

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

19 June 2001

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Wednesday, 20 June 2001

The **PRESIDENT** (Hon. B. A. Chamberlain) took the chair at 10.05 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Ballarat sitting**

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

That the Council meet at the town hall in the City of Ballarat on Thursday, 16 August 2001 and that so much of the sessional orders be suspended as necessary to enable:

- (a) the sitting to commence at 10.30 a.m.;
- (b) general business to take precedence of all other business except formal business until 12.30 p.m.;
- (c) questions without notice to be taken and answers given to questions on notice at 2.00 p.m.;
- (d) government business to take precedence of all other business from the conclusion of questions until 5.00 p.m.; and
- (e) a motion for the adjournment of the house to be moved at 5.00 p.m.

I move this motion for the historic event of the Parliament moving from this place — I think the last time we moved was when the feds kicked us out — to Ballarat, which is a good initiative and will provide regional and rural Victorians with an opportunity to see how this Parliament operates. With the proposed sessional orders I have outlined in the motion people in the City of Ballarat and regional areas will be provided with a snapshot of what Parliament does in a normal sitting week. They will have the opportunity of seeing the conduct of general business, question time, government business and legislation. As was introduced — —

Hon. Bill Forwood — Don't forget the adjournment.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — And the adjournment — I was getting to that. During the government business program a piece of legislation will be debated, which the government hopes will be passed during the sitting on that day; that will be followed by the adjournment, after which we will return to this place, where we belong. It will be a good opportunity to open up the Parliament to the people of Victoria. I commend the motion to the house.

Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — The opposition supports the motion and looks forward to going to Ballarat. It is an historic opportunity for this house to travel to regional Victoria. It is without precedent and is very welcome. After the Premier announced that the Legislative Assembly would be going to Bendigo, we were pleased that our idea of this house going to Ballarat was taken up. I congratulate you, Mr President, on organising those matters.

We thank the government for the plan for the day. We particularly welcome paragraph (c), which says that answers will be given to questions on notice. That is also a precedent of recent days. We support the motion.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I am pleased to give the National Party's enthusiastic support to the motion. Members of the National Party are delighted that the Parliament of Victoria is moving out to regional Victoria on this historic occasion, and we are particularly pleased that the Legislative Council is showcasing Parliament in Ballarat. We have been involved in constructing the program for the day, and we appreciate being given the opportunity to do so. We look forward to participating in what will be an exciting and historic day for the Legislative Council.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I congratulate the parties on reaching agreement on a program for the day. It will showcase a number of aspects of our house that make it different from the Legislative Assembly, which is important. This is a first: we made inquiries of all other Parliaments around Australia and learnt that no other Parliament had sat outside its capital city. I congratulate the Premier on his initiative, and I congratulate all the party leaders in this place on the enthusiastic way in which they have taken up my suggestion to go to Ballarat.

A significant amount of work is being put into the day. The Usher of the Black Rod, Dr Ray Wright, will be producing a publication for the occasion, and we are looking to the party leaders to contribute words of wisdom to it. On the day a broad cross-section of the Ballarat community will be given the opportunity to watch the proceedings on a rolling basis. We are all looking forward to the sitting with great enthusiasm. I also thank the City of Ballarat for the enthusiastic way in which it has responded to our request.

Motion agreed to.

Sessional orders

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

That so much of the sessional orders be suspended as would prevent new business being taken after 8.00 p.m. during the sitting of the Council this day.

Motion agreed to.

COMMONWEALTH TREATY DOCUMENTS

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations), by leave, presented the following treaty documents:

- (a) bilateral agreement tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 27 February 2001, together with national interest analysis and regulation impact statement, dealing with —
- mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment between Australia and the Republic of Singapore
- (b) bilateral agreements tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 27 February 2001, together with national interest analysis, dealing with —
- reciprocal protection of classified information of defence interest, between Australia and the Kingdom of Denmark
- reciprocal protection of classified information of defence interest, between Australia and the Republic of South Africa
- air services agreements, between Australia and the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden
- air services agreement, between Australia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- air services agreement, between Australia and Samoa
- (c) multilateral agreements tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 27 February 2001, together with national interest analysis, dealing with —
- agreement establishing the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- constitution of the International Labour Organisation instrument of amendment
- Asia-Pacific Postal Union: second additional protocol to the constitution and the additional protocol to the general regulations
- (d) multilateral agreement tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 6 March 2001, together with national interest analysis and regulation impact statement, dealing with —
- treaty on fisheries, between certain Pacific island states and the United States of America
- (e) bilateral agreement tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 23 May 2001, together with national

interest analysis and regulation impact statement, dealing with —

films co-production agreement, between Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany

- (f) bilateral agreement tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 23 May 2001, together with national interest analysis, dealing with —

social security agreement, between Australia and New Zealand

- (g) multilateral agreements tabled in the commonwealth Parliament on 23 May 2001, together with national interest analysis, dealing with —

denunciation of ILO conventions: No. 15, Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention, 1921; and No. 21, Inspection of Emigrants Convention, 1926

withdrawal of ratification of ILO conventions: No. 57, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention, 1936; No. 76, Wages, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention, 1946; No. 93, Wages, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1949; and No. 109, Wages, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1958

protocol to amend the convention on limitation of liability for maritime claims

conservation of albatrosses and petrels agreement

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Hon. G. B. ASHMAN (Koonung).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Workcover premiums

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) presented final report, together with appendices, extracts from proceedings, minority report and minutes of evidence.

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) (*By leave*) —
The committee has just completed two interesting and involved references, and I am sure this report on the reference in relation to Workcover will make interesting reading. I place on the record my thanks to the members of the committee who have been involved in the last two reports, and particularly this one, for the time they have put into the work undertaken and the way they have agreed to travel around Victoria to collect evidence. It has been a long and involved process, and I appreciate their commitment.

