

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**29 February 2000**

**(extract from Book 1)**

**Internet: [www.parliament.vic.gov.au](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au)**

**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 G. K. Rich-Phillips. (*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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Party</b>
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

---

## TUESDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 2000

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD	
<i>Appointment</i> .....	1
ROYAL ASSENT .....	1
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
<i>Electricity: Yallourn dispute</i> .....	1, 2, 5, 6
<i>Small business: survey</i> .....	4
<i>GST: sport and recreation</i> .....	5
<i>Mineral sands deposits</i> .....	5
<i>Youth: regional committees</i> .....	6
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE	
<i>Answers</i> .....	7
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Correction of bill titles</i> .....	7
<i>Committee sittings</i> .....	7
PUBLIC SECTOR ASSET INVESTMENT PROGRAM	
<i>Report</i> .....	7
SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS	
COMMITTEE	
<i>Alert Digest Nos 1 and 2</i> .....	7
PAPERS .....	7
GOVERNOR'S SPEECH	
<i>Address-in-reply</i> .....	10
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Monash Medical Centre</i> .....	28
<i>Greater Geelong: road construction levy</i> .....	28
<i>Police: Kew station</i> .....	29
<i>GST: small business</i> .....	29, 30
<i>Springvale and Whitehorse road intersection:</i>	
<i>upgrade</i> .....	29
<i>Western suburbs: aquatic centre</i> .....	30
<i>Police: western suburbs</i> .....	30
<i>CFA: firefighters dispute</i> .....	30
<i>Youth: suicide prevention</i> .....	31
<i>Minister for Environment and Conservation:</i>	
<i>responsibilities</i> .....	31
<i>ALP: fundraising dinner</i> .....	32
<i>Eastern Freeway: extension</i> .....	32
<i>Bendigo: Telstra jobs</i> .....	32
<i>Flavorite Tomatoes</i> .....	33
<i>Minister for Small Business: Dandenong visit</i> .....	33
<i>Electricity: Yallourn dispute</i> .....	33, 36,37
<i>Young Rural Ambassadors</i> .....	35
<i>Small business: survey</i> .....	35
<i>Monash Freeway: trucks</i> .....	35
<i>Public transport: rolling stock</i> .....	35
<i>Planning: Somerville broiler farm</i> .....	36
<i>Swimming pools: fencing</i> .....	36
<i>Sandringham Secondary College</i> .....	37
<i>Responses</i> .....	37



**Tuesday, 29 February 2000**

The **PRESIDENT** (Hon. B. A. Chamberlain) took the chair at 2.02 p.m. and read the prayer.

**USHER OF THE BLACK ROD****Appointment**

The **PRESIDENT** — As a consequence of the appointment of Mr Matthew Tricarico as Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees, I have appointed Dr Raymond Wright as Usher of the Black Rod and Clerk of the Records with effect from 19 January 2000.

**ROYAL ASSENT**

Message read advising royal assent on 21 December 1999 to:

Crimes at Sea Act  
Freedom of Information (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act  
Gas Industry (Amendment) Act  
Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act  
Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre (Amendment) Act  
Police Regulation (Amendment) Act  
Public Prosecutions (Amendment) Act  
Rail Corporations and Transport Acts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act  
Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act  
Water (Waterway Management Tariffs) Act

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE****Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to the recent electricity industry dispute in the Latrobe Valley. When did the minister know there could be a shortage of electricity that may lead to blackouts or load shedding?

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — That is out of left field, isn't it? The reduction in the power available for Victoria resulted from huge demands being made on supply during February and industrial action taken by the workers and the company locking out its work force. Yallourn was shut down on 10 January and work had not taken place since that time.

During the lockout the government constantly monitored the supply of electricity to the state. As

Minister for Industrial Relations I was constantly monitoring the negotiations taking place between the privatised company, the employer, and the unions. The matter of power shedding is a responsibility of the Minister for Energy and Resources.

**Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. G. D. ROMANES** (Melbourne) — Will the Minister for Industrial Relations inform the house of the flaws identified in the federal Workplace Relations Act as a result of the recent Yallourn energy dispute?

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Yallourn dispute highlighted a number of flaws in the Workplace Relations Act. Under that act, where the termination of an enterprise bargaining period results in protected action the employees are entitled to take industrial action or the employers may lock out the workers. That is what occurred at Yallourn Energy.

Only at that time can a matter can be brought before the commission, and that must be at the direct request of the commission, where it is negotiated with the parties, or of Mr Reith, the minister responsible for the legislation.

The Yallourn Energy dispute identified the flaws in the Workplace Relations Act, which allows protected action. That means it is designed to allow for the parties to make claims against each other outside the sphere of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

The previous state government referred Victoria's industrial relations powers to schedule 1A of the federal Workplace Relations Act, which does not allow for conciliation and arbitration. It does not allow the commission to act as a circuit-breaker in enterprise bargaining.

The employees were entitled to take the action against the company that they did. The company was entitled to lock out its employees. Because Yallourn Energy is a private company, under the Workplace Relations Act the state government is not entitled to call the parties to the commission. However, Mr Reith has those powers. Did he do so? Not once! The Honourable Mark Birrell wrote to the *Age* one Saturday and called on the state government — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! This is only the second question, and it is going to be really warm in here. I suggest we keep the temperature down.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — The federal Workplace Relations Act allows only three means of bringing a matter before the commission: the commission on its own motion can do that only when there is a serious economic impact on the state; one of the negotiating parties can do that; or Mr Reith can do it. The Leader of the Opposition knows that. His contribution to the Yallourn Energy dispute was to call on the state government to bring the matter before the commission. He knows the state government does not have the power to take the matter to the commission. The government can do something after the matter is in the commission but not before.

Under the Workplace Relations Act the parties are entitled to undertake protected action, which they did. The commission, Mr Reith or the parties are entitled to bring the matter before the commission — and the government has identified that as a concern. During enterprise bargaining the Australian Industrial Relations Commission does not have the power to enforce compulsory conciliation and arbitration. I have written to Mr Reith — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Members of the opposition should contain their enthusiasm and keep quiet while the minister responds and winds up her answer.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — I am winding up, Mr President.

I have written to Mr Reith asking for appropriate amendments to be made to the Workplace Relations Act to allow the state to bring such matters on. The Yallourn dispute was resolved only after I was able to — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! It is of no help to the minister if someone is speaking over her shoulder. The barrage of noise coming from my left is also of no assistance. I ask the house to settle down. The minister indicated she was winding up her answer and I ask her to do so.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — I was able to broker private mediation between the parties because the Workplace Relations Act does not allow that to occur any other way.

**Hon. K. M. Smith** — On a point of order, Mr President, the minister has now been talking for 7 or 8 minutes, probably a little longer. I classify her answer

as a ministerial statement. Perhaps the matter could be debated at a more appropriate time.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Ministerial statements are at the discretion of the minister. I have expressed views about longwinded answers. The minister has indicated she is winding up. I do not uphold the point of order.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** — Private mediation between the unions and Yallourn Energy occurred as a result of my persuading them to agree to sit down to private mediation. No negotiation or discussion had taken place for three days prior to that. That process got the parties in the room at the same time and led to agreements being reached in a number of areas with one outstanding matter still to be resolved. If the Workplace Relations Act was concerned with conciliation and arbitration rather than conflict, the dispute would not have gone on for so long.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — I raise a point of order, Mr President. Given the nature and length of the minister's answer, I move:

That the minister's answer be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! There is an appropriate time to do that during notices of motion.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — The precedent is now.

**The PRESIDENT** — Very well.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Ordered that answer be considered next day.**

### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — When did the Minister for Energy and Resources learn that an electricity shortage might lead to blackouts and load shedding as a consequence of the withdrawal of Yallourn capacity?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — There was a poignant moment when I thought the opposition, during its deliberations over the summer recess as to why it lost the last election — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The house does itself no service with that sort of noise. I ask honourable members to allow the minister to respond to the question.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I thought opposition members might have improved their behaviour a bit, but it is a lost cause!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — When did you know? Give us an answer.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I am happy to outline to the house, without having to shout, how the government dealt with the recent power circumstances. The interruption to electricity supplies on 3 February was the result of a number of circumstances. The opposition has particularly drawn attention to the industrial relations situation. However, a number of other factors also contributed to the situation.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — It was hot, we know that.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — Including the weather, and breakdowns, as the opposition is well aware. As a result, on the morning of Wednesday, 2 February the government was advised that the combined forecast reserve for that day for both Victoria and South Australia was 670 megawatts of supply. That was consistent with advice that had previously been provided to the government in the lead-up to that day. It is important to note that, through the load-shedding agreements with Portland, Victoria also has the capacity to add to that reserve.

At around 5.30 p.m. on the same day a second generating unit failed and contributed further to the situation, which the government was advised about. That evening National Electricity Market Management Company, also known as NEMMCO, said it had new information on the basis of an increase in forecast demand, which, as the opposition has pointed out, was a result of the weather. It advised that the reserve margin for Thursday had fallen to around 500 megawatts and that any further supply loss would result in involuntary load shedding. That was on the Wednesday evening. By Thursday morning due to the higher overnight temperatures the forecast demand had increased again. The overnight minimum was 27 degrees rather than the forecast 18 degrees and the forecast maximum daily temperature increased from 32 degrees to 38 degrees with the possibility of even higher temperatures. That led to advice that involuntary load shedding was expected to occur in Victoria and South Australia on the Thursday afternoon. The government took the step of advising the public that that was the likely situation, as the opposition would be aware.

On that day NEMMCO commenced load shedding at around 1 o'clock. Unfortunately, at about 2 o'clock the situation was further exacerbated by the failure of the 500-megawatt unit at Loy Yang. As a consequence, at that point the demand exceeded available supply, including the Alcoa lines, by 800 megawatts. A load shed was then implemented by NEMMCO. That continued until around 3 o'clock, when power supplies were gradually restored, and by 5.30 p.m. all power had been restored.

In going through that history it is important to point out the contribution the previous government made to the situation. The protocols followed on that day were put in place by the Kennett government in its agreements with NEMMCO, dating back to 1998, that load shedding was the most appropriate response.

The stated policy of the Treasurer of the previous government was to reduce the amount of surplus in the system. It is clear from the government's examination of the contracts that when selling off electricity generation in this state the previous government did not take steps to ensure that there was any requirement in the contracts for the generators to supply energy, which seems to be an extraordinary state of affairs.

The government accepts neither the situation it inherited from the previous government nor the consequences that have flowed from it. As a result, the government has commissioned a review of the events that occurred at the beginning of this month to examine the adequacy of the protocols relating to load shedding.

The government will ensure that new, revised protocols are put in place to ensure that private electricity companies and the appropriate regulatory bodies provide the community and the government with timely advice whenever power supplies are threatened. In addition the committee will examine supply-and-demand issues to assess expected future demands on the system and the options for increasing capacity. The issues will include, but not exclusively, the testing of interconnects; greater use of demand management such as through interruptible power contracts, co-generation and the use of renewable energy, which will contribute to more use of a greater capacity in the system.

**Hon. Philip Davis** — On a point of order, Mr President, I am concerned that my question has not been answered. I requested the minister to advise the house when she knew there could be blackouts or load shedding or a withdrawal of available Loy Yang capacity. The house has heard about arrangements that

are pertinent to the issue but not relevant to the question, which was: when did the minister know?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have been listening carefully to the minister's answer. The narrative commenced with the events of 2 February, and the minister took us through the daily events until the following Thursday. The answer is responsive to the question. Having said that, I point out that the minister has extensive notes before her. We have previously talked about that issue and the option of the minister discussing the matter through a ministerial statement. The house is not helped by lengthy, read answers to questions without notice.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — It is an important issue.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I accept that my answer has been lengthy. However, it is an important matter that should be on the public record. I believe I have covered that issue in my answer.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — In conclusion, I advise the house that the essential services commission will also address the issue to ensure that the electricity industry is properly regulated to ensure that the interests of consumers and business are protected.

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

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister has finished her answer. I have ruled on the point of order.

**Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland).**

### Small business: survey

**Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West)** — Will the Minister for Small Business advise the house of the recent business survey on how small business is performing in Victoria?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business)** — Mr President — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition appears to be constantly interjecting. This is the first day of the session and I know he is enthusiastic, but I ask him to contain himself.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** — Today Yellow Pages released its *Small Business Index*. The media release was headed 'Strong quarter for Victorian small business'. I shall read a couple of paragraphs from it:

Victorian small business proprietors have enjoyed a strong quarter for sales and profits, according to the latest Yellow Pages *Small Business Index*.

The survey found that a net 20 per cent of the state's small businesses recorded increased sales revenue during the past three months — up from a net 7 per cent in the previous quarter.

In profits, a net 11 per cent reported increases, compared with a net 6 per cent three months ago.

...

Small business proprietors' confidence about their business prospects for the year ahead rose by three percentage points to a net 48 per cent.

However, for the first time an issue has overtaken what has been the major concern of small business — the lack of work and sales — because 26 per cent are concerned about the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST), whereas 11 per cent are concerned about lack of work and sales. I have repeatedly alerted the house to the problems small businesses face because of the GST; the overwhelming concern of small business in Victoria is the GST.

The survey discloses that 47 per cent of Victorian small businesses believe that the federal government's policies actually work against them, while the figure for those concerned about the Bracks Labor government's policies is 19 per cent. The survey also shows that 81 per cent of small businesses believe the Bracks Labor government either has supportive policies or that its policies will have no impact on small businesses.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** — Like many members opposite, I attended a function of the Australian Hotels Association last night and heard its president's concern about the GST.

The issue on which assistance was sought was the impost of the GST on those who have to deal with the tax in their hotel businesses. I have previously asked opposition members to speak up against the impost of the GST on small business and call on the federal government to give further assistance to small business but, as the coarchitects of the GST, is it any wonder they are silent?

**Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to her previous answer on the electricity crisis, when she talked about having knowledge about government advice on the morning of Wednesday, 2 February and I ask: can we conclude that the minister therefore had no knowledge of those matters prior to Wednesday, 2 February?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — Mr President, can I ask for clarification from the Leader of the Opposition as to what matters precisely he is asking about? I think the question was to the government as a whole. What precise matters is he asking about notice of?

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — I am happy to have a dialogue with you on it, rather than anything else. I want to know when you as minister first knew that there could be a shortage of electricity that may lead to blackouts or load shedding. When did you first know?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I believe I have dealt with that at length in answer to an earlier question, which the opposition appeared not to be very happy about. I started by indicating that there was early notice on Wednesday, 2 February to a number of ministers, including myself, that the situation could possibly lead to a shortage of supply. I then went on to elaborate step by step the situation that unfolded.

**GST: sport and recreation**

**Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS** (Jika Jika) — Will the Minister for Sport and Recreation inform the house of the impact of the goods and services tax on sport and recreation in Victoria?

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I have been informed that the Australian Tax Office has given a draft ruling that grants to non-profit sporting organisations will be subject to the goods and services tax (GST). This matter should be of significant concern to a vast majority of people involved in sport and recreation because sporting organisations will be a lot worse off — even worse off than small businesses.

It will result in flagging participation levels for many small sporting organisations because the costs will have to be passed on to the participants. It is often already difficult for people to engage in sports because of some of the costs, and the GST will most likely result in lower club memberships, smaller participation rates and smaller attendances.

Sport and Recreation Victoria in partnership with Vicsport have run seminars on the impact of the GST on sporting organisations. The Australian Sports Commission has followed Victoria's lead in the matter in also running seminars. It is a significant concern for the sporting community and the sport and recreation sector that the GST will undermine the good work that that sector is doing.

**Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to her previous answers on the electricity crisis and ask: are you asking the house to believe that 2 February was the first time you received such advice?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — What advice?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The advice of the threat to Victoria's electricity industry.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — If members of the opposition want me to interpret their questions, I am more than happy to do so. I do not regard questions of that nature, which do not specify exactly what the opposition is asking for and which may or may not refer to matters I have referred to previously, as being very precise questions.

I shall interpret the question for the opposition. If it is a repetition of the previous question from the Leader of the Opposition, I repeat my answer — that is, in relation to the particular situation which occurred around the first week of February and in relation to the particular circumstances, the early advice on Wednesday, 2 February, to the government from the National Electricity Market Management Company was that there was a tight situation which could lead to a situation where there would be shortage of supply. In an earlier answer I then went on to indicate how events unfolded from that point.

**Mineral sands deposits**

**Hon. D. G. HADDEN** (Ballarat) — Will the Minister for Energy and Resources inform the house of the commercial viability of mineral sands discoveries in western Victoria?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I thank the honourable member for her question and her interest in regional and rural Victoria. Some members of the house will be aware of the

discovery of deposits of mineral sands in the north-west of the state, specifically in the Murray basin in parts of New South Wales and Victoria. However, until now those deposits have not been commercially mined.

