission.
- (b) How is this information managed.

- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the Commission, or by any other person on behalf of the Commission.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Health: web site user information**

**159. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Planning: web site user information**

**160. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Transport: web site user information**

**161. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Energy and Resources: web site user information**

**162. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources:

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**State and Regional Development: web site user information**

**163. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on its websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Local Government: web site user information**

**164. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Local Government):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Workcover: web site user information**

**165. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for WorkCover):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

At this stage, the Victorian WorkCover's web site is an information only site and does not provide services of a transactional or interactive nature.

The website does not include a data collection service nor does the Authority collect information about users.

**Community Services: web site user information**

**166. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Education: web site user information**

**167. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.

- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) Website managers within each business unit establish and maintain website usage logs for the purpose of site management and quality assurance. The logs record technical information about the equipment used to access the websites and particular web pages accessed. Personal information is not recorded.
- (b) Website logs are stored in a secure network environment and managed by the appropriate website manager.
- (c) Information on website usage is used by business units within the Department of Education, Employment and Training to monitor the level of use of online materials and also to profile the hardware and software in use by clients.
- (d) Collection and use of this information is subject to the standard Departmental and Government policy relating to privacy and confidentiality.

**Industrial Relations: web site user information**

**171. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) Currently data from the department's website is collected and profiled through the use of software called 'Web Trends'. This software automatically collates information on the user's IP address when they access the Victorian Government website. This software is managed by the Government Information and Communications Branch. The information obtained from this software is limited to IP addresses, and therefore does not extend to identification of personal user information.

The current information allows for demographic information (such as the user's country) to be identified and is used by the Government Information branch to assess server performance. No personal information is recorded at all and the software is not used to collect names or details of commercial transactions. They are also not used to contact users.

- (b) The Government Information and Communication branch produces this information on a monthly basis. This information is collected from the Victorian Government site and not separated into individual departmental websites.

- (c) This information is provided to the Corporate Communications branch of the Strategic Management Division, Department of Treasury and Finance which use the information to assess the performance of the website and relevance of the information located on the website.
- (d) There are several sources of information in relation to Privacy and Data Protection. Multi Media Victoria has issued an Online Privacy Policy with guidelines on what the Departments' need to do to ensure they adhere to National Principles of Fair Handling of Personal Information.

**Police and Emergency Services: web site user information**

- 172. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services):
- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
  - (b) How is this information managed.
  - (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
  - (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Justice does not utilise data collection or profiling methods to collate or store information about individual users of its websites, nor does it engage others to do this on any external websites operated on behalf of the Department.

The only data retained from the Department's website is the volume of users who "enter" the site; this is kept as an aggregation of numbers ("hits"), not as records of individuals.

Information provided by website users to complete a transaction or service request is held in the Department's databases under the same policy and security guidelines that apply to telephone or paper based requests, ie: not used for any purpose other than the primary purpose of the collection.

The Department is in the process of confirming its Online Privacy Policy Statement to be published on its website.

**Agriculture: web site user information**

- 173. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Agriculture):
- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
  - (b) How is this information managed.
  - (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
  - (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Aboriginal Affairs: web site user information**

**174. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

The Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on our websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Attorney-General: web site user information**

**175. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Attorney-General's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:



The Department of Justice does not utilise data collection or profiling methods to collate or store information about individual users of its websites, nor does it engage others to do this on any external websites operated on behalf of the Department.

The only data retained from the Department's website is the volume of users who "enter" the site; this is kept as an aggregation of numbers ("hits"), not as records of individuals.

Information provided by website users to complete a transaction or service request is held in the Department's databases under the same policy and security guidelines that apply to telephone or paper based requests, ie: not used for any purpose other than the primary purpose of the collection.

The Department is in the process of confirming its Online Privacy Policy Statement to be published on its website.

**Manufacturing Industry: web site user information**

**176. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on its websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Racing: web site user information**

**177. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Racing):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on its websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: web site user information**

**178. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment):

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

The answer to this question has been incorporated within the response to Legislative Council Question No. 167, a copy of which is attached.

**Sport and Recreation: web site user information**

**179. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on its websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Major Projects and Tourism: web site user information**

- 181. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism):
- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
  - (b) How is this information managed.
  - (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
  - (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on its websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Housing and Aged Care: web site user information**

- 182. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing and Aged Care):
- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
  - (b) How is this information managed.
  - (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
  - (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Small Business: web site user information**

- 183. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business:
- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
  - (b) How is this information managed.

- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the Department does not have any common data collection or profiling methods in use on its websites.

Web site managers within each Branch/Agency establish and maintain processes based on individual specifications and needs related to their web sites.

The Department complies with relevant policies currently promulgated by Multimedia Victoria.

**Consumer Affairs: web site user information**

**184. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
- (b) How is this information managed.
- (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
- (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Justice does not utilise data collection or profiling methods to collate or store information about individual users of its websites, nor does it engage others to do this on any external websites operated on behalf of the Department.

The only data retained from the Department's website is the volume of users who "enter" the site; this is kept as an aggregation of numbers ("hits"), not as records of individuals.

Information provided by website users to complete a transaction or service request is held in the Department's databases under the same policy and security guidelines that apply to telephone or paper based requests, ie: not used for any purpose other than the primary purpose of the collection.

The Department is in the process of confirming its Online Privacy Policy Statement to be published on its website.

**Premier: Parliamentary Secretary for Transport**

**185. THE HON. N. B. LUCAS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): In relation to Mr. Matt Viney, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Infrastructure:

- (a) Where will his office be located.
- (b) Does he, or will he, undertake activities for the Premier, the Premier's Office or for the department of Premier and Cabinet; if so, what and when.