I place on the record my appreciation for the work of the staff of the Economic Development Committee: our

excellent executive officer, Mr Richard Willis; our two research officers, Mark Ryan and Karen Ellingford; and our office manager, Tania Esposito. These officers have put in extra time on holidays and weekends to get the reports completed and all members of the committee appreciate very much their commitment and the time they have put in; and as chairman, I appreciate it even more.

Laid on table.

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

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1994 — No. 54.

Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 — No. 53.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Minister's exemption certificates under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rules Nos 53 and 54.

YOUTH: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — I move:

That this house condemns the government for failing Victoria's young people through a lack of action and opportunities.

As the Liberal Party's spokesman for youth affairs I am pleased to play this role in the party and at the same time speak on behalf of and represent the 900 000 young people in Victoria who fall under the definition of youth and are in the age bracket of 15 to 25 years. While I am pleased to be the Liberal spokesman at the same time it saddens me to have to talk about youth in Victoria in the context of today's motion. However, I am forced to do so because of the government's lack of action in getting on with the job of looking after the interests of young people in Victoria.

The lack of action is headed up by a confused minister. His confusion has been evident from early on in Parliament, when he had difficulty defining what he thought youth was. Suffice it to say that he said, 'Youth is youth'. He was trying to answer some questions put to him at the time by the Honourable Cameron Boardman, who was keen to seek the minister's definition. That was an early sign of the confusion of the minister in presiding over youth affairs in Victoria.

There are also a number of other areas in which the actions of the government and the minister deserve condemnation. We in this chamber have heard plenty in recent times about the bungling of funding for the Freeza program. Opposition members are aware, as are plenty of young people in Victoria, that the minister ignored a very important youth initiative last year — Youth Week Victoria. As we heard in this house as late as last night, he has messed up the youth employment line and web site. The government and the minister have struggled to make their much-talked-about round table discussions work. They were put to this house as having an important role in the government listening to the voice of young people in Victoria, but it has had a struggle to make them work.

Part of the struggle for the Minister for Youth Affairs with his youth round tables was the fact that not long after announcing them to the house he was forced to make a personal explanation concerning comments he had made about the previous government's approach to consultation with young people, the very successful Premier's Youth Council. As a result of his lack of understanding over the way that program worked the minister was forced to make a personal explanation.

Another area which is indicative of the lack of action and provision of opportunities by this government is seen in the youth unemployment figures which are rising in metropolitan and rural and regional Victoria.

I intend to address each of those areas during my contribution today. I look forward to hearing the minister's contribution in response to this motion. I am certain young people throughout Victoria are keen to hear of action rather than just talk by the government so far as youth affairs and youth activities are concerned.

I am advised that the National Party spokesperson on youth affairs, the Honourable Jeanette Powell, wishes to make a contribution. With her understanding of rural and regional issues no doubt she will be making a contribution which will bear listening to. In the limited time available, which has been reduced somewhat by the tabling of various treaties, the Honourable Andrew Olexander, who has been doing some valuable work not only in his electorate but throughout Victoria as a representative on a youth committee established by the opposition, wishes to put some remarks on the record in respect of a number of the areas I have outlined in my introduction.

The lack of action by the government is basically summed up by the fact that rather than taking action, the government and the minister take what they perceive to be action — that is, engage in public

relations exercises, conduct reviews or seek reports into various aspects of youth activity in Victoria. I suppose that is understandable for a minister in this government who sees every other minister conducting a range of reviews and inquiries. No minister wants to be left out; they want to say, 'I want one too.' The minister has told the house about one review in particular which is apparently being finalised. Given the government's track record across a number of departments when it talks about things currently being completed or finalised — as we discovered in respect of the small business ethnic enterprise advisory council; that has taken seven months and the government has not appointed the 15 people to it yet — finalisation of the Victorian youth strategy may take some time.

The starting point for the government in paying lip-service to this issue, as it has to a range of youth activities, was for the Minister for Youth Affairs to make a ministerial statement on youth affairs more than 12 months ago. I revisited that ministerial statement in preparation for today's debate and I was reminded that in the introduction to that statement the minister said that in working with young people the government would be guided by the four principles of consultation, choice, support and recognition. Sadly, there was not a fifth principle which would have been action. The consultation, recognition and support goes on but the action is missing.

Further in that ministerial statement the minister talked about his role and the government developing policy and providing service delivery that meets the diversity of needs of young people. Under the head of 'key approaches' the minister states:

I have identified five strategic approaches to ensure that this occurs.

The 'five' strategic approaches then followed but there were only four dot points. I know it is a small matter but it is an early sign of the minister's confusion — while he was able to tell us that he had identified five strategic approaches, he was only able to list four.

One of those strategic approaches was the establishment of the Office for Youth. I think this is probably what the government and the minister would claim is their greatest achievement so far or the greatest definition of the action they are taking to support young people in Victoria. The government established the Office for Youth and moved youth affairs out of the Department of Human Services and into the Department of State and Regional Development where the minister is placed. I guess that is a bit like the metooism of ministers. I said they want to conduct reviews, reports and inquiries and I guess the minister

was aware that his leader in the upper house had moved her office three times and he thought he should move an office as well, so he moved the Office for Youth from the Department of Human Services into his department. That seems to have been the most significant action that has been taken — to move the Office for Youth from one end of town to the other. Whether that has delivered any tangible benefits to the young people of Victoria remains to be seen. It would appear that most of the work that goes on in the Office for Youth is planning, reviewing and working on strategies.

In the ministerial statement of last year the Minister for Youth Affairs also said he had:

... requested the Office for Youth to begin work on the development of a comprehensive youth policy for Victoria ...

One would have thought Labor had a youth policy going into the election in 1999 but last year the government decided to develop a comprehensive youth policy for Victoria. A discussion paper was developed on the Victorian youth strategy and the closing date for responses was April this year. In the past 12 months we have seen the discussion paper produced and submissions called for; the talking has gone on for 12 months and while the talking goes on there is a lack of action and a lack of opportunities for young people in Victoria.

