

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

11 May 2000

(extract from Book 7)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

His Excellency the Honourable Sir JAMES AUGUSTINE GOBBO, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

Professor ADRIENNE E. CLARKE, AO

The Ministry

Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. S. P. Bracks, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Health and Minister for Planning	The Hon. J. W. Thwaites, MP
Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover	The Hon. M. M. Gould, MLC
Minister for Transport	The Hon. P. Batchelor, MP
Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for Ports and Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development. . .	The Hon. C. C. Broad, MLC
Minister for State and Regional Development, Minister for Finance and Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. J. M. Brumby, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Workcover and Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads	The Hon. R. G. Cameron, MP
Minister for Community Services	The Hon. C. M. Campbell, MP
Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. M. E. Delahunty, MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation and Minister for Women's Affairs	The Hon. S. M. Garbutt, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. A. Haermeyer, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. K. G. Hamilton, MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Manufacturing Industry and Minister for Racing	The Hon. R. J. Hulls, MP
Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment.	The Hon. L. J. Kosky, MP
Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Youth Affairs and Minister assisting the Minister for Planning	The Hon. J. M. Madden, MLC
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Major Projects and Tourism and Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. J. Pandazopoulos, MP
Minister for Housing, Minister for Aged Care and Minister assisting the Minister for Health	The Hon. B. J. Pike, MP
Minister for Small Business and Minister for Consumer Affairs	The Hon. M. R. Thomson, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet	The Hon. G. W. Jennings

Legislative Council Committees

Economic Development Committee — The Honourables R. A. Best, G. R. Craige, Kaye Darveniza, N. B. Lucas, J. M. McQuilten, W. I. Smith and T. C. Theophanous.

Privileges Committee — The Honourables W. R. Baxter, D. McL. Davis, C. A. Furletti, M. M. Gould and G. W. Jennings.

Standing Orders Committee — The Honourables the President, G. B. Ashman, B. W. Bishop, G. W. Jennings, Jenny Mikakos, G. D. Romanes and K. M. Smith.

Joint Committees

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables B. C. Boardman and S. M. Nguyen. (*Assembly*): Mr Jasper, Mr Lupton, Mr Mildenhall, Mr Wells and Mr Wynne.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables R. F. Smith and E. G. Stoney. (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty, Ms Duncan, Mr Ingram, Ms Lindell, Mr Mulder and Mr Seitz.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables G. D. Romanes and E. J. Powell. (*Assembly*): Mr Hardman, Mr Lim, Mr Nardella, Mrs Peulich and Mr Wilson.

House Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President (*ex officio*), G. B. Ashman, R. A. Best, J. M. McQuilten, Jenny Mikakos and R. F. Smith. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Kilgour, Mr Leigh, Mr Leighton, Ms McCall and Mr Savage.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables D. McL. Davis, D. G. Hadden and P. A. Katsambanis. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr McIntosh, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson.

Library Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President, E. C. Carbines, M. T. Luckins, E. J. Powell and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker, Ms Duncan, Mr Languiller, Mrs Peulich and Mr Seitz.

Printing Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President, Andrea Coote, Kaye Darveniza and E. J. Powell. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker, Ms Gillett, Mr Nardella and Mr Richardson.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Bill Forwood, R. M. Hallam, G. K. Rich-Phillips and T. C. Theophanous. (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Barker, Ms Davies, Mr Holding, Mr Loney and Mrs Maddigan.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Andrew Brideson and E. C. Carbines. (*Assembly*): Mr Kilgour, Mr Langdon, Mr Plowman, Mr Spry and Mr Trezise.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables M. A. Birrell, M. T. Luckins, Jenny Mikakos and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Carli, Mr Dixon, Ms Gillett and Mr Robinson.

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Hansard — Chief Reporter: Ms C. J. Williams

Library — Librarian: Mr B. J. Davidson

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Ms C. M. Haydon

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

President: The Hon. B. A. CHAMBERLAIN

Deputy President and Chairman of Committees: The Hon. B. W. BISHOP

Temporary Chairmen of Committees: The Honourables G. B. Ashman, R. A. Best, Kaye Darveniza, D. G. Hadden, P. R. Hall, Jenny Mikakos, R. F. Smith, E. G. Stoney and C. A. Strong

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. M. M. GOULD

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. W. JENNINGS

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. A. BIRRELL

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. BILL FORWOOD

Leader of the National Party:

The Hon. R. M. HALLAM

Deputy Leader of the National Party:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Member	Province	Party	Member	Province	Party
Ashman, Hon. Gerald Barry	Koonung	LP	Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Gippsland	NP
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Koonung	LP	Hallam, Hon. Roger Murray	Western	NP
Baxter, Hon. William Robert	North Eastern	NP	Jennings, Hon. Gavin Wayne	Melbourne	ALP
Best, Hon. Ronald Alexander	North Western	NP	Katsambanis, Hon. Peter Argyris	Monash	LP
Birrell, Hon. Mark Alexander	East Yarra	LP	Lucas, Hon. Neil Bedford, PSM	Eumemmerring	LP
Bishop, Hon. Barry Wilfred	North Western	NP	Luckins, Hon. Maree Therese	Waverley	LP
Boardman, Hon. Blair Cameron	Chelsea	LP	McQuilten, Hon. John Martin	Ballarat	ALP
Bowden, Hon. Ronald Henry	South Eastern	LP	Madden, Hon. Justin Mark	Doutta Galla	ALP
Brideson, Hon. Andrew Ronald	Waverley	LP	Mikakos, Hon. Jenny	Jika Jika	ALP
Broad, Hon. Candy Celeste	Melbourne North	ALP	Nguyen, Hon. Sang Minh	Melbourne West	ALP
Carbines, Hon. Elaine Cafferty	Geelong	ALP	Olexander, Hon. Andrew Phillip	Silvan	LP
Chamberlain, Hon. Bruce Anthony	Western	LP	Powell, Hon. Elizabeth Jeanette	North Eastern	NP
Coote, Hon. Andrea	Monash	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	Eumemmerring	LP
Cover, Hon. Ian James	Geelong	LP	Romanes, Hon. Glenyys Dorothy	Melbourne	ALP
Craige, Hon. Geoffrey Ronald	Central Highlands	LP	Ross, Hon. John William Gamaliel	Higinbotham	LP
Darveniza, Hon. Kaye	Melbourne West	ALP	Smith, Hon. Kenneth Maurice	South Eastern	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	East Yarra	LP	Smith, Hon. Robert Fredrick	Chelsea	ALP
Davis, Hon. Philip Rivers	Gippsland	LP	Smith, Hon. Wendy Irene	Silvan	LP
Forwood, Hon. Bill	Templestowe	LP	Stoney, Hon. Eadley Graeme	Central Highlands	LP
Furletti, Hon. Carlo Angelo	Templestowe	LP	Strong, Hon. Christopher Arthur	Higinbotham	LP
Gould, Hon. Monica Mary	Doutta Galla	ALP	Theophanous, Hon. Theo Charles	Jika Jika	ALP
Hadden, Hon. Dianne Gladys	Ballarat	ALP	Thomson, Hon. Marsha Rose	Melbourne North	ALP

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2000

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Redundant and unclear legislation.....1083

PAPERS1083

DISABILITY SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading.....1083

Third reading.....1092

Remaining stages.....1092

BUSINESS REGISTRATION ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading.....1093

Committee.....1101

Third reading.....1103

Remaining stages.....1103

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Fishing: licences.....1103

Industrial relations: disputes.....1104

Fisheries Victoria: funding.....1105

Youth: round table program.....1105

Snowy River.....1105

Port of Melbourne.....1105

Fishing: government policy.....1106

Federal budget: sport.....1106

Minerals and petroleum: government policy.....1107

GST: small business.....1107

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers.....1108

BUDGET PAPERS, 2000–011108

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment.....1118

ADJOURNMENT

Monterey Secondary College site.....1118

Mobile phones.....1119

Olympic Games: torchbearers.....1119

Housing: Shepparton estate.....1120

Sport and recreation industry awards.....1120, 1124

Housing: Monash Province.....1121

Government advertising.....1122

Liquor: licences.....1122

Snowy River.....1122

Industrial relations: disputes.....1122

Water safety: Victorian Boating Guide.....1123

Housing: loan schemes.....1123

Small Business May.....1123

Responses.....1124

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2000

Premier: designated union contacts.....1127

Multicultural Affairs: designated union contacts.....1127

Planning: designated union contacts.....1128

Transport: designated union contacts.....1128

Finance: designated union contacts.....1128

Treasurer: designated union contacts.....1129

Local Government: designated union contacts.....1129

Workcover: designated union contacts.....1130

Roads: designated union contacts.....1130

Police and Emergency Services: designated

union contacts.....1131

Attorney-General: designated union contacts.....1132

Post Compulsory Education, Training and

Employment: designated union contacts.....1134

Planning: designated union contacts.....1135

Gaming: designated union contacts.....1135

Consumer Affairs: designated union contacts.....1136

Premier: ministerial appointments.....1138

Multicultural Affairs: ministerial appointments.....1138

Planning: ministerial appointments.....1138

Transport: ministerial appointments.....1139

Finance: ministerial appointments.....1139

Local Government: ministerial appointments.....1140

Workcover: ministerial appointments.....1140

Transport: ministerial appointments.....1141

Arts: ministerial appointments.....1141

Police and Emergency Services: ministerial

appointments.....1142

Attorney-General: ministerial appointments.....1142

Gaming: ministerial appointments.....1143

Major Projects and Tourism: ministerial

appointments.....1143

Housing: ministerial appointments.....1144

Consumer Affairs: ministerial appointments.....1144

Health: hospitals — weighted inlier equivalent

separation statistics.....1144

Housing: task forces.....1148

State and Regional Development: information

technology skills initiatives.....1149

State and Regional Development: information

technology investment.....1150

State and Regional Development: information

technology skills initiatives.....1150

State and Regional Development: information

technology investment.....1150

State and Regional Development: RAFT

polymerisation process.....1150

Manufacturing Industry: RAFT polymerisation

process.....1151

State and Regional Development: Industrial

Supplies Office.....1151

Attorney-General: public holidays.....1151

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices.....1152

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices.....1152

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices.....1153

State and Regional Development: Multimedia

Victoria — VicOne infrastructure.....1153

State and Regional Development: Connecting

Victoria — export assistance centre.....1154

State and Regional Development: 'A better deal

for regional Victoria'.....1154

State and Regional Development: information

and communications skills task force.....1154

CONTENTS

<i>State and Regional Development: strategic audit of industry</i>	1155
<i>Attorney-General: nursing home deaths</i>	1156

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2000

<i>Premier: Independents — resources</i>	1157
<i>Treasurer: designated union contacts</i>	1157
<i>Workcover: designated union contacts</i>	1158
<i>Multicultural Affairs: designated union contacts</i>	1158
<i>Treasurer: ministerial appointments</i>	1159
<i>Treasurer: permanent employment</i>	1159
<i>Industrial Relations: ministerial offices</i>	1160
<i>Industrial Relations: ministerial offices</i>	1160
<i>State and Regional Development: advertisement — Multimedia Victoria</i>	1160
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: information and communications skills task force</i>	1160
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Community Business Employment program</i>	1161

Thursday, 11 May 2000

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

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Redundant and unclear legislation

Hon. M. T. LUCKINS (Waverley) presented report on Constitutional Convention Act, together with appendix.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Mt Buller Alpine Resort Management Board — Report, 1998–99.

Tweddle Child and Family Health Service — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–1999 report.

DISABILITY SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 9 May; motion of Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business).

Hon. R. A. BEST (North Western) — The opposition supports the Disability Services (Amendment) Bill, which makes minor changes to the Disability Services Act to ensure the role of community visitors mirrors the role as set out in the provisions of the Intellectually Disabled Persons Services Act. The amendments will mean community visitors will now be able to visit non-government disability services and residential services funded under the Disability Services Act. This provision was recommended by the Office of Public Advocate in its evaluation of the community visitors program in 1998. I will refer to a copy of that report in my contribution to the debate.

Many people are not aware of the role of community visitors. I refer honourable members to the *Annual Report of Community Visitors 1999*. I will read from the introduction to the report to put on the record the role of and the gratitude owed to the wonderful people who voluntary take on this work. The introduction states, in part:

Credit is due to the community visitors who throughout any given year have visited hundreds of men and women with intellectual disability who are living in institutions or community residential units (CRUs). They have gone into what are the homes of these vulnerable, powerless people and compared their living conditions to those of the majority of the community. They have pledged to do all in their power to praise the rights and try to right the wrongs. The board members say thank you to all community visitors for their outstanding contribution.

It is that type of volunteerism in the community that is a vital component of society. Throughout country Victoria various institutions — ambulance services, the Country Fire Authority and various sporting organisations — require volunteers to assist their operations. The community's commitment to various organisations needs to be recognised and volunteers should be praised for the work they do.

I have had the opportunity of meeting many people who work in the disability area and the pleasure of helping many families who unfortunately have a sufferer of either a physical or intellectual disability. My association goes back a number of years. From 1973 to 1977 I coached Sandhurst Football Club and pre-season training was conducted on the grounds of the Sandhurst Boys Centre in Bendigo. In the lead-up to the regular season the club would train at the centre from about 5.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. and the residents of the boys centre would come down to the oval and participate in the training. Many friendships and associations were made during that time. Even now, many of those boys who have left the centre and gone to other forms of accommodation still support the Sandhurst Football Club.

I sometimes see boys from that time in the street and they often refer to the impact their association with the football club had on them. They were able to get close to people who played football at the highest level in Bendigo, and in turn the footballers enjoyed their association with the boys. The boys helped by fetching the footballs, watching the sprint work and yelling out encouragement, often indicating who came first in the sprints. They assisted as judges or goal umpires during scratch matches. It was an opportunity to create friendships — and that is what happened.

I remember a chap named Claude, a loyal young man who unfortunately has a severe disability. However, although that was 27 years ago Claude still stops me in the street to have a chat. It often takes some time for me to appreciate the point he is making, but he is a real character and I value his friendship.

It was because of that association that about four years ago I was approached to assist in the formation of the

Warriors Football Club. The club competes against other teams in the metropolitan area, as well as against teams from regional Victoria. It allows people with disabilities, either physical or intellectual, to participate in mainstream sport. In 1997 Kate Ballantyne, a member of the Warriors committee, wrote to me. Her letter states:

I am writing on behalf of the Bendigo Warriors to thank you for your support and patronage during 1997. Your involvement in supporting the players and the club has been greatly appreciated, even if you wouldn't pull on your football boots! As you are aware we don't have the normal support structures usually available to both operate and finance a football club making us value any support we do receive from local individuals or organisations.

Raising the profile of the Warriors was one of our major aims last year, and we will continue this during 1998. Having you as patron helps us in this endeavour.

We hope that the sponsorship idea floated through Vichealth will gain support to assist us in 1998 and in future years. If you need us to help follow this up in any way please contact us.

I am delighted that I am the patron of a football club that may not be a household name in Bendigo. I have renewed my sponsorship of the team this year. Just the other day I hosted a league fixture night. The boys play against other boys from Broadmeadows, Keilor, Maribyrnong, South Yarra, Hawthorn, Karingal and Ringwood. Their away games include Colac, Geelong and Ballarat. It is an extensive competition comprising teams from a broad area.

Those kids just love to get out on the ground and be part of a game of footy. It is an opportunity that they have not always been provided with. It is terrific to watch them come off the field at the end of a game after they have been out there enjoying themselves, chasing the ball and tackling other players. They keep talking among themselves about the little highlights of the game where they did something special. It is a fantastic program that provides people who suffer from disabilities with the opportunity to participate in mainstream sport.

Sports Focus, a Bendigo group that provides a range of advisory services and programs for mainstream sport, has produced a video and created a model program to encourage people with disabilities to become involved not only in football but in other mainstream sports. That model has now been implemented almost on a statewide basis. I am not sure that every part of the state has a similar program, but at least the disabled people now have opportunities to participate in sport and enjoy what the rest of us take for granted instead of being isolated or segregated.

Unfortunately there is a fair amount of ignorance in our communities about the services special accommodation houses provide for physically or intellectually disabled people. I became aware of that several years ago when I received representations from people who had bought real estate in a prime residential area of Bendigo. They were concerned because the Department of Human Services had purchased a block of land nearby and rumour was rife that an establishment was to be built on it to house five or six disabled boys. Each community visitor region reports to the Office of the Public Advocate, and when reading the *Annual Report of Community Visitors 1999* prepared by that body I came across the circumstance I have just referred to in the Loddon Mallee section. Page 35 of the report states:

Another situation that came to the attention of community visitors concerned a neighbourhood meeting of about 60 people who were objecting to a proposal to build a house for people with intellectual disability. The house was to be built in the neighbours' area. Some people expressed concern to community visitors about the effect on the resale price of their property and whether their children would be safe from the disabled people. Unfortunately, this shows that the Victorian community still has a long way to go before it can adequately demonstrate it accepts people with disabilities as fellow members of the community.

I make this comment in fairness to those people: I was concerned about the distance of the proposed special accommodation house from public transport. The boys would have had to walk at least a kilometre, if not more, to access public transport. I thought then and I still believe that it would have been better if the residential unit had been built closer to public transport to make it easier for the boys to go shopping or do their banking or whatever they needed to do.

I approached the developer to suggest other blocks of land in Bendigo that were more appropriate to meet the boys' needs. I am pleased to say that the house was built in the White Hills area, which is a fair location, where the boys now live.

It is sad that some members of the community often do not understand the needs of the intellectually disabled people housed in residential units and are not aware of the support networks and programs that assist them to take their place in the community. That level of ignorance reflects badly on the community. I hope that as time goes by and more people with disabilities are deinstitutionalised they will have the opportunity to be successfully integrated into our communities.

The *Final Report — Evaluation of the Community Visitors Program* that was prepared in May 1988 for the Office of the Public Advocate, the community visitors programs, the Department of Human Services

and the Department of Justice contains four recommendations. It is important that those recommendations be put on the record, because there is still much more work to be done to provide opportunities for community visitors to visit those institutions.

The first recommendation on page 52 of the report states:

That a volunteer, community-based program with Governor-in-Council appointments be maintained as the basis for the community visitors programs. The role of community visitors is the identification of individual consumer problems as a consequence of regular and informal visits to eligible facilities. This role is based on the assumption that community visitors are an essential external monitoring program that forms part of the Department of Human Services quality improvement strategies in services for people who are vulnerable.

All honourable members would agree that those safety nets and precautions need to be put in place in a structured way.

The second recommendation is:

That the culture of the community visitors programs and related agencies is reorientated to take account of the current developments in service provision and quality improvement. This will require an organisational development strategy which includes service providers, Department of Human Services and other key stakeholders.

The recommendation identifies the need for the net to be widened. Reliance cannot be placed on one contributor alone — the state government — so other ways must be found to involve more stakeholders in the programs.

The third recommendation is:

That a strategic focus is established for the programs involving key priorities, performance measures and protocols for action to support the visiting role.

The recommendation is that programs should not be so structured as to be inflexible but should ensure that key priorities are established so the desired outcomes can be achieved. It is important that performance measures are put in place so all Victorians are conscious of what needs to be achieved and what needs to be provided to support disabled people.

The fourth recommendation was that realistic resourcing be provided for strengthening infrastructure and support to the community visitors. I am certainly realistic enough to know there is a great deal of competition to attract funding for government programs. All honourable members would love to see more money delivered to a range of different programs.

When identifying a realistic level of resourcing, it is therefore necessary to have other indicators.

Information on performance, future outlooks and achievement objectives, such as providing good quality of life, wellbeing and a safe and secure environment for the people, provide a valid basis when bidding for resources. Unquestionably the number of people in the community requiring such programs is increasing.

I have enjoyed my association with many of the people involved, particularly the families. They are so very brave. The dedication they display in the face of daily difficulties provides a wonderful example of nurturing and parenting that should humble many of us. During the past 18 months I have been associated with the Alcock family in Bendigo. Wilf Alcock has a son Rodney, who has a disability. I was devastated to read a statement from Wilf reported in the *Herald Sun* on Sunday that unless the state can assure him that a bed in a unit will be provided for Rodney when he and his wife die, they would take him with them. The family had reached such a stage of distress because of the lack of certainty over Rodney's future.

I am delighted to say that after negotiations with the Department of Human Services — many of the departmental staff associated with the program are outstanding individuals and wonderful professionals — a solution was found for Wilf and his family. If anything happens to the parents young Rodney will be looked after. He will have a secure bed in an accommodation unit.

A variety of issues concerning respite come before members of Parliament. I understand the time it takes and the difficulties that arise when caring for kids and adults with disabilities. Therefore I have an enormous amount of pleasure in supporting the bill. It is a subject with which I am very well acquainted and understand. I hope in future years more resources will be made available to disability programs. It is not just about throwing money at a worthy cause but about making sure that the quality of life and the wellbeing of disabled people is of a standard that we would hope for ourselves.

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — I am pleased to speak on the Disability Services ((Amendment) Bill and follow the Honourable Ron Best whose contribution I enjoyed. He obviously cares deeply about the intellectually and physically disabled residents in his electorate, and I commend him.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Disability Services Act and the Intellectually Disabled Persons Services' Act to make provision for community

visitors. The disabled, whether intellectually or physically, are among the most vulnerable in society. It is therefore essential that governments legislate to protect their rights in all circumstances. The Disability Services (Amendment) Bill aims to give community visitors access to residential services for people with disabilities funded under the Disability Services Act.

Under the principal act community visitors have been unable to access non-government services funded under the act. The passage of this bill will ensure that community visitors will have access to non-government residential services for the disabled. The community visitor program has been operating in Victoria for the past 14 years. It was set up by the previous Labor government in 1986. The program is highly regarded and is administered by the Office of the Public Advocate.

I refer to the 1999 annual report of the community visitors and in particular to the report of the Barwon–South Western region, which I represent in Parliament. The region is extensive, covering an area from Geelong where I live to the South Australian border and north to the border of the Grampians region. It has 23 community residential units and one institution, the Colanda Centre in Colac. A total of 11 residential units are located in Bell Park, Bell Post Hill, Belmont, Geelong West, Grovedale, Hamlyn Heights, Newcombe, Newtown and Norlane West, and there are four in the Colac area.

It is disturbing to read in the report that over the past year there has been a continuing shortage of community visitors in some parts of the Barwon–South Western region, particularly in the Colac and Warrnambool areas. I encourage people to consider taking on the role of community visitors. More will be needed in Victoria with the passage of the bill when access is allowed to non-government residential services. I invite residents of my electorate to consider offering their services to become community visitors and engage in the program.

The report highlights a number of issues that emerged in all areas of the Barwon–South Western region, some of which were quickly and efficiently addressed. Some problems took longer to address but everyone benefited from the access community visitors were given to government residential services. I am sure that with the passage of the bill the ability of community visitors to access non-government residential services will also improve.

Clause 6 inserts a new part 3 into the principal act. Proposed section 7 outlines the functions of community

visitors with respect to residential service providers. They are to visit the provider and inquire into:

- (a) the appropriateness and standard of facilities for the accommodation, physical wellbeing and welfare of residents; and
- (b) the adequacy of opportunities and facilities for the recreation, occupation, education and training of residents; and
- (c) whether services are being provided in accordance with the principles specified in schedule 2; and
- (d) any complaint made to a community visitor by a resident.