**ANSWER:**

Mr Viney is no longer Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure. Currently, Mr Viney's position is Parliamentary Secretary for Human Services and his office is located at Level 22 - 555 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Mr Viney will not be undertaking any activities associated with the Premier, the Premier's Office or the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

**State and Regional Development: Rural and regional Victoria Skillsnet targets**

**187. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): In relation to the Minister's press release of 7 December 1999 entitled "Brumby Announces Milestone For Skills.Net" in which he acknowledged that the Skillsnet Program under the Coalition department "had been particularly successful in rural and regional Victoria, where 80 per cent of Skills.net members are from", what are the targets for the percentage of rural and regional membership of Skills.net for 1999–2000; 2000–01; and 2001–02.

**ANSWER:**

Over the life of the Skills.net program our aim is that the benefits be available in rural and remote areas as they are in the more populated regional centres. The program at the same time will target people who face additional technological barriers such as having a physical disability or difficulties with the English language.

**Gaming: machine distribution**

**190. THE HON. R. M. HALLAM** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): In respect of the distribution of electronic gaming machines:

- (a) What regional boundaries will be employed on which to base the regional cap now proposed.
- (b) Who will be responsible for the conduct of the social and economic impact statement to determine the applicable cap on machines in each region.
- (c) If this impact statement concludes there are too many machines in a particular region — (i) who will determine which venue operators shall shed the necessary machines; (ii) will there be any dispensation for community and/or sporting clubs in any such determination; and (iii) will all existing contracts with venue operators be honoured in any re-distribution process.
- (d) What role will local government have in determining the ceiling to apply in any particular region, or the location and number of venues comprising that ceiling.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The options for boundaries to be used in implementing regional gaming machine caps are still being considered.
- (b) Arrangements for the conduct of social and economic impact statements to determine the applicable cap on gaming machines in each region will be provided in legislation to be introduced in Parliament.
- (c) (i) The issues of who will determine the re-distribution of gaming machines, whether community and/or sporting clubs are treated the same as other gaming venues, and how existing contracts will be considered in the re-distribution process will be dealt with in legislation to be introduced in Parliament.

- (d) The Government has made a commitment that local councils will be given the power to object to the establishment of gaming venues on the grounds that there is a net negative economic and social impact. The details of this arrangement will be provided in legislation to be introduced in Parliament.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Victoria University of Technology — ALP functions**

- 198. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier):
- (a) What funds have the Victoria University of Technology allocated in 1999 for representatives or staff to attend events or functions organised by the Australian Labor Party, or its agent.
  - (b) On whose specific authority were those funds allocated.
  - (c) What benefits did the university derive from this use of funds.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) The University has advised me that it makes no allocation in its annual budget for events or functions organised by political parties.
- (b) Decisions about which functions to attend in furthering the University's interests are made by the heads of appropriate units within the University. Part of the role of these staff is to maintain and develop commercial contacts.
- (c) The University does not seek to quantify, nor does it expect to derive, specific tangible benefits from its participation in public events where business contacts may be made and sustained. The University appreciates the value of interaction with business people in a variety of settings as an investment in relationships which will assure its continuing success as a dynamic provider of tertiary education, training, research and consultancy.

**Health: construction industry employees — hepatitis B**

- 199. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health):
- (a) What specific funding has been or will be provided in each of the financial years 1999–2000, 2000–01, 2001–02, and 2002–03 for advertising of, or education programs in regard to, the desirability of Victorian construction industry employees at risk of needlestick injuries being immunised against Hepatitis B.
  - (b) Will any funds be made available to peak employer or union groups for this purpose in each year; if not, why.
  - (c) What percentage of Victorian construction industry employees were immunised against Hepatitis B as at 1 October 1999 and what is the department's target over each of the years between 1999–2000 and 2002–03.

**ANSWER:**

The Immunisation Program of the Department has advised that they will develop fuller policy statements on occupational immunisations as recommended by the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for wide distribution to employers. Advice on implementation of these guidelines will be included.

Construction workers are not deemed by the NHMRC to be at particularly high risk for hepatitis B infection, therefore there is no monitoring of uptake of hepatitis B vaccine in this group. The government commits \$487,000 each year for local government to conduct free hepatitis B immunisations for all students in Year 7. Universal hepatitis B immunisation for all babies will be introduced on 1 May this year, ensuring increased protection against hepatitis B for all Victorians.

**Health: statistics on smoking**

**200. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health):

- (a) On a gender basis, what percentage of Victorians smoked as at 1 October 1999 or at the most recent date prior to that for which information had been collected in each of the following age groups — (i) under 18; (ii) 18 to 24; (iii) 25 to 39; (iv) 40 to 54; and (v) 55 and over.
- (b) What is the department's target for the percentage of smokers in each age group and gender by — (i) 30 June 2000; (ii) 30 June 2001; and (iii) 30 June 2002.

**ANSWER:**

- (a) In relation to smoking prevalence in Victoria, the most recent data from the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria's *Prevalence of Smoking Behaviours among Victorian Secondary Students in 1996* shows that 21 percent of Victorian males and 25 percent of Victorian females aged 12 to 17 years of age surveyed had smoked in the week preceding the survey.

In relation to your question about adult smoking rates, note that data illustrating simultaneous gender and age breakdown on smoking rates is not available, however the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *1998 National Drug Strategy Household Survey* provides prevalence data by age group. The survey shows 14 per cent of 14 to 29 year old Victorians were current regular smokers, 26.5 per cent of 20 to 39 year old Victorians were current regular smokers, 20.3 per cent of 40 to 59 year old Victorians were current regular smokers, and 10.6 per cent of those aged 60 years and over were current regular smokers.

- (b) In relation to the issue of setting smoking prevalence targets the government does not consider this strategy to be particularly useful in the context of addressing the tobacco problem.