There have been two very important discoveries: by RZM at Wemen and Iluka Resources near Ouyen. The extent of the discoveries, their high grade and, most importantly, the availability in the state of established infrastructure which can be used to exploit those resources means that those resources are now recognised as a new, highly prospective mineral sands province.

I am very pleased to indicate to the house the recent announcement by RZM that it will proceed with its proposal to mine mineral sands at Wemen. The project is a joint venture between that company and a Western Australian goldmining company, Sons of Gwalia Ltd. RZM has recently received approval for mining following an environmental effects assessment. It has committed an initial \$20 million to the development of that resource. I am advised that over 40 jobs will be directly created by the project, with a potential for a further 100 jobs as an indirect result of the project.

RZM's decision to proceed with the investment is further evidence that as one of its four pillars to building the development of this state and of growing the whole of the state — not only metropolitan Melbourne but also rural and regional Victoria — the Bracks government approach is succeeding, notwithstanding the attempts by some members of the opposition to talk down investment in the state and tear the whole place down.

### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. R. M. HALLAM** (Western) — I will be very careful about how I frame this question to the Minister for Energy and Resources. I refer the minister to her previous answers on the electricity crisis — which recently confronted Victoria, let me make that clear — and I ask: is it a fact that 2 February was the first time she received advice that a shortage of electricity was a distinct probability and that it could lead to blackouts or load shedding in Victoria?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — As I said about the particular circumstances that arose on 2 and 3 February, the advice the government received — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I ask honourable members to desist. The question is specific in its form. I

point out to the minister that the question is similar to the one before it which, in my view, was not answered, either. The minister should relate the events from 2 February onwards. The question relates to events that may have happened before that. The minister may address the question in the form: did she have this sort of knowledge prior to 2 February?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I am not required to answer questions with a yes or no answer. If members of the opposition wish to ask me questions in relation to previous instances, which may or may not have occurred about risks to electricity supply in this state, they are free to do so.

My knowledge of the events at the beginning of February relates to a whole series of circumstances that came together. The earliest advice to the government and me as minister was on the Wednesday, which indicated the tightening of supply which could lead to more serious ramifications.

**Hon. M. A. Birrell** — The Wednesday or the Tuesday?

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** — I have indicated that it is 2 February, and I believe it was a Wednesday.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I think there may have been a slight error. You have always said it was 2 February.

### **Youth: regional committees**

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** (Geelong) — Will the Minister for Youth Affairs advise the house what action the office of youth affairs has taken to reconstruct youth affairs in regional Victoria?

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Youth Affairs) — Lesley Foster, the acting director of the office of youth affairs, is visiting regions as we speak. I am meeting with the chairpersons of the regional youth committees on 6 March to discuss the future development of the committees. I will examine the terms of reference and operating procedures of the committees to see whether they are adequate, whether they are properly supported to carry out their roles and whether young people can participate in them.

I will ascertain from the 15 committees around the state their potential to play an important role in advising the government about youth needs and issues in local areas. Unfortunately, the previous government established the committees as a token measure only and did not listen, communicate or facilitate communication.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Answers**

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

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

The question numbers are 1–16, 20–36, 38–45, 47–63, 67–99, 103–139, 141–149, 151–167, 171–179, 181–185, 187, 190, 198–204, 206, 207, 210–217.

**Motion agreed to .**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Correction of bill titles**

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

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Committee sittings**

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

That leave be granted to:

- (1) The house, library and printing committees to sit within the Parliament buildings during the sittings of either house of the Parliament, but not while either house is actually sitting.
- (2) The privileges and standing orders committees to sit within the Parliament buildings during the sittings of the house, but not while the house is actually sitting.

The select committees were appointed by resolution on 14 December 1999. Under standing order 205 a select committee may not meet during the sittings of the house unless otherwise empowered by the house.

By this motion, the committees will be able to meet on sitting days at times other than when the house is actually sitting. That will enable meetings to take place when the house is suspended for lunch or dinner. A similar motion in respect of the joint committees is

being proposed in another place, and I commend it to the house.

**Motion agreed to.**

**PUBLIC SECTOR ASSET INVESTMENT PROGRAM**

**Budget paper**

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) presented *1999–2000 Public Sector Asset Investment Program* — Budget Information Paper No. 1.

**Laid on table.**

**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE**

*Alert Digest Nos 1 and 2*

**Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS** (Jika Jika) presented *Alert Digest Nos 1 and 2 of 2000, together with appendices.*

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered to be printed.**

**PAPERS**

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Adult Parole Board — Report, 1998–99.

Alexandra District Hospital — Minister for Health’s report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Alpine Health — Report, 1998–99.

Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council — Minister for Environment and Conservation’s report of 25 January 2000 of receipt of the report for the period 30 April 1998 to 30 June 1999.

Australian Food Industry Science Centre — Report, 1998–99.

Beechworth Hospital — Report, 1998–99.

Benalla and District Memorial Hospital — Report, 1998–99.

Building Act 1993 —

Building Code of Australia — Amendment No. 5

Minister’s exemption certificate under section 9(6) of the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* and notice of Amendment No. 5 (*Gazette No. G48, 2 December 1999*) (two papers).

Casterton Memorial Hospital — Minister for Health’s report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Central Murray Regional Waste Management Group — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 January 2000 of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Cobram District Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Corangamite Regional Hospital Services — Report, 1998–99.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Minister's Orders of 11 December 1999, giving approval of granting of leases at Mentone and Mordialloc Beach Park.

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — Poisons Code — Amendment No. 1, Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons, No. 14 and Minister's Notice regarding the amendment, commencement and availability of the code (two papers).

Electoral Commissioner — Statement of functions conferred, 14 December 1999.

EcoRecycle Victoria — Report, 1998–99.

Emu Industry Development Committee — Minister for Agriculture's report of 24 February 2000 of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of failure to submit the report for the period of 1 November 1998 to 31 October 1999 to her within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Financial Management Regulations 1994 Act — Order in Council of 25 January 2000, Authorisation of Expenditure of a Royal Commission, pursuant to Regulation 11.

Gippsland Regional Waste Management Group — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 21 February 2000 of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Goulburn Valley Health — Report, 1998–99.

Grampians Regional Waste Management Group — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 14 February 2000 of receipt of the 1997–98 audit report.

Heywood and District Memorial Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 —

Notice pursuant to section 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 110/1999.

Notice pursuant to section 32(4) in relation to Amendment 5 of the Building Code of Australia, 1996.

Lake Mountain Alpine Resort Management Board —

Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of failure to submit the report for the period of 1 November 1998 to 31 October 1999 to her within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report, 30 April 1998 to 31 October 1998.

Latrobe Regional Hospital — Report, 1998–99.

Maffra District Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Mansfield District Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Melbourne City Link Act 1995 —

City Link and Extension Projects Integration and Facilitation Agreement Third Amending Deed, 17 December 1999, pursuant to section 15B(5).

Melbourne City Link Ninth Amending Deed, 17 December 1999, pursuant to section 15(2).

Melbourne City Link Tenth Amending Deed, 18 January 2000, pursuant to section 15(2).

Order in Council of 14 December 1999, varying the project area of land, pursuant to section 8(4).

Statement of Variations Nos. 9, 10 and 11/1999 to the Melbourne City Link Project, 21 December 1999 (three papers), pursuant to section 15(2).

Statement of Variation No. 12/1999 to the Integration and Facilitation Agreement, 29 December 1999, pursuant to section 15B(5).

Melbourne Parks and Waterways — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 29 December 1999 of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Mt Baw Baw — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of failure to submit the report for the period of 1 November 1998 to 31 October 1999 to her within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Mt Buller Alpine Resort Management Board —

Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of failure to submit the report for the period of 1 November 1998 to 31 October 1999 to her within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report, 1 May 1998 to 31 October 1998.

Mt Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board —

Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of failure to submit the report for the period of 1 November 1998 to 31 October 1999 to her within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report, 30 April 1998 to 31 October 1998.

Mt Stirling — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of failure to submit the report for the period of 1 November 1998 to 31 October 1999 to her within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Murray Valley Wine Grape Industry Development Committee — Minister for Agriculture's report of 8 February 2000 of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Nathalia District Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Northern Victorian Fresh Tomato Industry Development Committee — Minister for Agriculture's report of 15 February 2000 of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Numurkah District Health Service — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 — Minister's response to recommendations in Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Report upon the Review of the Auditor General's Reports 39 to 41.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments and new planning schemes:

- Ararat Planning Scheme — Amendment L6.
- Bacchus Marsh Planning Scheme — Amendment L58.
- Ballarat Planning Scheme — Amendment C25.
- Bass Coast Planning Scheme.
- Bayside Planning Scheme.
- Bendigo — Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme — Amendments L82 and L91.
- Boroondara Planning Scheme.
- Brimbank Planning Scheme — Amendment C6.
- Bungaree Planning Scheme — Amendment L31.
- Buninyong Planning Scheme — Amendment L63.
- Campaspe Planning Scheme — Amendment C1.
- Cardinia Planning Scheme — Amendment C5.
- Doncaster and Templestowe Planning Scheme — Amendment L138.
- Frankston Planning Scheme — Amendments L114 and L118.
- Geelong — Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — Amendments R196, R235, R241 and R248.
- Glen Eira Planning Scheme — Amendments C3 and C7.
- Hindmarsh Planning Scheme.
- Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme — Amendment L21.
- Hume Planning Scheme.
- Indigo Planning Scheme — Amendment C1.
- Kingston Planning Scheme.
- Loddon Planning Scheme.
- Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendment L27.
- Maroondah Planning Scheme.
- Melbourne Planning Scheme — C15.

Melton Planning Scheme — Amendments C1 and C2.

Mildura Planning Scheme

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Amendment C10.

Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendment L71.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Amendments C4 and C13.

Moyne Planning Scheme.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Amendment C19.

Shepparton — Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — Amendment C1.

South Gippsland Planning Scheme.

West Wimmera Planning Scheme.

Wodonga Planning Scheme — Amendment C1.

Wyndham Planning Scheme — Amendments C1 and C9.

Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendment L87.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — Revised Code of Practice for the Welfare of Wildlife during Rehabilitation, 15 February 2000.

Seymour District Memorial Hospital — Report, 1998–99.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Administration and Probate Act 1958 — No. 2/2000.

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — No. 148/1999 and No. 9/2000.

County Court Act 1958 — Nos. 3 and 5/2000.

Dangerous Goods Act 1985 — No. 142/1999.

Dentists Act 1972 — No. 147/1999.

Electricity Safety Act 1998 — Nos. 139 to 141/1999.

Forests Act 1958 — Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — No. 137/1999.

Legal Practice Act 1996 — No. 144/1999.

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — Nos. 135, 136, 149 and 150/1999 and No. 6/2000.

Marine Act 1988 — No. 145/1999.

Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958 — No. 138/1999.

Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 — No. 143/1999.

Road Safety Act 1986 — No. 146/1999.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Nos 7 and 8/2000.

Supreme Court Act 1986 — Nos. 131 to 134/1999 and Nos. 1 and 4/2000.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Ministers' exemption certificates under section 8(4) in respect of Statutory Rules Nos. 111, 116, 131 to 134, 136, 147, 149 and 150/1999 and Nos. 1 to 8/2000.

Ministers' exemption certificates under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rules Nos. 142, 146 and 148/1999 and No. 9/2000.

Tallangatta Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Trust for Nature — Minister for Environment and Conservation's report of 28 February 2000 of receipt of 1998–1999 report.

Upper Murray Health and Community Services — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Wangaratta District Base Hospital — Report, 1998–99.

Western District Health Service — Report, 1998–99.

Wildlife Act 1975 — Notice of control of hunting, No. 1/2000, 31 December 1999.

Wodonga Regional Health Service — Report, 1998–99.

Yarrawonga District Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

Yea and District Memorial Hospital — Minister for Health's report of receipt of the 1998–99 report.

### Proclamations of His Excellency the Governor in Council fixing operative dates in respect of the following Acts:

Audit (Amendment) Act 1999 — All provisions — 1 January 2000 (*Gazette No. G51, 23 December 1999*).

Electricity Industry Acts (Further Amendment) Act 1999 — Section 8 — 31 December 1999 (*Gazette No. G50, 16 December 1999*).

Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre (Amendment) Act 1999 — 3 February 2000 (*Gazette No. G5, 3 February 2000*).

Rail Corporations (Amendment) Act 1998 — Remaining provisions — 23 December 1999 (*Gazette No. G51, 23 December 1999*).

Rail Corporations and Transport Acts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 1999 — Part 2 (except for section 7 and section 9 (1)) and sections 10, 11 and 12 (except for section 12(1)(a)) — 23 December 1999 (*Gazette No. G51, 23 December 1999*).

## GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

### Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 16 December 1999; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) for adoption of address-in-reply.

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** (Templestowe) — It is certainly a privilege for me to contribute to the address-in-reply debate on this very auspicious day. It is the first day of the autumn session of Parliament of 2000. It is the first parliamentary sitting day of the new century. It is 29 February — a leap year — and it is the 132nd day of the floundering Labor government.

Ironically, I was prepared to make my contribution to the debate on the last day of the last parliamentary sitting day of the last century but I was supplanted in that by the Honourable Theo Theophanous. But I think being the first speaker in the new century has a far better ring to it than being the last speaker in the old.

I thank His Excellency Sir James Gobbo for his opening of the 54th Parliament and also for the ongoing commitment and dedication that he and Lady Gobbo show to Victoria and to all Victorians. Their efforts for and in support of so many associations, groups, entities, charities and campaigns are reflected in their personal attendances, and their sponsorship and patronage of so many of those entities, for which they are renowned not only in Victoria but throughout Australia.

The Governor and Lady Gobbo have promoted Melbourne and Victoria throughout the globe as tourist destinations and places for the investment of capital. The promotion of Victoria's education facilities to developing countries is one of the Governor's predominant priorities, and he has been promoting them very favourably around the world.

I am sure all honourable members have witnessed Sir James and Lady Gobbo's unequivocal support of the state's cultural diversity and recognition of the significance and contribution of migrants to Victoria and Australia. I therefore thank them profusely on behalf of all Victorians, particularly my constituents of Templestowe Province, for the manner in which they have fulfilled and continue, jointly and separately, to fulfil their demanding vice-regal roles.

I specifically thank Lady Gobbo for her ongoing support of Sir James and for her own individual attributes and contribution to Victoria. I particularly recall that at about this time last year Lady Gobbo visited Templestowe Province to open a rose garden at the Linlithgow aged care facility in Ivanhoe. The rose garden had been established by the users of the home so they could do some gardening in that lovely area. Lady Gobbo's graciousness, loveliness and approachability on the day were a great feature. It was certainly a great thrill for the director, Margaret Heathorne, and members of the board, and everyone much appreciated her visit to the facility.

I add to the contributions of other members in reporting my gratitude to and regret at the loss of a number of former colleagues, all of whom made me feel most comfortable and welcome when I arrived in this place in 1996 and all of whom will be sadly missed. I will miss the quiet achievement, honesty, openness, availability and advice of Dick de Fegely. Rosemary Varty, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet, was a senior administrator and made a significant contribution to debate in the house. Sue Wilding was a friend to all. Her prompt and ready smile made us all comfortable. She took on the honorary role of secretary for our extracurricular activities. Ronald Wells presented his contributions in the areas of his expertise with lucid and often authoritative argument.

I worked with Bill Hartigan on a couple of bills committees. We argued often and vehemently about the role of lawyers in our community, but could resolve our differences. I enjoyed the occasional inspection of pasture with him when time permitted.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! He did not like our profession?

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — He did not. Bill was fascinating because of his wealth of knowledge. His vocabulary and articulation left me amazed. For example, his ability to refer accurately to Latin grammar in one breath and in the next to give an authoritative dissertation on the history of the Roman Empire left me gaping. His contribution to economic debate in this house will be remembered as significant.

Louise Asher, now shadow Treasurer, has made a successful transition to the other place. I am sure she will play a key role in the opposition's return to government.

A particular loss and one that requires specific mention — a loss not only to this side of politics but to the whole of Parliament — was that of Rob Knowles. As Deputy Leader of the Government he was always approachable for advice, and was philosophical about outcomes. His door was open not only to members but also to their constituents. As Minister for Health he always gave a fair hearing and was most generous with his time and genuine in his opinions. He will be sorely missed by the Parliament. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

I must mention also the members on the other side who have left. I record my best wishes to Doug Walpole, Tayfun Eren, Jean McLean and Barry Pullen, all of whom, I am sure, will succeed in whatever they do. I thank them for their contributions to the activities of the

house. To Caroline Hogg, so well regarded on both sides of politics and respected by one and all, I wish all the best.

Don Nardella has transferred to what he considers to be greener pastures. I regularly crossed swords with Don in this place, but I admired him for his genuine efforts in presenting points of debate on Attorney-General bills, notwithstanding his limited resources. I cannot allow to pass the opportunity to comment on the considerably reduced volume of noise in this house with the Don now in the Legislative Assembly!