Proposed section 8 outlines the rights of access of community visitors to non-government residential services and states that they may enter with or without any previous notice. The minister may direct a community visitor or a panel of community visitors to visit a residential service provider at any time.

Proposed section 9 outlines the entitlements of community visitors. They are entitled to inspect any part of the premises, see any residents, make inquiries about the admission and care of residents and inspect any document pertaining to any resident and any records. Proposed section 9(2) outlines the obligation of the management and staff of non-government residential services to fully cooperate with all aspects of the community visitors program. Proposed section 9(3) outlines the penalties for staff and management if they do not cooperate with a community visitor, or if they obstruct a visitor's work in any way.

Clause 6 also inserts proposed section 10 which outlines the process to be followed should a resident or a person on his or her behalf request a community visitor to speak to the resident. The vast majority of Victorian non-government residential services for disabled persons operate appropriately with the rights and interests of their residents paramount. Recently in Victoria we witnessed the closure of the Riverside Nursing Home. Some operators are prepared to compromise the level of care offered to residents.

A colleague I used to work with has an adult daughter Joey, who has a degenerative disease that has rendered her both physically and intellectually impaired for more than a decade. Joey has resided in a variety of residential places in the Geelong region and even in an institution. At times my friend has been concerned about the level and dignity of care that has been offered to her daughter in various placements. After many years of hearing about Joey I was privileged early this year to finally meet her in my home. She is 29 now and is an engaging, friendly, charming young woman who takes

great pride in her appearance and wants to look fashionable and to keep up with the modern trends, as does any young woman.

The place in Geelong where she is residing now takes that into account and makes sure she is always dressed smartly. Her carers even took her to the hairdresser so she could have her hair dyed red because Joey wanted to look very modern for her birthday. It is pleasing that she is treated with much dignity and care by the residential service where she lives. That helps my friend cope emotionally with her daughter's disabilities.

Access to non-government residential services for the disabled by community visitors is essential to allow independent scrutiny of those establishments and of the level of care they provide for residents. It is often said that a society can be judged by how it looks after its most vulnerable members. The bill will attempt to ensure that in Victoria the level of residential care afforded to people with disabilities is of the highest quality.

The bill also addresses the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986 and seeks to remove some references to the use of aversive therapy. In 1997 aversive therapy ceased to be used, therefore rendering those references redundant. I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I support the Disability Services (Amendment) Bill and compliment the earlier speakers in the debate, in particular the Honourable Ron Best who obviously has a sincere commitment to the provision of adequate disability services and the monitoring of programs such as the community visitors program. The Honourable Elaine Carbinis similarly made important points about her electorate and has a clear commitment to the program. It is important to note that the program has bipartisan support.

The community visitors program has a long and distinguished history. I compliment a previous member of the house, the Honourable Caroline Hogg, a former member for Melbourne North. I served with Mrs Hogg on the parliamentary Family and Community Development Committee and on a number of occasions we had lengthy discussions about the community visitors program. Her longstanding support for that program and involvement in its initial stages was a significant lesson to me. She convinced me of the wider importance of the program. I compliment her on her advocacy for the program over a long period.

The widening of the community visitors program to include the intellectually disabled area is an important step. Earlier in the debate the Honourable Ron Best referred, as did the minister in her second-reading speech, to the widening of the program following the evaluation report that was presented to the government in early 1998, which was an assessment of the community visitors program requested by the Public Advocate. It is important that all programs across government, including those in the human services area, undergo proper evaluation and careful analyses so that best-quality delivery and the best ongoing outcomes for the community result. The report is an important step forward and makes a series of useful recommendations, not all of which have been adopted by the government. At some future point the government can reconsider a number of the recommendations that were made to ascertain if there may be some scope to step a little further than it has with the bill.

The former Kennett government would certainly have implemented those recommendations with great enthusiasm because it always supported the program and saw it as an important part of the monitoring of service standards in the community services area.

It is important also to note the independent nature of the community visitors program. Its independence is a key feature. The Governor-in-Council appointment is important as is the fact that the people involved in the community visitors program are neither professionals within the disability or community services area, nor are they family members or connected in any other way with the people whose good health and outcomes they seek to monitor. There is much literature, strangely out of economics, that makes it clear that sort of independence is important and that the interest of service providers can in a genuine or non-genuine way cloud the service they deliver.

The community visitors program provides an independent and fair level of evaluation and draws on the resources and goodwill of the community. Community visitors are mainly females of 45 or 50 years of age, a disproportionate number coming from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Community visitors give tirelessly and generously of their time, energy and enthusiasm and have a commitment to undertake tasks of goodwill and altruism which is often achieved only by volunteers stepping forward without other motives.

The community visitors program is a model that could be used more widely. Many issues have been discussed in the community over the past, including the recent

inadequacy of nursing home standards. A community visitors program could do more in providing a valuable step forward. Monitoring could be undertaken more widely by including the full range of facilities provided to older persons. I know when the Honourable Carolyn Hogg and I served on the Family and Community Development Committee in the previous Parliament we examined the subject of positive ageing. It was clear that independent monitoring was important and would become increasingly important as time moved on.

Mr Best referred to a number of people he knew in his area who had disabilities and who would benefit if monitoring standards in the application of care were available. It would give reassurance to families not only in the disability area as the population ages but also to those with intellectual disabilities who are living longer, which is welcomed. The community should turn its mind to how best to deliver services and cater for the needs and legitimate requirements of those with intellectual disabilities. The examples Mr Best gave were persuasive. I am aware that the number of older people with intellectual disabilities has increased and will increase and therefore provision should be in place not only for those services but also the monitoring of those services.

I support the changes in the bill and compliment the minister and the government on introducing them in a bipartisan way. Further steps can be taken, but without speaking directly for the shadow minister the opposition welcomes the spirit of the legislation and welcomes the changes and the goodwill that have been harnessed for the community benefit that is behind the community visitors program.

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I am pleased to speak on the Disability Services (Amendment) Bill. I have had first-hand experience of working with community visitors when visiting facilities not only for the intellectually disabled but also for the mentally ill. Some years ago I worked as an admission ward psychiatric nurse at Larundel hospital. In 1986 when the bill was first introduced by the previous Labor government giving authority for community visitors to visit government-run facilities, mixed feelings were expressed by staff and the facilities. Although it was welcomed that independent people would speak with clients, concern was expressed that it would be another intrusion and another distraction from carrying out the work of caring for patients.

I am pleased to say that once it was established and we worked with the community visitors they were a welcome addition to the care and services provided to

both the psychiatrically ill and the intellectually disabled. Not only were community visitors introduced by the previous Labor government, it also introduced a whole package of reforms in the disability sector. Community visitors are able to visit only government-run services. The legislation has never given them access to services which received government funding but which was not run by the government.

At the time the community visitors legislation was introduced, most services for the intellectually disabled and psychiatric ill were not only funded by the government but also run by the government. The legislation brought about changes in the way most psychiatric and intellectual disability services were run because of the access by community visitors to services funded and run by the government.

The then Labor government introduced programs of maintaining psychiatric services as well as a deinstitutionalisation program for intellectual disability services. Large institutions and congregate care facilities closed or wound back and community-based services, known as community residential units, were established throughout the community. Those important initiatives took a great deal of foresight, courage and commitment by the previous Labor government not only at a philosophical level but on a practical level. Major changes were made to important programs.

Disability services programs are provided for some of the most vulnerable people in the community. Those administering and working in the programs were dealing with the practical issues of moving people and services from where they had historically been provided into new settings and with the apprehension and anxiety that accompany such major changes.

The previous Labor government was also prepared to commit the funding required to set up the new services and establish the infrastructure necessary for their provision, including mainstreaming of psychiatric services and the transition from large, free-standing psychiatric hospitals. The previous Liberal government continued that transition program but at the same time it made very severe budget cuts in that area. There was not the same commitment to funding the services during the transition from large psychiatric facilities to mainstream facilities under the previous Liberal Government.

The new services are close to general health facilities and public hospitals. The program also established a range of new community-based facilities such as

community clinics, and crisis teams and mobile support teams were put in place. We now take such services for granted.

I acknowledge and recognise the work done by a previous Labor Minister for Community Services, Kay Setches, and her foresight and commitment to changing the way disability services are provided in this state. When Kay Setches was the minister the first very large congregate care intellectual disability facility, the Caloola Training Centre, was closed and its residents were moved to community residential units. Community residential unit is just a name for an ordinary suburban house, the sort of house that honourable members and our families live in, and they are scattered throughout the suburbs and regional Victoria. The program showed foresight, vision and a commitment to the process and, as I said, part of that commitment was the allocation of funding to allow the change to take place very smoothly, given that it was a large project.

At the time community visitors played an important role in identifying the shortcomings of some of the larger congregate care facilities and in recognising and acknowledging the benefits that could be gained from clients being able to live in normal circumstances — that is, in residences that provided the sort of accommodation that other Victorians enjoy. Community visitors have played an important role in reporting on major initiatives that were put in place by the former Labor government, and the program was continued by the previous Liberal government, albeit at a time of significant budget cuts.

A number of facilities for the intellectually disabled have closed, including Caloola, Mayday Hill, Aradale and Pleasant Creek. Over 400 community residential units have been established in Victoria. In the western metropolitan region, which takes in my province of Melbourne West, 31 community residential units operate, and over the past year community visitors have made 162 visits to those units.

As previous speakers have acknowledged, community visitors are committed and dedicated people who establish a strong rapport with not only the clients who reside in those facilities but also the staff. They do an excellent job. In the previous year the number of community visitors decreased, and that needs to be addressed.

In an analysis of Victoria's regions, community visitors identified significant shortfalls in some regions. I will cite the figures: in the western metropolitan region the potential shortfall is 5 community visitors; Hume

region, 2; Grampians region, 3; and northern metropolitan region, which has the largest number of facilities together with the greatest spread across the region, 10. Over the last year the number of community visitors has dropped in the Grampians region from 8 to 3; Hume, from 4 to 2; the northern region from 12 to 10; and the western metropolitan region increased from three to five, but the report still recognised a shortfall of five.

Community visitors do important work, visiting hundreds of men and women with intellectual disabilities living in either institutions, training centres or community residential units run and funded by the government. They visit the homes of vulnerable and powerless people, comparing their living conditions with those of the majority of the community. In their last report community visitors acknowledged some issues of grave concern to them, which in turn support the need for more community visitors.

One concern is residents with challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour is another term often used to describe violent behaviour. In shared houses challenging behaviour can leave other men and women frightened, vulnerable and unable to cope with the behaviour of their co-residents. Lack of adequate transport leaves residents without access to the community that other members of the community take for granted.

Huge maintenance problems can arise in the setting up of ordinary suburban houses for residents, as those houses are not necessarily designed to cater for the number of residents living in them or for the amount of time residents spend in the houses. They are not always set up to deal with the physical problems of some residents — for example, clients in wheelchairs or with behavioural problems such as repeated banging on the walls. Maintenance problems can be a real issue for such houses. The other maintenance concern is ensuring adequate funding to keep the general maintenance requirements of those houses up to scratch.

Staffing issues identified in the report are of concern, with the use of inexperienced casual staff and the constant movement of permanent staff. Such problems have arisen in intellectual disability services over the past seven years. Under the previous government there was a strong move away from the employment of permanent staff and towards the casualisation of the work force, which meant the turnover of the staff was fairly constant. A consistent criticism by community visitors over the years has been of the lack of continuity in staff. That leads to and exacerbates problems within

residential units because residents are continually confronted with new faces.

Both previous speakers on the bill have mentioned the report, *Evaluation of the Community Visitors Programs*. Mr Best spoke about it at some length. The Office of the Public Advocate requested a review of the community visitors program, and an independent evaluation was conducted in May 1998. The evaluation found that the community visitors program provided impressive coverage of a wide number of services and offered safeguards for and access to individual resident issues not available elsewhere in the system. The role of the programs as an independent reference point for service providers and the government was highlighted.

The report was completed in May 1998 but the previous government refused to release it. The previous speaker, the Honourable Ron Best went into some detail on and praised the report's recommendations, but the report was not released when the former government, of which he was a member, held office. When the Labor government was sworn in one of the first things the new Minister for Community Services did was release that report, which had been ignored for some 18 months.

The Labor government welcomes the report. The government will implement the following recommendations: the volunteer community-based program with Governor-in-Council appointments will be maintained as the basis for the community visitors program; the role of community visitors will include the identification of individual resident problems as a consequence of regular and informal visits to eligible facilities; the community visitors programs will take account of the current developments in service provision and quality improvement, involving key priorities, performance measures and protocols for action to support the visiting role.

The bill amends two pieces of legislation — the Disability Services Act 1991 and the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986. It provides that the extension of community visitors to residential services for people with disabilities will be funded under the Disability Services Act 1991, which means that the bill provides for community visitors to visit government-funded but not government-run intellectual disability services and services covered by the Disability Services Act, which covers people with physical and sensory disabilities as well.

This important legislation also removes two redundant references to aversive therapy in the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act. It sees the carriage of

work by community visitors, which was originally put in place by the previous Labor government, expanded. I commend the bill to the house.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I am pleased to support the Disability Services (Amendment) Bill. I have listened with great interest to previous speakers because issues such as this are often raised by constituents in electorate offices, sometimes in large numbers. It is educational to listen to what other speakers have had to say about the bill.

Honourable members should treat every piece of legislation on disability services as important because those measures deal with the lives of people who sometimes are not able to look after themselves adequately. It is up to us to legislate to ensure their care is paramount in our minds. I am pleased to see that this is a practical bill. The house often has before it pieces of legislation which to me, as a lay person rather than a legal person, seem most impractical in the way they deal with matters, but this bill is a practical approach to an issue which needs to be continually addressed. It is clear that the bill is popular with people involved in this sector. They are all fully supportive of the recommendations contained in the bill.

The next issue, which is just as important, is that the bill has full support across all political parties without any reservation, and that is excellent. We need to have an evolving attitude to these services because society changes and we should offer ever-changing services from a range of non-government, government and volunteer sectors that better serve the community. For that reason I see the bill as bringing up to date what is best for our communities.

The purposes of the bill are quite practical. It will make minor amendments to the Disability Services Act 1991 to ensure that the role of community visitors mirrors the provisions of community visitors in the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986. Community visitors will now be able to visit non-government disability services funded under the Disability Services Act 1991 and residential services for people with disabilities under the same act.

It is important to note that this was recommended by the Office of the Public Advocate in its evaluation of the community visitors program in May 1998. That evaluation has just become available.

Before I discuss some of the other provisions in the bill and relevant reports, I shall put on the record the way the community visitors program operates. Community visitors do an absolutely wonderful job in many

important areas, not only with the intellectually disabled. Obviously those who offer their services in this area sometimes face difficult circumstances that make it even tougher for them to perform their tasks. Their commitment is absolutely outstanding. It is typical of the volunteers we have across all areas of the community. It does not matter whether they are community visitors or Country Fire Authority volunteers.

The crucial role of volunteers hit me recently when I read through the annual report of an organisation in Mildura known as Sunassist. The task of this relatively small organisation is to provide transport facilities for all manner of people who are in need of transport. The group is run by volunteers, with some funding from government and from wherever they can get it. The lady in charge, Henriette de Jong, does a marvellous job of organising the volunteer services.

I read the *Annual Report of Community Visitors 1999* with great interest. It made me realise that we should promote such reports more than we do because it sets out things that happen to honourable members almost on a daily basis in their electorate offices. Part of the excellent introduction of that report states:

Credit is due to the community visitors who, throughout any given year, have visited hundreds of men and women with intellectual disability who are living in institutions or community residential units (CRUs). They have gone into what are the homes of these vulnerable, powerless people and compared their living conditions to those of the majority of the community. They have pledged to do all in their power to praise their rights and try to right the wrongs. The board members say thank you to all community visitors for their outstanding contribution.

Board members then ask readers of the report — this is one of the reasons why it would be advantageous for honourable members to promote these reports — to check the issues that have been followed up by community visitors and seriously consider what they can do to assist in those positives and to right the wrongs. A few of the issues have been raised in my electorate office. The report mentions several issues of grave concern to the board including:

Residents with challenging behaviours sharing houses with other men and women, many of whom are left frightened and vulnerable by the unpredictable behaviours of their co-residents.

A number of representations have been made to my electorate office about this matter. It is particularly difficult to manage a community house for people with intellectual disabilities who can share a residence with others. Such a facility is designed to enable them to get

out into the community life stream and live normal lives.

The second issue of grave concern mentioned in the report is the:

Lack of adequate transport leaving residents without access to the community that others take for granted.

I have just talked about Sunassist Volunteers (Mildura) and the wonderful job its members do. Adequate transport is an important issue in rural Victoria. Those of us who have transport take it for granted, but it is a major problem for those who do not have their own transport, and a problem that has to be addressed by organisations that not only care for the intellectually disabled but also help other people who need transport in rural areas where none is available.

The third point raised is:

Security measures put in place to support a resident who may abscond and in doing so locking others indoors —

or I suspect outdoors —

inappropriately.

Just the other day a lady who came to my office said she had gone to visit a friend who lives in a residence only to find that the friend had absconded — she got out to have a look around — and locked the door so that no-one could get in and no-one could get out. That problem was corrected without major difficulties arising. It is interesting that many of the happenings mentioned in the report come across the desks of members of Parliament.

The fourth point is:

Outstanding maintenance issues —

the Honourable Kaye Darveniza spoke about such issues —

which in some cases lead to unsafe floor surfaces, bathrooms, laundries and outdoor spaces.

Some things that we take for granted need to be checked on a reasonably informal basis by community visitors — and that can be done — to ensure that floor surfaces and so on are safe for the people for whom they are designed.

The next point is:

Documentation that is out of date or inadequate in terms of its importance to the wellbeing of the residents ...

I know we live in a world of paper and reports, but we are talking about the care of people for whom it is

important that the documentation be up to scratch and correct, so that the accountability is first class.

Another point — this was also raised in my office not so long ago — raised in the report is:

Staffing issues that include the use of inexperienced casual staff and the constant movement of permanent staff, which in turn confuses the residents.

It goes on to note that:

The houses where residents are settled and more contented are the houses where residents know their direct care staff.

That is very important. I could continue quoting from the report, but I am sure the relevant issues were also raised by other honourable members. It is, however, important to put on the record that the report addresses real things that all of us address daily.

The issues raised in the annual report illustrate why we should promote the work of the community visitors and their conclusions far more often than I suspect we do. People often come into my office and ask, ‘What are the standards required of people in this area?’. Obviously those of us who are not trained in the particular field would have substantial difficulties in dealing with that question.

I note that the government recently issued its disability service standards for Victoria. I suspect it is a snapshot of the standards community visitors would find as they go about their visits. This matter is particularly important. As I said, we should promote these issues out in the community.

It is important to put on the record the role of community visitors and the work they are expected to do during their visits. Page 4 of the *Annual Report of Community Visitors 1999*, which sets out nine standards community visitors must follow, states:

1. Each resident seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need and available resources.
2. Each resident receives a service, designed to meet, in the least restrictive way, his or her individual needs and personal goals —

that is difficult to achieve, but it is a standard that is set down —

3. Each resident has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about events and activities of his or her daily life in relation to the services he or she receives —

honourable members have experience of that through their electorate offices —

4. Each resident’s right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality in all aspects of his or her life in the community.
5. Each resident is supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the life of the community —

that is most important —

6. Each resident has the right to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable him or her to achieve valued roles in the community —

Mr Best spoke about that during his excellent contribution. He is obviously close to the people he represents —

7. Each resident is free to raise and have resolved any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the service provider or service —

that would be a standard community visitors would have to walk through and deal with delicately —

8. Each service provider adopts sound management practices, which maximises outcomes for residents.
9. Each resident has the right to be free of physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse and neglect.

I congratulate all honourable members who contributed to the debate. I particularly congratulate community visitors for their commitment to those in the community who need their care. I commend the bill to the house.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — By leave, I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

I thank Mr Best, Mrs Carbines, Mr David Davis, Ms Darveniza and Mr Bishop for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

BUSINESS REGISTRATION ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 2 May; motion of
Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business).**

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — The opposition does not oppose the Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill, which is significant legislation that goes some way to enabling Victoria to continue to be one of the leaders in electronic commerce not just in Australia but throughout the world.

Part 6 of the bill changes the name of the Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs to Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria and the name of the Director of Fair Trading to the Director of Consumer and Business Affairs. No particular good reason has been advanced for the changes. The opposition does not oppose them even though it does not know why they are happening. I do not believe the world will be different or that the department will operate differently or more efficiently. I note that it is indicated that the change demonstrates the government's interest in consumer affairs and welfare. I would not have thought that a change of name would affect people's welfare.

Clause 16 amends section 5(1) of the act by increasing the penalty for trading under an unregistered business name from \$200 to 30 penalty units. Clause 17 amends section 5A(b) by increasing the penalty for trading under a business name while disqualified. They are sensible and necessary provisions. Clause 14 amends section 4A by inserting 'and Investments' to update the reference to the Australian Securities and Investments Corporation. Clause 5 provides further powers for the winding up of incorporated associations where they fail to be registered within a specified time. The opposition does not have any problem with that provision.

The major part of the legislation deals with facilitating electronic service delivery for services provided by a number of acts — the Associations Incorporations Act, the Partnership Act, the Co-operatives Act and the Business Names Act. I indicate my appreciation and that of my colleagues for the briefing received from departmental officers. The first was a spirited briefing. I particularly thank the officers who were present for their forbearance as we grappled with the complex ideas put to us. I was grateful both for the information provided and their assistance. We met again the following Monday when, not to put too fine a point on it, the department rolled out its heavies.

I am particularly grateful for the detailed briefing on the way the legislation is intended to work. If I wanted to be a little bit critical I would say that at our first briefing we had to grapple with the bill without understanding the broader framework into which it fitted. However, the people at the briefing were able to explain the bill well, even though some of the issues were technical. As I said, I am grateful for the assistance I received from department officers at both briefings.

The second-reading speech says that the bill goes hand in glove with the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill, which memory tells me the house passed yesterday to facilitate the use of electronic signatures. The bill before the house takes the next step by enabling government departments to adopt those facilities. One of the questions the opposition asked at the original briefing was which transactions or applications would be facilitated by the bill. As I mentioned earlier, the bill is designed to enable electronic transactions to be conducted under the Business Names Act of 1962, the Associations Incorporation Act of 1981, the Partnership Act of 1958 and the Co-operatives Act of 1996.

The department provided me with a list of 48 applications under those acts that are covered by this facilitating legislation. The commencement clause provides that any of the provisions of the bill that have not been proclaimed before 1 July 2002 will come into operation on that day. Departments therefore have a bit of room to move through the process of putting various applications and transactions online.

If the opposition were to be churlish it would say that the process will take a long time and that if Victorians have to wait until 2002 to access the facilities by then the state may have missed the boat. The government must drive the process hard to ensure that the best value flows to individuals and businesses in Victoria and that, as I said at the beginning of my contribution, the state stays ahead of the game. As all honourable members know, Victoria was the first state to have a Minister for Information Technology and Multimedia, and it has established a reputation for leadership in that field. It would be a pity if that reputation slipped over time. I encourage the minister to continue to drive the process forward.