To top it off, in terms of all the talk that goes on and the reports, reviews and inquiries that are conducted, the Minister for Sport and Recreation and/or the government are sitting on two further reports. The first is an evaluation of the Freeza program, which has been the subject of so much discussion since the budget was tabled and the opposition discovered that its funding had been reduced by \$1 million and would continue only for the first six months of this financial year. The evaluation of the Freeza program should be very valuable for the minister in future deliberations about the continuation of the program.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — Enormously beneficial.

Hon. I. J. COVER — Yes, enormously beneficial. The report may have been completed prior to the budget, but there is uncertainty surrounding it. I understand the evaluation was conducted by people from the Victoria University of Technology. If the review is complete I call on the minister and the government to release it and end the uncertainty so all parties can work towards continuing the Freeza program in the way it has served young people in recent years.

I understand another evaluation is being carried out by the government which will provide a lot of valuable information that will assist young people — that is, the evaluation of the School Focused Youth Service program, which Dr Ross raised in this house last night.

I know from talking to youth workers around Victoria, but particularly in Geelong, where I and other Liberal members have regular meetings with those involved in youth services, that they are supportive of this valuable program because it assists young people who may be in danger of dropping out of school and falling through the cracks. It is important that the program continue, but it is equally important that the evaluation and/or report, if complete, is released and acted upon by the government. I understand from the minister's response last night that the program is not necessarily his responsibility but he was at pains, especially in his ministerial statement last year and other statements during the course of the year, to point out that the Office for Youth and his department are taking a whole-of-government approach to youth affairs. Although the program may not be the minister's direct responsibility, surely it falls under his description of taking a whole-of-government approach to youth affairs in Victoria.

The government and the minister have demonstrated in many other ways that they are not listening to the views or acting on behalf of young people. In August last year Youth Week Victoria was conducted. When the minister made his ministerial statement in April he said he would be working on developing a comprehensive strategy or policy for youth affairs and subsequently he released the discussion paper for the youth strategy. In August he had an opportunity to participate in Youth Week Victoria.

Hon. M. T. Luckins — He didn't even turn up!

Hon. I. J. COVER — Yes, the minister did not even turn up. Youth Week Victoria involved a range of activities, not just in metropolitan Melbourne but throughout regional Victoria. It may have been another issue if the events had taken place on the weekend but they went from Monday to Friday, so there was no excuse for the minister not attending some events. Not only did the minister show no direct interest in the events, but the government did not provide any funding for them. Instead it chose to concentrate on National Youth Week, which has its merits but tends to focus more on the lighter side of youth activities such as karaoke events, mural painting and a surfing competition.

Had the minister attended in Queen's Hall on the final day of Youth Week Victoria, Friday, 18 August last year, he would have met the youth week ambassadors who presented key recommendations resulting from their debate at youth week forums throughout the state. The issues that the young people presented to a meeting chaired by the Honourable Andrew Olexander included youth finance, physical and emotional health, street violence, substance abuse, teen sexuality, youth culture, the Olympics, the family unit, depression, youth suicide, body image, fitness, road safety, among others. It is a comprehensive list of real issues that young people want to talk about, place in front of government and members of Parliament and, more importantly, want action on.

The document entitled 'Youth Voice of Victoria 2000', which contains key recommendations developed by more than 2250 young Victorians from 162 schools and organisations, was presented to the government and the opposition. I have my copy and I trust the minister has his. I will be interested to hear, given that the document was presented last August, whether any action has been taken by the minister and the government on the important recommendations from the young people who took part in Youth Week Victoria at locations as widespread as Gippsland, Geelong, Melbourne, Wangaratta and Bendigo.

There were important issues that would provide a basis for the minister and the government to tackle and provide responsive action to these recommendations. I understand Youth Week Victoria will be with us again this year. I further understand that again there has been little or no interest shown by the minister and the government.

Hon. G. D. Romanes — There were three government members in attendance at that meeting.

Hon. I. J. COVER — I stand corrected. Ms Romanes points out that there were three government members in attendance on the day the document was presented, but I make the point that the minister was not in attendance. Clearly three government members make up one minister!

The government has sought to place its policy direction into the Victorian Youth Strategy. It released a discussion paper and sought responses to that, which closed on 18 April. The 'Victorian youth strategy' discussion paper and accompanying document are typical of the government's approach to youth affairs because the government refers to the serious issues that young people are talking about and wanting action on, yet on the other hand takes a PR talkfest approach and

produces glossy brochures, which the minister is always pleased to launch and report on, along with other things such as postcards and stickers and the occasional help line, if it can get it to work.

At page 4 of the 'Victorian youth strategy' discussion paper the introduction says:

In April 2000 the Minister for Youth Affairs, the Honourable Justin Madden MLC, made a ministerial statement in which he outlined the government's vision of governing with young Victorians.

It may have been appropriate at the time of the ministerial statement to start the work of having the strategy discussion paper ready to go, but it has been a drawn-out process of talking, reviewing and inquiring into things. Basically the strategy discussion paper was a rehash of the ministerial statement. It is 12 months further down the track and other activities have taken place, such as Youth Week Victoria, which would have provided starting points for the government to roll up its sleeves and act on behalf of the young people of Victoria. It is only a glossy PR document that basically repeats what was in the ministerial statement and, in turn, reports on some of the activities that are already in place.

Thank goodness for the existence of the Freeza program and the Victorian youth development program, both of which had been created by the previous government and have been extremely successful. Thank goodness they are in existence because the minister or the government would have had little to hang their hats on in terms of activities that are in place for Victorians.

As I understand it, the Victorian Youth Strategy has received 150 or so responses. One of the submissions came from the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (Yacvic), which is regarded as the peak body and the leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria. In its submission it makes pertinent observations and at the same time damning observations of the activities thus far of the government in youth affairs. It begins by saying that there has been a lack of a coordinated policy linked with the youth sector.