The government is concerned about the level of tobacco related mortality and morbidity and has moved quickly to address the unacceptable tobacco toll in Victoria through announcing a range of new measures in tobacco control. These will include banning smoking in Victorian cafes and restaurants, abolishing point of sale advertising in tobacco retail outlets and mandatory warning signs in retail outlets.

The government is committed to addressing smoking prevention in a number of high risk groups including young people.

**Health: registration of funeral directors**

**201. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health):

- (a) What funding has been or will be provided in each of the years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03 for the creation of a system of public registration of funeral directors.
- (b) What funding has been or will be made available in each of those years for the establishment of a Standards Board in relation to the funeral industry.

**ANSWER:**

- (a) The Funerals (Pre-Paid Money) Act 1993 is administered by the Department of Justice therefore the question should be directed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs.
- (b) This question also should be directed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

**Police and Emergency Services: lifesaving clubs water safety campaigns**

**202. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services):

- (a) What is regarded as “acceptable” resources for surf lifesaving and lifesaving clubs to ensure that they can run water safety campaigns, support volunteers and patrol beaches for more summer days and what additional funding will be provided in each of the years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03 for this purpose.
- (b) What is the benchmark or desired number of days each year in which clubs should be able to patrol their beaches around — (i) Port Phillip Bay; (ii) Corio Bay; (iii) on Victoria’s coastline; and (iv) in other areas of the State.

**ANSWER:**

The Government provides \$280,000 per year for The Royal Life Saving Society Australia (Victoria Branch) and Surf Life Saving Victoria. This supports their operational functions. In addition, the Government is two years into a \$6 million Community Support Fund program, “Play it Safe by the Water”, which provides funds for a public awareness campaign, water safety week, education programs and a range of new life saving services.

Surf lifesaving patrols at beaches are coordinated by the appropriate surf lifesaving clubs.

**Police and Emergency Services: Streetwatch program**

**203. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): In relation to the Streetwatch program:

- (a) What funding will be allocated to this program in each of the years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03.
- (b) How many different areas are expected to be allocated under this program in each of those years in — (i) metropolitan Melbourne; and (ii) rural and regional Victoria.
- (c) What benchmarks will be used to determine whether an area has a recognised crime problem.
- (d) Will citizens who walk in twos and threes in local areas as specified by Victoria Police be provided with any additional legal powers.
- (e) What checks will be undertaken on the probity of such citizens.
- (f) Will those citizens be provided with any additional resources; if so, what will be the additional costs in each of the years from 1999–2000 to 2002–03.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed by my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, that the Streetwatch program model and funding have not yet been decided upon.

Developing and trailing a Streetwatch program is part of the Government’s Community Action Plan on Crime Prevention. Streetwatch will be developed to complement and enhance the existing Neighbourhood Watch program and involve the community in tackling issues of local crime prevention and community safety.



**Health: public hospital translation services**

- 204. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Health):
- (a) What additional funding has been or will be provided for the further development of translation services for patients at public hospitals and community health centres, respectively, in each year from 1999–2000 to 2002–03.
  - (b) How much will be allocated in each year (if any) to the Angliss Hospital and the Maroondah Hospital and how many additional hours of translation will this provide per week in the Greek, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Italian and German languages, respectively, across the State.

**ANSWER:**

The Honourable Member's question refers specifically to "translation" services, that is, written activity; but I assume he means both translation and interpreting services, which are separate disciplines. Otherwise his specific references to Cantonese and "additional hours of translation" are not meaningful, as Cantonese is not a written language and translations are normally costed in terms of the number of words of text, not hours.

The Department of Human Services currently spends in excess of \$7 million each year for the provision of language services— with approximately \$3 million being allocated for use by the funded sector through the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS) and the Central Health Interpreter Service (CHIS). Some \$4 million each year is provided directly to major hospitals across Victoria, through the "NESB Grants" system established under the last State Labor Government. In addition, the funds provided for mental health services delivered within hospital settings already incorporate a loading for language services.

Public hospitals and community health centres generally, including the two hospitals mentioned in the Honourable Member's question, all have access to language services on the basis of their actual need, either through the centrally funded service providers or by purchasing services on the open market with their grant allocations.

I can advise the Honourable Member that, under the "NESB Grants" system, the Maroondah Hospital received \$106,900 for 1999-2000 and the Angliss Hospital \$22,200 for the same period. These figures are subject to periodic adjustments to reflect actual service volumes.

I am advised that for the years 1998-99 and 1999-2000 (to December 1999), CHIS provided interpreters to Maroondah Hospital on a total of 13 occasions, and to Angliss Hospital on 31 occasions. This year Maroondah has also purchased language services from VITS to the value of approximately \$4000, in part provided under the mental health funding formula.

Future funding, and in particular the matter of additional funding, will be determined in the context of normal Government budgetary processes. You will be advised of the outcomes of these deliberations at the appropriate time.

According to the Census, some 4 percent of all Victorians have difficulty in communicating in English. Labor's multicultural and health policies recognise that language services, especially in public hospitals and community health centres, are a critical foundation for accessible, equitable and responsive service delivery to all Victorians. During the term of this Government, the Department of Human Services will give appropriate attention to these issues. Improved data collection, to help measure demand more accurately, is already being implemented.

I understand that the English-speaking proficiency of the Honourable Member's electorate is four times greater than the State average, which would tend to suggest that demand for language services is relatively less than in many other parts of the State. The reported usage of CHIS and VITS by the two hospitals named by the Honourable Member would tend to indicate the absence of any significant pressures in this area. However, individual services are encouraged to bring particular issues to the attention of the relevant regional management of the Department of Human Services, in this case the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

In reference to the second part of the question, the Honourable Member enquires about the future availability of assistance in certain specific languages. In view of the wide range of languages in which translation and interpreting services are provided, it is neither helpful nor logical to specify a dollar amount or an allocation of "hours" for service provision in any particular language, either on a statewide basis or within individual agencies. It is the actual demand from the different linguistic communities which will determine the language of the translator or interpreter engaged for any specific assignment.