In its second briefing opposition members asked how the system would work for new registrations and renewals, and for individuals and groups. They were the four categories the opposition was keen to explore. Despite what the second-reading speech says the opposition was concerned that although people could do certain things online they would still have to have

signed hard copies in a drawer back at the office. The opposition believed that was not the way to go, but it turned out not to be the way the system is intended to operate. For that reason, it was useful to have the technical people available at the second briefing.

The department intends to start the process with the renewal of registration of business names. There are many thousands of renewals each year — I believe the figure is 55 000-odd. In future, a person will be able to renew a business registration by going to the web site, clicking on ‘Business registration renewal’, typing in the business name and using a credit card or electronic funds transfer at point of sale (EFTPOS) facility — as many of us already do with our banks — after which he or she will receive a receipt number.

The department has said that because it is a relatively simple procedure it will get the infrastructure systems right before it establishes the other 47 facilities, many of which do not attract the amount of activity that business name renewals do.

The second concern the opposition had related to the way people would access the facilities for the first time to carry out electronic transactions with Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria, to give the department its new title.

That involves the use of electronic signatures. The house dealt with that complex issue in detail yesterday when debating the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill. I note with admiration the substantial contributions made to the debate on that bill by some of my colleagues, who know a darn site more about the issue than I will ever know — and who no doubt take more interest in it than I ever will.

With the help of the department the opposition investigated at some length the way the public key will be used and how people will be able to facilitate transactions. The department gave us some documentation on frequently asked questions about the federal government’s Gatekeeper strategy. The department has decided — I applaud it for its decision — to adopt an established system rather than create its own. It intends to adopt an international standard known in the jargon as X.509 to facilitate the legislation. The system will be built to that standard so that anybody who is accredited to operate a key system will be able to access it.

The multiple layers that fall under that standard are called attribute layers. Various levels of security are necessary because of the potential for liability and fraud. The opposition was given a bizarre but telling

example of the need for varying levels of security. If people are accessing the system to make payments to the government, it is unlikely that other people will want to do that for them, so the level of electronic identification required in those circumstances will be lower than it would be for a doctor who has the capacity to sign a death certificate. The example given to the opposition was that no-one would want a murderer to be able to get into the system and issue a death certificate electronically. That example strikes at the heart of the issue.

Hon. C. A. Furletti — It brings it home.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — I thought ‘strikes at the heart of the issue’ was a better way of putting it, but it also brings the issue home. The example demonstrates that some electronic transactions will require greater levels of security than others. It is unlikely that other people will want to get into the system and pay our tax returns for us when we lodge them.

Hon. M. R. Thomson — Wouldn’t it be nice!

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — It would be nice. Attribution layers were discussed in some depth as the opposition grappled with the concept of different risks and levels of security. The department should be aiming for what it described as ‘cross-recognition of certification of signatures in the long term’.

I understand that, along with other government departments headed by Multimedia Victoria, the Department of Justice, under which Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria operates, is part of a working group whose aim is to ensure that organisations that have electronic signatures can use them across state and federal government departments and local government. I again applaud that initiative. I am concerned that people will be required to have one electronic signature for certain transactions and a different electronic signature for others, which would be disappointing.

I encourage the officers and ministers involved to focus their energy on ensuring that the system is as seamless as possible to make it work as best as they can. Obviously some things will need to be done. For example, one can no longer prescribe absolutely what a form should look like. The content of the form must be described, which the legislation does for each of the four areas.

Part 2 of the bill deals with associations incorporation, part 3 with business names, part 4 with cooperatives and part 5 with partnerships. It makes clear that it is no longer necessary to have a signature on a piece of paper for an electronic transaction needing an electronic

signature. What is important — the minister will deal with this in committee — is that if somebody is acting on behalf of a group of people, that person must have back home in the filing cabinet significant, sufficient authorisation for that activity to take place electronically. For example, my accountant is authorised to lodge tax returns on behalf of a class of clients of which I am one, and as long as I have signed my tax form and my accountant has it in the office, the form can be lodged electronically. The same system will apply to lawyers. Accountants who do business renewals or business name registrations will have the capacity to do it without first seeking permission in writing on behalf of an individual. As I said, that is logical and sensible.

I note in passing that under the bill, minor and insignificant inconsistencies or errors concerning associations incorporation, cooperatives and partnerships can be corrected on the register. It does not allow entries to be withdrawn. Apart from cases where the registrar or commissioner is certain that whatever was recorded in the first place was totally incorrect one can also track back changes that have been made.

As I said, the opposition does not oppose the legislation. It welcomes its introduction and looks forward to its playing a significant role in easing the way that associations, partners and businesses operate and interact with government. It also looks forward to more work being done in that area.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — It is with pleasure that I speak in support of the Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill. I also welcome the fact that the opposition does not oppose the legislation. As I said in the debate on the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill, which allows for electronic signatures to be recognised as legally valid, this bill is intended to form part of a total package to enable Victorian consumers and businesses to deal with Victorian government agencies in a far more simple and less cumbersome way than in the past.

The implementation of both bills has involved an extensive degree of consultation with industry and consumer groups and government departments. The Bracks government is committed to delivering all suitable services online as soon as possible by way of electronic service delivery. It intends that Victorian consumers and businesses are better able to access Victorian government information and to lodge the various forms they are required to lodge under legislation in a less costly and cumbersome manner.

The bill seeks to allow for electronic lodgment in particular instances by amending four key pieces of Victorian legislation — the Associations Incorporation Act, the Business Names Act, the Cooperatives Act and the Partnership Act. Parts 2, 4 and 5 of the bill, which relate to incorporated associations, cooperatives and partnerships are essentially the same in the way they seek to amend those pieces of legislation.

Part 3, which relates to business names, is substantially the same but also contains a number of additional provisions. Clauses 8, 29 and 37 allow the registrar in the case of incorporated associations and cooperatives and the commissioner in the case of partnerships to approve special lodging arrangements for documents lodged electronically. The registrar or the commissioner can accept an unsigned document when they are satisfied that it is not practicable to obtain the signature of the person required to sign the document, but that person who is required to provide such a signature is not relieved under the legislation from actually signing the document. A number of provisions in the bill require a person to sign the document and to retain the original signed document for a period of seven years after electronic lodgment, and the bill has penalty provisions for non-compliance. However, the registrar or commissioner is not required to receive the signed originals in order to accept the document.

The bill also provides that documents lodged electronically are not required to comply with regulations that prescribe that paper documents be signed and lodged manually. In addition, clauses 3 and 18 allow for the director or registrar to approve the design and layout of forms without the need of prescribed layout of those forms by means of regulation.

As chairperson of the regulation review subcommittee, which comes under the umbrella of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, I do not have a problem with the proposal to facilitate forms being regularly updated in form rather than substance to ensure that best practice is being used in the layout of governmental forms.

The Honourable Bill Forwood said the bill has other provisions that do not directly relate to the change towards electronic lodgment, but I think those provisions are included in the bill for good reason. For example, clause 5, which relates to incorporated associations, allows the registrar to deregister an association where the association is directed by the registrar to incorporate as a corporation under the Corporations Law and the association has failed to do so within the prescribed time.

The provision has been included in the bill as an anti-avoidance device because in the past some associations have chosen to circumvent the provisions of the Associations Incorporation Act that require associations to incorporate in particular circumstances. The inclusion of the clause is entirely justifiable in the circumstances.

A key part of the bill makes changes to the Business Names Act.

Hon. Bill Forwood — That is not a key part; it is cosmetic.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — I disagree that the provision is cosmetic. It is fundamental to the changes the government is introducing in clause 20 which allow for the electronic renewal of business names. The change will enable Victorian businesses to process their business name renewals in a speedier and less cumbersome way. It will assist businesses located in regional Victoria with renewing their business names. As Mr Forwood mentioned in his speech, each year approximately 60 000 business names are renewed. Electronic lodgment will be faster for many Victorian businesses although the bill does not preclude people from attending the office to deal with renewals or from handling them through the usual mail system.

Mr Forwood also commented on clause 16 which increases considerably the penalty for a business found to be trading under an unregistered business name. The clause fits in very well with the general nature of the bill as it relates to electronic lodgment because the move to electronic lodgment may encourage some businesses to neglect their obligations to renew their business names.

Hon. Bill Forwood — What nonsense!

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — It is necessary to increase the enforcement mechanisms to ensure that electronic lodgment does not lead to an increase in non-compliance. Therefore, the inclusion of clause 16 fits in quite well with the general nature of the bill.

In addition, the bill provides that an email address notified to the registrar may be recognised as the registered address for the serving of notices to a business. That will improve Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria's ability to monitor and communicate with Victorian business. It will facilitate an easier exchange of information between the agency and businesses.

The final part of the bill relates to the change that took effect on 22 April in the name of the Office of Fair

Trading and Business Affairs to Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria.

The consequential amendments contained in part 6 are machinery amendments to a series of acts and seek only to reflect the change in the name of the organisation and the Director of Fair Trading to the Director of Consumer and Business Affairs. The change reflects the Bracks government's commitment to Victorian consumers that their rights will be given a greater emphasis and importance by the government administration.

I take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Consumer Affairs on recently launching the new web site. I have examined the web site and can advise the house that it contains useful information for Victorian consumers about a range of transactions they are likely to undertake in their daily lives.

A number of minor amendments will be made to the bill by agreement between the government and the opposition. I am not concerned about any of the proposed amendments. I hope they will assist and facilitate the government's increasing take-up of electronic lodgment in government services.

In conclusion, I welcome the bipartisan support given to the bill today and also to the government's amendments to the legislation. I am certain that the move to electronic lodgment will improve government service delivery and will be of great benefit to Victorian consumers and businesses. I commend the bill to the house.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I do not oppose the Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill. I applaud its focus and intent. As I said yesterday in my contribution on the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill, the bill is but a minor part of a far greater picture. The Honourable Jenny Mikakos mentioned that the bill was part of a total package. However, the government has failed to indicate what the rest of that package is, which is disappointing because opposition members are aware of the enormous amount of work and funds put into information technology (IT) and multimedia by the former coalition government.

Yesterday in my contribution I mentioned the work of the former Law Reform Committee, of which the Honourable Monica Gould and I were members. I refer to it again because it presented a major report that devoted an entire chapter to electronic commerce and security in privacy issues under electronic commerce which at the end of the day form the nub of many

factors that are retarding the otherwise rapid expansion of e-commerce.

The former coalition government took great leaps forward in IT, specifically in the area of e-commerce. As the Honourable Bill Forwood said, the previous government formed a specific ministry headed by a senior member of cabinet, the former Treasurer. The initiatives that it took in delivery of services to all Victorians can be seen in the Victoria 21 strategy, which set out a series of initiatives and which I referred to yesterday during my contribution to the debate on the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill.

It is inevitable that I refer to that bill because, as the minister said in the second-reading speech, the Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill partners the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill. During discussions with government advisers, it was noted that the Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill had been around for a couple of years awaiting the passage of the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill, which is the enabling bill. It is a sad reflection on the government that it has taken so long to pick up on the groundwork undertaken by the previous government.

While on that topic, I should say that privacy and security are core issues in any dealings with e-commerce. The former government had gone a long way to setting a sound base for the elimination or the control of those concerns. In particular it tabled in the autumn session last year the Data Protection Bill which specifically addressed the issues of privacy and security. It had also gone a long way in preparing to table a bill that had been drafted but which has not been referred to by the government — that is, the electronic commerce framework bill, to which I referred yesterday — which covered the areas of electronic signatures, industry codes of practice and computer crime.

The opposition is disappointed that those great initiatives by the coalition government have not been referred to by the government today. They are initiatives that at least deserve some degree of recognition, if not applause. In the second-reading speech the minister states:

The government is committed to delivering all suitable government services online as soon as possible by way of electronic service delivery.

That is no more than pursuing and implementing the strategy initiated by the coalition during its last term of government. I refer to the Government Online 2001 strategy and the Law Reform Committee's *Technology and the Law* report tabled in May last year which states:

For the vision of Online Government 2001 to be fully achieved all levels of government and synergistic private sector organisations should make their services available electronically to the public. The broad policy statement has been clarified in a policy document titled *Online Government 2001: from Vision to Reality*. Online 2001 requires that the following government services are available electronically:

- (1) lodgment of all forms and registrations;
- (2) all applications for payments and grants;
- (3) all payments to government;
- (4) information currently printed for public dissemination;
- (5) all payments by government; and
- (6) all government purchasing.

An integral part of the Victoria 21 strategy was that all appropriate government services and information be available online all the time by 2001.

The second-reading speech gives a summary but instead of indicating that the government has taken on board the Coalition's Online by 2001 strategy, the second-reading speech is silent in recognising the enormous advances made by the previous coalition government, which implemented a large number of initiatives.

I shall mention but one — electronic service delivery through Maxi, an online system established in late 1997. It flowed through to 1998 and is still current. The system is accessible through the Internet and through a number of kiosks currently operational at various locations throughout rural and metropolitan areas.

Yesterday during the debate on the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill honourable members spoke of the tyranny of distance and how information technology, the Internet and e-commerce will resolve that. Maxi is a classic example. If I am not mistaken, the Leader of the Opposition in this place played a role in some of the those instances, in particular, at a launch in Warrandyte, because Manningham City Council was one of the councils engaged in the pilot project. There are now two or three Maxi kiosks in venues within Manningham and they have been very successful. The council has the ability, for example, to retrieve lost dogs by people notifying the council via the kiosks located in The Pines and other shopping centres. Rates can be paid and changes of address and so on can be transacted through the kiosks.

The opposition is concerned about the tardiness of the government in implementing technology. It is

imperative that it does not drop the ball with multimedia and information technology. Victoria should not lose its ranking, which is recognised worldwide as being among the highest for a state of its size. Bill Gates and other governments are looking at Victoria's development as a model for their own pursuits. Victoria has been involved in technology and electronic communication for a number of years.

In my earlier life it was possible to issue civil proceedings electronically in the Magistrates Court. In 1998 about 1000 civil complaints a month were being lodged electronically by about 135 law firms. Considering the conservative nature of legal practices, which was something the Law Reform Committee encountered during its inquiries, that means a respectable number of firms have embraced the technology. Apart from the electronic lodgment system used by the Magistrates Court, which won a national award, the cost to the user of each transfer is 40 cents compared with about \$4.80 for manual filing. That is a practical and obvious indication of the benefits to users.

Recommendation 1 in the report of the Law Reform Committee, which is chaired by the honourable member for Doncaster in the other place — those who know him recognise his passion in the field — states:

The committee recommends that an entity be formed to coordinate and implement a centralised approach to the introduction and development of new technologies on a whole-of-government basis. Such an entity should establish broad policy directions and strategic planning for the whole-of-government on IT issues and should require government departments and agencies to publicly report on the implementation of new technologies and electronic service delivery.

Part of the recommendation was pursued and implemented. I encourage honourable members to address that if they have interests in the area. The committee found in its two-year inquiry on technology and the law that it is important for there to be a whole-of-government approach. It should not be on a sector-by-sector basis because the state could end up where it was some of three or four years ago with considerable incompatibility between departments and levels of departments, and the Magistrates Court, the County Court and the Supreme Court not having the ability to communicate.

When the committee met with the federal Attorney-General as part of its investigations into technology and the law, members mentioned the need for a global approach with everything interfacing with everyone else. The bill is the first step in bringing that to life. It allows for the electronic service delivery of registration services that was envisaged in coalition

policy. Electronic lodgment is an additional rather than a substitute form of registration. The government should be applauded for retaining all existing modes of registration and introducing this 21st century method.

Mr Forwood said that 48 different forms will eventually be lodged electronically, some mainstream and significant and others not so significant. The passage of the bill will enable the core function to be implemented — namely, the renewal of business name registrations. That will be built on with other elements and other forms, such as the application for registration of business names, statements of change of particulars of business names, applications for incorporation and unincorporated corporations and so on. Some 70 000 applications for registration of new business names, 55 000 renewal of business names, 15 000 to 20 000 changes of business name and about 30 000 statements of change of particulars are currently manually lodged each year.

A substantial amount of paperwork moves through the system. I have no doubt of the veracity of the comment by the Honourable Jenny Mikakos that the introduction of electronic lodgment will facilitate and hopefully reduce the cost for businesses.

Business registration was chosen as being appropriate as the first document for electronic lodgment because it meets three core criteria for the development of such services — namely, the renewal of business names involves the confirmation of existing information stored in the database, the payment for that administrative service being effected electronically and the registry acknowledging the receipt of the transaction.

Significantly the lodgment of a renewal does not require a signature. As the Honourable Bill Forwood mentioned, it is unlikely somebody would pay a bill for somebody else. Changing particulars, for instance, would require a different level of security. The opposition has been advised that an Oracle financial system is proposed that satisfies all audit requirements. That advice negates any concerns about the validity of transactions.

Verification is of concern to opposition members. We have been advised a receipt will be conveyed back to the person lodging the document, which appears to be appropriate. The government is working on other documents to be lodged electronically, but the nature of the documents sought to be lodged will require that a verification or authentication regime be put in place, such regimes being discussed in contributions yesterday on the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill.

I endorse the comments of the Honourable Bill Forwood and also express my gratitude to the advisers who took us through the bill last Monday. In particular I thank the online manager, who explained to us the complexities of electronic signatures, nevertheless satisfying us that the government was taking appropriate steps in ensuring the integrity and security of the system.

It is understood the Victorian government is to adopt the commonwealth government's gatekeeper strategy, which involves the commonwealth government's public key authority certifying the security of certain public key technologies and the identity of the holders of public keys. In discussions with people across-the-board — users and providers — it was clear that the integrity of the provider of the public key is absolutely essential.

The Honourable Bill Forwood pointed out that the purpose for which the private key is issued becomes significant. External elements such as public liability insurance or professional insurance cover for the providers of electronic signatures could restrict the otherwise general use of signatures. I can understand the problems referred to yesterday by the Honourable Bill Forwood. It is one matter for certification to be given and a key to be issued for the purposes of verifying the lodgment of a renewal of a business name document or taxation return, but totally different factors are involved when exchanging detailed, sensitive and confidential contracts or other documents, whether sensitive commercially or otherwise. Clearly the need for security increases.

Whatever organisation is providing the signature and whatever form of technology it may take, clearly that organisation would have to consider its responsibilities in those terms. Such complex issues need to be addressed. The opposition is pleased the government has indicated its intention to address opposition comments and urges the government to do so as quickly as possible so Victoria may stay ahead of the pack in the global race.

I trust the government will ensure the technology employed to realise that technology will be available to all. As part of the arduous inquiry into technology and the law conducted by the Law Reform Committee, committee members visited New York. We spoke at length with representatives of a facility not unlike the community legal aid service. A public key was being developed whereby an individual could be led through a series of questions in filling out a public housing complaint. Although that in itself is not overly exciting, it was exciting that that facility was provided not only

in English but also in Spanish and French. With the development of technology, translation becomes considerably simpler, and multilingual access should be addressed.

The opposition accepts that the bill is necessary and introduces positive changes, and urges the government to accelerate the speed at which those changes are implemented. I commend the government on accepting a number of the opposition's recommendations on the content and drafting of the bill. I am pleased that a number of the opposition's concerns will be addressed during the committee stage. It is appropriate that both sides of the chamber work together to ensure well-drafted legislation is brought before the house. Opposition members will not oppose the bill — indeed they wish it a speedy passage through the chamber.

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — The Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill in some ways follows on from the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill debated yesterday. A number of members spoke on e-commerce and related issues.

The bill has two aims. One will allow government departments to deal electronically with business and consumers. The government will encourage businesses and members of the community to use computers in their dealings with departments. Computers are now popular in every Victorian community. Therefore, we should take the opportunity to open it up to the public so that everyone can access departmental services through web sites.

The bill will facilitate electronic service delivery for registration services; make name changes to the new Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria and its director; and amend the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, the Business Names Act 1962, the Cooperatives Act 1996 and the Partnership Act 1958.

The Bracks government is committed to delivering high-technology government services to Victoria. The bill is focused on assisting members of the community to understand more about the use of computers. People who want to lodge their tax returns electronically can now deal directly with the Australian Taxation Office, but many departments have not utilised electronic services up to now. The bill will make it easier for businesses to register names or apply for services on the computer.

As Mr Furletti said, these services are available in more than just English; we should have multilingual services on the Internet so that people who do not speak good

English can apply for services electronically in their own languages.

The bill amends the Business Names Act and the Associations Incorporation Act to enable a director or registrar to approve the design and layout of forms. That means the forms can be originally designed to meet the Internet standard.

The bill changes the name of the Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs to Consumers and Business Affairs Victoria. The name of the Director of Fair Trading will change to Director of Consumer and Business Affairs. The government is changing the name to consumer affairs because we would like the department to be more accessible to consumers so that any consumers using government departments can feel more comfortable with them. While we encourage Business Victoria to grow, at the same time we want to protect consumers so that they get better information about their rights and about the responsibility of retailers or companies that are manufacturing certain products.

The government is concerned about the welfare of consumers and the wider community. It wants people to feel confident about buying products. Many people use e-commerce to buy products on the Web, and the bill helps to ensure that consumers can sue any company which misled them. To that end the bill increases penalties for companies trading under unregistered business names. Clause 16 increases the penalty for trading under an unregistered business name from \$200 to \$3000, or 30 penalty units. People doing business with other people have the right to know where that business comes from and the everyday trading arrangements of the business. That provision will make companies accountable to consumers. The advantage to business is that people who run good businesses will have a better relationship with consumers and will, in turn, gain more business.

E-commerce is the future of the world, and we must protect Victorian consumers not only from certain businesses in this state but also from those operating in overseas markets. Consumers are entitled to know that the products they are buying are reliable and of value, and the government should ensure that products are suitable for consumers.

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — The Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill is the second bill the house has debated within 24 hours that deals with electronic transactions and electronic commerce generally. It is heartening to see that the government appears to be trying to get its house in

order to ensure that Victorians get the opportunity to utilise the emerging technologies to transact business, not only among themselves but with governments as well.

The bill puts a little more meat on the bone provided through the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Bill, which we debated yesterday, by creating an environment where, when the system is eventually established, Victorians will be able to effect certain transactions online with Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria — formerly the Office of Fair Trading or the Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs. That practice should be encouraged. It is a good sign that the government is slowly moving towards providing for public access to some government services online.

It should be pointed out that this is not change simply for the sake of change, it is about providing another option. If we start looking at electronic commerce as just a sidelight to the real game and not as a vehicle for providing services to the public of Victoria, we will be short-changing Victorians.

Why do we need to enable Victorians online access to register businesses, associations, partnership and the like? Because it will make things easier, more convenient and more affordable to the people of Victoria and give them better access to government services. Gone are the days when any business enterprise or endeavour could rely on having a fixed presence — in the case of government, usually in the CBD — in an office building, open from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Life is not like that any more.

It is good that the government seems to recognise that fact and is trying to provide Victorians with any-time, anywhere, access to some services via the use of emerging technology and the Internet. That is a positive step, which I welcome. I hope the government will go further and expand its range of electronic services.