It noted that the government and the minister have made great play of the fact that they have established the Office of Youth: they have taken it out of the Department of Human Services and put it into another department. Interestingly, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria suggests that it should be moved again to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which really is the place at the centre of government. It will be interesting to see and hear what the minister's response is to that

suggestion and whether it is taken up in the youth strategy, given that he is pleased about placing the Office of Youth in his own department and now there is a suggestion from the peak body that it should be in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The submission says that there should be established a youth policy advisory council to link in directly with the Minister for Youth Affairs. The most interesting point made in the submission on the youth strategy by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria is that:

A youth strategy should not be a public relations document for the government that describes the programs that are currently offered ...

That clearly identifies what has been going on and what the discussion paper is all about — it was a public relations document. More must be done by the government in an active way to provide opportunities for young people, to promote policies and to explain how those policies can assist young people.

Yacvic further says:

We believe that the process to date has been inadequate and has not achieved the broad-based support necessary for a youth strategy.

That is significant coming from the peak body for youth affairs, because its view is that the process has been inadequate. It may well, by extension, feel that the government's handling of youth affairs has been inadequate in total.

Yacvic has called for more discussion and consultation, which is all very well, but it is time for action by the government.

Recently the house heard about the youth employment line and web site. It heard how the government has mishandled rather than handled the development of those facilities. During the adjournment debate in the house last night the Honourable Andrew Olexander said that in March the Minister for Youth Affairs, in tandem with the Minister for Industrial Relations, had attended a function in St Kilda that was attended by about 3000 young people — and, no doubt, they would have been excited by the presence there of the Minister for Youth Affairs!

At that function the ministers announced that a special employment hotline would be established to help young workers. In a press release dated 12 March the Minister for Youth Affairs states:

... postcards and stickers would be distributed through universities, TAFEs, cafes and cinemas as part of the campaign.

That is an example of the hard-hitting campaign for youth in Victoria: it amounted to the distribution of postcards and stickers! I have spoken to young university students on Victorian campuses and, as I understand it, although they made inquiries on their campuses they saw no stickers.

In the same press release the minister states:

... I encourage young people to visit the web site established at www.youth.vic.gov.au/youthatwork ...

There seems to be confusion about whether that site has yet been established and what youth web sites exist in Victoria. Basically, the minister is relying on other government agencies to do the work for his department rather than having a direct link to the minister's portfolio base.

A couple of weeks ago the house heard the confusion amplified when the Honourable Jeanette Powell asked the Minister for Youth Affairs about the web site for youth. Not only had the web site been a Labor election promise, but also its establishment had been mentioned in a ministerial statement delivered in this place last year by the Minister for Youth Affairs. In response to Mrs Powell's question without notice, the minister said he believed the youth employment line, as opposed to the web site, was still being established and that the web site linked to the employment line was also being established. I do not think anyone is any the clearer in working out the status of the employment line and the web site, and for which ones the minister is responsible. Today the minister has the opportunity to clarify that situation.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — Please!

Hon. I. J. COVER — Yes, please! I turn to the confusion over the ongoing saga of Freeza. The issue came to light as a result of the budget, as \$1 million has been allocated for six months — that is, to the end of 2001 but not for the first six months of 2002, which would be the second part of the financial year. The house has heard various attempts to explain how funding has been allocated for only six months. It was said that on the one hand, the change was because the Victorian Youth Strategy had been developed, so the Freeza program had to be looked at in the light of that strategy; yet on the other hand a couple of weeks ago the minister told the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee a different story. On that day the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips was right on the money in trying to get to the bottom of the Freeza funding story.

The confusion grew when the minister said the budget papers were clear and that the funding was for only six months but that the target for the number of people who attended Freeza was set for 12 months. The minister must have been told, 'We cannot fund Freeza for the whole year but at the same time put in your targets for 12 months'. The minister made statements to the house, at the PAEC hearings and through the media; he guaranteed that the money would be there in the second six months of the year.

Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips interjected.

Hon. I. J. COVER — I do not doubt the minister's word, but I would love to see it in writing — and the place for that would be in the budget. The minister had the opportunity to make a submission during the budget process to ensure the money was available to enable the Freeza project to be conducted as it has been in the past. But either the minister failed to submit or made an inadequate submission to the Department of Treasury and Finance to continue the previous levels of funding for Freeza.

The reason given for it not being yet available is that it will be transferred to the Office for Youth in the second half of this year, but I have also heard the minister say that the \$1 million will come from the Community Support Fund. If the government is able to take the \$1 million for six months from the Community Support Fund, the minister should have hit the government up front for \$2 million for 12 months.

I am concerned about how the Community Support Fund is being run. If the Freeza funds run short, does the minister ring the Treasurer and say, 'I have mucked up my budget submissions, I am \$1 million short, can you help me? Otherwise, I will have to go out and tell young Victorians that the program, which has been so important and so well supported by them, will fall over'.

Hon. B. C. Boardman — What direction have you got otherwise?

Hon. I. J. COVER — Opposition members may not be as aware these days of what the guidelines are for the Community Support Fund as when we were in government, when we knew what they were. I am disappointed because the minister knows what a good program the Freeza program is. He has talked about it many times in this house. Indeed on 25 October of last year when responding to a question he said:

The Freeza program is a magnificent program.

I seek guidance from my leader, the Honourable Mark Birrell, who would well know how the budget process works from his days as a minister. I would think around October would be probably about the time you might be working on budget submissions.

Hon. M. A. Birrell — Indeed; I am with you.

Hon. I. J. COVER — The Leader of the Opposition says that, indeed, he is with me. If in October of last year the minister was saying he thought the Freeza program was a magnificent program he might have been able to echo those words in his budget submission and say, 'It's a magnificent program. Let's keep it going. Let's put \$2 million into it and keep it going'.