**Consumer Affairs: no-refund sign campaign**

**206. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: On 14 December 1999 the minister announced that inspectors from the Office of Fair Trading had visited some 500 retailers as part of a campaign against illegal no-refund signs.

- (a) When did the campaign start.
- (b) When will it finish.
- (c) How many inspectors are involved.
- (d) What is the total cost of the campaign.
- (e) How many illegal signs have been discovered.
- (f) How many warnings have been issued.
- (g) How many prosecutions have been laid.
- (h) Is the intention to force retailers to display correct signage.
- (i) How much will each sign cost.
- (j) What sanctions will be applied to retailers who refuse to display the correct signage.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The campaign started on 1 December 1999 and was a follow up campaign to one conducted in March 1999.
- (b) The campaign finished on 14 December 1999.
- (c) Eight inspectors from the Fair Trading Operations Division were involved.
- (d) The campaign was run within existing budget resources.
- (e) At least three illegal signs were detected.
- (f) Traders were encouraged to place correct signs in their premises and were advised of legislative requirements.
- (g) No prosecutions have been laid.
- (h) The campaign was run as part of the Office's proactive education program for traders. There is no legislative power to force traders to display correct signs.
- (i) The signs were prepared in December 1998 at a cost of 17 cents per sign.
- (j) Traders are not required to display signs. Traders who display incorrect signs can be sanctioned by warning, undertaking or prosecution.

**Consumer Affairs: Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs staff**

**207. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

- (a) How many inspectors are employed by the Office of Fair Trading on full a time and part time basis.
- (b) How much of their work is actually inspecting premises as opposed to office work.
- (c) How many prosecutions have been initiated by the Office of Fair Trading inspectors from the years 1999–2000 to date and from the years 1998–99; 1997–98 and 1996–97, respectively.
- (d) What offences do these prosecutions relate.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The Fair Trading Operations Division of the Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs employs 22 inspectors. Twenty are employed on a full time basis and two are employed on a part time basis.
- (b) No details are recorded of time spent in the Office or in the field. Many of the matters investigated are not property related and therefore there is no requirement to inspect premises.
- (c) A table of prosecutions for the years 1996-97 and 1997-98 is found in the Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs annual reports which have been tabled in Parliament. Attached is a table for the year 1998-99 and for the first half of the year 1999–00.
- (d) The tables described in item (c) contain details of the offences.

*[Table referred to in answer (14 pages) sent to honourable member and copy tabled in parliamentary library]*

**Education: Careskills contract**

**210. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education):

- (a) What contractual or other arrangements does the Department of Education or any of its agencies have with Careskills.
- (b) What payments have been made by the department or any of its agencies to Careskills pursuant to these arrangements.
- (c) Has Careskills complied with all contractual, statutory or other obligations under these arrangements or under any applicable State or Federal laws.
- (d) What amount is currently due and payable to Careskills pursuant to these arrangements.
- (e) Is there any dispute between the department or any of its agencies and Careskills regarding the performance of any obligations of Careskills under these arrangements or any amount payable to Careskills under these arrangements.
- (f) When was the last payment made to Careskills under these arrangements.
- (g) What are the details of all discussions, meetings or correspondence between Careskills and the department, the department or any other person on behalf of the department or the department since 1 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

In relation to the involvement of the Office of Schools with CareSkills:

- (a) The Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd trading as 'CareSkills' delivered the Certificate II in Business (Office Administration) to nine school students registered on training agreements. This program is coordinated by CareSkills and Chandler Secondary College on behalf of their own students as well as students from other government and non-government schools in the Southern Metropolitan Region.

Chandler Secondary College has a Memorandum of Understanding with CareSkills. Under this Memorandum of Understanding, CareSkills had agreed to subcontract the training of these students to Chandler Secondary College and provide funding for coordination and project development.

- (b) During 1999 CareSkills has been paid \$19,800 by the Office of Schools within the Department of Education, Employment and Training under these arrangements.
- (c) Investigations by Apprenticeship Field Officers and the Office of Schools in June 1999 found that CareSkills had employed a number of school based trainees without host employment. This arrangement was in breach of the Vocational Education and Training Act 1990 (Vic). This situation was resolved and students without host employment were transferred from training agreements to VET in the VCE programs.

Chandler Secondary College is owed \$26,125 from CareSkills for services under their Memorandum of Understanding.

- (d) No amount is currently due or payable to CareSkills from the Office of Schools.
- (e) There is no dispute between the Office of Schools and CareSkills regarding the performance of any obligations of CareSkills under these arrangements. No amount is payable to CareSkills under these arrangements.

CareSkills owe monies to Chandler Secondary College for services under their Memorandum of Understanding.

- (f) The last payment to be made by the Office of Schools to CareSkills will be 24 December 1999.
- (g) The Office of Schools wrote to CareSkills on 28 October 1999 seeking a refund of \$7,150 for structured training costs paid to CareSkills for the students who were employed without host employment or withdrew from the program before host employment could be found.

Six documents were sent from Chandler Secondary College to CareSkills since 1 October 1999. These documents are summarised as follows:

- Letter (21/10/99) seeking confirmation that Chandler Secondary College students will complete all the necessary hours as guaranteed by the end of the 2000 school year.
- Facsimile (27/10/99) informing CareSkills that students had completed the required VET modules and a reminder that money is due.
- Facsimile (28/10/99) requesting workplace hours and workplace contact person for each of the nine students undertaking the program.
- Facsimile (28/10/99) requesting urgent information from letter (21/10/99) and a meeting to discuss the counselling of students for the school based Apprenticeship and Traineeship program.
- Facsimile (3/11/99) providing an invoice for services under the CareSkills and Chandler Secondary College Memorandum of Understanding.