It has been proven time and again that when Victorians are given access to electronic services they will use them. In his contribution Mr Furletti highlighted the online services provided by the Manningham City Council through the Victorian government's maxi-service, which was established by the previous Liberal-National party government. He explained how the people of Manningham can effectively access their public services — whether it is paying rates or reporting the lost dog — from their own homes or offices without having to be inconvenienced by having to take time off work or organise for the kids to be collected from school to enable them to go down to the

municipal offices at the time the municipal officers choose to make themselves available.

Electronic communication and e-commerce are about giving citizens access to government services when they want to use them, rather than the old economy way of opening offices when governments and public servants want to have them open and not really taking note of the needs of people. That is effectively saying, 'If you want access to government services you can do it in our time only', which always puts a barrier between a government and its citizens.

It is incumbent on governments not just here in Victoria but across Australia, — including the federal government — to use e-commerce to make services available any time, anywhere, to give Victorians and Australians an easy and convenient interrelationship with governments.

The opposition has been provided with a list of services that are likely to go online in the minister's department as a result of the provisions in the bill. I notice clause 2 states that the act will come into operation on the day or days to be proclaimed but that if any provision of the act does not come into operation before 1 July 2002 it comes into operation on that day. It seems a long time — and if an Internet year is the equivalent to five years, electronic commerce will escalate rapidly between now and 2002. Some of the service delivery mechanisms that are available today may not be the service delivery mechanisms in use in 2002.

It is imperative that the minister explain what type of service delivery it is envisaged will be utilised, what platforms will be used for the services and whether the range of services being put up today will be the whole number of services or whether the minister is assessing other services that may go online.

I highlight a particular anomaly with the commencement provisions about which I am concerned. On 29 February, in answer to question on notice 47, the Attorney-General, the lead minister in the Department of Justice, provided an answer that the target dates for the delivery of online services in the department were December 2001. The Attorney-General went on to highlight the fact that although the target dates were set by the former government, the Bracks government had not changed the target dates and would adhere to them. There is an inherent contradiction between the answer given to me and the commencement date set out in clause 2 of the bill.

If the government were to stick to the commitment it gave to me in response to my question on notice on 29 February that it would make sure that online services in the Department of Justice would commence by December 2001, I would have thought the default commencement date should have been 31 December 2001. I am concerned that the extension of the date beyond 31 December indicates some shift in the position of the government in that it is not going to adhere to its earlier commitment.

I would welcome an explanation by the minister on whether the government intends to ensure that all transactions in the Department of Justice, or in the area of the department for which the minister is responsible, can be delivered online by December 2001, which was the commitment of the previous government and of the Attorney-General in his answer to the question on notice.

I congratulate all honourable member who have contributed to the debate, especially the shadow minister, the Honourable Bill Forwood, and my colleague the Honourable Carlo Furletti, for the way they outlined the full operation of the bill. I reiterate that the opposition does not oppose the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 6

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

1. Clause 6, lines 6 to 8, omit "any of the powers or functions of the Minister under this Act, except this power of delegation" and insert "the power of the Minister to give consent under section 12(1)".

There is a ministerial directive that debars certain words being used in associated corporations. The amendment will enable the registrar to approve names from the list to be used where appropriate.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

2. Clause 8, page 5, line 3, after “persons” insert “or class of persons”.

The amendment will enable agents acting on behalf of organisations to have authority to do so for future clients as well as current clients.

Amendment agreed to.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

3. Clause 8, page 5, lines 16 to 17, omit “must refuse to grant an approval under this section” and insert “may impose any condition on an approval under this section including a condition that the Registrar will refuse to accept a document for lodgement”.

The amendment will enable agents to be authorised to deal with future clients without documentation for that purpose until such time as they are lodging on behalf of their clients.

Amendment agreed to.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

4. Clause 8, page 5, line 19, after “of” insert “the association proposed to be incorporated or”.

The amendment covers future bodies that may wish to be incorporated under the legislation.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clause 9 agreed to.

Clause 10

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

5. Clause 10, line 9, after “person” insert “who lodged the copy of the document”.

The amendment will ensure that persons who lodge documents remain responsible for the keeping of the documents for the seven years for which they are required to hold them.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 11 to 14 agreed to

Clause 15

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

6. Clause 15, lines 27 to 29, omit “any of the Minister’s functions or powers under this Act, other than this power of delegation” and insert “the power of the Minister to give consent under section 9(1)”.

Amendment 6 does for the Businesses Names Act what clause 6 does for the Associations Incorporation Act, which enabled names under the ministerial direction that cannot be used to be used by delegation to the Director of Consumer and Business Affairs.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 16 to 21 agreed to.

Clause 22

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

7. Clause 22, line 11, after “persons” insert “or class of persons”.
8. Clause 22, lines 23 to 24, omit “must refuse to grant an approval under this section” and insert “may impose any condition on an approval under this section including a condition that the Director will refuse to accept a statement for lodgement”.

The amendments bring the Business Names Act into line with the amendments made to the Associations Incorporation Act in clause 8.

Amendments agreed to.

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

9. Clause 22, line 25, after “on” insert “or proposing to carry on”.

The amendment also brings the clause into line with clause 8.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 23 to 28 agreed to.

Clause 29

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

10. Clause 29, line 27, after “persons” insert “or class of persons”.
11. Clause 29, page 18, lines 6 to 7, omit “must refuse to grant an approval under this section” and insert “may impose any condition on an approval under this section including a condition that the Registrar will refuse to accept a document for lodgement”.
12. Clause 29, page 18, line 8, after “co-operative” insert “or proposed co-operative”.

Clause 29 effects the same change for the Co-operatives Act as clause 8 did for the Associations Incorporation Act.

Amendments agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 30 to 36 agreed to.

Clause 37

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

13. Clause 37, page 24, line 34, after “persons” insert “or class of persons”.
14. Clause 37, page 25, lines 12 to 13, omit “must refuse to grant an approval under this section” and insert “may impose any condition on an approval under this section including a condition that the Commissioner will refuse to accept a document for lodgement”.

Clause 37 does for the Partnership Act what clause 8 did for the Associations Incorporation Act.

Amendments agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 38 to 53 agreed to.

Reported to house with amendments.

Report adopted.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

I take this opportunity to clarify the issue of time lines which was raised by the Honourable Peter Katsambanis in his contribution to the second-reading debate. The time line for implementation is set at December 2001. A delay has been incorporated into the legislation to allow for any hardware problems along the way. The bill contains some flexibility to allow for problems with the provision of the hardware to deal with the electronic signature component of the legislation.

I thank the opposition, particularly the Honourables Bill Forwood and Carlo Furletti, for the cooperative way they have dealt with the bill and the positive approach they have taken to ensure that the bill is strengthened and that we have better legislation on which the government can draw.

I also thank the officers from Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria who have had to work fairly hard to get the amendments together in time. They have also put a lot of effort into briefing the opposition so its members could reach some conclusions based on a considerable knowledge. I put my thanks to them on the record.

I also thank the members who contributed to the debate today: the Honourables Bill Forwood, Jenny Mikakos, Carlo Furletti, Sang Nguyen and Peter Katsambanis.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

Sitting suspended 1.02 p.m. to 2.03 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Fishing: licences

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — Given that 108 of the 208 bay and inlet licensees have accepted the former government’s buyout offer, I ask the Minister for Energy and Resources whether the total cost will be recovered from the proceeds of the recreational and fishing licence, and if so, when?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — That was a rather breathless question. It must have been a rush to get to question time!

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — In response to the honourable member’s question about the successful buyout program, which was put in place by the previous government, the reports I have received about its implementation are in accordance with what the honourable member has said. The financing of the implementation of the program will continue to come from the revenue raised from recreational fishing licences. Once the program is completed there will be a review of the next stage in relation to what should occur with the remaining bay and inlet fishing licences.

The buyback program will continue to be funded by the recreational fishing licence revenue, and the next stage will be announced when I have received advice on the matter.

Hon. Philip Davis — When will the funding be recovered? That was the question!

Hon. C. C. BROAD — The funding will continue to be raised from recreational fishing licences until all those licences have been bought back.

Industrial relations: disputes

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to claims made by the opposition during question time yesterday about industrial issues involving Holden Ltd and Blue Circle Transport and ask her to inform the house whether she has investigated those claims and, if she has, what the results of those investigations are.

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — In the interests of providing honourable members with the most accurate information available on industrial matters in this state, I sought further advice on the issues raised by the opposition yesterday.

What I uncovered revealed nothing less than sloppy research by the opposition and the misleading of the house with half-truths and innuendoes in an attempt to score cheap political points.

Yesterday the Honourable David Davis referred to an industrial dispute at Holden Ltd. I can report that I have had my department contact the company. Holden has stated categorically that there is no industrial dispute taking place at Holden.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! This is only the second question: I ask the house not to get so excited.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — The honourable member got it wrong. There is no industrial dispute at Holden!

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. G. R. Craige — I can't hear.

The PRESIDENT — Order! They are my sentiments, too.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — What I can say about Holden is that it is keen to secure jobs in Victoria, and the government has been working closely with the company to secure those jobs. I am sure members of the opposition would applaud the government for taking that approach. Similarly, yesterday the Honourable Peter Katsambanis — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have had difficulties before with honourable members to my right. It is not helpful when Ms Darveniza continues to talk over her leader, and I ask her to keep quiet. It is one thing for honourable members to tackle interjections coming from the other side, but it is another thing to talk over

the shoulders of members on the same side. That applies to both sides of the house: it happens on the other side as well. I ask the honourable member to contain herself.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — Yesterday the Honourable Peter Katsambanis referred to the inability of Blue Circle Transport to move e-tags out of its premises, and I advised the house that I had not been contacted by Blue Circle. There was a reason for that: once again the Honourable Peter Katsambanis has gone only halfway down the track. The dispute at the Burwood warehouse is with Gordon and Gotch Ltd, not with Blue Circle!

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I believe the honourable member made that very point in asking his question.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — Blue Circle does not have any problems with getting its trucks through the picket line because it is exempt. At the very time the honourable member was making his statement yesterday about Blue Circle not being able to get its e-tags through the picket line, truckloads of e-tags were going through the picket line. He got it wrong!

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask the house to settle down. It is doing itself no service. Without referring directly to the gallery, I notice it contains some young people who are interested in proceedings. They would not be edified by that sort of caterwauling.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — In conclusion, the question shows that opposition members are throwing up half-baked, appalling research on issues when they know nothing about the facts. The honourable member claims that Blue Circle cannot get its e-tags out when truck loads — more than one yesterday, and the day before — had no problems doing just that.

I suggest to honourable members on the back bench of the opposition that the next time the Leader of the Opposition gets them to raise an industrial issue they make sure they get their facts right so they do not end up misleading the house or coming up with inaccurate claims about what is happening in the industrial relations arena. They ought to think twice.

Fisheries Victoria: funding

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE (Central Highlands) — I congratulate the Minister for Energy and Resources on her indication of support for the yabby farming projects at Snobs Creek and Queenscliff, all of which are important elements of Victoria's aquacultural initiatives. Will the minister advise why she cancelled the \$1.5 million annual funding for such initiatives?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I shall correct some of the points made in the honourable member's question. The funding to which he refers is not annual funding. I am sure the honourable member would be aware that the funding to which he refers is initiative funding provided by the previous government. It is clear from the documentation made available to me that when that initiative funding was announced for that very important project it was made clear that it was time limited. That initiative has now been completed.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment is in the process of assessing what has been achieved through the implementation of the previous government's initiative and will advise me what further steps should be taken in supporting the development of aquaculture in Victoria.

Youth: round table program

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — Will the minister for Youth Affairs inform the house what steps he is taking to ensure that Victoria's young people have a voice in government?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I am pleased to announce that I am establishing the Victorian youth round tables, which will provide a direct link between government and young people. The round tables will be held quarterly and will involve up to 60 young people per forum. The key objective is to draw participants from a variety of social and economic backgrounds from metropolitan rural and regional areas. The program will draw participants from government and non-government schools, universities and technical and further education colleges as well as asking youth peak organisations and regional youth committees to nominate representatives.

Each round table will focus on a specific issue and will be constituted of a particular age range depending on the issue being examined. Following each round table a report will be prepared with details being presented to my ministerial colleagues. A copy of each report will

also be posted at the Office for Youth web site, www.freeza.vic.gov.au/ofy.

Snowy River

Hon. R. M. HALLAM (Western) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to the 2000–01 budget currently before Parliament and in particular to the capital investment dedicated to water efficiency savings projects designed to contribute to the restoration of environmental flows in the Snowy River, which I note from the budget the government expects to be spread over seven years. Will the minister now advise the house of the total investment in water savings required of Victorian taxpayers to deliver the 28 per cent environmental flow in the Snowy River to which she has publicly committed the Bracks government?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I have the responsibility for negotiating with New South Wales and the commonwealth on the implementation of this most important election commitment of the Bracks Labor government.

As the honourable member has pointed out, the budget papers refer to the allocation for the coming financial year, 2000–01, and indicate that the remainder of the project will be spread over a period of six years beyond that. The funding to implement the remainder of the project is subject to negotiation with New South Wales and the commonwealth. The funding required will be provided when those negotiations are completed in accordance with their settlement. The funding will flow, so to speak, at the necessary time.

Port of Melbourne

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — Will the Minister for Ports inform the house of any e-commerce advances that have been made to improve the efficient running of the port of Melbourne?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Ports) — Honourable Members may be aware that Melbourne is Australia's busiest container port, handling more than 1.2 million containers a year. Business done by the port continues to rise by almost 8 per cent per year. As an example of the growth of business in the port a \$40-million bulk-handling facility is nearing completion at Appleton Dock. It will soon provide competitive import–export contracts for nearly 50 000 tonnes of various commodities.

The Bracks government is committed to ensuring that the port of Melbourne maintains its pre-eminent position as a major contributor to growing the state's

economy. To assist those efforts the Melbourne Port Corporation has a number of priorities, which include increased warehousing, improved transport links with regional Victoria and, most importantly, electronic commerce developments. I am advised that the port of Melbourne is leading the way with already more than 40 per cent of international container trade coming through Melbourne now lodging freight manifests electronically. There is an expectation that that figure will soon rise to around 60 per cent.

Electronic lodgment is significant because it allows the Melbourne Ports Corporation not only to process manifests more quickly and to allow the cartage to proceed more quickly and thus provide customer service but, just as importantly, allows the corporation to more efficiently monitor trends in international trade and therefore to capitalise on analysis of that information.

The corporation is currently updating its web site to give customers easy and direct access to its trade statistics. In addition, ships should soon be able to book electronically berths, tug boats, linesmen and pilots. Currently all those activities require separate documentation that is processed manually.

In addition, the Melbourne Ports Corporation is working with regional Victoria to see how it can assist e-commerce applications in regional Victoria, including the possibility of providing customs and quarantine services. Those e-commerce improvements will assist in providing better services to port customers which will ultimately benefit in growing the whole state, which is one of the four pillars of the Bracks government.

Fishing: government policy

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — In attending the launch of the Fishing Tourism Action Plan 2000–03 at the exclusive Millbrook Lake Lodge at Ballarat, which I understand has its own private lake, was it the Minister for Energy and Resource's intention to signify her support for a policy restricting restocking to private waters?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The honourable member referred to my attendance at the launch, but he must be referring to another minister. Although I have been pleased to support that fishing tourism initiative, I make it clear that I was not able to attend that launch. It is an important initiative for which the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism, the Minister for Sport and Recreation and I, as the minister responsible for fishing,

have various responsibilities and have been and will continue to be involved in supporting, promoting and implementing.

In relation to the matter of stocking, to the best of my recollection that is not a matter which was addressed as part of that launch.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — In answering the question which was asked, as opposed to the interjections, to the best of my knowledge at the launch of that important policy of the Bracks government that matter was not addressed. However, it is an ongoing responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment through the fisheries area and an ongoing matter for consultation with the various interested parties, including the Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body, also known as VRFish. It is a matter that is being pursued around the state. Consultations need to take into account a whole range of aspects including seasonal factors and ensure that stocking where it does occur is successful.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — On a point of order, Mr President, the question specifically asked the minister to signify her support or otherwise for a policy restricting restocking to private waters. The long answer just given by the minister did not specifically address whether the policy that she is pursuing is to restrict restocking to private waters.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — On the point of order, Mr President, I believe I indicated in my answer that that is not a matter referred to in the document which was released and which is continuing to be implemented. In answer to the question, that is not a matter which is contained in that policy or any other policy of the government.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — Further on the point of order, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT — Order! No, there is no point of order.

Federal budget: sport

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — Will the Minister for Sport and Recreation inform the house of the impact on Victoria's sporting community of the federal government's cut of \$13 million to sports funding as outlined in the recent federal budget?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The federal budget delivered this week

outlined approximately \$13.3 million in cuts to the Australian Sports Commission's budget. Clearly, that will have a significant impact on sport in Victoria. I understand that the Australian Sports Commission will announce today how it will reprioritise the way it delivers sports funding to various bodies. I note the federal minister is suggesting that the cuts are a result of Olympic-related expenses. However, a 14 per cent cut from a \$110 million program will most likely go beyond purely Olympic-related matters.

I have been advised that the Australian Sports Commission will be required to reduce its high performance program by \$9.2 million. I understand that will result in a loss — this is significant — of 42 staff positions. I also understand that letters have been forwarded to the national sporting organisations outlining budget reductions to their high-performance programs.

Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips — On a point of order, Mr President, on the question of relevance, the minister is commenting on a federal government policy and I do not see the relevance to his administrative duties as a state minister.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Funding for efforts such as sporting programs is usually a jointly funded state and federal matter so it is open to the minister to examine the impact of that on Victoria. I do not uphold the point of order.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I am drawing this together in relation to state funding aspects that are threatened. In Victoria there are six intensive training centres, which include rowing, soccer, athletics, men's hockey, women's hockey and cycling. Allocations range from between \$40 000 to \$190 000. Those programs are now under threat. I am extremely concerned about the impact of the potential cuts on Victoria's sporting infrastructure.

Another important aspect is that the Australian Sports Commission provides \$312 000 to supplement the Victorian Institute of Sport's sports science, sports medicine and strength and conditioning programs for elite athletes. Positions are likely to be lost in those programs.

I have outlined to the house the government's commitment to sport and in particular the additional money it has committed to promoting grassroots participation. The government is committed to promoting participation in areas where participation is low — such as promoting women's participation, promoting participation in sports where the

participation rate is below the national average, and promoting participation in rural and regional areas. The federal government does not signal any funding in those areas. It has been left entirely to the state. Grassroots sport has been left behind; rural and regional Victoria has been left behind; and women have been left behind.

Minerals and petroleum: government policy

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I remind the Minister for Energy and Resources that it is now eight months since the 1999 state election. On 8 December in this house the minister advised that she would consult with industry to develop policy in minerals and petroleum. Despite the expectation of industry, the minister failed to reveal the government policy in her address to the recent annual dinner of the Victorian Chamber of Mines. When will the minister announce the government's minerals and petroleum policy?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I welcome the shadow minister's attendance at the address I was pleased to give recently to the annual dinner of the Victorian Chamber of Mines. In that address I referred to a whole series of challenges that will be addressed in the government's minerals and petroleum policy, which I will be pleased to announce at a time of the government's choosing.

GST: small business

Hon. R. F. SMITH (Chelsea) — What action is the Minister for Small Business taking to investigate the goods and services tax compliance issues that affect Victorian small businesses?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I have described to the house on a number of occasions the government's concern for the capacity of small business to cope with the implementation and compliance of the goods and services tax (GST). The government intends to collect information about how businesses are coping. It will be conducting a study into the compliance regimes for small business as they meet the demands of the GST and any compliance problems that may occur.

A number of spokespersons have criticised the federal budget for failing to adequately assist small business during the compliance period of the GST. Mr David Edwards, chief executive officer of Certified Practising Accountants Australia was disappointed there was not more funding for the GST start-up assistance offers. The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and

Industry has been critical that the GST start-up advisory service will not receive continued funding.

Hon. M. T. Luckins — On a point of order, Mr President, the minister is not sourcing the documents she is using, and I ask her to do so.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is no requirement that members provide chapter and verse when they are purporting to put the views of another body. If the minister purports to quote from a document she should source it. She is able to make a statement about the view of someone else, because that is subject to contest in the house.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — Mr Rob Bastian was concerned that the federal budget failed to send positive signals to small business. I visited my local fish and chip shop the other night to buy some food for my kids. The owner of the shop said he was waiting until two weeks before the implementation of the GST for his accountant to tell him what he had to do to comply with the GST. He believes all he needs to do is add 10 per cent to everything he sells in his shop!

Many small businesses do not understand what the GST means. It is beholden on the federal government to increase assistance to small businesses to enable them to understand the requirements of the GST.

The government's study will enable it to provide accurate information to the federal government about what assistance small business will require for ongoing support in dealing with the GST and its compliance.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — I raise a point of order, Mr President. It concerns a matter raised in question time and in the adjournment debate yesterday by the Honourable Andrew Olexander.

The PRESIDENT — Order! If the member wishes to raise a point of order he must raise it when the issue comes up. There are other avenues. There is a time, a place and a manner in which points of order are raised. A point of order interrupts the proceedings before the house. The member may talk to me about the issue or raise it on another occasion. I will not allow a point of order.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Why did you allow Mr Forwood to do exactly the same thing?

The PRESIDENT — Order! The member should talk to me about it. If I need to I will give him the opportunity to have his say. As he knows, the time for points of order is when the issue is being dealt with, as has happened throughout question time.

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*.

I have received answers to the following questions on notice: 289, 292, 311, 323, 336, 373, 402, 403, 419–21.

Motion agreed to.

BUDGET PAPERS, 2000–01

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

That the Council take note of the budget papers, 2000–01.

Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) — Many important issues must be raised when responding to the motion. It is important to reflect on the importance of the budget and what it achieves. The budget sets out to raise funds to provide many of the essential services of government, such as police, hospitals, public transport and so on. It provides relief for those in need. The key issue to dwell on is that the budget derives its revenue from taxes which, if they are to be effective, must be levied on a healthy economy that has the capacity to pay them.

One of the keys to a good budget is that it helps to deliver a positive and strong economy. The measure of a good budget is to have a positive impact on the economy. That is essential to allow for a sustainable tax base. One of the best forms of social welfare that can be provided to people is to give them jobs with secure and safe salaries that have the potential to increase.

The economy is the golden egg on which any budget is based. I wish to dwell on that side of the budget because it is the absolute key that any budget, as well as providing for essential services, consolidates or at the very least does not hurt the economy on which it is based.

To a large extent an economy is driven by business and industry; that is basically where the revenue and the jobs are derived. Business and industry are sensitive to pointers or indicators in the economy and to where the government is taking the economy. One of the key drivers for business and businessmen is trying to be the first to identify where in the economy are the

opportunities or threats. Any businessman worth his salt always wants to be in the lead — first in when the opportunities arise and first out of a risk area before anybody else. That is why markets and businesses are sensitive and always anticipate what direction the economy is taking. Anybody who follows the share market or the currency market, both important economic indicators, would realise that great efforts are made by business people to anticipate directions and hence be better positioned when the market changes.