Finally I mention Pat Power, who lost preselection for his seat in a bitter factional contest. I know at the time Pat was extremely disappointed at his loss. Given the election result, I am sure he will carry with him forever the thought, 'What if?'. Pat was a major contributor to the work of the then opposition. In my view the government would have benefited enormously from having his experience, competence and professionalism on the front bench, talents sadly lacking in many of the present incumbents.

I am proud and privileged to represent Templestowe Province. It is an enormously diverse electorate in every respect. It has industry of all descriptions: light, heavy and everything in between. It has within its boundaries large multistorey shopping centres and strip shopping centres with local charm and character. Amid the modern shopping complexes spread throughout the electorate there are considerable enclaves of village atmosphere, which have been preserved and in some cases re-created.

Templestowe Province has technology precincts; entertainment centres; excellent educational facilities, both government and private; and arts precincts, including Victoria's Museum of Modern Art at Heide and the world renowned Montsalvat in Eltham. Templestowe is largely urban but has substantial rural tracts, now being developed for agriculture and particularly wine production.

Templestowe Province is very much representative and reflective of Victoria's cultural diversity. In the publication released last year by the Multicultural Affairs Unit entitled *Counting on Diversity* some statistics are of interest and should be noted. Victoria is the home to migrants from 208 countries. Victorians speak 151 languages and practise over 100 faiths. Some 44.5 per cent of Victorians were born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas; 20 per cent of those are from non-English-speaking countries. In Templestowe Province an average of 19 per cent of inhabitants are from non-English-speaking countries,

and 21 per cent of Templestowe residents speak a language other than English at home. Templestowe is reflective of our multicultural community.

On that point I hope the elements of the pledge on cultural diversity that the Victorian government made to the people of Victoria in November 1996 will be grasped by the government, supported and upheld, and that that multicultural policy will be supported in the bipartisan manner it has been in the past. It has been a great privilege and honour for me to be appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Helen Shardey. I look forward to the challenge of working with my counterpart in government, the Honourable Kaye Darveniza, to ensure that the tolerance and harmony all Victorians enjoy is enhanced and protected for the future.

I must express my gratitude at having a close and effective working relationship with my lower house colleagues in Templestowe Province. It is fair to say a close working relationship with colleagues simplifies and facilitates the task we as members of Parliament need to perform. To Victor Perton in Doncaster, Wayne Phillips in Eltham and Nick Kotsiras in Bulleen I say that I appreciate the support and camaraderie they exhibit in working in the best interests of our constituents. I express my thanks to David Perrin for his efforts and contribution to the constituents of Bulleen over many years and wish him well in his endeavours in the future.

I must note the effort and commitment of Mr Don McLean, the Liberal candidate for Ivanhoe at the 1999 election. A former mayor and councillor of Banyule council and an indefatigable community worker, he would have made a great parliamentary representative of the people of Ivanhoe. He fought a valiant campaign and was defeated because of a deceptive and misleading campaign opposing the development of a new medical centre for the people of northern Melbourne. I wish him the best in the future in whatever he seeks to do.

The colleague I work with most closely in Templestowe Province is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Bill Forwood. I am pleased to see he is in the chamber. I offer him special thanks for facilitating my task in representing the people of Templestowe Province, and I look forward to maintaining that efficient working relationship with him and to a long friendship.

Mr President, I am pleased that your appointment is ongoing for the 54th Parliament. I thank you for the exemplary manner in which you conduct proceedings

in the chamber and for the wisdom and patience you share with all of us.

I am anxious to place on record the benefit I received from serving as part of the Kennett government, which generated the phoenix-like recovery of Victoria from its near bankruptcy in 1992. I am proud to have played a role, albeit a minor one, in a government that achieved things that other states envied and wished to emulate, including privatisation, local government reform and the legislative programs.

The former Premier will be remembered as one of the great leaders this country has produced. Jeff Kennett took a leadership role not only in Victoria but in the rest of Australia, where his comments were listened to. On a personal note, I consider that his involvement with the development of multiculturalism in Victoria was something only he could have done. By championing the need for tolerance and opposing racism he led the push that left the Victorian One Nation campaign floundering. Who would forget his classic comment that he would chase One Nation like rabbits down burrows to eliminate it from the Victorian landscape? Jeff Kennett's views that migration should form part of population policy rather than be considered in isolation have been picked up at a federal level. They earned him the respect and kudos he deserved, both in Australia and internationally. I will always be proud to have been part of the Kennett government, which restored Victoria's reputation and honour on the Australian and global landscapes.

I will refer to statistics that I repeat at every opportunity. In 1992 when the Kennett government was elected to power, Victoria was in a state of near bankruptcy. It was the rust-bucket state that other states saw as being near collapse. It had a debt of \$32 billion which it could service only through further borrowings, a \$2.3 billion recurrent deficit and the unemployment levels were frightening — almost 13 per cent. In 1999, after seven short years of the Kennett government, Victoria's employment had reached its highest level in state history with almost 300 000 more jobs than in 1992. Unemployment had fallen to a record low of 6.8 per cent, well below the national average of 7.1 per cent. In 1998–99 economic growth in Victoria was the fastest in Australia. Victoria had the highest business expenditure on research and development of any state. The value of new building approvals was double 1992 levels, and consumer confidence was at record levels with retail turnover and vehicle registrations going through the roof. In seven short years this state was restored to its proper position as the principal state in Australia. I am very pleased to have been part of a government that transformed the state in that way.

An analysis of the Governor's address to Parliament on 3 November 1999 reveals the approach of the present government. However, in the short period it has been in power the number of broken promises in my electorate is significant. The previous government committed \$500 000 to the Ivanhoe East Primary School. I asked a question during the adjournment last year and I am still awaiting a reply. My question was replied to in a backhand way by the Minister for Education in a response to a question put to her in the other place by the honourable member for Ivanhoe. She simply brushed aside the suggestion that the present government would support the \$500 000 Ivanhoe East primary rebuilding program.

Concerns exist about the future of the Eastern Freeway extension to Ringwood. In its typical style, the government has gone to consultation. The media reports that four options are now being considered. The residents of Templestowe Province fear that the issue will be put on the back-burner and it will be a long time before anything happens about the Eastern Freeway. Clearly the preferred option will cost in excess of \$100 million more than the Kennett government budgeted for.

Typically, the Scoresby freeway has been totally blocked and shelved; it will not see the light of day. A further initiative of the Kennett government that would have benefited the residents of Templestowe Province is the removal of the peak-hour bottleneck at the Hoddle Street end of the Eastern Freeway. The Kennett government initiative to conduct feasibility studies on relieving that bottleneck has now been scrapped.

On it goes. One of the principal establishments — indeed, icons — of Templestowe Province is the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre in Heidelberg. The political repercussions for the electorate of Ivanhoe are a source of considerable angst. The centre is very close to my heart. Ever since my election to this place I have worked hard to promote it and to resolve the difficulties. At the moment the centre is situated on two campuses — one being the site of the old Austin hospital in Burgundy Street, Heidelberg, and the other the site of the old commonwealth repatriation hospital in Waterdale Road. They are about 800 metres apart. Everybody acknowledges that the hospital is in desperate need of overhaul, but it has turned into a political football at every election. Now, because of the deceptive and misleading campaign of the local member and his cohort from the adjoining electorate of Bundoora, the proposed redevelopment of the hospital on the one site, the repatriation site, has lost ground in Ivanhoe.

Honourable members need to be reminded of the ignorance of the honourable members for Ivanhoe and Bundoora in the other place about the establishment of the hospital. The argument of the government when it was in opposition was that the Austin hospital was a public hospital, was owned by the community and was donated to the community by Mrs Elizabeth Austin almost 130 years ago. In speeches delivered last year or the year before, the honourable member for Ivanhoe said that Mrs Austin had donated the land on which the Austin was built while the honourable member for Bundoora suggested Mrs Austin had left it to the government in her will. Both statements are incorrect. The Austin Hospital for Incurables, as it was originally called, was established in 1881 by statute of an act of the Parliament of Victoria when the Crown in its right of the state of Victoria granted 11 acres of land to the incorporated hospital and Mrs Elizabeth Austin donated £6000 for the establishment of the Austin Hospital for Incurables. In 1901 she contributed to a children's ward on the same site. Over time the hospital has attracted numerous other benefactors and donors and has enjoyed the support of innumerable volunteers without whom the work of the hospital would suffer.

It is of interest to note that the Austin Hospital was open to public, paying patients in 1939, so patients have been paying for the use of the hospital for 60 years. At various times over the years the hospital has been added to. Those who know the grounds will appreciate that its infrastructure presents considerable difficulties to the users of the hospital. Its hilly topography, tight roads, high-density construction, unoccupied buildings and lack of parking facilities do not make it the most appropriate site in Melbourne.

It is also important to note that the major extension was effected after the Hamer government funded the Harold Stokes building in 1976 at a cost of \$6 million. It has been the involvement of the state government that has kept that icon in place. In a book on the history of the Austin Hospital the following comment is made:

Only the massive foundation stone which was laid in 1881 remains of the original building.

It is important to record the history of the Austin so that people appreciate the significance of continually monitoring and seeking to improve the facilities that are so desperately needed at the moment, and on which pressure will be brought to bear for further facilities as time goes on.

From the original 66-bed hospital for incurables established in 1881, the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre is now a teaching hospital with almost 800 beds. It is the second major hospital in Victoria and

treats over 65 000 patients annually in a timely and caring manner.

I record my thanks to the chairman and the board of the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre and to its CEO, Jennifer Williams, for the wonderful job they have done and continue to do in difficult circumstances. I also record my gratitude to a couple of former board members, Mrs Beverley Breise and Regina Perton. Mrs Breise is also the president of the Friends of the Austin and I thank her for her hard work in not only acting as a board member but also for maintaining a successful volunteer group. The positions of both those board members were terminated on the arrival of the new government. The contributions of Regina and Beverley to the board were valued and effective, and Victorians should appreciate their dedication and commitment to their tasks.

The Kennett government launched an ambitious project to provide the best medical centre in Australia to the people of Templestowe Province and the northern metropolitan area. The cost was to be \$250 million to \$300 million. Why should two hospitals with the same name be conducted on two campuses? It was considered unbelievable that patients were transported from one hospital to the other in taxis. It was uneconomical, inefficient and unruly. The Austin, while continuing to serve its purpose, demands change. The cost of restoring or redeveloping the Austin site was calculated and it was huge. The issue was not so much who provided the best outcome for Victorians, but what was the best outcome for Victorians.

We all appreciate that nothing is permanent. The relocation of 25 specialities practised at the Austin hospital, the transfer of the seven research institutes on the site and the retention of the University of Melbourne joint clinical school of necessity made the project a unique and incredibly complex proposal, and the logistics involved in the merger of sites were mind-boggling. From the structural redevelopment to the relocation of the RSL rose garden on the repatriation site, it all caused great emotion among those involved in any way with it. The transfer of the Mercy Hospital to the repatriation site was all but done. The development of the hospital had reached the stage where two bidders were seeking to evaluate the types of building and areas required, and was well advanced to the stage of signing contracts. The complexity of the project undertaken by the Kennett government cannot be overstated.

I regret, not only for the people of Templestowe Province but for all Victorians, that the government has abandoned the development of the new hospital. The

area needs a new state-of-the-art hospital. The Northern Hospital, which was opened two or three years ago, is already overcrowded and requires expansion. Submissions made by general practitioners of the northern district to the Australian Medical Association suggest that the extensions to the Northern Hospital need to be completed quickly. What has the government proposed for the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre? More of the same — committee inquiries. Because it had no thought of winning the election last year, a sum of \$155 million was plucked out of the air by the then opposition and literally thrown at the redevelopment of the Austin hospital as a pre-election promise.

The Labor Party promised the funds because it thought it would never have to honour its election promise. Its promised \$155 million over four years would have been totally inadequate. The problem is that valuable resources will be spent on repairs and maintenance when they should be allocated to rebuilding the hospital. The government has no idea what it should do.

I refer to an email received from the ALP campaign headquarters in September 1999. Somebody had sent the ALP an email asking what it would do to improve the Austin Hospital and whether it would retain both campuses. The response from the ALP campaign headquarters was:

The \$155 million will be used to rebuild and upgrade the Austin to maintain it as a world-class hospital. Labor has not yet made a decision as to whether it will be on one or two campuses, and will examine that issue in more detail once we are in government.

It allocated \$155 million towards the upgrading of the Austin Hospital, but it did not know whether the hospital would be on one or two campuses. The Labor Party said it would work it out once it came to government. The conduct of the government in the past 132 days shows that it had no idea about the health portfolio, yet the election campaign of the honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place was based on the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre remaining in public ownership and the historic Austin Hospital building not being sold.

What has happened there since the election? The government has allocated \$4.5 million to have consultants consider the future of the hospital. Not only is that action causing more delays but the allocation is a waste of funds. It seeks to reinvent the wheel.

The Kennett government spent about five years consulting, seeking opinions and working through the best possible outcome for the Austin and Repatriation

Medical Centre, yet the Bracks Labor Party comes to power and appoints a steering committee — it simply throws a bucket of money at the issue.

The option to relocate the hospital onto one site is included in the government's brief to consider the redevelopment of the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre. Is the Labor government meeting its pre-election commitment to keep two sites for the hospital or is it following the coalition's policy of building a state-of-the-art hospital on one site? I am certain that \$155 million over three years will not build a new state-of-the-art hospital. That funding will be only a bandaid solution and will continue to cause a major fester in the health area.

The Kennett government was prepared to bite the bullet and had committed to the provision of a new hospital for Victorians. It had the wherewithal to follow through its commitment irrespective of political fallout because the Kennett government believed its plans would provide the best outcome for the sick, the frail and the elderly — in other words, the best outcome for all those who need the best available hospital services. I welcome any improvement to the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre.

The Austin Hospital redevelopment has been at the heart of ALP campaigns in the Ivanhoe electorate during the last two elections. Its campaign of scaremongering and misinformation has been dishonest but has been successful politically. However, times change and the obligation to deliver good, effective and efficient health services to my constituents is now in the hands of the Labor government. I place it, and particularly the honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place, on notice that I intend to pursue every avenue to ensure the government is taken to task at every opportunity so that medical services at the Austin Hospital will not diminish one iota from their current level.

I commend the government on its agreement to honour one of the Kennett government's initiatives — that is, the further development of the Heide Museum of Modern Art at Bulleen. In March 1999 I was pleased to attend the launch of a program designed to merge the Heide grounds with the adjoining Banksia Park. That joint federal–state initiative received \$3 million from the former state government. A further commitment of \$3 million made to the gallery will enable it to house the approximately 280 works of Albert Tucker, who died last October.

The front page of today's *Age* carried an article on Albert Tucker, his wife, and the development of Heide.

Shortly before his death Albert bequeathed his works to the state. It is appropriate that his work should be housed at Heide, where he spent so much of his time.

The gallery will form part of the \$7.5 million redevelopment of Heide and the adjoining Banksia Park. The firm of architects O'Connor and Houle won a design contest with what was described as a spectacular plan for Heide. Its entry was in line with the contest's stated objective:

To merge both sites —

that is, Heide and Banksia Park —

on the banks of the Yarra ... into a single cultural destination of national significance.

Heide is one of the best-kept secrets in Victoria. I congratulate the director of Heide, Warwick Reeder, on his success in raising the profile of the museum. On 31 October last year Heide hosted one of Victoria's best events — the Spring Harvest festival. One could not find a greater location for the festival than Heide.

For the past 10 years the festival had been held at significant Victorian landmarks, including the Werribee mansion, where it displayed Victoria's unique food and wines. Last year more than 90 exhibits were displayed in marquees and tents scattered throughout the idyllic leafy gardens and surrounds of Heide. More than 6000 people visited Heide for that festival. The crowning glory of the event was that as the Spring Harvest was conducted in the grounds of Heide, two art exhibitions were on display in the museum.

Victorians were able to visit the exhibitions of the works of two outstanding local artists, Albert Tucker and Mirka Mora. I am advised that more than 3000 people visited the combined art exhibitions. It was an extraordinary example of innovation and the benefits that this state can generate from its natural assets.

The produce on show was amazing. Something that comes to mind is that when I was wandering through the Harvest Festival tents my eye caught a bottle of extra virgin olive oil — one of the most stunning bottles I have seen. It had a Tuscan brand name and attracted my attention even further — tweaking a couple of heart strings, I guess. I looked at it and thought, 'These Italians have really got marketing stitched up'. On having a closer look, I was really pleased to find that what I thought was Tuscan olive oil was not only bottled in Victoria but produced from Victorian olives. It showed that world-class products are produced, managed and displayed in our own state.

I know that I speak for all Victorians in expressing great pride in the achievements of Heide Museum of Modern Art. I wish its director, board and very competent personnel continuing success and ever-increasing popularity.