- Letter (5/11/99) listing concerns regarding CareSkills involvement in the school based Apprenticeship and Traineeship program.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Building Industry Group Scheme contract**

**211. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education):

- (a) What contractual or other arrangements does the Department of Education or any of its agencies have with Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS.
- (b) What payments have been made by the department or any of its agencies to Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS pursuant to these arrangements.
- (c) Has Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS complied with all contractual, statutory or other obligations under these arrangements or under any applicable State or Federal laws.
- (d) What amount is currently due and payable to Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS pursuant to these arrangements.
- (e) Is there any dispute between the department or any of its agencies and Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS regarding the performance of any obligations of Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS under these arrangements or any amount payable to Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS under these arrangements.
- (f) When was the last payment made to Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS under these arrangements.
- (g) What are the details of all discussions, meetings or correspondence between Building Industry Group (Training) Scheme — BIGS and the department, the department or any other person on behalf of the department or the department since 1 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) B.I.G.S. has a Performance Agreement with the State Training Board in relation to the 1999 Apprenticeship and Traineeship Training Program.
- (b) \$60,450 was paid to B.I.G.S. on 22 December 1999 for training delivery.
- (c) The Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment (PETE) has no evidence of non-compliance by B.I.G.S. with the agreement referred to in paragraph (a). PETE has investigated non-compliance with earlier agreements and is currently investigating possible further non-compliance.
- (d) The State Training Board is contractually bound to B.I.G.S. under the agreement referred to in paragraph (a).
- (e) I refer to my answer to paragraph (c).
- (f) 22 December 1999.
- (g) The following have occurred between the PETE and B.I.G.S. since 1 October 1999:
  - 12 October 1999 - The Office wrote to Mr Barry Hughes, Manager B.I.G.S. informing him that the Office would be undertaking an audit to verify delivery of contracted training;
  - 20 October 1999 - Audit of B.I.G.S. undertaken by contractor on behalf of the Office; and

- 8 November 1999 - The Office informed B.I.G.S. in writing of the findings of the audit to which B.I.G.S. responded by providing additional reports.

**Education: Health Industry Training Co. contract**

**212. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education):

- (a) What contractual or other arrangements does the Department of Education or any of its agencies have with Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd.
- (b) What payments have been made by the department or any of its agencies to Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd pursuant to these arrangements.
- (c) Has Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd complied with all contractual, statutory or other obligations under these arrangements or under any applicable State or Federal laws.
- (d) What amount is currently due and payable to Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd pursuant to these arrangements.
- (e) Is there any dispute between the department or any of its agencies and Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd regarding the performance of any obligations of Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd under these arrangements or any amount payable to Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd under these arrangements.
- (f) When was the last payment made to Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd under these arrangements.
- (g) What are the details of all discussions, meetings or correspondence between Community Services and Health Industry Training Company Ltd and the department, the department or any other person on behalf of the department or the department since 1 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Please refer to the response to Question No. 210, a copy of which is attached.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Victorian building and construction industry group training scheme contract**

**213. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education):

- (a) What contractual or other arrangements does the Department of Education or any of its agencies have with Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme.
- (b) What payments have been made by the department or any of its agencies to Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme pursuant to these arrangements.
- (c) Has Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme complied with all contractual, statutory or other obligations under these arrangements or under any applicable State or Federal laws.
- (d) What amount is currently due and payable to Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme pursuant to these arrangements.

- (e) Is there any dispute between the department or any of its agencies and Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme regarding the performance of any obligations of Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme under these arrangements or any amount payable to Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme under these arrangements.
- (f) When was the last payment made to Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme under these arrangements.
- (g) What are the details of all discussions, meetings or correspondence between Victorian Building and Construction Industry Group Training Scheme and the department, the department or any other person on behalf of the department or the department since 1 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

The answer to this question has been incorporated within the response to Legislative Council Question No. 211, a copy of which is attached.

**Planning: Royal Exhibition Buildings — World Heritage Register**

**214. THE HON. M. A. BIRRELL** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) Does the department intend to nominate the Royal Exhibition Building for inclusion on the World Heritage Register.
- (b) Has any agency of the department prepared a draft case for this nomination; if so, which agency.
- (c) Has the department consulted the Federal department.
- (d) What is the timetable for the nomination.

**ANSWER:**

- (a) The Government is aware that the Melbourne City Council is in the process of updating the documentation that they first prepared in 1997 in support of such a nomination. The Government will consider the updated documentation when it is available and will seek the advice of the Victorian Heritage Council prior to making a decision whether or not to support a nomination.
- (b) No Government agency has prepared a draft case for World Heritage nomination.

However, the Royal Exhibition Building is on the Victorian Heritage Register and the extent of that registration is currently under review by Heritage Victoria. This review is part of a documentation upgrade that is being conducted on a number of government owned buildings that were transferred from the former Government Buildings Register following the passage of the Heritage Act in 1995.

The documentation that the Melbourne City Council is compiling will assist Heritage Victoria with their review.

- (c) Not on this matter.
- (d) Given the answer to (a), the government has no timetable for nomination of the Royal Exhibition Building and there is nothing before the Government for its consideration.