Being the first budget of the Bracks Labor government, the signals and pointers the budget gives to the Victorian economy and Victorian businesses are crucial. If Victorian businesses read the signals as threatening the economy, they will be off over the horizon as quick as they can. The net result will be destructive and unfortunate for Victoria as a whole. Business and industry are always looking for the magic straw in the wind that will point the way ahead. Today's environment is one of significant risk, which makes industry and businesses even more sensitive, watchful and mindful than usual to the pointers that might give them a clue as to what the future holds for them and their enterprises.

There is no doubt that over the past few years the economies of Victoria, Australia as a whole and much of the western world including the United States and Europe have been very successful. The Victorian economy has to a large extent weathered the serious downturn in the Asian economy and the slowdown in the Japanese economy. It has been enormously successful. But just as governments have electoral cycles, the economy has economic cycles.

Although the economy has been successful, people are worried that it cannot continue that way, noting indicators such as the turmoil in the share market, a significant tightening of interest rates and a slowdown in many other economic indicators such as building and domestic consumption. That is why it is so important that the signals sent out by the budget be strong and positive and that their implications for business be analysed. Businesses are able to read the signals sent out, and if they read there is a problem the Bracks government must move quickly to then send out the right signal. In that way the apprehensions of business will not become self-fulfilling.

The government's enormously strong financial position is a legacy of the former Kennett government. The budget reports a surplus of close to \$1.3 billion, by any measure an absolutely wonderful bequest to have been handed on. Given that the government has received that bequest it would be hard for the government not to

loosen the purse strings, but it must be realised that the government has loosened the purse strings.

The budget indicates some \$637 million of initiatives, a significant increase in expenditure of some 5.2 per cent. It could be argued that if that were not extravagant it would be okay. In a way, Victoria will have to wait to see how extravagant or otherwise that allocation might be. But the real issue I want to draw to the attention of the government is that, although it has allocated over \$600 million this year for those spending initiatives and added to that another billion dollars for an infrastructure fund, its commitment to business must be examined.

Business is the other important side of the economy. Business and industry must be given the confidence of a sound revenue base. That wonderful bequest of the Kennett government to the Bracks government is as much a function of the strong economy the Bracks government has inherited as anything else. The bequest will in many ways remain with the government if it can ensure that the Victorian economy remains strong and buoyant. If its budget damages the economy, that bequest will disappear and all Victorians will suffer as a result.

I compare the government's spending on the abovementioned initiatives with what it has promised to business — that is, a delayed tax reduction of \$400 million over four years. One can see that that is on any measure a fairly puny amount given the \$1.3 billion surplus which to a large extent the budget soaks up.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Particularly given that it is subject to the maintenance of an operational surplus!

Hon. C. A. STRONG — Exactly. As Mr Hallam points out — and I will expand on this later — the surplus which underpins this prospective tax cut of fairly small proportions is also highly dependent on the future state of the budget. I am certain that if there is any tightening of the budget these prospective tax cuts will be the first victim rather than the last, and that will send a detrimental message to industry. Many companies feel most strongly that of all the goodies coming out of the budget, they have not got their share.

What does the Bracks government think about them and the economy? I will refer the house to some interesting commentary on that point. Everyone has a different view of tax cuts, but I believe if governments take our money and then have more than they need they should give it back. It is not theirs to spend — it is our money. So tax cuts are very important to industry. Many businesses agree that the deferral of that process

and linking them with future budget strength is a key pointer of the government's lack of faith.

Mr Hallam said the budget is predicated on surpluses that go forward, which are in the order of \$500 million per annum. When one examines the cash side of the budget — up until the last two years that is how this and most governments have budgeted — one sees that the current method of budgeting is significantly different from the traditional one. The government's cash surplus in 2000–01 is approximately \$630 million, but at the end of the budget cycle for 2003–04 that cash surplus becomes a cash deficit of \$135 million.

The budget is very finely balanced — not to put too fine a point on it — which leads to another question mark for business and the economy. Given that the budget is so finely balanced and that business tax deductions are deferred, one must ask will they actually come? That is the question that business justifiably asks itself, and which I ask the government. I hope the government will do something about it.

The budget does not do great things for business because the tax cuts are relatively small. It is \$400 million over four years. They are deferred, they are dependent, and they are clouded with all sorts of question marks and caveats. An issue that concerns me and many business people with whom I have spoken is the extent to which the government will blur that \$400 million worth of budget cuts with the tax deductions which have been put in place and guaranteed under the new goods and services tax system. I am concerned about the extent to which taxes like the reduction of the financial institutions duty, the bank debit tax and others locked in through the GST system will take the place of a portion of the \$400 million.

So a tax deduction to business will happen, but will it be as a result of the transition to GST or in addition to that? In other words, what is the extent to which the \$400 million will be blurred with the other tax deductions working their way through the system?

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Then will they all be offset by workers compensation premiums?

Hon. C. A. STRONG — Indeed. I turn to some of the underpinnings. If those tax cuts are put off, reduced, blurred or mixed up with the GST, or if they are offset by increases in other business costs like the 15 per cent increase in Workcover — and let us not kid ourselves that the 15 per cent increase will not be the end; it will be just the beginning — there is no doubt that the budget will start to spiral downwards. If the state

economy heads in that direction there will be even less money available and reduced ability to raise taxation to return some of it to business.

I will examine some of the risks inherent in the budget so that we can appreciate the certainty or otherwise of the surplus and understand how real some of those tax deductions are likely to be. The budget papers deal with some of the risk factors in a certain amount of detail — and I will not dwell on them to the same extent as the budget papers do — but it is important to highlight those risk factors.

Page 46 of budget paper no. 2 deals with a few of those risk factors. It highlights one of the major risk factors as follows:

A more rapid slowing in US growth than generally expected will affect Australia both directly and indirectly through its effects on global activity —

and here is the punch line —

Historically, Australian economic activity is linked closely to the state of the US business cycle.

In referring to the United States of America business cycle, I will quote from Access Economics which, as honourable members know, is the adopted economic guru of the government. It pointed out in *Economics Monitor—Highlights—April 2000* how the US Federal Reserve is, in a very real sense, trying to slow the US economy. That reports states:

Greenspan will raise rates until economic growth slows.

We have already seen that. There is absolutely no doubt that the United States Federal Reserve will keep raising rates until the US economy slows. So in every sense the state of the US economy is a risk factor — it is a real factor. The US economy will be slowed. It is just a question of the extent to which that can be managed in the United States.

Many commentators wonder whether the US Federal Reserve will go too far and the US economy will have a hard landing or will it be able to manage a soft landing. However, whichever way one cuts it, US economic growth will be slowed and that is an important risk factor.

Another key risk factor mentioned in the budget is the assumption about foreign exchange rates. The budget states:

The budget projections assume an unchanged foreign exchange rate.

Some of the sensitivities that I will touch on later include the impact on the budget of those exchange rate assumptions not being met. However, given the events of recent weeks and months, only a very brave person would assume that foreign exchange rates will not change.

Internal migration trends are another of the important risk factors linked to the underlying general feeling about how strong and prosperous the Victorian economy is. There is no doubt that a reversal of the historic internal migration has been a significant factor in boosting the Victorian economy over the past few years. For many years people moved from Victoria to northern New South Wales and Queensland. That trend is not new or unique to Australia. That worldwide trend is often called the 'sunbelt phenomenon', which describes aptly the movement of people to warmer climates. In the United States people move from the northern to the southern states.

The reversal of the migration trend has been a fascinating feature of the Victorian economy in the past few years as people have moved from the northern sunbelt states of Australia to Victoria in the belief that job opportunities are better in this state. If there is even a sniff or hint that that may not be so, those historic trends will be re-established. That would have a double-whammy effect because people moving into Victoria have a positive effect on the state's economy. If that positive effect, which is built into the economic assumptions, were reversed, the consequences could be extreme.

Those are some of the important risk factors in the key assumption of the budget which assumes a gross state product of 3.5 per cent growth. Although that has been scaled down from previous years, it is still a high rate of economic growth for the state.

That rate is worth commenting on, because Victorians have had the good fortune to see two budgets being brought down in a very short time. Whereas the state budget includes a gross state product increase of 3.5 per cent, the recent federal budget for 2000-01 assumes a 3.75 per cent increase.

When dealing with the factors underpinning this growth the federal budget makes much of the impact of the Olympic Games and how they will inject an estimated \$6 billion into the Australian economy, which equates to 1 per cent of the gross domestic product, so that next year something like 1 per cent of the 3.75 per cent growth will be directly related to the Olympic Games. Victoria will not have the Olympic Games, but undoubtedly it will get a significant amount of

flow-over activity, although nothing like the activity in New South Wales.

Another significant factor is the effect on inflation. There is no doubt that in the past three or four years the consumer price index (CPI) increase in Victoria and Melbourne has been significantly less than the Australian average. Over the past couple of years it was almost half the Australian average. That is enormously important for businesses and for anybody who is on a wage or salary.

Wage and salary earners know that one of the things that eats into their buying power is high rates of inflation. If the CPI is low your real take-home pay is much higher. The real take-home pay here in Victoria has been significantly better as a result of the low CPI. It is good for businesses because they can contain wage and salary increases, and it is good for wage and salary earners because their buying power increases so that they can pump their disposable income into buying things, which in turn helps the upward spiral effect of domestic growth from spending.

Some interesting factors have come out of the state budget and the recently delivered federal budget. In the state budget something like a 20 per cent increase in private business investment is assumed for 2000-01, whereas in the federal budget the assumption is something like a 5 per cent increase.

There is no doubt that for the reasons I have outlined private business investment in Victoria has been running significantly above the Australian average. Those reasons include the fact that people have been moving to Victoria; the CPI has been significantly less so that real spending power has increased; and the competitive position of Victoria has been gradually getting better and better and therefore people have been investing more in this state.

People can be enormously nervous, and capital investment is based on confidence. People invest money today that will be locked into a particular piece of plant or equipment or a property for many years to come, and if there is even a murmur of trouble that confidence is put at significant risk.

The proposed increase in Workcover fees of 15 per cent will be a significant extra impost on employing people. It will have a significant flow-through effect on the economy, not just on-costs, but on the relative competitiveness of the Victorian economy against those of New South Wales and Queensland. It will affect Victoria's economic growth.

One of the major revenue sources underpinning the Victorian budget for the past few years has been gaming revenue, which has significantly increased in successive budgets. As a proportion of household disposable income gaming revenue in Victoria is now almost on a par with New South Wales. The New South Wales industry is a lot more mature than that of Victoria. Because the Victorian industry was new there was a lot of catching up to do, but Victoria has now caught up and the results have flowed through to the budget. I do not say whether that is a good or bad thing, but it clearly shows that the growth in income from gaming revenue will not be as strong or dramatic as in the past. Those are some of the issues that cast doubt over the strength of the projections underlying the budget.

This week's federal budget predicts a significant 1 per cent drop in domestic demand. It also predicts that government spending will reduce from 5 per cent last year to 2.5 per cent this year, so a significant reduction in government spending will flow through to governments across the nation. Some of that will occur in Victoria and will affect the Victorian economy. Many commentators have also referred to the decline in household consumption. The significant risk factors to which I have referred have been built into the budget assumptions, but they highlight the risks underpinning the state budget.

The housing sector is an important industry that is a significant revenue earner for the Victorian economy. State taxes are imposed on a range of transactions affecting the industry. The latest BIS Shrapnel report, acknowledged as a leading forecaster in the building and real estate industries, shows that total dwelling commencements nationally have significantly fallen. It is projecting a 29 per cent decline in building commencements in 2000–01 in Victoria compared with an 18 per cent decline in New South Wales. Once again this major revenue source coming from building activity is predicted to be in decline. In fairness, I do not believe any of that can be blamed on the current government. The industry is cyclical, but nevertheless it will have a significant impact on revenues.

If there are problems with state revenues where will the impact be felt? The prospective tax cuts, which have yet to be committed, will be the area where the revenue shortfall will be felt. I believe the government knows that and business and industry know that the government knows that. It is a strong signal of the priorities of the government.

I should refer to the impacts those factors will have on the Victorian economy. I mentioned the impact state

economic growth and the consumer price index will have on the economy and I have concentrated my comments on the financial year 2000–01. Page 47 of the economic outlook and strategy paper shows a measure of the economic projections to 2003–04. It is projecting 3.5 per cent state growth for 2001–02, but by 2003–04 it is projecting a 3.25 per cent growth in state gross domestic product. Given the factors at work, that projection can only be described as high risk.

One of the drivers of the economy is the rate of employment growth and the increase in the consumer price index. It is predicted that the unemployment rate for 2000–01 will be 6.5 per cent. Clearly, that is reasonable considering where we are today. It is predicted to fall in 2003–04 to 5.75 per cent. We would all like to think that projection is a desirable outcome, but it has considerable risk attached to it. The forecast that I believe is most at risk is the consumer price index, because although Victoria has a low CPI rate in the current financial year, the budget predicts a spike for 2000–01 as a result of the impact of the goods and services tax. By 2003–04 it is predicted that the CPI will reduce to 2.25 per cent.

When one considers the factors at work in the international economy, as well as the way the Australian dollar is going down — which in one sense is good for our export industries — it is clear that they will have inflationary consequences as they flow through to affect the prices of the goods and services that are bought by people in this country, with all the risks inherent in that.

In assessing those risks, the budget papers made the following comment on page 175 of budget paper no. 2 :

The budget operating position, over the entire forward estimates period, is likely to be highly sensitive to changes in either the levels of economic activity (GSP and employment) or wages ...

And again:

The operating position is likely to display even greater sensitivity to movements in share prices than to economic parameters ...

From our reading of the newspaper headlines we are all too aware of what is happening with share prices worldwide. The budget papers refer to the sensitivity to change inherent in the assumptions on which the budget is based.

The budget papers contain an assessment of what might happen if some of those economic assumptions are affected by outside factors. They calculate that a 1 per cent increase in gross state product and employment

growth will have an impact on the operating surplus of \$62 million this year, growing to \$77 million in 2003-04. Those figures demonstrate the level of sensitivity. If average weekly earnings were to increase by 1 per cent, the impact on the budget would be \$71 million this year and about the same amount in 2003-04.

All honourable members know that interest rates have gone up by 1.25 per cent since November, and we all know that the Federal Reserve will continue to pound interest rates in the United States. That will have an impact on the Australian dollar and will in turn flow through to Australian interest rates, and so on. The impact of an interest rate increase of 1 per cent has been predicted to cost \$25 million in 2000-01 and \$33 million in 2003-04.

A table on page 183 of budget paper no. 2 summarises some of the effects. It projects a negative 1 per cent deviation from the base line assumptions in gross state product, employment, the consumer price index, the wages cost index, property prices, share prices and interest rates, and calculates a bottom line effect in next year's budget of \$400 million.

As the Honourable Roger Hallam said, it is not a big ask to imagine the current surplus being easily wiped out. That is why the strategy adopted by the government of deferring the tax cuts to business and making them dependent on future budget surpluses is risky. If tax cuts are at risk, business, industry and economic growth are at risk and, most important of all, confidence is at risk. If that confidence is lost, the downward cycle will start.

By transferring any budget deviations to business and by reducing the tax cuts — a pitiful \$400 million — and making them dependent on the future state of the economy, the government is simply saying to business, 'If anything goes wrong, it will be you who is hit'. Business then asks, 'If that's the case, is this the place for us to be?'

To reinforce the point and to demonstrate that these are not merely the spoutings of a member of the opposition, I will quote from some recent newspaper articles. The first is an article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 4 May headed 'Bracks fails to excite punters'.

Hon. J. M. Madden — Which page?

Hon. C. A. STRONG — I could not really tell you that. I have torn it out of the newspaper. You will find it somewhere in the financial pages. Among other things it says:

Of the seven business people the *Australian Financial Review* spoke to yesterday at the presentation, none believed there were any significant budget initiatives for their industry or business in general.

In the small business section of the *Australian Financial Review* under the headline 'Budget overlooks small business', Max Newnham states:

The Small Business Output group, which is part of the department responsible for small business, had its budget decreased by 7 per cent to \$10.6 million. This represents less than 4 per cent of the total budget for the department ...

The article goes on to say that even the \$10.6 million is a small part of the budget of the Department of State and Regional Development.

Many of the sentiments I have been talking about have been expressed by business commentators. An article on page 5 of the *Australian Financial Review* of 3 May comments on the tax cuts that:

That's a sop to business which is still trying to decide where exactly the Bracks government fits on the continuum between Joan Kirner and Jeff Kennett.

Whether business will be as reassured as the Premier hopes remains to be seen. But it might be unwise of business to take the promise of a tax cut too literally.

Any government that feels the need to open 360 new hospital beds and recruit 800 extra police, 350 teachers and 200 additional tram conductors and railway staff is destined to be fiscally challenged.

The article continues:

And if fiscal squeeze comes to shove, it's a fair bet that business's tax cut and the budget surplus will get cut before the teachers and tram conductors.

It goes on:

But when it —

meaning business —

looks realistically at where the budget is pointing, it will see that the Bracks government, unfortunately, is more likely to spend from the Kennett legacy than to build on it.

At the end of the day when one tries to get a feel for what the government will do for business, there is probably no better place to look than the government's own press releases that are targeted at business. I will deal with a couple of press releases, both dated 2 May 2000. The first, issued by the Minister for State and Regional Development, is headed 'Pro-business budget drives growth'. That is a good headline.

Hon. M. M. Gould interjected.

Hon. C. A. STRONG — Good at the spin, there is no doubt about that! In the third paragraph after a little bit of hoo-ha, the hoopla continues:

Mr Brumby said, 'In addition to maintaining Victorian's AAA credit rating and delivering a substantial budget surplus, the government is supporting Victorian business through programs to attract investors, boost export growth and create new jobs'.

As I have highlighted, Victoria's AAA-rating substantial budget surpluses are really bequests to the budget, not of the budget's own making. Even more interestingly, he continues by saying the budget will be pro-business because Victorian businesses, through programs to attract investors, boost export growth and create new jobs. What are the measures in the budget to do that? The first one is to:

... reduce unfunded superannuation liabilities and cut government debt.

It is a little hard to see how this initiative will attract investors, boost export and create new jobs. That is not to say that they are not worthy things to do. However, they will hardly have new businesses streaming into Victoria.

The next major initiative is the \$400 million in business tax cuts over the next four years, the very issue I have been talking about of deferred tax cuts that depend on the state of the budget. Then follows something a little more meaty — an \$800 000 increase. Remember, Victoria is coming back from the 5.2 per cent increase in budget expenditure — something like \$657 million all up. Now we are getting down to what it really means. How much of the \$657 million in extra spending will go to business and in what way?

The answer is as follows: \$800 000 is allocated for a strategic audit of Victorian industries. Although there is nothing wrong with that, it is hardly a major initiative. Next, \$600 000, which is hardly big time, will be allocated for a world economic forum to be held in Melbourne in 2000. Some \$1.9 million is allocated to promote the skills and capabilities of Victoria's manufacturers — rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb! — by staging industry weeks. Those are the major programs to attract investment, boost export growth and create new jobs. So what are they? They are a strategic audit at a measly \$800 000; \$600 000 for a world economic forum; and close to \$2 million over four years for industry weeks.

It gets even better:

Mr Brumby said the Bracks government would invest heavily to ensure the future of Victoria as Australia's manufacturing power house and premier investment location.

That is fine, but once again the opposition asks what? Where? No initiatives are quoted; it is just spin. Further on, one finds the following statement:

Mr Brumby said spending aimed at knowledge creation and high-tech advances were at the forefront of the government's strategy to encourage business and investment.

Well we can all sign on to that, which is terrific; but what is it? That comes in the next paragraph:

Major commitments [are] the \$310-million science, technology and innovation program, and programs for the information and communications and technology sector ...

I should point out to the house — Mr Brumby, the Minister for State and Regional development would know this already — that the \$310-million science and technology innovation program was put in place by the previous government. It is a budget initiative not of this government but of the previous government and as such is not new spending.

The minister's press release, which trumpets what the government is doing for Victoria, reveals expenditure this year that adds up to a measly \$2.5 million. No need to wonder why business is cynical; it is because it can see through this stuff.

The second press release, dated 2 May, was issued from the Office of Premier and Treasurer. It is headed 'Tax Cuts for Business' and states:

'This pro-business budget will focus on improving Victoria's competitiveness, attracting new investment and generating jobs', Mr Bracks said.

But it says nothing about how he will do it. Where are the initiatives for Victoria's competitiveness? Where are the initiatives for attracting new jobs and investment? They are simply not there. The only one that is quoted is the deferred tax cut, which as I have pointed out will be highly dependent on the budget situation.

The key question to come out of all that is: what signals does it send to business and industry? What confidence does that give business to invest in, build and drive forward the Victorian economy? That is so particularly on top of another factor that comes out of the budget papers — that is, the fact that a 10 per cent decrease in Australian share prices — let us face it, that is not impossible — would wipe \$580 billion off Victoria's budget. The risks in that whole process are significant.

When it comes to the economy, I suggest that confidence is the key. When it comes to the ability of any budget to work — and government members should be aware of this from their knowledge of the

Cain–Kirner governments — a strong economy is needed to support the taxes in the budget. A strong economy is critical to confidence.

A clear signal has been sent to business and industry that business is not a high priority of the government. The business tax cuts are puny by any measure. The investment in growing the economy is tokenistic. Although they are small compared with expenditure increases, those tax cuts would nevertheless be extremely welcome. However, they have to be at risk because they are deferred. They are clearly dependent on the future and, as business commentators have said, they would be the first thing to go if any stress were put on the budget surplus. As I have outlined, many factors can apply that stress to the budget.

To send a clear signal to business — and it is important that it does so — the government must do more than just use rhetoric and promise things in the future. If the crunch comes — and let's hope it never does — and there is a downturn and the budget starts to unravel, honourable members should never forget that it is the people the Labor Party purports to represent who will be hurt first and hurt most. The best thing Labor can do for its constituencies is to ensure the economy is robust and booming because it is the people at the bottom of the heap who are hurt first and most if there is any downturn.

It is not too late to show some action. In terms of a good political action to take, imagine what sort of signal it would send to business if some of those tax cuts were brought forward or if an announcement were made in the next couple of months of a first instalment on the tax cuts. That would show it was more than rhetoric and that there will be tax cuts. I urge the government to take that position and to understand the inherent risks and the signals that it is sending to business, which is a major part of the economy of the state. The current message is that the government ranks business at a low level because, firstly, it is not giving business much, and secondly, the government is making anything it does give contingent on a whole lot of factors. For the sake of Victoria, the economy, and the people it represents, something needs to be done by the government to show some good faith in business.

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — As a member for Geelong Province and a member of the government I am delighted to speak in support of the first budget of the Bracks Labor government. On behalf of all Geelong Province residents I welcome the delivery of such a socially progressive and financially responsible budget. The budget delivers on four key pillars that the Labor Party took to Victorians at the election in September

last year: responsible financial management; promoting growth across the whole state; delivering improved services to all Victorians; and restoring democracy.

The budget is important for all Victorians. It delivers long overdue improvements to areas that Victorians told us they were deeply concerned about prior to last year's election. Those areas were education, health, and community safety. The budget also looks to the future of our great state with the establishment of a new \$1 billion Growing Victoria infrastructure reserve, which will provide a major boost of 20 per cent to Victoria's infrastructure over the next four years across the state. The Growing Victoria infrastructure reserve of \$1 billion comes on top of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund of \$170 million which has been so warmly received by regional areas including the area that I represent, Geelong Province.