In his address to the Victorian Parliament on 3 November, the Governor announced the creation of at least one dozen committees, councils, commissions and other groups to advise and prepare the government to govern. A dreadful touch of *deja vu* shook through me when I heard of that type of approach to government by committee. It was very similar to what happened in 1982. One can replace 'consultation, investigation and inquiry' with 'dithering, indecision, delaying' and — most importantly — 'fixing'. It is interesting to be able to refer to the Workcover proposals that have already come out and been attacked very strongly by some of the unions as pre-empting the handing to the government of the recommendations of the government-appointed working party.

The first 100 days of this government went fairly calmly and with little angst, but the past 32 days must be the longest 32 days that the Premier can remember. I am sure that the new government members in this chamber would like to think that what has happened in those 32 days had never happened.

As I said, there has been criticism about this government's consultation and openness. The five foundation stones that the Governor referred to in his address to the Parliament bear a stunning resemblance to the five points listed in the Independents charter — that is, to promote open and accountable government; to improve the democratic operation of the Parliament; to establish clear plans, strategies and targets to address the urgent needs of rural and regional Victoria; to introduce an improved code of conduct between government and all other members of the Parliament; and, finally, to defer any further privatisation of public assets or long-term contracting of government services until an independent inquiry has assessed its experience to date.

Those five points listed in the Independents charter just happened to be those that appeared in the Australian Labor Party's policy. A cynic might suggest that there had been some collusion in determining those five points. The then caretaker Kennett government, believing the Independents were serious about putting up a charter for consideration by both sides of politics, took on board, considered and actually conceded most of the points raised, only to be told 'Sorry, the deal has been done with somebody else'.

It is very telling to note that only rarely in the course of the past 132 days have we heard the world 'mandate'. Clearly it does not exist because this government is not elected by the people of Victoria; it is in power because it has been gifted government by the three Independents. When one looks at the statistics and the seats held, it is a shame that it went that way and convention was not followed. Nevertheless, we must accept things as they are, act as an efficient opposition and seek to restrict to the minimum the term of this government.

Over the past three weeks I have seen history repeating itself. In early February there was activity by the Electrical Trades Union in Yallourn which brought Victoria to its knees. What did the government do? It said it had no power and could do nothing. It blamed everyone but itself — the federal government, the former state government, the union and even the weather! It said it was not its fault. Eventually, when it realised that it must and had the power to do something, it was too late. It brought in as a mediator a failed Labor government minister — back to the 1980s.

Things have started faltering on the economic front. The government was not quite sure what it should do because it was elected without policies. As I said, it did not expect to have to govern. When it realised its role it decided to call a summit. Who better to chair a summit?

**Hon. K. M. Smith** — Big Bob!

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — Big Bob, a defunct Prime Minister — back to the 1980s.

The government looked for an issue; it said 'Let's revisit Federation Square'. A competition was conducted which attracted the best architects from all over the world to develop plans for Federation Square. After two years of consultation in the market place, the plans were accepted and approved by all the participants — federal, state and local government.

The Melbourne City Council has an investment of \$64 million in the project, but within 100 days of being elected the state government decided it should revisit the project. It did not go to a committee or the internationally renowned architects; it went back to the 1980s to Evan Walker, a former Labor planning minister. The government did not consult with the Melbourne City Council or any of the participants in the project. The government changed the plans by removing one shard even though it had promised to consult and be open and responsive to demands.

When a question was asked whether it was appropriate that the government should consult with the public on

the removal of the shard and change the plans that had been approved by all concerned, a spokesperson is alleged to have said, 'Haven't you read the *Age*?'. According to the government the *Age* is the source of public opinion, which clearly it is not. Contrary to its pre-election promises and everything that Victorians expected of it, the government has fallen over badly in its first 132 days in office. The opposition is concerned about what will happen during the remainder of its term because of the problems between the government and its masters, the union movement. That should be of concern to all Victorians.

It is frightening that the power crisis went the way it did and that the government was unable to discuss matters with the unions to resolve the serious disputation before it did. It is frightening that the government sat on its hands while the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union committed an incredible act of extortion over a major Victorian industry. It should be of concern to all Victorians that the government fails to appreciate the significance of the construction industry to any economy and to consider for one moment that \$6 billion-worth of capital investment in this state in one area, Docklands, is placed at risk because of the conduct of union activity and industrial strife. It should not be tolerated.

It is not sufficient to say that it happens because of investor fear or concern. Confidence is a fragile element; if it is running with you it can make champions, as the Minister for Sport and Recreation knows, but if it is not running with you, it can destroy you. We should be concerned that Victoria is being perceived as it was during the Cain and Kirner years when Victoria was not the place to be because it could not rely on the unions or the support from government that deals would be honoured. That is fundamental to any government.

The current Premier has said a number of times that he wishes to create a climate of confidence. I regret to say that over the past 30 days confidence in the state has declined to a level not seen in the seven years of the Kennett government. The former government can be proud of the fact that it raised investor confidence in the state to levels not seen for more than 20 years. The current crisis in the state can easily be attributed to the incompetence and inability of those directing the ship called Victoria.

No better example can be found than the Leader of the House. I have a great deal of respect for the Minister for Industrial Relations because she is a genuine and sincere person. However, it is a long time since such a broad range of commentators and

journalists have been in agreement on one matter. An article by Damon Johnston in the *Herald Sun* of 12 February entitled 'Woman in the hot seat' calls the minister the:

... subterranean member of the Bracks cabinet ...

because she did not surface during the power problems.

He said in his interview with her that she:

... appeared far from comfortable in her starring role.

She deserved to be savaged by commentators. He also said that she failed to do enough to resolve the power dispute and that there was more she could have done.

He said the interview was lengthy and that the minister was:

... at times bordering on rambling.

On 8 February Damon Johnston said that the minister was out of her depth and floundering and that her ineffectual performance as industrial relations minister deserved condemnation.

I am not trying to be vindictive, but such comments are a classic example of why Victoria is in the state it is today. Nicholas Way in the *Business Review Weekly* of January said in an article entitled 'Victorian unions prepare for war':

Monica Gould ... lacks a profile, a department and a senior bureaucratic adviser.

The article continues:

She is not likely to carry much weight with the Mighells and Johnstons of this world.

That refers to the Minister for Industrial Relations. It is no wonder she did not know what her job profile was when she was asked about it in the last session of Parliament!

An article in the *Herald Sun* of 21 February says Monica Gould lacks respect and:

... lacks credibility inside and outside the government.

These comments are about the Minister for Industrial Relations. They are not my comments but, as I said, they are unanimously agreed comments from journalists and political commentators.

The *Age* editorial of 8 February says Monica Gould seems:

... utterly out of her depth and incapable of making any impact at all.

In an *Age* article of 5 February Ewin Hannan says the:

... power dispute made John Thwaites look unpolished and Monica Gould look irrelevant.

But perhaps the classic was in Bill Birnbauer's article in the *Age* of 10 February, when he interviewed the minister. He calls her 'invisible' and says she took a 'relatively back seat' in the power dispute and that 'her portfolio is not a real job'. He, too, says she is out of her depth.

**Hon. W. R. Baxter** — I must have missed that one. I'd better go and get it.

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — He also asked her to describe her characteristics and that left her floundering.

**Hon. P. A. Katsambanis** — This is the interview she commissioned, which was to reinvent her image!

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — She was left almost asking for an easier question. She could not answer it. But, as I said, Ms Gould is very much committed to her cause, which we all know, and she is quoted as being a crusader for workers' rights. When asked why she did not order the union back to work, she was quoted as saying it was a tough call to order them back to work.

Finally, in an article in the weekend edition of the *Australian Financial Review* of 12 and 13 February Ivor Ries made the ultimate comment: perhaps she was unaccustomed to public speaking! He also said:

... the behaviour of Bracks and his minister [Monica Gould] had local business leaders wringing their hands in shock and disbelief.

I am sure other articles exist on the subject. I hope the minister does not have a scrapbook, because none of those are particularly gratifying.

The part of the article she commissioned that really attracted my attention — after all the hard questions about her character and the like had gone! — was her reply when she was asked about the house. She said:

It's great. When you look across the other side ... every one of them is a male.

Then she goes on to say that apart from Mark Birrell, who is about the same age as she, the rest of them are about 50-plus.

Those comments are from a minister of this house, a member who has been here for some time. She should know her opposition in the house better than that. I am sorry that the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips is not

here: I am sure he would have something to say about that, as I am sure would Cameron Boardman, and Peter Katsambanis, who is in the chamber.

**Hon. W. I. Smith** — And her comment on gender, of course.

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — Yes, and gender. God forbid that we should take issue with that sort of thing!

Honourable members could go on for some time about the problems the government will have to confront over the next few years. I fear we are in for a very rough passage. I am concerned about where the current disputation will lead us because the current situation in this Parliament does not lend itself to the type of conduct that the former Kennett government put into place shortly before the last election.

It is amazing to think that former Premier Kennett was meeting with union leaders on a weekly basis to resolve industrial disputes and threatened industrial disputes. Yet we read in the daily newspapers that Premier Bracks will not meet with those same union leaders. He tries to shunt them off to the invisible Monica Gould, and they get miffed and annoyed at the scenario, which possibly explains partly where the state is at now. A strong government and a strong Premier would pick up these unions and tell them the situation. The greatest and largest contractor in Victoria is the government. If the largest supplier of work in this state cannot pick up the unions and say, 'Behave yourselves, be reasonable in your demands, be sensible, and let us sit down and work this out', we have a problem.

The reason the government is not willing to flex its muscle is that it has a serious conflict of interest. Let us remember who predominantly funds the Labor Party and its election campaigns. Let us remember who controls the factions. If one were to analyse the parliamentary handbook — as I just happen to have done — one would note that 66 per cent of government members in this Parliament are former ALP staffers or union representatives.

**Hon. R. F. Smith** interjected.

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — One of the union representatives is up there, making some sort of inane comment. If honourable members want a distribution of that 66 per cent, I can say 19 are former ALP staffers, and 18, or 33 per cent, were union organisers — people, who unfortunately have a conflict of interest and who cannot govern in the best interests of all Victorians because they are obliged, committed and indebted to the union movement for their place now and for maintaining their place in the future.

So it is that we have a union-run government that is governing for sectional interests and does not have the willpower to turn around and seek to bring its masters into line. Like spoilt children the unions thumb their noses at the government and say, 'We are going to make these extraordinary demands'. That raises the risk of Victoria returning to the basket case levels of 1992.

Just think of the effort that was made over the past seven years to elevate this state from the pit it was in as a result of 10 years of Cain and Kirner government and to leave it in the best condition in which it had been in decades. In the past 32 days, confidence is at one of its lowest ebbs in the past seven years. It is not a coincidence that we see headlines like those in the *Australian Financial Review* that are attributable totally to this government — 'Victoria a state of chaos', and an editorial in the *Herald Sun* with a headline that makes play on the Whelan the wrecker motto: 'Wheel in the wreckers'. Great stuff! I quote from the *Herald Sun* editorial of 3 February:

The damage to the confidence of investors contemplating investment in this state is incalculable. For the first time in years, Victorian households face the prospect of power restrictions.

Victoria has not had power restrictions for over 17 years, yet in the past 30 days with this mob in office the results have been disastrous.

My ideology is different from that of government members. It has always amazed me that the future and the prosperity of the state have been damaged for the short-term interests of a few union members.

**Hon. K. M. Smith** — Thugs.

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — Thugs! The 60 maintenance workers at Yallourn Energy — it is said there were 60; I assume there were 60 — demanded a say in the way that company conducts its business. They wanted to ensure they were the only people who could work for that business and that no others would be employed — that is effectively what they were saying.

The dispute at Yallourn was not over money or hours but over who would be employed. The unions did not want to have contract labour at Yallourn. It is a fascinating story. For all those years, thousands of workers worked in the Latrobe Valley producing the same quantity of energy as is produced now by less than a third of the work force. What did those retrenched workers do? Yallourn Energy is seeking to engender new employment arrangements that allow everybody who lives in the area to be eligible to work.

It is seeking to provide all contractors with an equal opportunity to bid for and engage in employment, yet 60 people chose to walk off the job and say, 'No, we are the only people in the Latrobe Valley who are allowed to work on this site and do this job'. It is so short-sighted.

Let us consider the withdrawal of Mirvac and MAB from the Docklands project. That is a crying shame. I sincerely hope the project can be salvaged, but fear it may be lost. Mirvac has stated unequivocally that if it were not for union activity it would have people working on the development now. The demand for the apartments being built is undoubted and unquestionable. Over three days last December 350-odd apartments were sold by Mirvac and MAB at an average of more than \$400 000 per apartment. The developers work on fairly tight profit margins. They have contracted and presold the apartments. For the union to demand a 36-hour week — really a 13-day fortnight — and a 24 per cent increase is just not on. The developers will work out that that will cost an extra \$30 000, and if that is the mark-up on the apartment the developers will ask, 'Why should we run any risk?'. They will turn around and walk away.

With the domino effect of problems with Studio City, MAB and Mirvac, one of the great projects of this state and particularly this city has been put in serious doubt. And who are the ultimate losers? That is the question to be asked. All Victorians lose, but the predominant losers are those who are holding the rest of the state and in particular the developers to ransom — it is a ransom and nothing else; no other term can be used. Any number of interstate builders have been working in Victoria for the past three or four years. What will happen to them? Just last June over 52 000 people had moved to Victoria from interstate, the largest net growth in population over 30 years. That growth is attributable only to the fact that Victoria has had economic growth, development, stability and employment. In the past 30 days the government has put all that in serious jeopardy.

I was pleased to note recently Moody's announcement of the restoration of Victoria's AAA credit rating. The Premier did not claim all of the credit himself; he only claimed a substantial part of it. That may be the last hoorah because that is the final legacy of the Kennett government's seven-year term. Clearly it is the ultimate result of that incredibly successful partnership between government and Victorians. I quote from the Reuters article dated 8 February reporting Moody's upgrading of Victoria's credit rating. It is ironic that that information was released in the middle of one of the

worst industrial campaigns in the power industry in a long time. Reuters reports:

Moody's rating upgrade reflects the success the state has had in achieving an exceedingly low debt burden, as well as in maintaining structural balance fiscally, and the belief that these trends are sustainable.

Time will tell! The report recites some of the great successes of the Kennett government, which I will put on record:

As a result public sector gross debt has fallen dramatically, from a peak of 34 per cent of gross state product (GSP) in 1992–93 to 6.7 per cent of GSP in 1998–99; while net debt as a per cent of output fell during the same period from 29 per cent to 4 per cent. Reductions in debt have greatly enhanced Victoria's budget flexibility by reducing its interest payments claim on expenditures from 19 per cent of revenues in the mid-1990s to around 5 per cent in 1998–99, and these are projected to fall to a very modest 3.3 per cent of budget this year.

The net impact of annual interest savings from debt reduction and the estimates of dividends forgone appear to be positive by more than \$800 million.

The criticism of privatisation is a nonsense, because that \$800 million is the net impact after taking into account dividends forgone. The report continues:

A healthy surplus position in the general government sector has been achieved in every year since 1995–96 ... the current budget year indicates that a fiscal balance of A\$1.5 billion ... is likely to be achieved.

Victoria's sound fiscal record has been underpinned by continued economic growth.

Those statistics are the result of the seven years of Kennett government, of which, as I said earlier in my contribution, I was pleased to be a part. I hope the government accepts and recognises that that position should be maintained.

One of the government's pre-election commitments was to conduct a royal commission into the ambulance contracts. That occurred late last year. Who would have expected that last week the government would withdraw the funding for representation by the Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) from the royal commission? That was much to the dismay of the commissioner, Lex Lasry, who said the withdrawal would cause difficulties for the commission and would make it harder to uncover the truth.

The government's pre-election unequivocal commitment to openness, frankness and transparency has suddenly become such a shadow that it has emasculated the proceedings. It is all as a result of a cost-cutting exercise for the departments. Many observers, including the Law Institute of Victoria and

the Bar Council, consider the MAS's involvement to be absolutely vital because it was the main player in the ambulance contract deals. The MAS needs to be represented at the royal commission so that it can cross-examine witnesses first-hand and establish the truth that the government when in opposition was so keen to discover. Now, suddenly, what happens? As a cost-saving measure the government has pulled the funding for representation of the main player in this very major royal commission. It did so at the cost of the Victorian public's knowledge of what really happened.

On top of the industrial disputation that has taken place and what the manufacturing sector can expect in the next six months, the government is supporting the claims of the Australian Council of Trade Unions for a weekly pay increase of \$24, together with extras, allowances and the like. One can add to that the government's proposed reform to Workcover. It foreshadowed an increase of 2.18 per cent but the union said it has to be 2.34 per cent. If I were a betting man, which I am not, I would probably say that the increase will be 2.34 per cent. That does not sound like very much, but when it is taken as a percentage of expenditure it amounts to something between 15 and 20 per cent on top of current premiums.