In general, nomination for World Heritage listing is an ongoing process. Should a nomination be proposed it would need to be lodged with UNESCO by July 2000 to be considered in the next round.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: registered training organisations**

- 215. THE HON. I. J. COVER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): With regard to the memorandum from the Office of Training and Further Education to Registered Training Organisations (RTO) dated 24 November 1999 freezing the maximum number of commencing apprentice/trainees for whom payments will be made to each eligible RTO over the next 12 months:
- (a) What was the aggregate number of all eligible RTOs of maximum commencing apprenticeships and traineeships for whom payments will be made as indicated by the Apprenticeship/Traineeship Training Program Internet site <http://gftp.otfe.vic.gov.au> as advised in that memorandum and as at 24 November.
  - (b) What maximum number of commencing apprenticeships and traineeships was shown for each eligible RTO as at 24 November 1999.
  - (c) After the lodgement of claims for apprentices and trainees who commenced training before 24 November, what was the aggregate number for all eligible RTOs of maximum commencing apprentices/trainees as at 8 December 1999.
  - (d) After the lodgement of claims for apprentices and trainees who commenced training before 24 November what was the maximum number of commencing apprentice/trainees for each eligible RTO as at 8 December 1999.
  - (e) Were all claims made subsequent to 24 November and by 8 December 1999 by RTOs for apprentices and trainees who commenced training before 24 November accepted by OTFE.
  - (f) What criteria were used to determine the validity of the claims by RTOs for additional numbers of apprentices and trainees subsequent to 24 November and by 8 December 1999.
  - (g) What was the final aggregate number of all eligible RTOs of the maximum number of commencing apprentices and trainees for whom payments will be made as finally advised to eligible RTOs.
  - (h) What was the final maximum number of apprentices and trainees who commenced training for whom payment would be made for each eligible RTO as finally advised to eligible RTOs.
  - (i) What was the OTFE's expectation as at 18 September 1999 and at 23 November 1999 with regard to projected growth of commencing apprentices and trainees for whom payment would be made for the year 2000.
  - (j) Of this projected growth, what number of apprenticeships and traineeships were to be provided by RTOs which received funding for apprenticeships and traineeships during 1999.
  - (k) Of this projected growth, what number of apprenticeships and traineeships were to be provided by RTOs which would be seeking to conduct apprenticeships and traineeships for which they did not receive funding during 1999.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) 170.
- (b) The information requested for each RTO is regarded as commercial-in-confidence.
- (c) 22,362.
- (d) The information requested is regarded by RTO's as commercial-in-confidence.
- (e) No.



- (f) The criteria were that the apprentice or trainee:
- had participated in training prior to 24 November 1999;
  - was not classified as a “existing worker”;
  - was not registered with another RTO; and
  - has not already been the subject of a claim.
- (g) 191.
- (h) The information requested for each RTO is regarded as commercial-in-confidence.
- (i) The projections of growth in commencements were 10,000 in 1999/2000 and 12,800 in 2000/2001.
- (j) All of the projected growth will be funded.
- (k) All of the projected growth will be funded.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Schofield inquiry on apprenticeships and traineeships**

- 216. THE HON. I. J. COVER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): With regard to the proposed Schofield inquiry into the quality of training in Victoria’s apprenticeship and traineeship system:
- (a) Will there be a reference panel; if so, who will it comprise.
  - (b) Will the industry be surveyed.
  - (c) To whom and when will the survey be distributed.
  - (d) How long is it anticipated that the inquiry will take.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) A project reference group will be convened for the inquiry, chaired by Mr Ross Oakley, Chairperson of the State Training Board. While those invited to participate in the reference group have been selected on the basis of their personal expertise and extensive experience of the apprenticeship and traineeship system, the group is representative of unions, industry groups, employers and training providers.
- (b) & (c)  
A survey of apprentices and trainees, and their employers will be conducted as part of the inquiry, and the results reported as part of the final report of the inquiry.
- (d) The inquiry formally commenced on 1 February 2000 and will report by 31 May 2000.

**Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: registered training organisations**

- 217. THE HON. I. J. COVER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): In relation to the freeze on the maximum number of commencing trainees for whom payments will be made to each eligible Registered Training Organisation over the next 12 months:
- (a) If she will ascertain and inform the House when did the freeze occur in Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania.

- (b) For how long did those freezes apply in each State.
- (c) Did those freezes apply to — (i) aggregate funds; (ii) aggregate numbers of commencing apprentices and trainees; (iii) individual RTOs; and (iv) commencing apprentices and trainees for each RTO.
- (d) Did those freezes apply only to private RTOs or to all training organisations for whom payment was to be made.
- (e) Were these freezes shortened in duration subsequent to their announcement.
- (f) Were the announcements of these freezes preceded by a public review or followed by a review.
- (g) Were these freezes preceded by a comprehensive audit of RTOs or followed by such an audit.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Limitations on private provider access to government funding apply in other States either by limiting budgets, limiting delivery to a prescribed range of programs or applying enrolment limits on private registered training organisations.

In New South Wales, private RTOs are not eligible to access Government funding to deliver apprenticeship training in non-metropolitan areas.

In Queensland, private RTOs must obtain a special local quality endorsement before they can access Government funds for training.

In Western Australia, access to user choice funding is controlled by allocating places to private RTOs. Also, funding is not available to private RTOs to deliver apprenticeship training in regional areas (with the exception of Bunbury).

In Tasmania, private RTOs cannot access user choice funding for a number of apprenticeships.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.  
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.  
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.  
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

**Wednesday, 1 March 2000**

**Gaming: web site user information**

- 180. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming):
- (a) What data collection and profiling methods are utilised by the Minister's department or by any other person on behalf of the department, to collate and store information about users of any website operated by or on behalf of the department.
  - (b) How is this information managed.
  - (c) What access or use of this information is made by the department, or by any other person on behalf of the department.
  - (d) What policy is in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that -

- (a) The Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority receives a monthly report from Information Victoria, the Authority's website host, detailing activity of this site (ie number of successful hits for entire site and the number of users). This report is a standard service provided by Information Victoria to those entities for whom they publish websites;
- (b) This report is received from Information Victoria via the Internet mail and a hard copy is retained;
- (c) This report is for information only; and
- (d) As this information is not distributed to a third party, there is no policy in place regarding the collection and distribution of this information to any third party.