I will detail the commitments made for the Geelong region in the Bracks government's first budget. I am proud of those commitments. Millions of dollars will be injected into capital works that will directly benefit residents across Geelong Province. On the Bellarine Peninsula, funding for projects include \$700 000 for the establishment of the Leopold Indoor Neighbourhood Centre, which will be built at Leopold Primary School. The funding for the project has been enthusiastically received by the Leopold community which has worked together over a long period in an attempt to secure funding.

Earlier this year I attended a meeting of the Leopold Indoor Neighbourhood Centre committee and was pleased to listen to representatives from a number of community groups, including Leopold Primary School, the local Lions Club, the senior citizens, Leopold Little Athletics Association, Allendale kindergarten, the local playgroup, a number of locally represented sporting organisations and representatives of the out-of-school-hours care group in Leopold. All those organisations will have input into the development of the Leopold Indoor Neighbourhood Centre and will benefit directly from its establishment in the heart of the Bellarine Peninsula.

The budget also outlined a funding commitment for the upgrade of Ocean Grove Primary School which is sorely needed. Funding of \$4 million was announced in the budget for the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute at Queenscliff. Earlier this year I visited MAFRI with the Minister for Energy and Resources to inspect the facility at Queenscliff. I was impressed by the work undertaken at the centre — work of international renown by the scientists and researchers. However, I was disappointed in the conditions under

which they work. It is a second-class facility at Queenscliff, and the funding the government has allocated will start the relocation of MAFRI to the Narrows at Queenscliff and the building of a new facility which has been enthusiastically received by all involved with MAFRI.

The budget also outlined funding of \$3 million for the Bringing the Bay to Life program which will see the redevelopment of the Queenscliff harbour which received much scrutiny under the Kennett government. Members of the Queenscliff community were unhappy about the coastal action plan and the proposed redevelopment of the Queenscliff harbour, and the government is now considering that. A new committee has been established to draft some plans to redevelop the Queenscliff harbour which I hope will have the support of most of the residents of the Borough of Queenscliffe.

The budget also describes how the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund will provide benefits to residents on the north side of the Bellarine Peninsula, in particular to the residents of Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards. For many years they lobbied to have a gas pipeline constructed through their townships. Funding will now allow the construction of that gas pipeline to take place. It has been warmly received by local residents and the north Bellarine gas action committee. Recently I led a delegation of the committee to meet the Minister for Energy and Resources about the progress of the pipeline. Committee members were pleased with the progress that has been made in planning for the construction of the pipeline. I congratulate the work of the committee. The persons I have had most contact with are Mr Alec Finney, who resides in Portarlington, and Ms Sue Wilson. They have worked tirelessly over a long period to bring the project to fruition.

A monthly journal called 'Port report' recently reported on the pipeline, and I am looking forward to reading the next edition. The pipeline has been discussed for a long period. The residents of the townships I have mentioned were disheartened by the previous Kennett government's inability to find funds to kick-start the project. Unbeknown to us at the time plans were afoot to privatise the gas industry and that stymied the project. The government is offering \$1.5 millions to subsidise the construction of the gas pipeline, which will be of major economic benefit to the north Bellarine community.

Since I was elected I have spent much time visiting schools in my province and have spoken to many teachers, principals, parents, students and

representatives of school councils. I am the product of a state school and I send my children to state schools. I am delighted that Geelong state schools have done so well out of the state budget. Belmont High School will receive \$2.9 million to establish information technology throughout the whole school and construct new wings for the arts, technology and science.

Grovedale Secondary College will receive \$1 million to build new classrooms and information technology laboratories. The Bellbrae Primary School has received funding for its much-needed upgrade. When I was elected I received a telephone call from the principal of the school to enlist my support for the upgrade and to impress upon me its urgency. I am pleased that the first budget delivered that upgrade.

Other schools in my province received funding, in particular those in areas of most economic disadvantage, such as the suburbs of Corio and Norlane. I am pleased to see that the Corio South, Corio West and Norlane West primary schools have all received much-needed funding for their upgrades, which will be of major benefit to the whole school community. I congratulate the school communities of Corio and Norlane for their work.

Many young people receive their tertiary education at the Gordon Institute of TAFE. Many of the students I have taught furthered their studies at the technical and further education college. At one of the schools I taught year 11 and 12 students completed their tertiary education at the Gordon. Some of the students who were doing their Victorian certificates of education completed their studies at the college by spending part of their week doing vocational education subjects.

I am pleased that the Gordon Institute of TAFE has received \$3.7 million for a continuing upgrade. When I was elected I was invited to the college. I had been their many times as a teacher but on that occasion I visited as the local member to meet with the chief executive officer, John Maddock. It was his last day and he was about to take up another position at the Box Hill College of TAFE. He was sad to be leaving the Gordon and was handing it over to the acting chief executive officer, Grant Sutherland, who has been looking after the Gordon institute for the past few months before the next CEO is appointed. An enormous commitment has been made in Geelong Province.

The Geelong community told me it was concerned at the erosion of health and other services in Geelong Province. The budget's health initiatives will benefit my province, including funding for the Barwon community health centre, which is part of a network of

community health centres run under the auspices of the Geelong Community Health Service. Prior to the budget the Minister for Health announced that \$600 000 would be provided to establish four new detox beds in Geelong as the first step in addressing Geelong's growing drug problem. Those beds are welcomed by the Geelong community.

Last year I was disturbed to meet one of my constituents, Ms Di Rogers, whose son is a heroin addict. I had taught her son in year 9 a number of years ago. I was disturbed to discover what had happened to him. She stressed that last year when her son needed assistance for his addiction and required access to detox facilities, he was unable to get them. Under the Kennett government people in Geelong had to go to Warrnambool for detoxification. When Ms Rogers's son went to Warrnambool he was removed from the support of his family, friends and a supporting and caring environment. That causes major distress to everybody concerned and did not have a favourable outcome for the boy. I welcome the \$600 000 for the four detox beds in Geelong.

Funding has also been announced for the planning this year of a new ambulance station on the Surf Coast. I know the local community will be grateful. Geelong will also benefit from its share of the 800 police to be trained, a number of whom will come to Geelong. Funding from the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund will also see major commitments come to fruition in the government's first term in office. They include \$12 million for the upgrade of the central activities area in Geelong which is badly needed.

The City of Greater Geelong is already working on plans for the upgrade, and they are currently on display at the Geelong City Hall for public comment. The city is also announcing funding to link the key wharves at the port of Geelong with the national standard gauge rail line, which will have major economic benefits for Geelong and the state.

Geelong will also receive its share of the \$80 million included in the budget to establish high-speed rail links in regional Victoria. Geelong commuters welcome that initiative and a number of people have already spoken to me about it. It will lead to a reduction of 15 minutes in the travel time from Geelong to Melbourne. Yesterday I met with representatives of the Public Transport Users Association which congratulates the government on its initiatives in public transport and is particularly supportive of the proposal to establish high-speed rail links in regional Victoria.

The budget also allocates funding to the much-needed upgrade of the Melbourne–Geelong road. That upgrade is secured and work has begun at the Corio end of the road. I was dismayed to hear the other member for Geelong Province trivialise that work during the adjournment debate the other night. I place on the record my concern about his remarks.

Hon. B. C. Boardman — You are kidding, aren't you? This is a serious issue!

Hon. E. C. CARBINES — Over a long time, many people have lost their lives on Geelong road, Mr Boardman. Last year just before Christmas when I was driving to Parliament I was stuck in a traffic jam. When I reached the obstruction I was upset to discover that people had died in that accident. Later that day I learned that a young mother and her two children had been killed. As I said, many people have died on that road, and many more people have been seriously injured. The Geelong road upgrade is desperately needed. I suggest the Honourable Ian Cover catch a train when he wants to go to Geelong-away matches.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. E. C. CARBINES — The Geelong Football Club ensures that there are extra train services to ferry Geelong supporters to its away matches. If the Honourable Ian Cover considers his inconvenience outweighs the need to upgrade the road, he should catch a train. The upgrade should proceed as quickly as possible.

For the first time in seven years Geelong has received its fair share of the state budget. Obviously a member of the Bracks government, particularly a member from Geelong, would be very pleased with the budget so it is necessary to turn to third-party and media comment to gauge reaction to the budget.

In the *Geelong Advertiser* of 3 May — the day after the budget was delivered — a banner headline screams out, 'Budget windfall — Boost: Geelong schools score big funds'. The article states:

Geelong schools have emerged as big winners from the Bracks government's first budget, with millions of dollars promised for upgrades and new facilities.

...

Many other grants for major projects promised for the Geelong region were yesterday confirmed in what Premier Steve Bracks described as a 'budget with a heart'.

...

Other big winners in Geelong were hospitals, roads and emergency services.

At page 2 of the same edition of the *Geelong Advertiser* is the headline, 'Bosses laud budget':

The Bracks government's first budget has been warmly welcomed by the state's business sector, which says it will cement the relationship between the two.

Again at page 2 is the headline, 'Good for business: chamber':

Geelong Chamber of Commerce executive director Lawrie Miller said yesterday the state budget was good for business, and it would restore confidence in the Bracks government as financial managers.

'We didn't think that it would be as pro-business as it's turned out to be, so we're pleased with it', Mr Miller said.

On the same day the *Geelong Advertiser* editorial, which can be found at page 6, makes interesting reading. Headlined 'Long overdue offerings', it states:

When the Kennett government exited Spring Street, considerable public hope existed that its successor might loosen the purse strings the coalition had turned into a large surplus.

While this had assisted in restoring the state's credit rating, it was achieved at the cost of considerable community services. Hardly a department escaped the budget razor and the privatisation of utilities and outsourcing of government contracts spelled even more cuts to service quality and service levels.

It is edifying, therefore, to find the new Bracks regime cautiously and sensibly loosening those purse strings. Health, education and police — the key recipients of yesterday's budget largesse — have been neglected for too many years. Geelong has been no stranger to this and so yesterday's handouts were a welcome relief.

The *Geelong Advertiser*, the voice of Geelong, has given a big tick to the Bracks government's first budget. For further evidence I refer to the *Weekly Times* of Wednesday, 3 May and its banner headline at page 1 reading, 'Bracks delivers on rural election promises — a fair share'. The article states:

Premier Steve Bracks has delivered on his election promises to country Victoria in the state government's first budget yesterday.

Two days after the budget the *Geelong Advertiser* interviewed some of the recipients of the Bracks government budget allocations in Geelong. An article at page 4, headed 'Belmont High gives a big tick to budget', shows the principal, Mr Allan White, and a few students in a run-down technology room, the caption describing the picture as showing 'a metalwork room which needs refurbishment'. I quote from the article:

'The students are the real winners', principal Allan White said.

...

'The whole school community, the council, staff and students have been involved in the planning process and are delighted and excited to see something we started planning in 1996 come to fruition', he said.

At page 7 of the weekly *Geelong Independent* of 5 May is the headline, 'Schools to spend windfalls on facilities and upgrades'. The Geelong media has certainly scored the first budget of the Bracks government 10 out of 10, and I congratulate the Premier on that.

The first budget of the Bracks government is great for Geelong. It delivers on key issues of concern to the Geelong community — education, health and safety. As a member for Geelong Province I am proud to speak in support of the first budget of the Bracks Labor government. I commend the budget to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of
Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash).**

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, 23 May.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Monterey Secondary College site

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN (Chelsea) — I raise with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is the representative of the Minister for Education in another place, an article in this week's Frankston *Independent*, the *Independent* being the leading newspaper in the Mornington Peninsula area, and an award-winning newspaper with excellent directorship, management and principles. I quote extensively from the article, titled 'A park for Pines Forest':

A park is to be built on the site of the former Monterey Secondary College in Frankston North.

The state government last week announced it had allocated \$1 million in its first budget to buy the site.

The article quotes Mr Matt Viney, MP:

'This is great news for the people living in the Pines' ...

...

The park plan signified a 'great day' for residents who could be confident the government would honour its promises.

Mr Viney campaigned heavily on the park issue. It was one of his key pillars — one of those pillars we hear so much about.

At page 172 of budget paper no. 2, under the heading 'Asset investment initiative decisions', \$400 000 is allocated under the Department of Treasury and Finance for the purchase of the former school site. In fact the allocation is \$1 million. I acknowledge that the allocation appears in the budget, but the difficulty with the initiative is that the former government sold the school site to a private developer in the best interests of the community. The developer could subdivide the land to attract additional residents, thereby increasing the social and economic prosperity of the Pines to the Frankston North area.

Mr Viney has negotiated with the Treasurer and the Premier to get the budget allocation to purchase the site from the private developer. Such an exchange has the potential to create a degree of legal and contractual complexity. What would occur if the private developer chose not to sell the site? What would occur where interest had been paid on any borrowings of the private developer in subdividing the property? More importantly, as budget paper no. 2 allocates \$1 million for the buyback of the land, does that mean the sale price is now \$1 million?

I ask the minister to advise the house of the steps she will take to investigate the issue and what steps the government will take to ensure the potential buyback of the land does not result in the government being left with an empty block of land and no additional funding allocated in the budget to do anything with the land in question.

Mobile phones

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Many Australians have mobile phones. Honourable members probably heard about or read last month of the amount of radiation that emanates from mobile phones and more particularly the earpieces many of us use with our mobile phones. A study by a British consumer association suggests that the amount of radiation emanating from an earpiece is three times that emanating when the user of the phone holds the phone next to his or her ear.

From a consumer's point of view there is a lot of uncertainty as to whether one should use an earpiece. I wonder whether, in the interests of consumers generally, it is possible for the government to examine this issue with a view to advising the community of the position on radiation and mobile phones, and in particular to earpieces attached to mobile phones. The question I raise is whether, under the heading of consumer affairs, the minister could consider the matter as one of public interest and potential concern to ascertain whether some advice could be given to the community on the issue.

Olympic Games: torchbearers

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation to the considerable disappointment and disgust felt by many members of the Greek–Australian community in Victoria and the wider community at the recent replacement of 15-year old Yianna Souleles, a young Australian girl of Greek descent, with the daughter of Australian International Olympic Committee official Kevan Gosper as the first Australian to carry the Olympic torch on its way from Olympia to Uluru and Sydney.

I am also concerned that Mr Gosper's failure to decline the offer made to him by Greek Olympic officials on the grounds that it was inappropriate — whether or not the offer was unsolicited — may suggest to our young Victorian athletes that our most senior sporting officials regard — —

Hon. M. T. Luckins — On a point of order, Mr President, I ask if you could consider what the matter Ms Mikakos has raised has to do with government administration in Victoria.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — On the point of order, Mr President, in view of your earlier ruling that sporting matters are on a joint federal and state funding basis, and if the honourable member will allow me to conclude my remarks, it will become clear why the minister has a power to express his view and some authority on this matter.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is a long bow Ms Mikakos has just drawn. The question of sport, like many things that happen in the community, is a matter of joint state and federal funding. In this case I agree with the sentiments expressed by Ms Mikakos, but it is not a matter of state government administration.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — It is premature on the part of the member.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister is in a position, as minister of the state, to present an opinion on this matter outside of the house. The question is whether this house is the appropriate forum to look at a matter of state administration. I do not believe it is a matter of state administration.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — What about the effect on sporting bodies in Victoria? The low morale!

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have sympathy for the comments the honourable member makes. I will let the honourable member finish what she was going to say, and then rule.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — Thank you for your indulgence, Mr President. I believe the failure by Mr Gosper to decline the offer made to him by Greek Olympic officials on the basis that it was inappropriate — whether or not the offer was unsolicited — may suggest to our young Victorian athletes that our most senior sporting officials regard favouritism and privilege to be acceptable in sport. Mr Gosper's actions resulted in the loss of an opportunity not only to demonstrate the symbolism of Greece's Olympic heritage and its link to Australia through its significant Greek–Australian community, but also to demonstrate the egalitarianism that forms the basis of the Australian spirit.

I ask the minister to advise the International Olympic Committee of the government's disappointment in this matter and to assure young Victorian athletes and sporting participants that they will be treated on the basis of merit by the government and not on the basis of favouritism to highly ranked officials.

Housing: Shepparton estate

Hon. E. J. POWELL (North Eastern) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Small Business, representing the Minister for Housing in another place. During the last term of the previous government the former Minister for Housing asked that I chair a committee to consider issues in relation to public housing and a redevelopment of an estate in Shepparton called Parkside estate. With the change of government I received a similar request from the new minister to reconvene the committee and again chair it and bring forward recommendations, and to send the final report to her.

I am delighted to inform the house that that report was lodged with the minister in February of this year. As of this stage I have not received a response from the minister and I see there is no specific allocation in the budget. Will the minister advise the house as to when

the funding will be provided to ensure that the much-needed upgrade to the estate can commence?

Sport and recreation industry awards

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Jika Jika) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Yesterday Mr Olexander raised a matter of sponsorship of the Victorian sports awards with the minister. I have been informed that the honourable member may have obtained information he used in the question as a result of inquiries to Sport and Recreation Victoria under the name of Bill Jones of the Bill Jones Personal Training Company when no such organisation exists.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — On a point of order, Mr President, in stating that I have sought to obtain information under another name the honourable member is obviously implying that I have acted with improper motives. I find that offensive. It is completely false, and I ask him to withdraw.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I was reporting to the house on information — —

Honourable Members — Withdraw!

The PRESIDENT — Order! The honourable member knows the rules of the house. If an honourable member finds a matter about himself offensive and if the Chair regards it as being objectively offensive and the honourable member assures me that — —

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Am I allowed to speak on the point of order?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Olexander is calling for a withdrawal from you because of offensive material.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — As a member I am entitled to speak to the point of order.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Let us get this right. Mr Olexander raised a point of order under the standing orders that the words were offensive and asked for them to be withdrawn. Standing order 131 states:

No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words in reference to any other member.

The notes for the President and other officers state:

The President must first be satisfied before asking a member to withdraw: firstly, that a person has taken exception; and secondly, that there was validity in the exception taken.

The honourable member has assured the house that he did not make the phone call or whatever it was that you suggested he did. The notes continue:

The mere request for a withdrawal is not sufficient — there must be grounds for the request.

In other words, it has to be objectively offensive. Just the fact that a member might be thin-skinned on a particular issue because you call him a Collingwood supporter when he is a Geelong supporter, for example, is not enough. The notes continue:

Unless the presiding officer makes a judgment on whether there are grounds for withdrawal, debate can be curtailed by requests for withdrawal that should never be made or entertained.

In this case the honourable member has found the honourable member's remarks offensive in accordance with standing order 131. If the member had not said anything about whether he had been involved with this and had just asked for a withdrawal, I would not have enough material to go on. However, he has told the house that he made no such contact with the department and therefore he finds the remark offensive. I call on the honourable member to withdraw.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Mr President, I withdraw.

It has come to my attention that a Mr Bill Jones rang Sport and Recreation Victoria and asked a range of questions that are similar to those asked in the house.

Mr President, my information is that in the conversation with the officer who took the telephone call Mr Jones was very forthright, constantly wanting to know which sponsors had provided cash sponsorships and which had provided in-kind — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The officer said he could not divulge the arrangements with the sponsors and — —

Hon. C. A. Furelletti — On a point of order, Mr President, this is all very interesting but I am really waiting to see where it leads us if Mr Jones rang the department.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is no point of order. The question relates to the minister's portfolio and the contact Mr X, whoever it was, had with an officer in the minister's department. It is clearly within the minister's responsibility.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — When asked what his interest in the matter was Mr Jones said the lower prize money and reduced corporate sponsorship may lead to a decision not to nominate for an award. He specifically asked whether the advertising company still sponsored the award. He concluded by asking outright whether the two companies listed in the nomination kit were the only two cash sponsors for this year and was given to believe that he could assume that that was the case at this stage.

What is of concern is that further investigations have shown that no company purporting to be a Bill Jones training company exists. No company of that nature has been found. Consequently the question is whether information may have been provided to a member of this place by somebody who purported to be a Mr Bill Jones, and it may be that as a consequence of that the honourable member may have come into this house and asked questions based on the information provided to the Mr Jones.

Housing: Monash Province

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — Through the Minister for Small Business I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing in another place. Housing is an important issue in Monash Province. I talk to many constituents on the issue and endeavour to assist them with their housing concerns. Indeed, in 1996, 2107 people in Monash Province rented accommodation from the housing ministry, 2029 of them in the Windsor–St Kilda region.

An understanding of what these issues involve requires a deal of cooperation between me and the department, and as I was new — I came here in September — I had an opportunity to meet with the head of the department, Howard Ronaldson, in Parliament House. I discussed the matter with him and asked him whether, as I was new, I could have a briefing from the department on the enormous housing problems in my area.

On 24 February Mr Ronaldson said he thought that was a very good idea and that he would organise it. On 20 March I attended the opening of the Regal housing project in Grey Street, St Kilda, at which I spoke to the Minister for Housing, Howard Ronaldson and Shane Lucas, the minister's adviser, about a meeting. All of them said it was a good idea and there would be no problem.

On 23 March I sent a letter requesting a meeting. I spoke to Shane Lucas in Parliament House the same day, and he assured me there would be no problem. On 30 March my office again spoke to the Office of

Housing. Shane Lucas was not available at that time and I have still not had a meeting. It does not end there. I have grave concerns about the Raglan–Ingles housing development and my endeavours to have a meeting with the advisers from the Office of Housing.

My office contacted the leasing management department several times over the last month. After contacting the department for a meeting with the advisory committee I was told it was not in a position to give a briefing. However, the coordinator contacted my office today and advised me to write to the department asking for a meeting. I have done that on several occasions in the past.

I want to have a meeting and I want a briefing. I ask the minister to facilitate a meeting by contacting the Minister for Housing to ensure that I can discuss these issues with ministerial advisers.

Government advertising

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I raise an issue for the attention of the Leader of the Government in her capacity as the representative of the Premier. On 13 April the Minister for Finance, in responding to a question without notice in the other place, referred at length to a manuscript allegedly commissioned by the former Premier. It is the same issue that Mr Theophanous has placed on the notice paper as a notice on motion to be debated when Parliament next meets. In the course of his answer in the other place the Minister for Finance described the manuscript as sloppy, sycophantic drivel, a good piece of fiction, disgraceful, scandalous and a misuse of taxpayers' money.

On 5 or 6 January I received in my electorate office a document addressed to me entitled 'Getting on with the job: the Bracks government's first 100 days'. It is a 16 page coloured document with a photograph of the Premier on the front page. It lists a number of portfolio areas and a number of initiatives the Premier claims as his but which I recognise as being those developed by the former government.

I ask the minister to ask the Premier whether taxpayers' money was used in the production of the document and, if so, whether he considers it a proper use of taxpayers' money.

Liquor: licences

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Small Business the national competition policy review on liquor packaging that is being undertaken by the office of regulation

review in the minister's department. On 4 May the De Bono Institute ran a love-in for various people. I ask the minister to explain why the institute was engaged by the office of regulation review to conduct such an event, whether she personally authorised it and what she hopes it will achieve. The minister may want to explain what the institute is doing in relation to the national competition policy review of liquor licences.