There is concern among the providers and the participants in the Freeza program around the state. The *Ararat Advertiser* of 5 June reports concerns articulated by an Ararat and Stawell Freeza provider, Damian Auton. The minister was obviously contacted for the article, and at the end of it is quoted as saying:

I can give an absolute guarantee that Freeza will continue to be funded beyond the 2001 calendar year.

As I said, I do not doubt the minister's word but I would like to see it in writing other than in a press release. I would like to see it in a budget paper. All we can do is wish the minister well as he seeks to find that million dollars from the Community Support Fund or some other funding source. In the *Bendigo Advertiser*, Josh Pell, who is a spokesperson for the Bendigo Freeza committee, is reported as having said that the decision by the Bracks government contradicted previous youth policy statements and that the decision would also affect the potential for growth of Bendigo region bands and the music industry.

It is reported in the *Geelong Independent* that the program is under threat in Geelong. Geelong Freeza coordinator, Jo York, is reported as having said:

... loss of the program would be a big loss for Geelong youths.

...

'At our last rave we had more than 600 people. I'm sure parents would also be disappointed because the events we have are drug and alcohol-free and provide a safe environment for youth to party'.

Similar sentiments were echoed from Castlemaine by the organisers of young people's events there.

An article in the *Progress Press* of 18 June states:

Boroondara youth workers are taking a 'wait and see' approach on the future of youth music program, Freeza.

Youth workers from Monash council have spoken out over fears that the innovative program is in danger because of state government funding cuts.

This is only two days ago! If the minister by press release or through media contact has said even as late as two days ago he has given this guarantee that the money will be there, either the message has not come through or the youth workers are taking a wait-and-see approach because they want to see a genuine commitment in writing and a funding allocation.

I will conclude briefly on a couple of other quick points because I know time is limited today and others wish to speak. It has been a struggle to make the youth round tables occur on a regular basis. There was an undertaking by the government that there would be four a year and that at least half would be in country Victoria. In the first year there were three, and one of those was hastily convened in Sale in December last year. I think just before Christmas the government realised it had not run a country one and proceeded to hastily convene a youth round table in Sale. Previously the former Premier's youth council had run some 13.

The minister discovered this when he was challenged about it in August of last year and had to make a personal explanation. He had said his youth round tables were going to be so much more frequent and so much more successful because the previous government had only run two. However, on 30 August the minister told the house:

I am now advised that the committee did in fact meet, in different forms, a total of 13 times during the period of its existence.

Hon. J. M. Madden — There is a bit of a difference, with emphasis on different forms.

Hon. I. J. COVER — What does that mean?

Hon. J. M. Madden — Emphasis on different forms.

Hon. I. J. COVER — The Premier's Youth Council was as close as you will get to the minister's round table style of activity. There are some concerns even about the make-up of the youth round tables and whether they have representation from a wide cross-section of people from the community aged 12 to 25. As I pointed out, and to emphasise the point, an information sheet of last year from the government's Office for Youth states that at least half of the round tables each year involve rural young people and are held in a rural city. However, as I said, so far there has only been the one, which was held last year in Sale.

The outcomes of each round table meeting are written up and distributed to all members of the government by the minister and published on the Office for Youth web site. It is my understanding the meeting in Sale of December last year has yet to appear on that web site

Hon. A. P. Olexander — It is still not there.

Hon. I. J. COVER — It is still not there some six months after it was held. The other area of concern is that as a result of the government's lack of action and failure to provide opportunities, young people are suffering in the area of employment. It is an important issue for young people as they make the transition from school to the workplace and desire to enter the work force. The minister might well say that it is not an area of his responsibility, but he has said his department is taking a whole-of-government approach. Therefore the Office for Youth actions should be linked to other government departments so that opportunities are created for young people to take their places in the work force.

I turn to some recent statistics compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the category of 15 to 24-year-olds in country areas of Victoria in February 2000, not long after the government came to office, the unemployment rate in Barwon Western was 15.1 per cent. Some 12 months later in February 2001 it had risen to 17 per cent. In Central Highlands, the area you represent, Mr Acting President, the unemployment rate for 15 to 24-year-olds has risen from 12.7 per cent in February 2000 to 16.6 per cent in February 2001. In Loddon Mallee the rate has risen from 17.6 per cent to 18.3 per cent, and in Gippsland it has risen from 22.4 per cent to 22.9 per cent. So, inroads are not being made at all. In some cases a holding pattern is seen, but the majority have risen.

In suburban Melbourne, Outer Eastern has risen from 12.1 per cent to 13.5 per cent. In South Eastern the rate has increased from 6.8 per cent to 13.7 per cent. I note, however, that in North Western the rate has decreased from 19.6 per cent in February 2000 to 12.5 per cent in February 2001. The government may well be focusing on assisting people in Labor-held electorates. However, by the same token, that decrease is ruled out completely by the rate in South Eastern increasing from 6.8 per cent to 13.7 per cent.

All areas of high unemployment need attention and the government cannot focus on one area at the expense of another when it says it is governing for all Victorians. The Outer Western area is stable at 17 per cent. Inner Melbourne has increased from 12.7 per cent to 12.9 per cent, and North Eastern has increased from 7.9 per cent

to 8.7 per cent. So generally speaking the unemployment rate has increased for young people aged between 15 and 24 years, which shows that the government is not providing action or opportunities for young people through its youth affairs activities.