The government is well aware of the scenario: give them what they want and then we will work it out. That is what the government did between 1982 and 1992. At the end of the day, someone has to pay. At the moment Victoria has the competitive edge, but what reason does the government use for justifying such an extravagant increase in workers compensation? The reason is that Victorian levies are lower than those of New South Wales. The government says, 'The national average is 2.39 and Victoria is below the national average. Let's increase Victoria's annual expenditure and increase productivity costs to match the national average.'!

Victoria is doing so well now because it has been able to come in well below the national average in most productivity elements. It has gone out chasing industry to establish here on that basis. Anyone with any commercial sense is well aware that the creation of jobs has to be the core issue and that to get industries to come here one has to make concessions, not slug them.

The ultimate irony was the Premier's going to Davos when Victoria was facing industrial strife at a level not seen for the past twenty years. What happened? The government says, 'If Victoria's productivity cost is less than that of the other states, let's give the workers a whole heap more so we come up to parity with the other states'. That explains why Victoria lost Virgin Airlines. Somewhere between 350 and 700 jobs would

have been a great boom for Victoria. It would have added competition across the board. What did the government do to try to win Virgin Airlines? Absolutely nothing! To add insult to injury, not only will the government not get involved in disputes between unions and employers; instead of putting some pressure on the owners of Melbourne Airport — as I am sure the former Premier would have considered doing — to ensure that appropriate negotiations were conducted with Virgin Airlines and that all avenues were explored to attract a major investor, what happened? The government let them go!

The government does not appreciate that its own Labor government counterparts in other states are laughing at it. On February 4 the Premier of Queensland published an advertisement in the *Age* which said, in effect, 'Got you, sport! We did the deal. You could not do it.' He said to industry, 'Come on up to Queensland!'. It was just like being back in the 1980s. I repeat: the greatest losers in the dreadful tragedy being played out in Victoria right now are the workers.

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

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — You'd better watch out or I will read through those articles again. The people this government says it is so keen to protect are ones who will in the final analysis suffer most.

We have entered a new century; we have a new government and a new era. We are obliged to accept the results of a democratic system that I hope will never change. My regret is my inability to be part of a Liberal government that would have introduced and shared the benefits and returns that were made possible through a productive and successful seven-year partnership between the Kennett government and the Victorian people. We are on this side of the chamber and are obliged to ensure the state is not permitted to again recede to the basket case it was in 1992. We can do so only by ensuring we perform as an effective and unified opposition. I am grateful to have had an opportunity to contribute to the address-in-reply.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** (South Eastern) — I am pleased to respond to the speech given by the Governor at the opening of the 54th Victorian Parliament. It was a pleasure to be present when Sir James Gobbo and his good lady were here and to hear him deliver a speech that listed a lot of things that would be undertaken by the current minority Labor government. We cannot go too far without saying that the government is in the minority. The government conned some Independents — not that Susan Davies, the member for Gippsland West in another place, was anything other

than a Labor Party stooge calling herself an Independent — to give it the numbers needed to become imposters in government. It was unfortunate that the Governor had to deliver the speech on behalf of the Labor government because it is a fraud.

Promises have been made and broken by Labor in the short time it has been in government. The industrial strife that has hit Victoria recently was certainly not experienced during the seven years of the Kennett government — —

**Hon. R. F. Smith** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Bob Smith, was it the AMWU that you were a member of at some stage?

Victoria never had industrial problems because the former government was prepared to get up and face them. The former government never had a missing Minister for Industrial Relations, such as Monica the missing minister who is not available for radio interviews or comment to newspapers, and certainly not available to negotiate the problems of the Victorian electricity industry that nearly crippled the state. Where was the minister? She was hiding away in one of her many offices around the state so people could not find her. The minister does not want to be accountable. What did she do in question time today? She handballed the first question she was asked — a question about an industrial relations problem — to the Minister for Energy and Resources. It was nothing more and nothing less.

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

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — You could talk under water, in wet concrete, and in dry concrete. The minister's mouth is full of it except when people want to make her accountable. She was anywhere other than where she was supposed to be. She was the missing government. She said the Kennett government handballed industrial relations to the feds.

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

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — When was the last time the electrical union was part of the state system? You could probably answer it, Bob Smith.

**Hon. R. F. Smith** — They still are. They are part of both systems.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Your union mob all hightailed it up to Canberra when Keating was the Prime Minister. You and your mob were pleased to go up there because you thought you would get some

protection from your Labor colleagues, but you were cordoned and put into a difficult position because John Howard became the Prime Minister of the country — and what a great Prime Minister he is. The whingers on the government front bench come in and have a bit of a go. He is a wonderful person.

Minister, you are the Minister for Industrial Relations yet we have all these building industry problems. The minister has hidden away from them too. The former government did not have those problems because Jeff Kennett called the people into 1 Treasury Place — Brian Boyd and Martin Kingham — to talk about any difficulties. The former Premier had the courage to say, 'Come and talk to us about the difficulties'. The former government just worked away quietly and got on with the job. It achieved great things for Victoria. Victoria used to be on the move forwards. Under the Labor government it is on the move backwards.

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

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — If you want to talk, why not get on the radio and talk? They could not get you to talk. Steve Price could not get you to talk. I wish we would get Steve Price to record this. Fair dinkum, you would talk under wet cement.

The Labor government has just about crippled Victoria. Government members are all representative of the trade union movement. We know where you are coming from. Labor will go out at the next election and we know where most of you will go — you will be back with your union mates. You will not, Bob; you will have another four years unless Bracks brings in his constitutional changes.

**Hon. M. M. Gould** — On a point of order, Mr Acting President, I suggest that when Mr Smith refers to the Premier he should call him the Premier and not refer to his surname. As he well knows, it is unparliamentary to do so.

#### **The ACTING PRESIDENT**

**(Hon. G. B. Ashman)** — Order! I ask all honourable members when they are referring to other members of Parliament to use appropriate titles. I have noted already that Christian names have crept into the debate. That is not appropriate. I ask all members to use appropriate titles.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I apologise to the house. I get a little uptight when I start to talk about the actions of the Labor government. The only time I referred to first names, apart from Bob Smith, was to Monica the missing minister, and that is the only name people know her as. The Honourable Monica Gould, the

Minister for Industrial Relations, sitting over there smiling because we have acknowledged her by her full title, is not known to anybody around the state. She is not known to anybody because she will not debate the issue. She just handballs it off.

We heard the minister on the radio blaming Peter Reith, the federal minister, for all the problems here. What a joke. Our federal industrial relations policy has been in place for a long time and it is working well. Government members are trying to unravel a good industrial relations policy. They are talking about trying to get industrial relations back under the state banner. How will they do that? Victorians do not want the government selling out the state for its trade union mates. When the Labor government wants to introduce legislation into the house it should not think it can just walk through the front door with a bill and then walk out the back door with it because it will not happen. The trade unions will not get back into the state industrial relations system. We do not want them back here, because a minister as weak as this minister will not be able control them. We know she was on the phone 5 minutes after getting elected and saying, 'Good on you, do what you like. I am the minister, you can do what you like with industrial relations'. She then disappeared for three months during some of the biggest industrial problems in Victoria.

Minister, through the Chair, you are extremely weak in the way you deliver industrial relations to this state — as weak as water. Firstly, you have failed the state already. Victorians have lost confidence in the state and what you people are doing to it. Mr Furletti mentioned Virgin Airlines and the full-page advertisement in our newspapers by the bragging Labor Premier for Queensland, stating that he stole Virgin Airlines. It would not have happened under Jeff Kennett. Things were booming in this state.

Investors have lost confidence. What about Olympic Airways? It, too, has gone. An article in the *Business Review Weekly* refers to the decline of the Victorian building industry. It predicts the industry will decline under the Bracks Labor government by about 50 per cent in 2000–01. People who wanted to invest in Victoria now lack confidence and no longer have the courage to do so.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Why would they have confidence when, for example, progress on the Docklands project is being strangled by the trade union movement — Martin Kingham from the building workers union and the Premier's mate from the

Electrical Trades Union of Australia? Everyone knows about the Minister for State and Regional Development in the other place — the man to whom the government gave \$170 million to be thrown around. But Docklands sits there — it may be finished in time but not finished according to plans.

Last year I raised with the minister the situation with the new multipurpose venue near Melbourne Park. In response to my inquiry he said, 'Yes, it will be finished in time for the Australian Open tennis'. But its construction is still not finished!

The museum in Carlton sits in an industrial wasteland because the building and electrical trades unions are holding the project to ransom. What is happening to Victoria is a disgrace, and it has all happened in the few months since the Labor government was elected. People flocked to Victoria because they had confidence in the Kennett government, but now they are leaving because they no longer have confidence.

In his speech about four or five months ago the Governor referred to a \$20-million investment in the development of a fast rail link between Melbourne Airport and the city. But, lo and behold, I nearly drove off the road yesterday when I heard the Premier announce on the radio what he thought was a brand new infrastructure plan that he suddenly discovered for Victoria — that is, the rapid transit link from Melbourne Airport to the city. The Premier should have read the Governor's speech; if he had he would have known about the project about five months ago, instead of discovering it yesterday.

Yesterday the community was also told about the redevelopment of Spencer Street railway station. The government aims to have it become the western hub of the CBD of Melbourne. However, the former Minister for Transport, the Honourable Robin Cooper, was working on that project last year. The Premier appears to have suddenly discovered the project and thought, 'I could get some free publicity out of this'. The Premier never ceases to amaze me.

In his speech the Governor refers to the government establishing a royal commission into the Metropolitan Ambulance Service and Intergraph. Everybody knew that would happen. The government talks about openness and fairness in government. However, the Minister for Health in the other place has now said the staff of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service will no longer be legally represented at the royal commission. He wants to save a few bucks. Serious allegations have been made against the hierarchy of the ambulance

service, yet the minister has withdrawn their legal representation. It is a disgrace!

The government reminds us that it is a warm and wonderful group of people, and that all the factions are working together. The government says it is especially proud of Victoria's reputation as the nation's multicultural capital and that it supports multiculturalism. Mr Furletti and the honourable member for Caulfield in the other place have done good work in establishing Victoria's position in that regard.

However, the newspapers have disclosed that two ministers have taken on the Premier on his stance on the High Court case concerning the Greeks and the Macedonians. I thought the Labor Party had a good multicultural mix within its ranks, but apparently ministers are fighting in cabinet about Victoria's representation in the High Court case. Mr Furletti could have spoken fluently for hours about this matter because he has a deep interest in the subject. It shocks and amazes me that the Labor government would be prepared to argue about the issue.

Where does the Honourable Bob Smith stand on the issue? Did he support the Premier or the Minister for Transport or the Attorney-General? Who did he support? Did he support the Greeks or the Macedonians?

**Hon. R. F. Smith** — I am a big fan of Alexander the Great.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Obviously you did not care. You can't sit on the fence, Bob.

A number of people who have sat on the fence for the past seven years have now started to appear on the Labor Party's side of that fence. Isn't it lovely to see so many of the old Labor Party stalwarts starting to hang about this building?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Between 1988 and 1992 a former Labor minister, the Honourable David White, sacked more people in the Latrobe Valley than did the Kennett government's privatisation process during its seven years in office.

The truth of the matter is that we know that David White is back in town and giving directions. David White was the chairman of the committee that was to oversee the transition to the Labor government. As the Labor Party did not expect to win at the last election, the committee had not held a meeting in the past 12 months and so the chairman was not able to offer

much advice. Now David is like a few others who have their snouts in the Victorian taxpayers' trough again and are getting a few bucks out of it.

Tony Sheehan is back again. We well remember Tony as bringing about the Kirner government's financial demise. We remember him in the advertisements, with his shifty eyes looking one way and then the other. He presided over huge losses and the absolute disgrace of the \$32 billion deficit in the state.

I saw Mal Sandon, a former Minister for Education, hanging around. He will have his snout in the trough again — Mal always did and will continue to do so. He is excited to be back and making a few bucks again. When he was out he had to make an honest living.

We also know about Neil Pope, a former Minister for Industrial Relations, who the current Minister for Industrial Relations brought in to try to broker a deal.

**Hon. B. C. Boardman** — She can't do the job.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — She can't. Neil Pope, the real Minister for Industrial Relations — not the missing minister — was there. Then we had Evan Walker sticking his snout in at Federation Square and saying 'There'll be only one shard here. I know better than the world expert architects who were brought in, who designed the two shards and submitted the plans that were accepted and I am saying there should be only one'. There has been absolute condemnation of the Bracks Labor government for its attitude and change to the shards. How much did Evan Walker get for being dragged into all this? How much did Neil Pope get for chairing the meeting? It will be interesting to find out.

Mr Deputy President — congratulations; I am not sure I have had a chance of offering you my congratulations — another person who has been hanging around the place is good old Mike Arnold, who lost his seat in about 1988. Was he a member of this house?

**Hon. R. A. Best** — Yes.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — When he went out a Labor government was still in place. He was a good old mate — he wore the beard and all that sort of stuff — and when he said 'I really need a job, can you help me out a bit?' the then government put him into the then Industrial Relations Commission. He had no experience in industrial relations but the then government whacked him into Nauru House! His sorriest day was when the Kennett government was elected and we said 'Out you go, mate'. When we gave them all the flick, he, along with all the other Labor government appointees, stuck

out his hand and won a couple of hundred thousand bucks. But everything is okay. He only had to hang around for six or seven years and now he is back in Parliament House with his snout in the trough again. Isn't that fantastic? You lot are a disgrace!

**Hon. R. F. Smith** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I bet that when he gets the flick in six or seven years Mr Bob Smith, a member for Chelsea Province, will be back here looking to get his snout in the trough. But we will be in government. Don't come snivelling to us — you'll get nothing out of us!

It's nice to see Bill Landeryou around the traps. Bill was a nice bloke and a good bloke. I had a lot of time for him — it will really upset him to know I have said that. Fred van Buren is another one who has been hanging around the place. He is obviously on a promise. Which committees is he chairing for the government?

**Hon. R. F. Smith** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Don't say anything, Bob, because we don't really want to know what he's doing. And of course Tom Roper has been offering advice — probably on health, as he was a Minister for Health. He was a Minister for Transport, too — so he is probably offering advice all round. He will have his snout in a couple of troughs. He will be pleased that you were elected.

Somebody else is pretty excited that the Bracks government was elected — in a minority fashion, of course. We know that you never got the numbers and were not elected properly, so you are a fraud government. John Brumby is, of course, pretty disappointed — —

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

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — The minister for what?

**Hon. M. M. Gould** — Finance.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — It really gives me a fright when you say that, because I know we will be plummeting into the depths of financial ruin again if he is the Minister for Finance. But he is also the man in charge of \$170 million of regional development money. What a joke! He will not get his hands on the money until 1 July this year, as provided by the legislation. Already \$100 million has been spent — it is out the door.

**Hon. P. A. Katsambanis** — It is a three-year fund!

**Hon. I. J. Cover** — Four years!

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — It only gets worse! He has \$70 million to last another four years. What will he do with that sort of money? If the government is fair dinkum and wants to win back the people in the bush, you cannot play around with them all the time. You have to be fair dinkum. We were. Until this last election, the Kennett government put \$102 million into Gippsland West. Your minister is running around with \$170 million for four years. What will he offer them? Nothing. You people set yourselves up as being friends of the people of the bush. You do not and never have cared about the people of the bush. It is a disgrace!

In another part of his speech, the Governor said:

A key priority will be to forge a new partnership with local government.

We know all about local government and the Labor Party. I am very pleased that I am making my speech when municipal elections are coming up — that is, on 18 March. We know that the Labor Party is trying to stack every local government area it can. One need only look at the lists of familiar names of people who are popping their heads up, such as Frank Thompson, who has been a Labor man for a long time and is an honest sort of doer. Frank is running the show on the Mornington Peninsula, where he has all his Labor Party mates and hacks out. He is calling public meetings, saying 'I am a concerned citizen' — not 'a concerned Labor Party citizen'. He is making sure that his Labor mates get a better go than the ordinary council candidates. It can be seen that he is holding meetings in places where they can get to Labor people.

It did not surprise me the other day to see Mike Hill from the Municipal Governance Association. He is a not just a good old mate but a member of the Labor Party. But he says 'I represent local government', not 'I represent local government as a Labor Party man'. He tries to make out that he represents all of local government but he cannot fool all the people all the time. We are awake up to him and have been for a long time. What is he doing? He is talking about the mayors getting \$100 000 a piece again. Remember all the fuss we had? Remember Darebin? Remember the Labor Party snouts in the trough out there? There was \$100 000 for the mayor who promised \$20 000 or \$30 000 for the Labor Party. He was kicked out.