**Environment and Conservation: firefighting budget**

- 189. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation):
- (a) What was the firefighting budget of the Minister's department and Parks Victoria respectively, in 1997–98, 1998–99 and what is the budget for 1999–2000.
  - (b) To what organisation(s) was "an additional \$13.6 million in funding to boost fire fighting resources this summer" granted.
  - (c) In respect of the Minister's statement that an "extra 800 seasonal fire fighters will be available in regional Victoria for what is predicted to be a very difficult fire season", is this "extra" component 800 more than the previous summer; if so, what did she mean by this statement.

- (d) What number and type of aircraft have been contracted for the summer of 1999–2000 and what were contracted for the summer of 1998.
- (e) What budget will be allocated by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to the training of staff for this current fire season and what budget was allocated for the last fire season.
- (f) Will Parks Victoria staff who fight fires be given time off normal Parks Victoria duties.
- (g) What are the financial arrangements between Parks Victoria and her department in the current fire season.
- (h) What increased availability of equipment (such as bulldozers) will be made available in 1999–2000 compared with 2000–01.
- (i) What upgrade of computer based information systems is being made.
- (j) What improved radio network is being introduced.
- (k) When will implementation of a statewide incident channel be completed.
- (l) What extensions of the fire detection network are being made in 1999–2000 and when will they be completed.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) In 1999/2000 and 1998/99 the Department operated on full accrual budgets. Prior to that the Department's budgets were on a cash only basis.

In 1997-98 the Department's budget for firefighting was \$28.777m. A Treasurer's Advance of \$26.5m to meet above average fire season costs was also provided.

In 1998-99 the Department's budget for firefighting was \$35.462m. In addition Treasurer's Advances of \$9.182m to meet costs associated with the above average fire season and \$2.88m for flood damage works to fire infrastructure in the North East and Gippsland were provided during the year.

In 1999-2000 the Department's budget for firefighting is \$42.996m including \$6.5m for the development of an Integrated Fire Information System.

In 1999-2000 the Department was granted an additional \$13.6 million above core funding for fire fighting due to the expected severe fire season.

- (b) The \$13.6m of additional funding above core budget was granted to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
- (c) Up to 800 seasonal firefighters will be employed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment during the 1999-2000 fire season to supplement the normal NRE and PV workforce. The previous season was also predicted to be long and dry, as a consequence additional firefighters were engaged that year.
- (d) During 1998-99 NRE contracted twenty-three aircraft, comprising ten fixed wing firebombing aircraft, two specialised fixed wing mapping/reconnaissance aircraft, six light helicopters, four medium helicopters, and one heavy helicopter. This represented an increase of six aircraft over the seventeen core contracted aircraft.
- (e) For the 1999-2000 season, NRE has contracted twenty-four aircraft, comprising ten fixed wing firebombing aircraft, two specialised fixed wing mapping/reconnaissance aircraft, six light helicopters, five medium helicopters, and one heavy helicopter. This fleet includes an upgraded, higher capacity fixed wing firebombing aircraft and the high capacity Erickson Air-crane firebombing helicopter. This represented an increase of seven aircraft over the seventeen core contracted aircraft.

- (f) The budgets allocated by the Department for the training of staff are:
- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1999-00 | \$256,000 plus a Treasurer's Advance of \$415,000 to allow for Basic Wildfire Awareness training for staff employed by the department other than former Conservation and Natural Resources staff. |
| 1998-99 | \$256,000.  |
- (g) The Management Services Agreement between NRE and Park Victoria confirms Parks Victoria's responsibilities to be available for firefighting duties, for which they are trained and accredited.
- (h) Under the Management Services Agreement between NRE and Parks Victoria, NRE funds Parks Victoria for a range of activities including base fire management responsibilities. As with other contracted service providers Parks Victoria periodically invoices NRE for the additional services provided.
- (i) The additional \$13.6m made available to NRE by the Government for the 1999-2000 fire season will ensure adequate, ready availability of resources such as heavy machinery for firefighting. This funding enables NRE to make arrangements with contractors to place machinery on stand-by as dictated by fire conditions at the time. Therefore the number of machines available at any time will vary according to the fire danger.
- In addition NRE has replaced ten old model light "first-attack" bulldozers with upgraded models, and is in the process of replacing sixteen heavy four-wheel drive fire tankers. The Government is committed to ensuring that adequate equipment such as bulldozers and tankers are available to protect our forests parks and reserves.
- (j) A complete renewal of computer based fire information systems is currently being implemented. Much of this new web-based system is already in place, with the remainder being scheduled to be implemented during 2000-01. Additionally NRE has recently completed the rollout of a substantially upgraded Departmental-wide, Wide Area Network to facilitate data communications for all NRE operations, including firefighting.
- (k) Substantial improvements to the radio network have been made for the 1999-2000 fire season, with the addition of an incident channel network, and a back-up network. The incident channel network, which establishes 51 strategically located conventional repeater sites, will greatly improve fireline communication. The back-up network is a strategic command network to provide for emergency radio communications between major fire incident control centres and Regional Offices in the event major outages of the telephone, trunk and Incident Channel Networks
- (l) The majority of the 51 sites associated with the incident channel network have been operational for some time with the remaining 6 programmed to become operational by early March 2000.
- (m) With the commissioning of a new fire tower at Big Hill in Stawell in December 1997, the fixed fire detection network provides good coverage for rural Victoria. While no significant extensions to the fire detection network are planned for 1999-00, the additional funding made available by Government will ensure that the detection tower network can be operated for longer periods each day, and for an extended season if required by fire danger conditions at the time. In addition the funds allow for aerial surveillance by fixed winged aircraft following lightning storms.