Like my colleagues on this side of the house I like to be positive about young people in Victoria and the contribution they make to this state, not only at this time in their lives but the contribution they will make in the future. Government policies should always be mindful of providing opportunities for them now and into the future. That is the approach members of the Liberal Party are taking. We are committed to Victoria's young people; we are committed to developing policy that is responsive to the real and serious issues that affect them. I am confident that we will be able to develop that policy and provide opportunities for them, given the past record of the Liberal Party when in government. Meanwhile, while I am confident, positive and optimistic about young people and their opportunities in this state — as they will be provided by the Liberal Party — the government, I sadly say, stands condemned for failing the youth of Victoria. I say to the minister and to the government in respect of youth affairs — lift your game!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Youth Affairs) — It is interesting to note how much of a priority young people are for honourable members opposite now they are in opposition, and how much of a priority they were for the Liberal–National coalition government during the Jeff Kennett era. Today highlights how much of a priority the issue is for the opposition in that we are in the last sitting week of a session and the time frame is condensed for opposition business allowing only 2 hours for discussion of this issue. It is the last item on their agenda now they are in opposition and it was the last item on their agenda when they were in government.

The Bracks government was elected with a clear message: it was serious about the welfare, participation, views and needs of young people. It is interesting that now members opposite are in opposition they are suddenly all ears to young people. They were not so in government, but suddenly in opposition they are — they have ears like taxi doors. They are carpetbaggers in the true sense of the word.

We came to government with a youth pledge that we outlined as a commitment in the lead-up to the election. Unlike the previous government our pledges were not just hollow political promises but undertakings that we

intended to keep and have kept. They are commitments we are prepared to be judged on.

I turn to the commitments that were part of the youth pledge. Firstly, the government is committed to establishing a better Victorian certificate of education. Through the government's response to the Kirby review the government is making VCE more relevant to all students and is providing improved access to vocational and educational training, which is linked to technical and further education (TAFE) qualifications and apprenticeships.

Secondly, the government is committed to a boost to training. It has commenced the process of rebuilding the TAFE system, which had been allowed to lag and flounder through the Kennett government years. The government has allocated \$127 million over the next four years into the TAFE system to restructure it. The government is also providing \$47 million to provide 6000 public and private sector apprenticeships and traineeships over the next four years.

The importance of that fact should not be lost in today's debate. One of the things that was not necessarily appreciated by the Kennett government in the years it set about privatising so many government authorities was that the process of privatisation resulted in a significant reduction in the number of public service apprenticeships traditionally provided by the government. The social obligation of many of the privatised organisations did not extend to providing employment opportunities for apprentices. That is why the Labor government is providing \$47 million to provide 6000 public and private sector apprenticeships and traineeships over the next four years.

The government is also establishing the youth employment line. I note how vocal the opposition has been in its anticipation of this project. The fact that this is a great idea has suddenly jelled, and that is why opposition members are so vocal in their anticipation. That youth employment line, which is currently being developed and is in the last stages of the tender process, will provide access to information and assistance on careers, wages, employment conditions, contracts of employment, apprenticeships, traineeships, occupational health and safety, and employment opportunities.

Hon. I. J. Cover — When?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — It is interesting to note the impatience of the opposition. But when it was in government its impatience — —

Hon. B. C. Boardman interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. E. G. Stoney) — Order! The

Honourable Cameron Boardman is out of his place.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — When opposition members were in government for seven years, the idea did not even enter their minds. It is not hard to be sceptical about the carpetbaggers on the other side of the house.

If you are interested, Mr Acting President, I will describe further the work this government has done for young people. The government is ensuring that students are supported in their transition from school to the work force. When coming into government it was easy for Labor to recognise the failure of the previous Kennett government to link support structures for young people. While the former government was happy to take money out of education and training, it was not prepared to support young people and their linkages into the employment system, and there was no follow-up.

The Bracks government is supporting young people not only by putting more money into education and training but also by linking and following up on their support systems so it knows what young people are doing, where they are going and what will happen to them in the future. In that way the education and employment outcomes can be measured. At the end of the day, the debate about young people — regardless of the political rhetoric and opportunism of the opposition — is about outcomes for young people.

This government will stand on its performance — just as the Kennett government stood on its performance and its failure to deliver to young people — and it will be judged by that. The best the Kennett government could do in its years in office was to establish the youth council it likes to talk about in such glowing terms — the youth council that was really just a photographic opportunity for local members to appear in their local papers standing beside young people. It was an opportunity for the former government's leader — the Honourable Jeff Kennett — to wear the black shirts, the black ties and the black suits. Those images reinforced the fact that it was a government about style and not substance.

I also reinforce this government's solid commitment to developing a comprehensive drug strategy. Young people are very conscious of all these issues, as the Honourable Ian Cover mentioned, and this government is acting on them, which the Kennett government failed to do.

This government is working on improving Victoria's natural environment, which is another issue that young people feel very strongly about. They know they will be around for a long time and that they will see what happens to the natural environment in the future. Unfortunately, the opposition is keen to scuttle any moves in the direction of natural environment protection.

This government is also working towards reconciliation with indigenous Australians, which is a key priority for the young people of Victoria. It is not necessarily a priority for the opposition parties.

The government's achievements under its Youth Pledge represent a mere fraction of what it is doing to support young people across the state of Victoria. I have not yet mentioned that the government has improved access to public transport for young people by providing tertiary students with cheaper public transport. That need reinforces what happened when the former government privatised service providers — it locked out the social obligations the service providers had when they were in the hands of government. In privatising so many organisations and authorities, that social obligation was left out of the charter, and that social obligation directly affects young people.

Since forming government Labor has established the Office for Youth within the Department of Education, Employment and Training. That reflects the high priority the government has given to education, employment and training pathways for young people.

It also represents opportunity, which should be noted because the former government's equivalent of the Office for Youth was in the Department of Human Services. I have mentioned on a number of occasions that by locating youth affairs in the Department of Human Services the former government indicated that it saw young people as problematic. On coming into government I made a ministerial statement — I want to reinforce this because it should not be lost on the opposition — which was the first ministerial statement about young people in almost a decade. The former government had all those opportunities across the Kennett years and it did not take them. This government is about opportunity; the Kennett government was about the failure of opportunity.