**Hon. R. F. Smith** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Not everybody was prepared to dud the system and do it over — the Labor Party people were. Consider those who were paid \$100 000 as mayors and who controlled the councils when those decisions were made. Look at the reasonable councils that took what they considered enough to cover them for their time and expenses.

As a councillor I received \$750 and put in many hours during council meetings. After council elections the Labor members would argue about how much they could get out of the till, so to speak. It cost me about \$300 a day in wages as a plumber each time I went to a council meeting. The Labor members were after \$100 000. They will have no hope of getting that when such a bill is introduced in this place.

None of us was fooled when Brad Mathieson, an Australian Labor Party member, represented himself as the spokesperson for the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). Many members use councils as a stepping stone to become members of Parliament. The opposition knows what types of people represent the Labor movement and how they run local government. They do not give a damn about local municipalities; they care only about getting the numbers for a position in this place. It is a disgrace. When I was a councillor I looked after my constituents and ratepayers.

The Governor's speech says the government will make roads safer across the state. The government scrapped the Scoresby bypass and will not continue with the Geelong freeway at this stage. The money was in place with the federal government committing funds.

Mr Lucas worked hard to get the federal government to agree to provide funds for the Pakenham bypass. The government has not started one road scheme in Victoria. It is letting down the people of Victoria.

Mr Craige was probably one of the best road ministers. Mr Baxter, also a former roads minister, has had to leave the chamber because he is so upset about what the Labor government is doing to Victorians. Many roads were constructed when Mr Baxter and Mr Craige were ministers because the government of the day recognised the importance of roads.

The Kennett government recognised the importance of multimedia and technology. It created a multimedia and technology ministry and invested millions of dollars in state schools, the police force and other areas. This government is doing nothing in the area of technology; it does not know what it is.

The Governor's speech says the government will take a new approach to education. During the election

campaign the Labor government spoke about how terrible things were under the Kennett government. However, Victoria had the best education system anywhere in Australia. Although Victoria did not put in as much money as other states its students were the best trained. Victoria has good teachers who work hard with students to ensure that they are well educated. What will this government do? It will ruin education. It will not give self-governing schools the opportunity to make decisions for themselves. Those schools had the full support of the school councils, teachers, students and parents. They accepted the fact that self-governance was best for their schools. They did it, and did it well.

When elected, the education minister could not wait to dismantle self-governing schools. The first thing she did to improve education in Victoria was to introduce condom-vending machines into schools. She also said that class sizes in grades prep 1 and 2 would be cut to 21 or less. The Governor's speech says it will be an average of 21. That is because the minister suddenly realised she could not honour her commitment. This year she left it up to the schools. It does not matter how prep 1 and 2 are taught so long as the government can assert its ideological views.

Honourable members have heard about how terrible the hospital system is. From Rod Morris of the ambulance association they have heard about the ambulance situation and Intergraph. Since the Governor's address there have been no problems with the hospital or ambulance system except for an incident at Frankston when an elderly gentleman fell over and broke his leg. He lay on the floor in a retirement village for 7 hours waiting for an ambulance.

Where was Rod Morris then? I have not heard him speaking on the radio berating the government. I have not heard John Thwaites, the Minister for Health, getting a hard time from Rod Morris. Where is he? He has disappeared. Obviously the Governor must have had something to do with that — he made him shut up.

What about that nurse? Belinda Morieson complained that the nurses were overworked and underpaid; it was not possible to staff hospitals and there were not enough people around. She was saying the hospitals were in financial crisis. Strike a light! The Governor did it again — the nurses are okay now. There are heaps of them around, everybody is happy and there are no complaints. One would think it was probably an exercise run by the nurses during the state election campaign. What a surprise — the nurses and Rod Morris together! This is incredible. I am absolutely amazed.

The problems in education are gone as well. What was the name of the union person from education? Mary Bluett and her people believe the people of Victoria will reckon everything has suddenly improved. I am pleased the Minister for Sport and Recreation is returning to the chamber because I had a note to remind him about how he was going to save Waverley Park. The great football hero was saying, 'I will go and negotiate with the AFL'. He and John Pandazopoulos — the minister for whatever he is minister for — were running around and saying they were going to save Waverley Park, as were all the Labor Party councils. At the time the Kennett government said that that was a private sector deal and the Australian Football League was not controlled by the government. This minister suddenly learnt.

**Hon. J. M. Madden** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I am going to speak loudly, because if those microphones go off you will not hear me — and in view of the way you have been treating the electricity industry it is possible that the lights and the computers will go off! That would be an absolute disgrace, but it would not be a surprise.

**Hon. B. C. Boardman** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I have not left out the police union. I understand Paul Mullett — or Fish Mullett, as he is known — is a good man. His contribution as a police officer was very good, and I do not in any way reflect on his police duties. But as assistant or deputy secretary of the Police Association, that is another matter. Here we have another miracle from the Governor. We do not have any problems now with the police force. We have more than enough police, and they continue to flow out from the Waverley police academy.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Where was the strike of the Police Association? More importantly, where was the government member for Chelsea Province?

**Hon. B. C. Boardman** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — I am so grateful for Mr Boardman's support. I am not so happy with what Mr Robert Smith is saying, but I am happy to have Mr Boardman's support. He is not interjecting at all, because as a former policeman and a former member of the Police Association, he knows the situation. I would like to see him as secretary of the association: he would get some commonsense back into the association; he would take his troops back to looking after the people

out there and policing properly; he would have all his troops out there, not in front of the television cameras having a whinge.

**Hon. B. C. Boardman** interjected.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Miracle of miracles, the Governor has done it again! He is truly a miracle worker — we do not have any more police problems in Victoria. I remember the photograph of the 50 or 100 police marching out of the police academy not long after the minority Labor government came to power. The Labor Party was trying to give the impression that it had put them out on the streets. I can tell the house that they were the police that the former Kennett government put on the streets. That government cared about people. And the next lot, the next lot and the next lot of police who graduate will do so because of the commitment of the former Kennett government. The Bracks government should never try to take credit for putting those police on the street. We made the commitment when we were in government; we made sure they would go through, and more will follow. We are extremely proud of our police force.

I will be pleased to see whether a new police station will be built at Wonthaggi and whether this government will spend the \$3.4 million, I think — it is a lot of money to be spent — to give that community a new police station so that people will not be afraid to enter their police station for fear the plaster will fall off, the windows will fall out of their frames or they will fall through the floor because the existing building is in such a bad condition. The Kennett government made a commitment in the budget to fix it up. The opposition will ensure Labor delivers and keeps all the promises the former government made. If Labor wants to cut back on things to which the Kennett government made commitments, it should just try it. The opposition will not allow it to do such a thing to Victoria.

I have shown today the Governor is a miracle worker. He has done many things that the speech said he was going to do. He has silenced the police, the nurses, the hospitals and the education union — they do not seem to have any problems now. He has silenced them all. Why? Because things were going along nicely, apart from the screaming, whingeing and moaning union leaders that the Labor Party had in place; apart from all the thugs it had out in the workplace; apart from the organised Labor Party people who used to write into the newspapers and ring up 3AW and 3LO, whingeing and moaning; apart from the organisation from trades hall. Some government members were using the phones up there and also those in their own offices. Of course, the Minister for Sport and Recreation has not been there,

nor has Mrs Carbines. When they look at the frontbench, they realise not too many of them were up there — and what a motley crew they are.

I again congratulate the Governor on having the nerve to come into this chamber and deliver a speech for this government on the opening of the 54th Parliament. The Governor has been a wonderful person who has made a great contribution to the people of Victoria, and I am sure he and Lady Gobbo will continue to make a magnificent contribution.

As members of the upper house, we always have a rare privilege once a year, at the President's dinner, to have the company of the Governor at Parliament House. That is a privilege we should never abuse. Those occasions present an opportunity for us to be able to look to governors of the day and listen to the contributions they make. Everybody should attend, and if members do not attend next time they will be banned forever. The minister is not snubbing his own colleagues but snubbing the Governor, and we do not appreciate that sort of thing.

**Hon. J. M. Madden** — Point taken.

**Hon. K. M. SMITH** — Thank you, Minister. I will not mention what minister you are, Mr Madden!

I draw my contribution to a conclusion. I thank all members for listening, and in particular thank Labor members for coming into the chamber and copping what they justly deserve! Also I thank members on this side of the chamber, who would agree with everything I have said about the Labor Party and the minority government. The sooner the Governor is reading the speech of the 55th Parliament of Victoria and talking about the Denis Naphine government, the better. That will be in the year 2002 or 2003. Then all members will have something to look forward to. Honourable members will be looking forward to the Governor's attendance in the house at that time.

**Hon. N. B. Lucas** — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, the other day Mrs Carbines called a point of order while a member on her side was speaking, and that was not seen to be a right thing. On that basis, I have waited until now to raise a point of order regarding a serious matter that arose during Mr Ken Smith's speech.

During some banter across the chamber, the Minister for Sport and Recreation said to Mr Boardman, 'Where do you live? Under a bridge?'. As was the case in the other house regarding the incident concerning the Minister for Community Services, that was a gross abuse of the minister's position. Many Victorians do

not have a place to live. Young people with difficulties in their lives should not be made fun of in that way. Through you, Mr Deputy President, I ask that the minister withdraw and apologise for that poor statement.

**Hon. J. M. Madden** — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, that comment was meant in the nature of heckling and was addressed to the Honourable Cameron Boardman. It concerned discussions by certain members in the house regarding not bridges but housing. The comment should be seen in that light — not in the light of bridge matters, but housing.

**Hon. B. C. Boardman** — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, while accepting the minister's point about the light-heartedness of the comment, I point out that in the heat of the moment he directly asked me where I was living at the moment and further stated, 'Under a bridge?'. I found that offensive not only to me personally but also to those homeless people who might be living under a bridge. In that context, the minister should apologise to the house.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! On the point of order, I have been in the house for some time listening to the debate. Often when the Honourable Ken Smith is on his feet debate on both sides is extremely robust. During the debate there was much good-natured banter and interjection from either side.

While I understand that interjections are disorderly, they often arise when a powerful and, might I say, entertaining speaker is on his or her feet. Those interjections are part of the theatre and histrionics of the house. My judgment is that I did not see any disrespect in the banter across the house, but the point of order has raised an issue all members of Parliament should be aware of. While the chamber enjoys free and open debate in conducting its business, all members should take care when engaged in banter not to go a little too far, and to consider that in future when commenting in the chamber.

I find no point of order. I understand the reason for the point of order being raised, and it is just as well the matter was raised because in future the house can operate all the better for it.

**Hon. N. B. Lucas** — Is the minister going to apologise?

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The point of order was not upheld, so I will not ask the minister to apologise.

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

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

### Monash Medical Centre

**Hon. M. T. LUCKINS** (Waverley) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to an industrial dispute that crippled the Southern Health Care Network between Thursday, 10 February, and Tuesday, 15 February. Members of the Health Services Union of Australia (HSUA) barricaded themselves in the kitchen at the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton in my electorate.

The union action at the hospital resulted in the cancellation of 80 elective surgery procedures and in patients being forced to eat junk food. The hospital had to order 500 Red Rooster meals and other food from takeaway outlets to feed patients during the dispute.

The Industrial Relations Commission ordered the HSUA members back to work on 15 February. Workers involved included security, catering, cleaning and general ward staff.

Will the minister inform the house of her role in the dispute? Did the HSUA provide advance notice of its action to her or her office, and what action did she take to resolve the dispute, which disrupted surgery and had a detrimental effect on patients with special dietary requirements?

### Greater Geelong: road construction levy

**Hon. E. C. CARBINES** (Geelong) — I raise an issue with the Minister for Energy and Resources, representing the Minister for Local Government in the other house. In Ocean Grove, a coastal town on the Bellarine Peninsula in my electorate, property owners in the Peers Crescent group of streets have received notification from the City of Greater Geelong of charges that will be levied on them for the construction of roads under provisions regarding 'special benefit to the property owner'.

The notification has caused great distress among owners because the City of Greater Geelong expects residents to fully fund the cost of the road construction

despite their streets being used as a thoroughfare, particularly in holiday periods when the area is inundated with holiday-makers from around the state.

A number of my constituents who have received such notices have contacted me and stressed to me the financial hardship such levies would impose on them and their families. One woman has received notification that she is to be billed close to \$14 000. Another woman, an 80-year-old pensioner, is to be charged \$8000 — the sum of her life savings — for the special benefit she will receive from the road.

I have raised the issue with the infrastructure department in Geelong, which has told me it has concerns about the inequity of the approach of the City of Greater Geelong to the funding of road construction by property owners. I have come to understand from discussion with representatives of other municipalities that not all municipalities adopt the same approach as the City of Greater Geelong to the funding of road construction.

I have written to the mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Ken Jarvis, on behalf of my constituents, expressing my concern about the financial burden the City of Greater Geelong will impose on those residents in funding road construction in Ocean Grove. I have asked the mayor, Ken Jarvis, to review the stance of the City of Greater Geelong. I want the Minister for Local Government to give this matter his due consideration.

#### **Police: Kew station**

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** (East Yarra) — I ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation to direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in another place. It concerns the Kew police station and local policing services in the City of Boroondara. Many police members in my area are concerned to ensure that the commitments made under the previous government are maintained under the current administration.

A total of \$7 million was earmarked for police service upgrades in the City of Boroondara. I seek an assurance from the minister that the money will be quarantined and there will be no reduction in either policing services or the police capital budget in the City of Boroondara. I ask that the present government maintain the previous government's commitment of \$7.3 million to ensure that the upgrade of police services and facilities in the City of Boroondara will receive the highest priority.

I seek that assurance because there has been little indication from the minister up to now that police services in the City of Boroondara will be given a high

priority. I am greatly concerned that the Bracks government will treat the city in an unfair and discriminatory manner and I ask that police capital upgrades that have been promised and should be allocated on any reasonable assessment of needs are forthcoming.

For example, a great deal of thought was given to the Kew and Hawthorn police stations. My colleague in East Yarra Province, the Honourable Mark Birrell, was very concerned to ensure that Boroondara received police facilities of the highest quality. I know the honourable member for Kew in another place has taken a strong step on this issue and has been very keen to ensure that the facilities, many of which date back to last century, are upgraded. The money was allocated. I want to ensure that funds are quarantined in the City of Boroondara and that the city will be consulted on the allocation of that money according to its priorities. I want to ensure also that local members of Parliament are able to make sensible comments about the matter. Although I am not seeking to directly have an impact on any operational decisions, it is crucial that the City of Boroondara facilities are upgraded to present-day standards. Many are certainly not suitable for the activities intended and certainly are unsuitable for the police staff who do a very good job in my area.

#### **GST: small business**

**Hon. D. G. HADDEN** (Ballarat) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Small Business on behalf of constituents in my electorate who have small businesses. They are deeply concerned about the lack of information on the goods and services tax and its impact on their operations. Time is running out between now and 1 July and they lack adequate information on the steps they need to take to comply with the GST regime. I urge the Minister for Small Business to seek answers from the federal government about how small businesses, particularly in Ballarat and surrounding districts, can obtain adequate information to comply with GST requirements.

#### **Springvale and Whitehorse road intersection: upgrade**

**Hon. B. N. ATKINSON** (Koonung) — I direct a question to the Minister for Energy and Resources, who represents the Minister for Transport in another place. I understand the City of Whitehorse has drawn the attention of the Minister for Transport to a proposal to place the Maroondah Highway under Springvale Road at Nunawading. I understand the proposal came about from a speculative consultant's report. However, I also note that the honourable member for Mitcham in

another place put a similar proposal to the people of Mitcham prior to the last election. The proposal was to eliminate the conflict points at the railway station at Nunawading and the intersection of Springvale and Whitehorse roads.

What surprises me about the proposal the City of Whitehorse put to the minister is that the price tag associated with putting the road underground is estimated by local competent consultants at \$20 million. I am sure that would not pay for the acquisition of properties let alone engineering works. It would certainly have an impact on businesses in the area. Will the minister advise his reaction to the report and explain what he will convey to the City of Whitehorse as his view of the proposal? Has the government any commitment to address the report?

### **Western suburbs: aquatic centre**

**Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA** (Melbourne West) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Melbourne is known as the sporting capital of Australia. It has world-class sporting venues and hosts many national and international sporting events.

All honourable members know that sporting events bring people together. It is very important that people in the western suburbs of Melbourne have the opportunity to enjoy first-class sporting and recreational facilities. I therefore ask the minister to report to the house on projects that will establish a major swimming centre in Melbourne's western suburbs.

### **GST: small business**

**Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS** (Monash) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Small Business to the fact that the new tax system and the goods and services tax will become a reality on 1 July. The minister has alluded to the fact that small business is still concerned as to the nature of compliance under the new taxation regime. Victoria is a signatory to the new tax system agreement and will be a significant beneficiary as a result of the introduction of the new tax system.