### Gaming: policy

- 191. THE HON. R. M. HALLAM** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): In respect of the department's "Responsible Gaming" policy:
- (a) How is the gambling industry to be made "more openly accountable to the Parliament".
- (b) Through what process will local government be afforded a "greater say" in the location and establishment of gaming venues.
- (c) What specific political associations will be outlawed.
- (d) What additional disclosure standards shall be applied to gaming owners and operators.

- (e) How will the probity checks on owners and operators be enhanced.
- (f) Who will determine that the concentration of ownership or control of gaming machines is “excessive” and how will any such excess be overcome.
- (g) Who will be responsible for determining “truth in advertising” and what sanctions will apply to any breach.
- (h) Will the gaming industry be involved in the development of the new “enforceable Code of Conduct” to apply to gaming operators and venue owners.
- (i) On what basis will the announced levy be applied on gaming operators to fund the government’s antidrugs policy.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The Government is still considering the options for accountability measures and will introduce legislation in Parliament once a final decision has been made.
- (b) Local government will be afforded a greater say in the location and establishment of gaming venues by being able to object to the establishment of gaming venues on the grounds that there is a net negative economic and social impact.
- (c) The Government has stated a commitment to outlaw senior office holders of government, and associated political parties, from holding directorships or senior employment with gaming companies.
- (d) The Government’s position is that donations to political parties by gaming and casino owners and operators should be limited and also fully and publicly disclosed. The options are still being considered.
- (e) The way in which probity checks on owners and operators will be enhanced will be dealt with in legislation to be introduced.
- (f) The Government will take into account the future national competition policy review findings, to determine whether the concentration of ownership or control of gaming machines is excessive.
- (g) The details of the Government’s policy on gambling advertising will be in legislation to be introduced in Parliament.
- (h) The Government has made a commitment to introduce an enforceable code of conduct for gaming operators and venue operators. This is in line with the findings of the Productivity Commission report: *Australia’s Gambling Industries*, which suggests mandatory regulations are more useful than industry self-regulation. The details of the enforceable code and the role of the gaming industry in its development are still being considered.
- (i) The Government made a pre-election commitment that additional funding for the Government’s drug and alcohol programs will be funded through \$10 million from the Community Support Fund and a small levy on gaming operators. The way in which the levy will be applied is still being considered.

**Environment and Conservation: animal shelters**

**194. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation):

- (a) What assistance is given to animal shelters by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
- (b) What assistance (if any) has been given to Ms Theresa Tate, wildlife shelter operator at Corinella, for her animal shelter and rescue work.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) Care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife is voluntary and no financial assistance is available from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The vast majority of animals treated are common species, and only about half of these animals are successfully rehabilitated. The remainder are either euthanised or die in care. It would not be appropriate to spend funds allocated for the conservation of biodiversity on an activity that provides little direct contribution to conservation.
- (b) Wildlife rehabilitators require a permit to operate wildlife shelters, otherwise it would be illegal for them to be in possession of wildlife. The Department facilitates the provision of permits for applicants who are able to demonstrate they have appropriate training, or have prior experience or employment.

Ms Theresa Tate contacted the Department requesting a donation of cages for housing raptors and was informed that no funds are available to supply cages or other equipment to shelter operators. She was informed that the nearby shelter at Grantville does have suitable facilities for the rehabilitation of raptors and that, if she is unable to provide suitable housing, she should direct any cases of injured raptors to that shelter.

**Environment and Conservation: Melbourne zoo**

**195. THE HON. A. P. OLEXANDER** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation):

- (a) What information has she received from Melbourne Zoo relating to the killing of healthy but surplus animals.
- (b) Has she commenced a review of the guidelines on animal euthanasia at Melbourne Zoo and animal and wildlife parks; if so — (i) what are the terms of the review; (ii) who is conducting the review; and (iii) on what date is the review to be completed.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

1. In December 1999 I received a briefing from the Chairman and the CEO of the Zoological Parks and Gardens Board (ZPGB) on management euthanasia practices at Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee Open Range Zoo.
2. A review into the guidelines on animal euthanasia at the ZPGB's three properties commenced on 21 December 1999, with the first meeting of the Management Euthanasia Review Committee.
  - (a) The terms of reference of the Review Committee are:
    - Determine whether the actual euthanasia procedures and practices at work in its three properties are in compliance with the policies of the ZPGB
    - Determine whether the policies of the ZPGB accord in their ethical principles with the codes of practice of the World Zoo Organisation and Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria
    - Determine whether the ethical principles encompassed by the Board's policies accord with prevailing community expectations of such policies
    - Establish, in consultation with relevant staff, any changes that may be required to procedures and practices under the relevant policies of the Board
    - Recommend such changes to policies, procedures and practices as may be deemed necessary
    - Recommend mechanisms to improve monitoring and review of policies and procedures, including accountability.

- (b) The members of the Review Committee are:

Associate Professor Andrew Vizard, BVSc; MPVM: Chair (Associate Professor, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne; Board member of ZPGB); Dr Peter Penson, BVSc, formerly Director, Animal Welfare Bureau, Department of Natural Resources and Environment; Ms Mary Gillett MP, Member for Werribee; and the Hon Glenyys Romanes MLC, Member for Melbourne Province

- (c) I am advised the review has been completed and was endorsed by the Zoological Parks and Gardens Board at its February meeting. The Board is forwarding the report to the Friends of the Zoos and to the RSPCA for comment and feedback. The report is publicly available.