The Bracks government has also established a youth culture and communications unit within the office to ensure consideration of a broader view of youth issues. As I mentioned, youth issues do not necessarily equal the welfare issues that the previous government believed were symbolic of young people. Our

government does not see youth as a problem to be solved or an issue to be addressed. We recognise that young people have a variety of needs, a diverse range of skills, talents, interests and views and can make a significant contribution to their respective local communities in many ways. This government is interested in listening to and hearing — the difference is 'hearing' — what young people have to say at many levels.

The government has again funded youth peak bodies to represent the views of young people. Let me set the record straight: the Kennett government made the decision to pull the rug out from under the youth peak bodies. The former government did not want to pay somebody to tell it what it did not want to hear. At the end of the day, that truly reflects the inability of the Kennett government to come to terms with issues it could not deal with, did not know how to deal with and had no strategies to deal with it.

This government has re-established the youth round tables to provide a real opportunity for young people to voice their views, directly to me as minister and to the rest of government, on a full range of issues. Next week the fourth youth round table for the year will take place in Devenish and will focus on access to services for young rural people.

I will give the house examples of some of our earlier forums. The one held in Frankston related directly to the Melbourne metropolitan strategy from a young person's perspective. Being in attendance all day allowed me not only to glean an enormous amount of information about young people's views but also to contribute that information towards the development of the metropolitan strategy.

A forum held in Sale focused on participation and self-expression. From that I gleaned that although opportunities exist, young people need to access information about those opportunities and their location. Bringing young people together enabled each person to highlight in no uncertain terms the services and opportunities they knew about — often services and opportunities that others did not know about. So the success came not only from being able to direct that information to government but also from enabling young people at the forum to network and immediately become better informed about the range of diverse opportunities for recreation, participation and self-expression existing within their local regional areas.

A youth forum held in Melbourne highlighted how the diversity of views held across the community is

reflected in the views of young people, as shown by the recent drug debate.

The Bracks government has provided additional support for the department through 15 regional youth committees which identify and advise on issues affecting young people, provide recommendations and identify additional services or support requirements and present ideas for better coordination and alternate delivery of current youth services.

It is interesting that although the opposition when in government was prepared to set up regional youth committees it was not prepared to resource them, which meant that the regional youth committees were without guidelines or terms of reference — which we have since set in place — and without substantial support to enable them to talk with and direct advice to the Kennett government. By its failure to resource those committees the former government undermined the youth sector. It took some fantastic workers from the sector and put them into an under-resourced committee to which the Kennett government did not listen. It undermined the valuable services young people could have been accessing but were unable to because their key workers had been taken out of the field.

This government has ensured that those committees are resourced, have clear terms of reference and that their recommendations are listened to and acted upon. That is the key significant and strategic difference between the actions of the former government and those of this government.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — You can't say that!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I can say that, because the regional youth committees have been instrumental in the conduct of the youth round tables. They have participated in the design and development of those youth round tables and have also participated in the design and development of the grant allocation for National Youth Week, to which the Honourable Ian Cover referred. The federal and state governments are committed to National Youth Week. The program will receive bipartisan support, regardless of political allegiances. We are committed to young people nationally.

I have on many occasions referred the house to National Youth Week, which celebrates and acknowledges the significant contribution of young people across Australia. Although the dilettantes on the other side of the house may wish to trivialise the significance of it, they should not lose sight of the emphasis given to it by the federal government through

the amount of resources it has provided for it and this government's commitment to that event.

I fear that the opposition has politicised the Victorian Youth Week in the same way in an attempt to use it as a whip against the government.

National Youth Week has been a policy priority of the Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. It is intended as a celebration in which young people can be linked to and be involved in their local communities by which their representation can be enhanced through the media. I believe the initiative has worked very well; otherwise, the federal government would not have continued to make a commitment to that. What is often lost by the opposition is that over 90 discrete initiatives currently exist for young people, located across all government departments.

I will give one example of a significant issue the government is concerned about, which I would expect the Honourable Jeanette Powell to discuss, as it is a significant regional issue — that is, the issue of mental health and young people, particularly the issue of youth suicide out there in the community. The government has committed significant resources to youth suicide prevention. It is committing a total of \$3.1 million per annum over three years to increase the number of residential rehabilitation services for young people across the state from 4 to 16; \$1.25 million over five years for rural youth suicide initiatives which target the prevention of youth suicide in rural Victoria; and \$250 000 over three years for initiatives targeting gay and lesbian young people. As well as that it is providing \$1.3 million per annum over three years to establish an early intervention service with 17 early intervention positions across metropolitan and regional Victoria for adolescents and young adults at risk of experiencing significant psychological disturbance or mental disorder. Those programs are discretely located in their respective departments. The way this government is working closely across departments to ensure the fine work of such programs should not be forgotten by honourable members.

One of the key indicators the government should also be judged on is the establishment of an Interdepartmental Committee on Youth. This is a very significant initiative. While there are 90 discrete initiatives across government, often — and this was seen by the previous government — they are not necessarily coordinated in a way that is strategic to the needs of young people. Through the establishment of the Interdepartmental Committee on Youth we are seeing a high level of coordination across programs and

policy areas to assist in coherent planning and comprehensive, integrated service delivery. Most significantly, the Bracks government has committed itself to a comprehensive youth strategy for Victoria, which will help to better plan and deliver services to young people aged 12 to 25 years.

I know there is a degree of scepticism on the part of the opposition. But let me put this into context. We have come from a period of virtually 10 years in which there was a lack of focus on young people, particularly during the Kennett government years. There has been virtually no mention of those issues in the house.

The comprehensive youth strategy framework will be a framework for governments for the next 10 years. It is not something you enter into lightly or without substantial consultation. A discussion paper was released earlier this year to underpin a thorough community consultation phase. The discussion paper provided an overview of the status of young people in Victoria to put it into context, current youth issues, and the government's response to young people to date. It also identified key themes and posed a significant series of questions.