I call on the minister to inform this house what actions her department is taking to ensure that Victorian small business operators are given full information about the implementation of the new taxation system including the implementation of the goods and services tax. I call on the minister to distinctly concentrate on the areas that will impact positively on small business rather than scoring cheap political points.

### **Police: western suburbs**

**Hon. S. M. NGUYEN** (Melbourne West) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is the representative in this house of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to police numbers in Victoria, which have been an issue for a number of years, and the consequences of the shortfall in the western suburbs, particularly in Braybrook over recent months. Will the minister advise what is being done to correct the problem and when more police can be expected in Victoria?

### **CFA: firefighters dispute**

**Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN** (Chelsea) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to 15 December last year when this house passed a motion simply asking the minister to demonstrate some leadership in the current Country Fire Authority–United Firefighters Union industrial dispute. Two and a half months have gone by since that motion was passed. I acknowledge that the minister has probably had other matters to deal with, although she could have appointed other people to deal with those sorts of things. On 22 February the union implemented 13 disastrous, devastating and completely unjustified bans that hampered the operation of the Country Fire Authority in Victoria.

The bans include the establishment of picket lines at any career fire station where the CFA attempts to have any other person apart from career firefighters do the work. If volunteers try to mount Country Fire Authority-owned appliances, the career firefighters prevent them from doing so, despite the fact that the volunteers dedicate their time to perform a vital emergency service.

Another ban involves country firefighting stations not responding to any fires or other incidents where the manning of the station has dropped below the normal manning levels. That has nothing to do with the level of volunteers the station may have. If a station has a staff of five — whatever the reasons for that manning level — it would not matter whether there were 30, 40 or 60 volunteers, through absentmindedness and irresponsibility the union has implemented a ban preventing volunteers from responding to calls.

Two and a half months have passed since this house passed the motion asking for the Minister for Industrial Relations to demonstrate some leadership in the matter. We have experienced a very dry summer and a dangerous fire season, and the current climatic conditions mean the risk of a fire in the state remains relevant.

I refer the minister to a particular example. The Frankston Country Fire Authority has a number of volunteers and a number of career firefighters, and it has been brought to my attention that if any of the non-union volunteers breach or attempt to breach the bans the union members, the career firefighters, will use force to prevent them getting on the appliances.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN** — It is disgraceful. It is in the worst interests of the Victorian community and is simply putting lives and the welfare and safety of Victorians at risk. Considering that two and a half months have gone by since the motion was passed, I ask the Minister for Industrial Relations to explain to the house what action she has taken to try to alleviate this disastrous union-initiated action.

### **Youth: suicide prevention**

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — I refer the Minister for Youth Affairs to my concern about the growing number of youth suicides in my electorate. I was horrified to read in the Port Phillip *Leader* of 7 February that Coroners Court statistics show that nine people from the St Kilda postcode area of 3182 took their own lives, including three women in their 20s. I recently met with Andrew Kay, executive director of Here for Life, which is recognised as a peak organisation for the sensitive area of youth suicide. The organisation ran five very successful youth forums last year and came up with some recommendations on the issues that young people need to consider in the running of their day-to-day lives.

A number of the Here for Life programs have been run in Monash Province; Life's a Ball and life teachers workshops were held last year. Will the minister tell me whether he plans to call upon the considerable expertise of the Here for Life organisation and, if so, in what capacity he intends it to be involved?

### **Minister for Environment and Conservation: responsibilities**

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** (North Eastern) — I ask the Leader of the Government to refer an issue to the Premier in his capacity as signatory to the memorandum of understanding which brought the government to office. Among other things, the objective of the memorandum of understanding states:

... to enhance parliamentary democracy and open and accountable government in Victoria.

I am concerned that that objective is not being met. The particular example I give is a letter I wrote to the Minister for Environment and Conservation on 3 December requesting that the minister receive a deputation from a group in my electorate to discuss matters concerning the Lower Goulburn River. As I am a perfectly accommodating sort of chap, I said in the letter, bearing in mind it was dated 3 December:

In view of parliamentary sittings and other commitments for ministers at this time of the year I will be perfectly relaxed if the deputation is not scheduled until later next month —

that is, January. I allowed all December and January to go by. Eight weeks later I had received no reply, so my electorate officer phoned the minister's office and was advised there was no record of the correspondence and that it had been lost. My electorate officer was asked if a copy could be faxed, which I was happy to do and did so. I understand that with a new office there is always a bit of turmoil and things may be mislaid. I could have overlooked that if I had received a response shortly after. Unfortunately, I did not.

On 7 February my electorate officer rang the minister's office again and left a message. She was told she would be phoned back. The next day she phoned again and was advised that the letter would be brought to the minister's attention and someone would phone back. No-one did. On 18 February — we let a fair bit of time go by again — my electorate officer phoned at 11.20 a.m. and spoke to someone who said they would call back. No-one did, so at 4.30 p.m. that day she phoned again and was informed that the office was frantic and that someone would ring on Monday. On Monday someone did ring back but it was at 6.15 p.m. My electorate officer was not in attendance in the office at that time but fortunately my office phone goes through to my house, so my wife took the call. As Mr Best knows, my wife does not like getting calls after hours, but nevertheless she took the call. The next day my electorate officer phoned and apologised for the fact that she was not in attendance and was advised that someone would phone back. No-one did. She then sent a fax on 22 February apologising for not being there and asking someone to address the question. Nothing came of that again.

On 24 February my electorate officer phoned and left a message. She was informed someone would ring back. No-one did. On 28 February, yesterday, she phoned the minister's office yet again and advised that as the minister was coming up to the area next week it was possible that the minister would be extremely embarrassed if she was confronted by a group who had been seeking a deputation through their local member and no answers had been forthcoming.

That situation remains today. My electorate officer has faxed the minister's office again today. I am endeavouring to protect the minister's back before her visit to my electorate next week, but I am frustrated because my calls have not been returned. I can get no satisfaction. The situation is contrary to the objectives stated in the memorandum of understanding.

### **ALP: fundraising dinner**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — The matter I direct to the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources concerns the print-out of the list of attendees at the Labor Party \$1000-a-plate dinner held late last year which shows that the failed candidate for Mordialloc, Robyn McLeod, was seated on table 64 and was described as a staff member of the Minister for Energy and Resources. Will the minister advise the house whether her office or her department paid for Ms McLeod's dinner that night?

### **Eastern Freeway: extension**

**Hon. W. I. SMITH** (Silvan) — The matter I direct to the Minister for Energy and Resources, the representative of the Minister for Transport in the other place, concerns the extension to the Eastern Freeway. As the house will be aware, the Kennett government budgeted \$255 million this financial year to extend the Eastern Freeway from Springvale Road, Nunawading, to Maroondah Highway, Ringwood. The Kennett government considered 50 reports before it made its decision, yet the Bracks government has published another report, containing four alternatives, for community comment.

The government says it is committed to building the extension. I attended a meeting of the Park Orchards Ratepayers Association at which 50 people were expected to attend; yet 200 turned up because the community is concerned about the six weeks consultation period allowed by the government for comment.

Will the minister provide a time frame on when the Eastern Freeway will be extended? Only six weeks has been allowed for consultation. When will the Bracks government put money into the budget and when will it complete the extension?

### **Bendigo: Telstra jobs**

**Hon. R. A. BEST** (North Western) — I ask the Minister for Industrial Relations to make representations to the Premier about the future of Telstra jobs in Bendigo. Since last year the federal

member, Steve Gibbons, and the local community have mounted a strong campaign on the issue.

I have made representations to the chief executive officer of Telstra, Ziggy Switskowski, about the future of Telstra jobs in Bendigo. I have received a reply, dated 23 February, to my letter of 16 February — unlike Mr Baxter, who has been frustrated through not having received a reply to his correspondence. I refer to one paragraph of the 23 February letter that states:

Telstra has no current plans in place to close operations in regional Bendigo. The team now working to assess our call centre operations is still gathering data and has made no recommendations. It is our intention to consult with governments at the federal and state levels as the project progresses.

I am aware that the government had announced a strategy before the last election. I am sure the government would have made a submission to the Telstra Journey 2000 project, which involved a review of all the call centres.

At a public meeting last night more than 100 people expressed their concern and dismay at the process. The meeting passed two motions, one directed at the Prime Minister and his minister, John Anderson, and the other at the Premier and his government. Both expressed community concern. An editorial in today's *Bendigo Advertiser* states:

Last night's public meeting also called on Steve Bracks to intervene. Again, isn't it sad that he should be asked by a public meeting to go in to bat for the very people he came out so strongly in support of before he won the election?

The answers I seek on behalf of the community and the work force in Bendigo are: what discussions has the Premier had with the Minister for State and Regional Development to insist that he make a submission on behalf of the regional centres that have call centres throughout Victoria? What discussions have he and the department had with Telstra regarding the call centres? Did the minister or his department make a submission on behalf of Bendigo and other regional centres — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! A matter raised in the adjournment debate can be the subject of only one question.

**Hon. R. A. BEST** — What strategies has the government undertaken to support the regional call centres throughout country Victoria and will the Premier act instead of sitting on his hands as he did during the electricity dispute?

### Flavorite Tomatoes

**Hon. G. R. CRAIGE** (Central Highlands) — I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, who represents the Minister for State and Regional Development in another place. The matter I raise is urgent and concerns a business in Warragul. Flavorite Tomatoes is a well-known hydroponic enterprise in that town and probably leads Australia in its use of technology to grow hydroponic tomatoes. It is a leading supplier of hydroponic tomatoes to Victoria and interstate.

At present, for the purpose of producing the heat and humidity needed for its production, the company uses bottled gas, the price of which, in case the minister does not know, fluctuates dramatically. It is now highly priced at 35 cents a litre. The price of gas has become an important and urgent issue in the company's consideration of employing more people.

Many discussions have been held over a period. Some commitments have been made by the Labor government to support the enterprise and the installation of natural gas in Warragul. Fruitful discussions have been held with regional staff of the Department of State and Regional Development. They are supportive and have been helpful to the business.

The issue I raise concerns the cost of natural gas connections. The connection for the 5 kilometres from the farm gate will cost about \$380 000; and from farm gate to the operations centre, about \$100 000. In early discussions between the business and the government the government made the commitment to help fund the gas connection to the tune of \$100 000.

The Department of State and Regional Development has been supportive of the company and the minister has had a submission before him for some time. I ask for an urgent response because if the opportunity for the installation of natural gas is lost, about 40 full-time jobs will also be lost. The enterprise will not be able to double in size.

I urge the minister to sign off on the financial assistance grant of \$100 000 so that the opportunity for employment and growth by the company is not lost.

#### Minister for Small Business: Dandenong visit

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Eumemmerring) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Small Business an article that appeared on page 3 of the Springvale–Dandenong *Times* of 9 February. It is headed 'Minister visits', and as it is a short article of three sentences I will read it to the house:

Small business minister Marsha Thomson met local traders and business owners on a visit to Dandenong last week. The visit was part of her listening to business program during a series of trips to regional centres. 'This meeting and others like it across the state will be of enormous benefit to me in establishing future priorities for outer Melbourne and regional business', she said.

As the minister will be aware if she is well briefed, Dandenong is well served by a number of significant business organisations. Two of the more prominent ones are the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Business and Industry and the Dandenong Retail Traders Association. The Dandenong chamber is well regarded for its networking and the educational opportunities it provides for Dandenong businesses. The retail traders association and its president are well regarded in Dandenong for the contribution they make on community issues.

Given that the minister's office did not bother to inform me as the local member that she was visiting Dandenong, after I read about the visit in the paper I naturally followed it up with the two organisations. On contacting the presidents of those two organisations, I was astounded to learn that neither of them had any knowledge of the minister's visit to Dandenong. As part of a program called listening to business, it would seem that the two most prominent business organisations in Dandenong had actually been ignored by the minister! What sort of listening to business program is that?

Will the minister ensure that on future visits to Dandenong in her capacity as Minister for Small Business she meets with the people who represent small business?

#### Electricity: Yallourn dispute

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** (East Yarra) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to matters raised earlier in question time about the electricity crisis and the concern in the community that the government knew in advance that the electricity crisis was occurring and that there would be an electricity shortage. The community wants to know why it was not told in advance, as occurred elsewhere, about the crisis.

The Minister for Industrial Relations apparently has ministerial responsibility for dealing with industrial disputes in this state and has an active role to play — or at least that is the impression the minister has tried to create over recent weeks. In answer to me during question time, the minister simply passed the ball to her ministerial colleague. Whilst the opposition welcomes that because it confirms formally on behalf of the Labor government the role that we knew the Minister for

Energy and Resources had, it does not answer the question that has been raised in the minds of the community — that is, when did the Minister for Industrial Relations know about this? It would dramatically impact on any minister's conclusion about the importance of an industrial dispute if the Minister for Industrial Relations was aware that the industrial dispute may well lead to blackouts or load shedding — in other words, may well lead to a major problem for the community in terms of access to electricity supply. I remind the house that on that day, as a result of the incompetence of the government's handling of the issue, people who were on home dialysis found their machines turned off because there was no electricity.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. C. C. Broad** — It's your system!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — People driving their cars entered intersections where the traffic lights had simply turned off because there was no electricity available. Therefore people want to know legitimately when the government was aware. A significant industrial dispute in January uniquely under this government led to the cessation of electricity being supplied by one power generator. I seek to know from the minister on what date she first knew that there could be a shortage of electricity that could lead to blackouts or load shedding or other problems. It is pivotal because it goes to the question of whether the government treated the matter or just filed the knowledge.

**Hon. C. C. Broad** — It's been answered.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — No, you didn't answer it and you will be pursued relentlessly because of your prevarication. You know very well that you did not answer the question, that you have exposed yourself and that you will be aggressively pursued until you tell the truth in this house.

**Hon. C. C. Broad** — Go on!

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — We will go on, minister — again and again. You will have people sitting in the gallery, saying, 'We don't think that minister told the truth' and 'She's covering something up, isn't she?'. Then we will have you on the record —

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — What's your question?

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — I'm responding to an idiot's interjections — don't blame me. We will have

people on the record taking up the comments that the minister has tried to say was a factual answer.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — Ask your question and sit down.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — I was. If the interjections had not kept me going, I would have sat down a while ago. Don't blame me for the weakness of the minister who interjected. I will take up someone's stupid behaviour willingly any time. If the minister wants to be stupid she has to cop the outcome. One of the outcomes is that you get a response and that is that people think you are not telling the truth, Minister.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — We caught you last time. You didn't tell the truth and you had to apologise.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. J. M. Madden** — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, would the Leader of the Opposition just get to the point of the question?

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, it is an abuse of the Parliament that this man can stand up and take a point of order on the Leader of the Opposition when he is in full flight in response to some interjections from the other side of the house. That is not a legitimate point of order.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, the adjournment debate is an opportunity to raise issues with one specific minister. It is not a time to debate in a broad sense a whole raft of issues and to canvass them, as the Leader of the Opposition is currently attempting to do. There have been interjections but the Leader of the Opposition has asked his question several times. He is continuing to debate the issue of the responses of the minister about which he has not been satisfied. As a result of putting it on the notice paper he will have an opportunity to debate that issue in this house at a later time. I ask him to ask his question and conclude his remarks on the adjournment.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! On the point of order, as Mr Theophanous said, there have been a number of interjections during the adjournment debate. While I consider the interjections to be out of order, I rule that there is no point of order and urge the Leader of the Opposition to finalise his contribution to the adjournment debate.

**Hon. M. A. BIRRELL** — I am seeking to know from the Minister for Industrial Relations when she first knew that there could be a shortage of electricity and that she not refer this to another minister. I want to know when she, in her capacity as Minister for Industrial Relations, first knew that there could be a shortage of electricity as a result of problems that were occurring at a power station that was not producing electricity. I look forward to the minister's response.

### Young Rural Ambassadors

**Hon. E. J. POWELL** (North Eastern) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Youth Affairs. During the adjournment debate on 9 November last year, I asked the minister about the future of the Young Rural Ambassadors program, which is very important to the young people of Victoria. Forty-eight young people were chosen out of hundreds of young Victorians who applied for those positions and 12 of those young people who showed real leadership went on a study tour and attended in Charlottetown, Canada a conference called Keys to Agriculture's Future, which all honourable members will agree is vitally important to Victoria's agricultural future.

The 36 young people who did not go to Canada received a bursary of \$1000 each, to study matters that are very important to country Victoria's future, such as sustainable agriculture.

The minister acknowledged that it was a significant program to establish role models for rural youth. He promised to review the program, including its current and ongoing status, and report back to me. It has now been more than three months and I have not heard from the department. Has the minister reviewed the program and will funds continue for the young people of Victoria, particularly young people on the land?