Snowy River

Hon. R. M. HALLAM (Western) — I raise with the Minister for Energy and Resources the capital investment associated with the environmental flows going to the Snowy River, and particularly her response during question time today that the cost to be borne by Victorian taxpayers was the subject of negotiations with the New South Wales and commonwealth governments.

The opposition has gleaned from its inquiries so far that the environmental flow of 28 per cent will be formally adopted by the Bracks government and that the budget papers indicate the government has scheduled the work over seven years. It is now told that the minister is still negotiating with New South Wales and the commonwealth to determine the cost to be borne by Victorian taxpayers. Honourable members have not been told the total cost of the project assumed in that negotiation process.

I now ask the minister directly to advise the house of the total cost of the water savings implied in the restoration targets of 28 per cent.

Industrial relations: disputes

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Industrial Relations an issue that follows on from the question without notice I asked today in which a number of industrial disputes were discussed. In particular, the minister indicated that there was no industrial dispute between Holden Ltd and a number of its employees. I find that surprising. I know the minister may argue some technical version of the dispute, but I find that unlikely as well. I refer the minister to a copy of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission list of cases of 9 May, which lists the Holden Ltd dispute regarding the refusal to follow grievance procedures and refusal to work as directed. I believe that is very much in the nature of an industrial dispute.

When I raised the issue yesterday I referred to a recent dispute. I wanted the minister to indicate what action she had taken and I received a wishy-washy response

that demonstrated she had little knowledge of the dispute, and as with the manufacturing industry, she had little impact. I ask the minister in light of her indication today that there was no dispute at Holden whether she will reconsider the statement and indicate that there has been a recent dispute that may be in the process of being settled. What the minister said in the house today was not accurate.

Water safety: Victorian Boating Guide

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE (Central Highlands) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources the *Victorian Boating Guide*, and in particular the significance of boating safety and accidents that occur in this state.

I refer to the 14th edition of the guide, in which the minister makes some important comments concerning boating safety. Importantly, the issues of boat operators and swimmers being in the same area and the need for boating operators and swimmers to be aware and to keep an eye out for each other are raised. The guide also covers the important issue of life jackets. In the introduction to the guide the minister indicates that boat owners must ensure that life jackets are up to date and readily available for the occupants of boats.

Another major issue the minister is genuinely interested in, the resolution of which she is working towards, as was the previous government, is the use of personal water craft. That will not be easy to resolve. The boating guide is well respected by the boating fraternity. I know the minister understands the significance of the guide to the community. All boat users hope the Marine Board and the State Boating Council will continue to promote the publication of the guide. The guide is produced annually, and the 2000 publication is an important edition.

Page 5 has a lovely photograph, together with an introductory statement.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Does Mr Craige want the photograph incorporated in *Hansard*?

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — I would have no worries about that! It is a good photograph of the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Candy Broad.

I ask the minister to explain to the house why on page 7 there is another photograph, along with a full-page article on recreational fishing licences.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — How long have you been going?

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — Not as long as you did, and I know how long that was. Why was the article allowed to appear in the guide when it refers to ‘the Honourable Patrick McNamara, Deputy Premier, Minister for Agriculture and Resources’? I do not know which is right and which is wrong, but either she should not be there or he should not be there!

Housing: loan schemes

Hon. R. A. BEST (North Western) — I ask the Minister for Small Business to refer to the Minister for Housing in another place two housing loan schemes for low-income families that were introduced by the former Cain and Kirner governments — that is, the home opportunity loans scheme (HOLS) and the shared home opportunity scheme (SHOS). Since the inception of those schemes 12 204 HOLs and SHOS loans have been discharged. However, 4369 loans remained undischarged as at the end of February.

I am aware that a review of the schemes was undertaken during the term of the Kennett government and that it provided a substantial amount of money to assist the many unfortunate people who were caught in difficult financial situations. Each of the loans made under those schemes was either case managed, refinanced, repaid, sold or voluntarily or involuntarily surrendered.

I ask the minister to advise the house of the financial allocation that has been made in this year’s budget to assist the poor unfortunate families that are still caught in the failed Labor home finance schemes.

Small Business May

Hon. M. T. LUCKINS (Waverley) — I refer the Minister for Small Business to an answer she gave yesterday in question time, during which she confirmed that she had scrapped Small Business May. May was designated by the previous government as the month in which to promote the vibrancy of small business.

Ninety-seven events were held during Small Business May 1999, and 91 events were held in 1998. Many of the seminars conducted as part of Small Business May focused on marketing, young entrepreneurs, microbusinesses and multimedia.

I ask the minister how many events, workshops, forums and seminars have been sponsored by her department since Labor came to government and how those events have been publicised and promoted to small business operators who are, by their nature, quite isolated.

Sport and recreation industry awards

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — I am sure the Minister for Sport and Recreation will be delighted by my referring to him the sport and recreation industry awards. Minister, has your department conducted a review of the corporate sponsorship of those awards and other initiatives of your department? If so, what are the results of that review and what impact have they had on this year's industry event?

Responses

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips asked me to direct to the attention of the Premier his comparison of the sycophantic drivel written about the previous government and the great document Labor put out on its first 100 days, which he asked the Premier to comment on. There is obviously no comparison; however, I will pass it on to the Premier and ask him to respond in the normal manner.

The Honourable David Davis referred me to comments I made in question time today, during which I said that I had been advised by Holden Ltd that there was no industrial dispute. That was the advice I received. Holden stated categorically that there was no industrial dispute, and I stand by the comments I made.

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The Honourable Roger Hallam asked me another question about the funding of environmental flows for the Snowy River and again requested advice on the total cost of the water savings involved in achieving the objective the government has set of returning 28 per cent of the original flows to the Snowy.

I again inform the house that the ongoing negotiations with the New South Wales and commonwealth governments, which are proceeding nicely, will determine Victoria's share of the final cost of providing those environmental flows to the Snowy. It is not possible at this stage to indicate what the final cost will be. A fundamental principle of negotiating is not to be constrained by particular figures so as not to compromise the outcome.

The Honourable Geoff Craige referred to an advertisement about recreational fishing licences which was placed in the current edition of the *Victorian Boating Guide* by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and which featured a photograph of former Minister McNamara. Not long after I became Minister for Energy and Resources, and while the

processes of government were still in transition, I was presented with and approved not only the foreword of the guide but also the remainder of it. Just one thing was missing — some advertisements — and the one in question was placed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

Needless to say, the department is remorseful that the error has occurred. However, in view of the Bracks government's commitment to fiscal responsibility it seemed to me that pulping the booklet and reprinting a new edition was not warranted, so the document was sent out in the normal course of events. Next time the advertisements will be scrutinised, as well as the rest of the copy.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — The Honourable Neil Lucas directed to my attention a study undertaken by the British Consumer Association on earpieces which suggests that the radiation emitted by mobile phones with earpieces is three times greater than that from phones without earpieces. He also referred to the unease in the community about radiation from mobile phones.

While there is uncertainty about the issue, I can inform the house that that study is the only research that suggests mobile phones with earpieces have high radiation levels. Some studies suggest the radiation levels from mobile phones with earpieces are the same as the levels from phones without earpieces, and others suggest it is safer to use earpieces. It is a national issue, however, and I will make it a national agenda item at the Ministerial Council on Consumers Affairs. It is important that consumers know what mode they should be using and what modes are unsafe.

The Honourable Jeanette Powell asked me to direct to the attention of the Minister for Housing in the other place the new developments in Shepparton. She also referred to a review that she commenced under the previous government, which she was asked by the current government to complete. Her report was lodged in February but she has not yet received a response from the minister. I will pass that on to the minister and ask her to respond.

The Honourable Andrea Coote raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing in another place. It concerns her request for a briefing on public housing issues, given the large number of constituents in her area who rely on public housing. The request was first made in February and the honourable member has yet to have a response. I will pass that on to the minister on her behalf.

The Honourable Bill Forwood raised a question about the De Bono Institute and the packaged liquor licence review that is taking place. I understand it was the idea of the Office of Regulation Review to bring the parties together under a facilitator. On that basis a working group was established under the facilitation of the De Bono Institute.

An Opposition Member — Is that all?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — I was not there. I do not know what happened.

The Honourable Ron Best asked a question for the Minister for Housing in another place concerning the home opportunity loan scheme and the shared home opportunity scheme. He asked about the loans that are still outstanding from those schemes and what financial allocation has been made in the budget to assist the affected families. I will refer the question to the minister.

The Honourable Maree Luckins again referred to Small Business May, as she did yesterday, and activities the previous government badged under the title Small Business May.

An honourable member interjected.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — A number of the seminars were scheduled to occur anyway, and there was a badging of Small Business May. Small Business Victoria has continued to sponsor the seminars in regional Victoria and will continue to do so because they assist small business in regional Victoria to access information and services. The department will provide access to information and support for small businesses for 12 months of the year, not one!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I will refer the question asked by the Honourable Cameron Boardman about the pines at the Frankston North school site to the Minister for Education in the other place.

The Honourable Jenny Mikakos asked about the actions of Mr Gosper and disappointment at the events surrounding the symbolism of the torch lighting. I assure honourable members that I intend to express my disappointment with the International Olympic Committee representatives. I also assure the house that athletes of all ages will be dealt with on their respective merit and not on favouritism by officials.

I have noted the remarks of the Honourable Theo Thephanous and will consider them accordingly.

In response to the question asked by the Honourable Andrew Olexander, a review has been conducted. As part of that, this year the awards have a number of additional categories to make them particularly relevant to the thousands of grassroots organisations throughout the community. Approximately 360 requests have been received to date for additional information and nomination kits.

Sport and Recreation Victoria is also seeking new and appropriate sponsors who have affinity with potential nominees to increase the benefits and sustainability of those partnerships. An increasing number of sport and recreation organisations have expressed interest in becoming involved with the awards and a number have provided in-kind support in various forms.

I also point out that the introduction of the goods and services tax on 1 July for the first time will be a tax on sponsorship, including in-kind sponsorship. That has complicated the recognition provided to in-kind sponsors. That is of particular interest to members of the respective supporting organisations and their communities. I would like honourable members to be aware of that. It is also particularly relevant to local grassroots sporting organisations.

Formal recognition is now being provided only to cash sponsors. Unfortunately, displaying the logos of many organisations that have provided in-kind support for the awards this year is not possible as it may lead to their support being deemed sponsorship and therefore taxable.

As part of the review and the feedback from the 1999 awards, this year's categories have increased focus on community recreation and regional local events and hence provide better balance between the activities undertaken by the private and public sectors. Overall, general interest in the awards has increased with, as I said, approximately 360 requests for additional information received to date as opposed to 100 requests last year.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 4.57 p.m. until Tuesday, 23 May.

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, 9 May 2000

Premier: designated union contacts

- 291. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): Does the Premier's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet currently does not have staff employed specifically to act as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions. However staff are required in the normal course of their duties to liaise and negotiate with a range of organisations, including unions, on routine employer/employee matters and in the development of policy. Furthermore the Department is in the process of recruiting an Industrial Liaison Officer.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Multicultural Affairs: designated union contacts

- 293. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet currently does not have staff employed specifically to act as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions. However staff are required in the normal course of their duties to liaise and negotiate with a range of organisations, including unions, on routine employer/employee matters and in the development of policy. Furthermore the Department is in the process of recruiting an Industrial Liaison Officer.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Planning: designated union contacts

295. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point on industrial relations issues.

- (i) An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
- (ii) The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
- (iii) The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.

Transport: designated union contacts

296. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point on industrial relations issues.

- (i) An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
- (ii) The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
- (iii) The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.

Finance: designated union contacts

299. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (i) The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position and is paid within the salary range for the position.
- (ii) The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
- (iii) At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Treasurer: designated union contacts

301. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Assistant Treasurer): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (i) The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position and is paid within the salary range for the position.
- (ii) The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
- (iii) At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Local Government: designated union contacts

302. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Local Government): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point on industrial relations issues.

- (i) An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
- (ii) The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
- (iii) The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.

Workcover: designated union contacts

303. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Workcover): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (i) The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position.
- (ii) The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
- (iii) At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Roads: designated union contacts

304. 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): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point on industrial relations issues.

- (i) An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.

- (ii) The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
- (iii) The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.

Police and Emergency Services: designated union contacts

312. 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): Does the Minister’s Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

In relation to statutory authorities, it would be necessary to circulate to each agency to obtain a response to the information requested, as it is not held centrally. Given the time and resources necessary to do this for all agencies, I would suggest the member indicate the particular agencies he is interested in and I will contact them to obtain a response to the member’s query.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O’Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services
- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of co-ordinated emergency services;
- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.
- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

Attorney-General: designated union contacts

- 315. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): Does the Attorney-General's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

In relation to statutory authorities, it would be necessary to circulate to each agency to obtain a response to the information requested, as it is not held centrally. Given the time and resources necessary to do this for all agencies, I would suggest the member indicate the particular agencies he is interested in and I will contact them to obtain a response to the member's query.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O'Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services
- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of co-ordinated emergency services;
- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.

- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: designated union contacts

318. 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): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

Please refer to the response to Legislative Assembly Question No. 120, a copy of which is attached.

Legislative Assembly

Question No. 120

MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.

4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

Reply:

The Honourable the Minister for Education: I am informed as follows:

1. Since the change of Government, the Department of Education Employment and Training has established formal and informal consultation mechanisms with the education sector unions covering both professional and industrial issues. Given the size of the Department's workforce and the number of unions which cover the workforce the Department has always had a unit with responsibility for managing industrial relations matters, including formal negotiations and consultation with unions.
2. Within the Employee Relations Branch of the Department, the Manager, Industrial Relations, has been appointed as the Department's interim Industrial Liaison Officer. The occupant of this position is paid within the salary range of Executive Officer Level 3.
3. The duties of the position of Manager, Industrial Relations include liaison and negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
4. The Department has not employed a person to specifically undertake the duties set out in the Member for Bennettswood's question. As indicated earlier those duties form part of the role of the Manager, Industrial Relations.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an equal employment opportunity employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Planning: designated union contacts

- 320. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning: Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point on industrial relations issues.

- (i) An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
- (ii) The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
- (iii) The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.

Gaming: designated union contacts

- 321. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual

employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (i) The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position and is paid within the salary range for the position.
- (ii) The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
- (iii) At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Consumer Affairs: designated union contacts

326. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

The Consumer Affairs portfolio has a number of statutory bodies which are serviced by staff of the Department of Justice. The bodies do not have separate administrative units.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O'Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services
- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of co-ordinated emergency services;
- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.
- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

Premier: ministerial appointments

335. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Multicultural Affairs: ministerial appointments

337. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Planning: ministerial appointments

339. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.

- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Transport: ministerial appointments

340. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Finance: ministerial appointments

342. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.

- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Local Government: ministerial appointments

344. 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 was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Workcover: ministerial appointments

345. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Workcover):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Transport: ministerial appointments

346. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Arts: ministerial appointments

349. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Arts):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Police and Emergency Services: ministerial appointments

353. 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 was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Attorney-General: ministerial appointments

356. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Gaming: ministerial appointments

- 361. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming):
- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
 - (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
 - (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
 - (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
 - (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Major Projects and Tourism: ministerial appointments

- 362. 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 was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
 - (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
 - (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
 - (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
 - (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide the Honourable Member with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should the Honourable Member wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide him with a response.

Housing: ministerial appointments

363. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Consumer Affairs: ministerial appointments

365. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Health: hospitals — weighted inlier equivalent separation statistics

369. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health):

- (a) For each of the periods from 1 October to 30 November 1998 and from 1 October to 30 November 1999, what was the target and actual number, respectively, of — (i) Weighted Inlier Equivalent

Separation (WIES) multi day and same day separations; (ii) separations; (iii) urgent (category 1) patients waiting more than 30 days for elective surgery; (iv) semi-urgent (category 2) patients waiting more than 30 days for elective surgery; (v) outpatient encounters classified as Victorian Ambulatory Classification System Group A patients; (vi) occasions of emergency care (to the nearest ten thousand); (vii) 24 hour emergency departments; (viii) Hospital in the Home bed days; (ix) post acute care clients; and (x) whole blood collections — in Victorian health services.

- (b) For each of those periods, what was the target and actual percentage of — (i) emergency (category 1) individuals treated immediately, (category 2) individuals treated in 10 minutes and emergency (category 3) individuals treated in 30 minutes; (ii) public hospital beds accredited by the Australian Quality Council or the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.
- (c) In relation to the period from 1 December 1998 to 30 September 1999, what, if any, was the percentage increase or reduction in the number of emergency admission blockages (patients waiting more than 12 hours) and what were the principal reason(s) for any variation.
- (d) Have any changes to methodology in the above statistics been made since 30 June 1999; if so — (i) what was each change; (ii) on what date was each made; (iii) why were the changes made and (iv) what would be the estimated result of the particular statistical indicator if comparisons had been made on a 'like for like' basis to the same period in the preceding year.

ANSWER:

- a. (i) The annual targets for weighted inlier equivalent separations (WIES) funded through the casemix funding system were 759,000 for 1998-99 and 782,000 for 1999-2000. These figures are not strictly comparable because a different formula is used to calculate WIES each year. The actual numbers for the months requested are shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Actual public hospital admitted patient data Oct-Nov 1998 and Oct-Nov 1999

	Same-day separations	Same-day WIES7	Non-same-day separations	Non-same-day WIES7
Oct-98	38,728	10,356	42,182	53,812
Nov-98	37,070	9,954	40,601	52,034
Oct-99	40,303	10,845	42,458	56,104
Nov-99	40,831	10,952	40,216	53,917

Notes to the table:

- Separations refer to WIES fundable separations only.
- WIES6 was applicable in 1998-1999. WIES7 is applicable in 1999-2000.
- For comparative purposes, WIES7 has been applied to the 1998-99 data. The number of separations has increased as a result of considering separations from the Alfred Hospital's Road Trauma Unit as WIES fundable which is consistent with the 1999-2000 data. The RTU separations were not WIES fundable in 1998-99.

- (ii) The annual targets for separations (including both same day and multi-day) funded through the Acute Health program were 923,000 for 1998-99 and 950,000 for 1999-2000. The actual numbers for the months requested are also shown in Table 1.
- (iii) Targets for elective surgery access are set on a quarterly basis and the target number of urgent (Category 1) patients waiting more than 30 days for elective surgery was zero for both quarters. However, during 1998-99 this target was set in terms of the number of patients on the waiting list who had been on the list for more than 30 days at the census date (ie. the end of the quarter) whereas for 1999-2000 it was set in terms of the number of patients admitted during the quarter who had waited more than 30 days prior to admission. Numbers for both definitions are given in Table 2:

Table 2 Selected indicators, public hospital waiting lists Oct-Nov 1998 and Oct-Nov 1999

	Oct 98	Nov 98	Oct 99	Nov 99
Number of Cat 1 elective surgery patients on the waiting list who had been on the list for more than 30 days at census date	1	9	5	3
Above as percentage of total Cat 1 elective surgery patients on the waiting list at census date	0.1%	1.2%	0.72%	0.39%
Admitted Cat 1 elective surgery patients who had waited more than 30 days for elective surgery prior to admission	23	36	1	1
Above as percentage of total Cat 1 elective surgery patients admitted during month	1.3%	2.1%	0.06%	0.05%

Notes to the table:

- Some changes to the reporting standards within this period have made the data not strictly comparable. See section 'd' below.

- (iv) Targets for the number of semi-urgent (Category 2) patients waiting more than a particular time were not set in 1998-99. However, for 1999-2000 individual hospitals were set targets in terms of the number of patients admitted during the month who had waited more than 90 days relevant to this urgency category (not 30 days) prior to admission. Numbers for both definitions and both indicators are given in Table 3:

Table 3 Patients on public hospital waiting lists at Oct-Nov 1998 and Oct-Nov 1999

	Oct 98	Nov 98	Oct 99	Nov 99
Number of Cat 2 elective surgery patients on the waiting list who had been on the list for more than 90 days at census date	2138	2404	4158	4318
Above as percentage of total Cat 2 elective surgery patients on the waiting list at census date	20.1%	23.0%	32.0%	17.8%
Admitted Cat 2 elective surgery patients who had waited more than 90 days for elective surgery prior to admission	560	648	863	877
Above as percentage of total Cat 2 elective surgery patients admitted during month	11.4%	13.4%	17.8%	17.4%

Notes to the table:

- Some changes to the reporting standards within this period have made the data not strictly comparable. See section 'd' below.

- (v) The annual targets for the number of Victorian Ambulatory Classification System (VACS) Group A encounters were 1,891,000 for 1998-99 and 1,916,000 for 1999-2000. The actual figures for the months requested are provided in Table 4.

Table 4 Public hospital outpatient encounters classified under VACS system

	Oct-98	Nov-98	Oct/Nov 98	Oct-99	Nov-99	Oct/Nov 99
Total VACS Encounters	176,455	170,674	347,129	173,064	170,401	343,465
Total DVA VACS Encounters				3,838	3,778	7,616

Notes to the table :

- Figures include non-VACS funded categories: emergency medical and allied health as well as VACS funded encounters.
 - DVA patients were not separately identified under VACS reporting in 1998.

- (vi) The annual targets for occasions of emergency service were 1,060,000 for 1998-99 and 1,074,000 for 1999-2000. The actual figures are 174,807 for the period from 1 October to 30 November 1998 and 175,296 for the period from 1 October to 30 November 1999. These figures relate to emergency departments in metropolitan and rural acute hospitals and exclude emergency services provided by psychiatric units.

- (vii) There were 33 hospitals with 24-hour emergency departments during October and November 1998 and October and November 1999.
- (viii) The annual targets for the number of Hospital in the Home bed days were 67,000 for 1998-99 and 96,000 for 1999-2000. The actual figures are 14,070 for the period from 1 October to 30 November 1998 and 15,380 for the period from 1 October 1998 to 30 November 1999.
- (ix) The annual targets for the number of post-acute care clients were 4,000 for 1998-99 and 7,600 for 1999-2000. The actual numbers of clients treated in each month were:

October 1998	909
November 1998	954
October 1999	1,327
November 1999	1,202

- (x) The target for whole blood collections in October and November 1998 was 35,933 units and the actual number was 35,091. For October and November 1999 a target of 39,853 units was set for the total number of collections (not just whole blood collections) and the actual total was 38,796.
- b. (i) The quarterly hospital targets set for treatment times in emergency departments during 1998-99 and 1999-2000 were 100 per cent of Category 1 patients treated immediately, 80 per cent of Category 2 patients treated within 10 minutes and 75 per cent of Category 3 patients treated within 30 minutes. The percentages achieved during the months requested are given in Table 5:

Table 5 Public hospital waiting list throughput data Oct-Nov 98 and Oct-Nov 99

	Oct 98	Nov 98	Oct 99	Nov 99
Percentage of Cat 1 emergency patients treated within target	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of Cat 2 emergency patients treated within target	83%	84%	83%	81%
Percentage of Cat 3 emergency patients treated within target	77%	77%	74%	74%

- (ii) No target was set for the percentage of public hospital beds accredited by the Australian Quality Council or the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards for the period October-November 1998. The target for October-November 1999 was 90 per cent. The actual percentages were 78.9 per cent in November 1998 (figures for October 1998 were not available) and 87.2 per cent in October and November 1999.
- c. The number of emergency admission blockages increased by 127 per cent from 647 for the month of December 1998 to 1,470 for the month of September 1999. The reasons for this increase include seasonal factors, system wide shortages of nursing staff and acute beds, imbalances between the supply of acute and sub-acute beds and the closure of Commonwealth funded nursing home beds.
- d. The only significant changes in methodology relate to the calculation of waiting times for elective surgery and to blood collections.