### Small business: survey

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** (Templestowe) — I direct my question to the Minister for Small Business who in answer to a dorothy dixer today indulged in some goods and services tax (GST) bashing relating to and arising from the Yellow Pages *Small Business Index*. Because of her selective comments I had a closer look at the index and, surprise, surprise — —

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** — It's probably the first time you have ever looked at it.

**Hon. C. A. FURLETTI** — That is once more than you.

The minister failed to say that although they thought the GST was important, most small businesses were not concerned. In gliding over an issue of long-term confidence, the index shows there is a 12 per cent decline today from this time last year.

For the first time since 1998 more small business proprietors believe the economy will be worse in a year's time than believe it will be better, with proprietors in Western Australian and Victoria being the most pessimistic.

Victoria is showing a 17 per cent drop. The index also shows that governments in South Australia and Victoria have experienced the most significant decline in support because small business proprietors believe this state government's policies work against small business. There has been a fall of 43 per cent, from a positive 30 per cent to a negative 13 per cent.

What will the minister do to reverse the concerns of an increasing number of small business operators about the burden of state government regulations? Will she implement the Law Reform Committee's report on regulatory efficiency that was tabled in this house in 1997?

### Monash Freeway: trucks

**Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON** (Waverley) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who represents the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in another place, to a matter concerning road safety. Like most honourable members, I travel a great deal along the Monash Freeway, and over the past 10 or 15 years I have not witnessed a police blitz.

Last week when travelling along that freeway I could not help but notice that many trucks were travelling in excess of 100 kilometres an hour. I was passed by a truck doing about 115 to 120 kilometres an hour. I also witnessed trucks tailgating and intimidating motorists. I believe a catastrophe will occur if something is not done to police these wild cowboy truck drivers.

I call on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to implement a random blitz on speeding trucks to try to improve driver behaviour before fatalities occur.

### Public transport: rolling stock

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Gippsland) — I raise with the Minister for Sport and Recreation in his capacity as the representative of the Minister for Manufacturing Industry a matter concerning the Victorian

manufacturing sector, particularly the sector involved in the production of train and tram rolling stock.

The matter was raised by one of my constituents, Neil Joiner, managing director of Australian NDT Services Pty Ltd, who has a small manufacturing operation located in the Latrobe Valley. His concern centres on the current direction of discussions taking place between the Victorian government and the new public transport operators, in particular local content provisions in the replacement of rolling stock. When the Kennett government called for tenders for the replacement of the state's rolling stock, one of the specifications was that 40 per cent of the work should go to Victorian-based companies.

Concern has been expressed by the manufacturing sector that the local provision sector of the contracts will not be enforced. If it is not enforced potentially Australia-wide 6000 jobs and an additional potential 11 000 jobs will be lost. Australian NDT Services Pty Ltd is a small manufacturing company employing 13 people. It has already shed three employees and may have to shed many more unless the local provision for rolling stock is adhered to.

Every job in Victoria is important, and the minister should do everything within his power to ensure that the replacement of Victorian rolling stock is shared fairly by Victorian-based companies.

### **Planning: Somerville broiler farm**

**Hon. R. H. BOWDEN** (South Eastern) — I seek assistance from the Minister for Energy and Resources, representing the Minister for Local Government in another place. It concerns a serious matter relating to the circumstances of Mr and Mrs Robert Bushby of 63 Whitneys Road, Somerville.

Approximately two years ago the well-known and highly respected small business family in the area sold a large and successful business and obtained a suitable contract with a reputable broiler industry participant. They purchased suitably zoned land in Somerville and in 1998 applied for a broiler shed permit from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. The council considered the application for an area of land that was appropriately zoned, but rejected it. In due course the matter proceeded to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for hearing and a decision was made in favour of the Bushby family.

One Mornington Peninsula shire councillor was dissatisfied with the terms of the VCAT decision, the independent arbitrator, and took the matter to council. By a margin of five to four the council was persuaded

to take the matter to the Supreme Court. Against the Bushbys' innocent circumstances, council then incurred a huge expense for the Bushbys. The Supreme Court did not choose to hear the matter. Because of that, my constituents have incurred \$45 000 of inescapable legal costs and a huge amount of personal and emotional pressure. The way the Bushbys have gone about the saga has vindicated them. The Supreme Court rejected council's appeal, but they have been victimised by the council's appealing against the costs of approximately \$45 000. Today my constituents have lost \$26 000 in cash in legal expenses that should have been paid by the council.

The Bushbys have been the subject of violence, property damage and personal assault. The matter is getting out of hand. The delays caused have meant that apart from the legal costs, they have also incurred losses in getting their enterprise up and going. I am concerned that well regarded, highly respectable, longstanding business people in my community have incurred a loss of \$26 000, an amount that should have been paid by the council.

I am asking whether the minister will investigate an urgent call for and initiate a full and complete departmental inquiry into this matter, which I will not let drop until justice is obtained for my constituents.

### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — Earlier today, in her response to my question without notice about the consequence of the withdrawal of capacity at Yallourn, the Minister for Energy and Resources advised that she was aware on 2 February that there could be a shortage of electricity, leading to load shedding and blackouts. Did the minister receive any advice prior to that date on the reserve margin and consequent risk to supply reliability?

### **Swimming pools: fencing**

**Hon. N. B. LUCAS** (Eumemmerring) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, as the representative in this place of the Minister for Local Government — who I believe is the responsible minister — the issue of swimming pool fencing. When I raised the issue previously I received two letters, one from the Minister for Planning and the other from the Minister for Local Government, which is slightly confusing. I now seek to raise the matter with the Minister for Local Government, through the minister in this house.

It is a sad fact that on average one child a month drowns in a swimming pool in Victoria, and over the summer period we have seen a continuation of that situation. I noted in the letters I received from the ministers previously that the Building Control Commission was to oversee a strategy to ensure the situation was improved. However, a report that appeared in the newspapers over the past month, I think, indicated that some 23 000 swimming pools in Victoria remain to be fenced. From time to time one sees in the real estate sections of newspapers pictures of houses that are up for sale, with lovely swimming pools that have no fences around them. I wonder whether there is any mechanism to follow up such articles as those that appeared on page 10 of the *Age* of 16 February and page 27 of the *Herald Sun* of 9 January.

That leads me to direct to the minister's attention the fact that a safety inspector referred to in the *Herald Sun* article on 23 January at page 18 indicated that in his opinion the regulations were not sufficient, in that gates did not have to be self-closing — they had to be self-locking and self-latching, but they will not latch or lock effectively unless they are closed.

Having raised those issues, I ask the minister to suggest that the Minister for Local Government initiate a review of the 78 councils in Victoria to see what has been achieved with the strategy. I also request that in carrying out such a review, the minister report to or advise me of the results of the review on the success of the campaign and what municipal councils have been able to achieve through the random audits which are referred to in the correspondence I received from one of the ministers and which municipal councils are evidently encouraged to carry out.

### **Electricity: Yallourn dispute**

**Hon. R. M. HALLAM** (Western) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to her response during question time earlier today about the electricity crisis that was recently inflicted on Victorians, and particularly her assertion that 2 February was the earliest date that she had been aware of the prospect of the impending load shedding or blackouts.

Given that background and the advice the minister offered the chamber this afternoon that she had constantly monitored the circumstances, and particularly given the fact that the industrial disputation at Yallourn had been front-page news for some time prior to 2 February, is she really asking Parliament to believe that as the Minister for Energy and Resources she had not been put on inquiry as to the prospect of

electricity shortages before that date — that is, before 2 February?

I find the minister's responses to my questions and those of my colleagues totally incongruous and I simply offer her another chance to clear the air. I again ask her: on what date did she first become aware of the impending electricity crisis?

### **Sandringham Secondary College**

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** (Higinbotham) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is the representative in this place of the Minister for Education, an issue regarding the Sandringham Secondary College. There is a fair bit of unease and concern among the parents and children of the college because of a persistent story coming home with the students to the effect that there will be some amalgamation and rationalisation of its campuses. The college is currently spread over three sites: Sandringham, Highett and Beaumaris. The story spreading around the school is that there will be a merger of the Highett and Beaumaris campuses, which would have the effect of wiping out the Beaumaris campus and just leaving the Highett and Sandringham campuses.

Honourable members will be well aware of the concerns that would create among the school community, and the concerns are heightened by the speculation that something like that will happen in this calendar year. It is important that the concerns be laid to rest and the situation clarified. I ask the minister to indicate whether the story is true, whether there is a plan for a rationalisation of the campuses and the wiping out of the Beaumaris campus from the Sandringham Secondary College. Some clear and definitive statement on the issue would put at rest the minds of many in the school community.

### **Responses**

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Before calling the Minister for Industrial Relations, I indicate that there have been a number of questions along the same line about the timing of certain events; Mr Hallam's question was also very tightly contained in that area. I believe the questions have been slightly different, but I ask the minister to note that in her reply.

**Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy President.

The Honourable Maree Luckins raised with me the Southern Health Care Network industrial action taken

by the Health Services Union of Australia on 15 February and asked whether I had been advised that the union planned to take the industrial action that it took at the time. The response to that part of the question is no. The second part of the question was what action I took about the dispute. I talked to the union in the Southern Health Care Network and encouraged it to go to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, which it did, and as a result the bans were lifted and work returned to normal.

The Honourable Cameron Boardman raised the matter of the bans imposed on 22 February by the United Firefighters Union for Country Fire Authority full-time firefighters. The Honourable Cameron Boardman is unaware that those bans were totally lifted last Friday. Negotiations and discussions between the parties continued over the weekend and yesterday. I am advised that negotiations have been taking place between the CFA and the relevant department, that those bans have been lifted and that there is only one outstanding issue, which I am advised will be resolved very shortly.

The Honourable Bill Baxter asked me to pass on to the Premier a query regarding the memorandum of understanding the government entered into with the three independent members. He identified an issue he has had difficulty getting a minister to consider. I will pass on that query to the Premier, and he will respond in the usual manner.

The Honourable Ron Best raised for the Premier a matter concerning Telstra jobs and call centres. He referred to a public meeting held last night of about 100 people, who agreed on a motion to be forwarded to the Prime Minister and the Premier. The honourable member asked a number of questions, and I will ask the Premier to respond to at least one of those questions in the usual manner.

The Honourable Mark Birrell raised with me the industrial dispute involving Yallourn Energy. The Major Incidents Committee of Cabinet has been monitoring the situation for some time. It was not until 2 February that we were alerted to the possibility of power shedding taking place the next day — that is, on 3 February. The minister advised the house in some detail what transpired as a result of that alertness and of the shedding that took place because of the reduction in power.

**Hon. C. C. BROAD** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The first question I received was from the Honourable Elaine Carbines, and it was directed to the Minister for Local Government in the other place.

Her question concerns notices from the City of Greater Geelong to residents of Ocean Grove that have caused some distress because of the large potential costs sought. The honourable member requested that I refer the matter to the Minister for Local Government to see what can be done about the large proposed costs for those residents, and I will do that.

I also received a question from the Honourable Bruce Atkinson to the Minister for Transport regarding a proposal put to the minister by the City of Whitehorse that Whitehorse Road be run underground. The honourable member sought a response from the Minister for Transport regarding his reaction to the proposal and how he intends to respond. I will refer the matter to the minister.

The Honourable Bill Forwood raised with me the attendance at an ALP fundraising function of my chief of staff, Ms Robyn McLeod, whom I understand at least some members of the house would have welcomed into the Parliament if she had won in the electorate she contested at the last election; however, that was not to be. The answer to the question is no — of course not.

The next question, from the Honourable Wendy Smith, was also directed to the Minister for Transport. It concerned the extension of the Eastern Freeway and the consultation process the government is engaging in to determine extension options. The question to the Minister for Transport concerned the government's timetable for the extension, following the consultation process. I will refer that matter to the Minister for Transport.

The next question was from the Honourable Geoff Craig and was directed to the Minister for State and Regional Development. A business at Warragul produces hydroponic tomatoes, which by all accounts are of a very high quality. The honourable member raised the cost of the extension of gas supplies to that business. He requested that I raise with the Minister for State and Regional Development his signing off on a request for funding to assist with that connection and on the report that there is a proposal before the minister. I will raise those matters with the Minister for State and Regional Development.

The next question, from the Honourable Ron Bowden to be brought to the attention of the Minister for Local Government, concerned what sounds like, if this can be described as the short version, a most unfortunate planning dispute between the Bushby family and the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. The honourable member requested that the minister investigate the

situation and report on it. I will raise that matter with the Minister for Local Government.

The next question was from the Honourable Philip Davis. I note that there is a subsequent question from the Honourable Roger Hallam on the same matter — that is, advice to the government regarding the electricity supply situation that arose on 2 and 3 February. I am not certain to what extent the opposition has looked at how the electricity industry works in this state but, as I outlined earlier, the capacity of the system at any time is governed by a range of factors. Clearly the government was aware of the industrial situation when it came to office as it commenced under the previous government — I think last May. That is a factor the government was well aware of.

However, the circumstances that arose on 2 and 3 February were the result of a number of other contributing factors that were necessary for the system to be put at risk and for the government to find itself in that situation. Earlier I also described those factors, including temperatures and breakdowns in the system. As I have previously explained, it was not until that point that the government was advised by Nemmco that there was a risk to the system. Ultimately on 3 February notices were issued and there were system shutdowns on the afternoon of 3 February.

The next question, from the Honourable Neil Lucas to the Minister for Local Government, concerned the fencing of swimming pools, an important matter he has raised in the house on a number of occasions. He asked a number of questions, including whether there is a mechanism for following up the photographing of pools without fences, perhaps their being published in the *Age* newspaper. I will refer that matter to the Minister for Local Government. He also requested that there be a ministerial review of the success of the campaign under way to audit the fencing of swimming pools. I will refer that request also to the Minister for Local Government.

The final question was from the Honourable Roger Hallam. He again canvassed the matter of the date on which I became aware of the impending electricity crisis. My answer stands, having previously advised the house of the circumstances on 2 and 3 February.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Small Business) — The Honourable Dianne Hadden raised the concerns of small businesses in the Ballarat region about the lack of relevant information available on the goods and services tax and the ability of small business to comply with the GST regime. She asked that I raise

the matter with my federal colleagues, and I certainly shall.

The Honourable Peter Katsambanis referred to the GST and the new tax system and the fact that it is reality. We all accept that the GST is a reality and that small business operators still have concerns about the impact of the tax and the nature of compliance. It is good to get that recognition at last from the opposition.

Mr Katsambanis asked what action my department and I are taking to help small business. The business office is distributing Australian Taxation Office information on the GST. I speak to small businesses operators when I am in the regions in the hope that I can send the information they provide me to the Honourable Peter Reith so that he can provide assistance to meet their needs.

The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips referred to the Springvale–Dandenong *Times* of 9 February and to my visits to the Greater Dandenong region where I met with a number of small business operators from a wide range of industries, including manufacturing and retail. They came from as far away as the Mornington Peninsula. I visited a couple of factories in the process. It was a short visit organised by the department.

The Honourable Carlo Furletti referred to the burden of state regulation on small business, which he said is a more important issue than the GST. I say again that the GST is by far and away the major concern and is also a regulatory burden on small business. However, my department will conduct industry-by-industry reviews of the regulations imposed upon business and consider ways of dealing with them.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The Honourable David Davis expressed concern about upgrades to the Kew police station and the surrounding Boroondara area. I will raise the matter with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place.

The Honourable Kaye Darveniza referred to the western suburbs pool facility. I understand that with the financial support of the Department of State and Regional Development, six councils in the western suburbs have conducted a strategic planning exercise to review regional aquatic sports capacities and investigate the feasibility of developing a major regional pool. The results of the study are under consideration by the participating organisations and a number of locations are being considered as potential sites for a regional pool.

The Honourable Sang Nguyen wishes me to raise with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place his concern about police numbers in the western suburbs. I will do so.

I wish to thank the Honourable Andrea Coote for her question about youth suicide. It is, and should be considered as, a very significant issue in the community. I recognise the good work done by the Here for Life group in working to develop and reinforce self-esteem among young people, which is often so hard to put into a strategy or a program. I look forward to meeting with representatives of the Here for Life program to establish appropriate levels of involvement in making recommendations to the office of youth affairs.

The Honourable Jeanette Powell asked a question about the Young Rural Ambassadors program. As I mentioned during question time today, I will discuss the rural service program with members of the regional youth committees when I meet with them early next week. I understand it is only a one-off program. We will look closely at how the program can best work for rural communities, particularly young rural people, and how to ensure that young people are involved.

The Honourable Andrew Brideson referred to truck speeds and tailgating on the Monash Freeway. I will raise that issue with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place.

The Honourable Peter Hall asked a question about tram and train rolling stock and the maintenance of local provisions for the Victorian manufacturing sector. I will raise the matter with the Minister for Manufacturing Industry in the other place.

The Honourable Chris Strong referred to the Sandringham Secondary College campus structures. I will refer that to the Minister for Education in the other place.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 6.49 p.m.**