As from 1 July 1999, if the patient's urgency category was changed, the patient's waiting time was calculated from the time that the change occurred. Before 1 July 1999, the waiting time was 'restarted' if the patient was re-categorised 'upwards' ie. from Category 2 to Category 1 or from Category 3 to Category 2, but not if the patient was re-categorised to a lower category. It is expected that the effect of this change on comparability of figures would be minimal.

A patient who is currently not ready to have surgery is termed 'not ready for care' and is not included in the waiting list statistics. Prior to 1 July 1999, when a patient's status changed from 'ready for care' to 'not ready for care' and returned to 'ready for care', the waiting time period was restarted. As from 1 July 1999, the data collection system was modified to clearly identify the number of days that a patient was 'not ready for care'.

These changes enabled the Department of Human Services to calculate and report Total Waiting Time in accordance with the definition in the National Health Data Dictionary Version 7.0, which requires that total waiting time is calculated from the time the patient is placed on the waiting list until the census or admission date, minus total not ready for care days.

It is not possible to calculate the impact of this change on patient waiting times. In hospitals where patients were designated as not ready for care, total waiting time for these patients would have been under-reported. However, it was common for hospitals to omit amending their records when a patient moved to and from ready and not ready for care status. In these cases waiting time would have been inflated.

Prior to 1 April 1999, hospital performance was measured according to the waiting times of patients who were waiting on a quarterly census date. From the June 1999 quarter, hospital performance is measured according to waiting times of all patients admitted during the quarter. Data have been provided showing the results according to the monitoring process of the relevant period.

Changes to the methodology for reporting blood collections have occurred. For 1998-99 the targets were based on whole blood collections only. In 1999-2000 the targets are based on total collections including both whole blood and apheresis collections.

In relation to public hospital activity generally, the Department of Human Services publishes a Hospital Services Report quarterly. This report is available on the Department's website at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/ahs/pub.htm> and provides a range of hospital activity indicators. This may be useful to supplement the information given in answer to this question.

Housing: task forces

- 378. THE HON. R. A. BEST** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing): How many reviews or taskforces have she or her department established or initiated since 18 September 1999 giving the terms of reference for each review or taskforce and the membership of those review committees or taskforces.

ANSWER:

1. A range of reviews were foreshadowed in the Government's "Better Housing" Policy.
2. A number of reviews have been initiated and are at different stages of development.
3. *Approved by Minister and completed*

Commonwealth State Housing Agreement Bilateral Reference Group

The terms of reference for the Group were to consider and advise on directions proposed for Victoria's Bilateral Agreement, to identify issues arising for particular groups in the community affected by the proposed outcomes of the Agreement and to advise on the implications of alternative approaches.

Membership of the Advisory Group is given at Attachment 1

4. *Approved by Minister*

(i) *Victorian Homelessness Strategy*

The terms of reference for the Strategy are currently being finalised. The Reference Group for the Strategy will be chaired by Netty Horton of the Council to Homeless Persons and will also contain 11 other community members, the names of whom are yet to be announced.

(ii) *Segmented Waiting List Review*

The purpose of the review of the Segmented Waiting List is to examine how the segmented waiting list has been operating and consider appropriate changes. Draft Terms of Reference are being developed. Membership for the Community Reference Group has not yet been finalised.

(iii) *Review of Eligibility Criteria*

The purpose of this review is to examine the impact of tighter eligibility limits introduced in 1997 on the access of low income families to public housing. Draft Terms of Reference are being developed. Membership for the Community Reference Group has not yet been finalised.

5. *Initiated but not yet approved by the Minister*

(i) *Review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997*

Draft Terms of Reference and membership for the proposed Reference Group are being developed.

(ii) *Review of the Rental Housing Support Program*

A review of the rental housing support program, including the role of representative tenant organisations and the potential for increased community development, is set to commence mid-year. An advisory group will be established but has not yet been formalised.

Attachment 1

Commonwealth State Housing Agreement Bilateral Reference Group

Taskforce Membership

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Representative</i>
Tenants Union of Victoria	Mark O'Brien
Shelter	Christine Black
Council to Homeless Persons	Netty Horton
Ecumenical Housing	Hal Bisset
Aboriginal Housing Board Victoria	Bev Murray
Wintringham	Bryan Lipmann
Southern Metro Domestic Violence Outreach Service	Janice Peterson
Supported Housing Development Foundation	Tony Miller
Loddon Mallee Housing Services	Ken Marchingo
Housing Industry Association, Victoria	John Gaffney
Real Estate Institute of Victoria	Norman Huon

State and Regional Development: information technology skills initiatives

387. 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 specific initiatives has the Minister undertaken or intends to undertake to ensure that Victorians with strong information technology qualifications, skills and experience are encouraged to remain in Victoria rather than migrate interstate or overseas.

ANSWER:

The Victorian Government announced its information and communications technologies strategy in the Ministerial Statement 'Connecting Victoria', presented to Parliament in November 1999. 'Connecting Victoria' recognises that a key success factor in Victoria's industry development is the development of a highly skilled workforce.

The Government has recently announced an Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Skills Taskforce comprising expert representatives from industry, education and training providers and government. Taskforce members are working co-operatively with the Victorian Government to develop initiatives to ensure that Victoria can meet future ICT skill requirements and promote a competitive ICT skills base.

State and Regional Development: information technology investment

388. 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 specific initiatives has the Minister undertaken or intends to undertake to ensure that Victoria is promoted both interstate and internationally as an attractive place to invest in information technology and associated industries.

ANSWER:

The Government will actively seek and welcome international investment in this State. This will include working in partnership with local subsidiaries of global firms to reinforce their presence here and actively attracting new investors to the State.

State and Regional Development: information technology skills initiatives

389. 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 specific initiatives has the Minister undertaken or intends to undertake to ensure that Victoria is promoted both interstate and internationally as an attractive place for individuals with significant information technology skills to emigrate to.

ANSWER:

The Government's 'Skilled Migration Program' will promote Victoria both interstate and internationally as an attractive place for individuals with significant information technology skills to emigrate to.

State and Regional Development: information technology investment

390. 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 specific initiatives has the Minister undertaken or intends to undertake to ensure that employment and investment opportunities in the information technology area currently available in Victoria are promoted both interstate and internationally.

ANSWER:

The Government will actively seek and welcome international investment in this State. Through the Victorian Government's network of overseas offices, the Government will actively pursue opportunities to grow Victoria's ICT sector.

State and Regional Development: RAFT polymerisation process

391. 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 action has the Minister taken to ensure that Victoria and Victorian industry will benefit from the commercialisation of the new RAFT polymerisation process developed by CSIRO.

ANSWER:

This Question is identical to Question No. 392 which the Honourable Member directed to my colleague, the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry. As my colleague is the Minister responsible for this matter, I refer the Honourable Member to the reply to Question No. 392.

Manufacturing Industry: RAFT polymerisation process

- 392. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry): What action has the Minister taken to ensure that Victoria and Victorian industry will benefit from the commercialisation of the new RAFT polymerisation process developed by CSIRO.

ANSWER:

The CSIRO and its commercial partner, Dupont, are offering licences to companies interested in using the RAFT polymerisation process. The Office of Manufacturing is making appropriate Victorian companies aware of the technology.

State and Regional Development: Industrial Supplies Office

- 394. THE HON. M. A. BIRRELL** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development):

- (a) What funding will be provided to the Industrial Supplies Office (ISO) in 2000–01.
- (b) What programs will the Government support to promote the replacement of imports with Victorian-made products.

ANSWER:

The ISO has an ongoing funding agreement with the State Government to provide import replacement services to industry. In addition, the Government has decided to fund a two year regional pilot which will extend ISO services into country Victoria.

The primary State Government mechanism for promoting import replacement is funding the activities of the ISO. In addition, the Department of State and Regional Development provides general assistance to local companies bidding for subcontract work with larger suppliers; and the Victorian Government Purchasing Board will consider issues of local industry development in a review of their purchasing procedures.

Attorney-General: public holidays

- 399. THE HON. C. A. FURLETTI** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): What was the cost to the Attorney-General's Departmental budget of the three additional public holidays gazetted during the Christmas Day, Boxing Day and the New Year's Day period in December 1999 and January 2000.

ANSWER:

The Government gazetted two, not three, additional public holidays to allow Victorian families to celebrate the new millennium: Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December 1999 and New Years Day, Saturday 1 January 2000. No additional public holiday was gazetted for Christmas Day by this Government. The previous Government gazetted Tuesday 28 December 1999 as a substitute holiday for the Christmas Day Saturday.

The Government decided to declare the two public holidays in a special, one-off arrangement in recognition of the unique nature of the new millennium. This decision was consistent with the approach taken by every other state in Australia and allowed Victorian families to enjoy the new millennium celebrations in the same way as families in every other part of Australia.

Negotiations were commenced under the previous Government on special payments for employees required to work during the millennium New Year's celebrations prior to the declaration of the additional two public holidays.

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices

401. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: In relation to your occupancy of your office at 55 Collins Street:

- (a) On what date she estimates that she and her staff will occupy this office.
- (b) On what date she and her staff intend to vacate her current office.
- (c) What is the estimated total lease cost to be incurred for this office space prior to her and her staff occupying this office.
- (d) What is the estimated cost to be incurred in renovating this office including office fit-out costs, design and interior decorating costs, new furniture, movement of partitions and other associated costs.
- (e) What is the estimated cost to be incurred by her and her staff in moving into this office in relation to removal costs, overtime, new filing systems, computer establishment and computer network costs and staff time associated with office moving.

ANSWER:

Following the transfer of the industrial relations functions to the Department of State and Regional Development plans are being developed to collocate the staff. It is intended that my office will also move at that time, but as arrangements have not yet been finalised it is not possible to predict either the timetable or the costs of the move.

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices

402. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: In relation to her occupancy of her office at 1 Macarthur Place:

- (a) On what date she estimates that she and her staff will occupy this office.
- (b) On what date she and her staff intend to vacate this office.
- (c) What will be the total lease costs incurred during the period between the date she and her staff occupied the office and the date the office will be vacated.
- (d) What will be the total lease cost incurred in the period following the vacation of this office by her and her staff and the period when the office will be reoccupied, or the lease will expire, or the property will be sub-let.
- (e) What expenses were incurred in renovating this office including office fit-out costs, design and interior decorating costs, new furniture, movement or partitions and other associated costs.
- (f) What costs were incurred by her and her staff in moving into this office in relation to removal costs, overtime, new filing systems, computer establishment and computer network costs and staff time associated with office moving.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

This is not a portfolio responsibility of Minister for Industrial Relations, the question should be asked of the Treasurer.

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices

- 403. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: In relation to her occupancy of her office at 9th Floor, 35 Spring Street:
- (a) On what date did she and her staff occupy this office.
 - (b) On what date did she and her staff vacate this office.
 - (c) What were the total lease costs incurred during the period between the date she and her staff occupied the office and the date the office was vacated.
 - (d) What is the total lease cost incurred in the period since the office was vacated.
 - (e) What was the total lease cost incurred in the period following the vacation of the office by her and her staff and the period when the office will be reoccupied, or the lease will expire, or the property will be sub-let.
 - (f) What expenses were incurred in renovating this office including office fit-out costs, design and interior decorating costs, new furniture, movement of partitions and other associated costs.
 - (g) What costs were incurred by her and her staff in moving into this office in relation to removal costs, overtime, new filing systems, computer establishment and computer network costs and staff time associated with office moving.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

This is not a portfolio responsibility of Minister for Industrial Relations, the question should be asked of the Treasurer.

State and Regional Development: Multimedia Victoria — VicOne infrastructure

- 413. 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 project team currently being established by Multimedia Victoria to review the VicOne infrastructure and in particular to examine ways of reducing the regional and rural price differential:
- (a) Who is on the project team.
 - (b) What are the terms of reference.
 - (c) By what date must the team report.

ANSWER:

The project team comprises Government representatives and consultancy support and is expected to report in the second half of this year.

The purpose of the report is to provide the Government with advice to ensure that Victoria's Information Communications Technology infrastructure capabilities are optimised, in the medium to long term, in terms of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

State and Regional Development: Connecting Victoria — export assistance centre

414. 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 statement 'Connecting Victoria' that the department will 'provide export development services through an online Electronic Export Assistance Centre:

- (a) Who is developing the specifications for the Export Assistance Centre.
- (b) When will they be completed.

ANSWER:

Responsibility for the Electronic Export Assistance Centre project is being taken by my colleague, the Honourable the Minister for Small Business, with whom I have consulted.

I am informed by the Department of State and Regional Development that the specifications for the phased development of the Electronic Export Assistance Centre are being prepared by Small Business Victoria in collaboration with Industry Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and Multimedia Victoria.

I am advised that specifications for phases 1 & 2 have been completed while the specifications for the latter phases are expected to be ready by December 2000.

State and Regional Development: 'A better deal for regional Victoria'

415. 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 a press release dated 9 November 1999 entitled "A Better Deal for Regional Victoria" where the Minister referred to a Three State Alliance (Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales):

- (a) What are the objectives of the alliance.
- (b) What amount has been set aside from the budget of Multimedia Victoria to service the alliance.
- (c) How many and which officers are servicing the alliance.
- (d) What discussions have been held with the Queensland and New South Wales Governments, respectively, in measuring the success criteria for the alliance.

ANSWER:

The activities and objectives of the alliance are under consideration, and will be developed in consultation with the Queensland and New South Wales' Governments. Discussions with both Governments are continuing.

Multimedia Victoria will service the alliance from within existing resources.

State and Regional Development: information and communications skills task force

417. 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 announcement of the Information and Communications Skills Task force (ICT):

- (a) On what basis has the minister stated that "more than 40,000 jobs in IT-related industries will go begging in Australia over the next three years".
- (b) What are the duties of the task force.

- (c) How often will the task force meet.
- (d) For how long has the task force been established.
- (e) What budget will be allocated to the running of the task force.
- (f) What fees will its members be paid.
- (g) On what basis will the task force's success be judged.
- (h) What instructions have been given to the taskforce in respect of development of strategies to address the skills shortage.
- (i) What instructions have been given to the task force in respect of the building of mechanisms for retraining people to use new technology, and to accelerate training programs and deal with skill migration issues.
- (j) What instructions have been given to the task force in respect of the acceleration of training programs.
- (k) What instructions have been given to the task force in respect of skill migration issues.
- (l) Will the government put more funding into ICT education and trainee schemes.

ANSWER:

The Government uses skill shortage statistics provided by industry sources.

The Information and Communications Skills Taskforce provides high level strategic advice to the Government on priorities for information and communications technologies (ICT) skill development. The work of the Taskforce will help ensure that Victoria has a sufficient and competitive ICT skills base. Success measures will be developed for initiatives that are implemented.

The Taskforce had its first meeting on 5 April 2000 and will meet regularly. It is serviced from Multimedia Victoria's existing resources and members are not paid fees.

State and Regional Development: strategic audit of industry

418. 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 Strategic Audit of Victorian industry:

- (a) Who will conduct the audit.
- (b) What budget will be allocated to the audit.
- (c) What instructions have or will be given to those carrying out the audit on the examination of new technologies and industries.
- (d) What instructions have or will be given to those carrying out the audit on the examination of any and which issues facing Victoria's industries.
- (e) What instructions have or will be given to those carrying out the audit on the examination of industry sectors in rural and regional Victoria.

ANSWER:

The Strategic Audit of Victorian Industry is being lead by the Department of State and Regional Development in close liaison with other Departments and supplemented by the use of specialist consultants where appropriate. The Strategic Audit will include widespread consultation with key stakeholders in Victoria's industry sectors, including

major employers, local government, unions and the community. Industry Reference Groups will be established to provide strategic input and leadership to each industry audit.

The Strategic Audit will help identify the major strengths and challenges in Victorian industry, and assist government and industry plan strategies for future growth. Identifying the strengths and capabilities of industry sectors in rural and regional Victoria will be a major focus of the audit.

Attorney-General: nursing home deaths

427. THE HON. J. W. G. ROSS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Attorney-General): Has the Coroner released or made available findings on any or all of the six deaths which occurred in Victorian nursing homes since 1996; if so — (i) when; (ii) to whom; and (iii) on whose request and instruction.

ANSWER:

I wish to advise the Honourable Member that:

- The investigation of the Coroner into six deaths that have occurred at the Riverside Nursing Home is progressing.
- There has been no information released to any of the parties involved.
- It is not known when the Coroner intends to deliver any findings in these cases.

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.*

Thursday, 11 May 2000

Premier: Independents — resources

289. THE HON. K. M. SMITH — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): In relation to the three Independent members of the Legislative Assembly:

- (a) What is the break up of the funds made available for 1999–2000 and 2000–2001, for (i) salaries; (ii) office fit out; (iii) computer equipment; (iv) other electronic equipment; (v) lease or rental expenses; and (vi) any other expenses.
- (b) From where are these funds being made available.
- (c) Are all additional adviser and electorate officer positions for these members on full-time basis.

ANSWER:

I am informed that in relation to the three Independent Members of the Legislative Assembly:

Question	Expense	1999-2000 Estimate	2000-01 Estimate
(a) (i)	Salaries and On-Costs	\$213,300	\$321,000
(ii)	Office Fit Out	\$29,000	Nil
(iii)	Computer Equipment	\$18,673	Nil
(iv)	Other Electronic Equipment	Nil	Nil
(v)	Lease or Rental Expenses	Nil	Nil
(vi)	Any Other Expenses	Nil	\$29,000

- (b) Funds are provided from the budget of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, except for electorate officer salaries (\$115,000 in a full year) and office fit out expenses (\$29,000) which are met by Parliament. The office fit out expenses relate to the Member for Gippsland West’s electorate office and reflect normal services provided to all Members of Parliament.
- (c) The additional advisers and electorate officers provided to the Independent Members are on a full time basis.

In addition, the Independent Members are entitled to provision of electorate staff, standard computer equipment and office equipment, and a budgetary allocation for running their electorate office as allocated to every MLA by the Parliament of Victoria.

Treasurer: designated union contacts

292. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): Does the Treasurer’s Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or

consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being the Industrial Liaison Officer who is the designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position. The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employer/employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Workcover: designated union contacts

311. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover: Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position. The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employer/employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Multicultural Affairs: designated union contacts

323. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): Does the Minister's Department have full time, part time, casual employees or consultants whose duties or contracts have included or currently include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) or the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); if so — (i) what is the name of each employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate is each employed; (ii) for which unions does each employee or consultant have responsibility; and (iii) how many of those employees were employed and estimated to be members of a union as at 31 December 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed that

The Premier, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, is responding to this matter regarding the Department of Premier and Cabinet in his response to Question on Notice 291.

Treasurer: ministerial appointments

336. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer):

- (a) What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
- (b) What expression of interest and selection processes were used in each case.
- (c) What date was each person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
- (d) What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in each case in 1999–2000.
- (e) Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any appointees since initial appointment; if so, what.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Treasurer: permanent employment

373. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer):

- (a) What funding will be made available in each of the years 1999–2000, 2000–01, 2001–02 and 2002–03 to promote permanent employment instead of contract and casual employment in the Victorian public sector.
- (b) How many positions in each department will be altered to full time.
- (c) What additional costs will be incurred by this change in each of those years in respect of — (i) annual leave; (ii) long service leave; (iii) superannuation; and (iv) other benefits.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

At this time it is not possible to provide specific data on numbers of positions which will be altered to full time. This information will become apparent as departments and agencies progress through their workforce planning and budgetary processes. Similarly, the matter of specific budget allocations for the current and future financial years cannot be specified.

It is expected that for the current financial year, departments and agencies will be able to manage changes to their staffing profiles within their existing budget allocations. Any requests for additional funding would be dealt with as part of the normal budgetary processes in future financial years on a department by department basis.

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices

402. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: In relation to her occupancy of her office at 1 Macarthur Place:

- (a) On what date she estimates that she and her staff will occupy this office.
- (b) On what date she and her staff intend to vacate this office.

I am informed that:

- a) The office at 1 Macarthur Place was occupied on 29/01/2000.
- b) Administrative arrangements with Department of State and Regional Development are yet to be finalised and it is not possible to predict the date this office will be vacated.

Industrial Relations: ministerial offices

403. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: In relation to her occupancy of her office at 9th Floor, 35 Spring Street:

- (a) On what date did she and her staff occupy this office.
- (b) On what date did she and her staff vacate this office.

I am informed that:

- a) 23/10/1999.
- b) 28/01/2000.

State and Regional Development: advertisement — Multimedia Victoria

419. 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 advertisement for a Director, Policy and Regional Access in Multimedia Victoria:

- (a) What is the Government's Regional Access Strategy.
- (b) Why is it not on the Multimedia Victoria web site.

ANSWER:

The Government has various programs to address access issues for rural and regional Victoria. A number of major reviews are currently being undertaken (for example the review of VicOne) which will provide important input to the consideration of these issues.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: information and communications skills task force

420. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — 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 Minister's announcement of the Information and Communications Skills Task force (ICT):

- (a) How much is the minister's department spending on IT training.
- (b) What amount is spent on job support.

- (c) What amount is spent on trainee subsidies.
- (d) How many employees will be included in the “Go for IT” on-the-job training program.
- (e) Will the minister increase funding for IT training given that she has been quoted as saying the government is “not keeping pace with either the skills shortage or being at the cutting edge”.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

- (a) The Victorian Government currently spends approximately \$25 million in the provision of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training for the ICT industry and users of ICT products and services. This does not include training money for IT fluency across all industries which are also part of TAFE programs.
- (b) The Government’s Community Business Employment Program provides job placement and support services to targeted groups of unemployed. The annual budget allocation for this program is \$8.8 million.
- (c) The Government is providing \$34.9 million over the next four years to support the recruitment of 6,000 apprentices and trainees into industries experiencing skill shortages. The additional funding will provide incentives for employers and additional training resources.
- (d) There are places for 125 trainees to participate in the program.
- (e) As outlined in the Article referred to, the Government is undertaking a range of measures to address skills development in the ICT industries, etc. Further information on these important initiatives are provided in the Budget document.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Community Business Employment program

421. THE HON. M. A. BIRRELL — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Youth Affairs (for the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment):

- (a) What funds will be expended in 2000–01 and 2001–02 on the Community Business Employment program.
- (b) What funds will have been expended in 1999–2000 on the program.
- (c) What are the names and addresses of each of the organisations that will be funded under the program in 2000–01.
- (d) What are the names and addresses of each of the organisations that failed to be funded under the new round of C.B.E. funding but had been funded under the previous round, and how did each of those organisations perform in relation to each of the program’s performance criteria in 1999–2000.
- (e) On what specific grounds were each of the new first-time organisations funded under the new round and what are the names and program responsibilities of each such organisation.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

It is anticipated that \$8.8 million will be expended on the CBE program in 1999-2000 and in each financial year.

A network of organisations has been contracted to deliver the program for the tender period to 31 December 2001.

Each of these organisations was selected in accordance with the published guidelines.