Over 50 consultation activities were held over the consultation period with young people and key stakeholders. Over 150 submissions have been received by the Office for Youth, which is currently in the process of coordinating the form of the draft strategy. It is expected that the final strategy will be released in September this year, after discussions are held with the key stakeholders — the likes of the regional youth committees and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria or Yacvic — to ensure that they are supportive and we are all heading in the same direction.

The scaremongering of the opposition — and I used the term 'carpetbagging' earlier, because it is appropriate in that sense — about the Freeza program has only undermined the fine work done out there with the program. I have made it very clear in press releases and in statements in this house that the government continues to support the Freeza program, and it has written to the providers to ensure them of its continued support. But that has not been heard by opposition members, and they are out there in the regions undermining the work that young people and the sector continue to do.

I shall just reinforce what the government has done. Although the opposition is very keen to highlight programs such as Freeza and the Victorian Youth Development program, to which they so keenly wanted to attach themselves to because that was the best they

could do in government, I point out that the Freeza program has been funded to a significantly higher amount in this government's term in office. This government has broadened the programs because specific needs out there for young people had to be addressed.

For example, through the Freeza committees we have put in place a program for young people who are attracted to the same sex to assist families and safety so that those young people feel comfortable in the surroundings. We have also done that for the young people from the Horn of Africa. We have seen the specific needs and addressed them and that is why the program has been broadened. While the opposition may say it is only \$1 million for six months, when it was in government that sum was the only allocation it made for an entire year. The government doubled the funding for Freeza in its first budget and will continue that fine work into the second six months of this financial year.

The Youth Development program has also been expanded. It was affectionately referred to by the media as Jeff's Cadets — and that might have been appropriate because it had a sort of military focus under the previous government. We have expanded that to have a significant community focus. There are now 5775 students participating in the Youth Development program — which is 2755 more young people than in the last year of the Kennett government.

Since gaining office the Bracks government has undertaken many more initiatives for young people. It has reinforced a positive media portrayal of young people. I note many local papers in regional areas, as well as the *Herald Sun*, have or are setting up or establishing youth pages or youth supplements to portray young people and their issues in a positive and not a problematic light, as occurred under the previous government.

It is interesting that the opposition likes to highlight the publication of the youth strategy, because the government is not in the habit of producing glossy brochures and expensive marketing campaigns such as those produced by the previous government. Honourable members may not be aware of many of the activities being undertaken because they are discretely located across a number of government departments. Honourable members should be assured that the young people at whom they are targeted are aware of them. They are also aware that the government respects their views, listens to their needs and delivers opportunities and support. We are not a government about black shirts and black ties. We are not a government about style. We are a government about substance.

Hon. E. J. POWELL (North Eastern) — The National Party is happy to support the motion moved by the Honourable Ian Cover:

That this house condemns the government for failing Victoria's young people through a lack of action and opportunities.

In his opening comments the Minister for Sport and Recreation said the motion was being brought forward in the last week of the session and that the time set aside for debating matters under general business is shorter than usual. I remind the minister that it is the government's program. As the National Party Whip I was advised by the Leader of the Government, the Honourable Monica Gould, that this motion would be debated for only 2 hours, between 10 o'clock and 12 o'clock. If the government wishes to extend the time, we would be happy to agree. All it has to do is let us know. We would like another hour as we have plenty that we would like to put on the record. Members of the National Party support the motion for a number of reasons. Most of the government's programs were instigated under the former coalition government which did not believe in strategies or policies but put in place actual programs.

Hon. I. J. Cover — Action.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — Some action and some outcomes. The minister has talked about putting in place strategies and policies; the coalition government put in place a number of policies. There is not time this morning for the National Party to put on the record all the programs that were initiated under the former coalition government, but I will mention a few because I think they were worthwhile programs.

A number of good programs are under review and they may be dropped, defunded or rebadged so that their names will be changed. A number of programs have had their funding cut and others have had promises made about them but not kept.

I have been involved in youth issues not only as a mother but as a shire councillor and, more importantly, when I became a member of Parliament. Under the previous government I was a member of the youth and community services committee which looked at many programs; and that is why I am aware of the programs put in place by the former coalition government. Many have been kept going by this government because they were so well received.

I refer briefly to last year's ministerial statement because the minister used it as the basis of his speech. The ministerial statement was made in April 2000. In

the introduction under the heading 'Youth at the centre' the minister put on the record that:

The government recognises that youth policy should be given a significantly higher priority than in past years, and the current administrative arrangements for the development and coordination of youth policies and programs must be changed to reflect this policy.

The former government was interested in focusing on the programs and outcomes rather than just on policies.

I noted with interest some of the statistics referred to in the ministerial statement. For example young people aged between 12 years and 25 years make up 20 per cent of Victoria's population.

Therefore people between the ages of 12 and 25 years constitute 20 per cent of all people in Victoria, and that is a significant number of people and an important sector of our community. We must ensure our policies and programs reflect the importance of that sector, as they are the future leaders of our community.

One of the initiatives in the minister's statement concerned a better Victorian certificate of education. Under the paragraph heading 'A better VCE' the ministerial statement reads:

Many young Victorians have expressed concern that VCE has a narrow academic focus. The government will make the VCE more relevant to all students and provide improved access to vocational education and training (VET), which is linked to TAFE qualifications and apprenticeships.

The former coalition government improved access to VET courses in all schools, and particularly in rural areas. It was proactive in encouraging and supporting schools in working with local industries and TAFE colleges and assisting schools to ensure that a number of people in country Victoria had access to VET programs.

There is a continuing problem in some smaller isolated communities that do not have access to many VET programs because of the lack of industries in some of those areas. It is a problem we faced when in government, and this government will also face the problem of how to improve VET services to smaller isolated communities so that those students are not disadvantaged by not having access to very important VET programs.

Hon. P. R. Hall — So what has this government done to improve the VCE?

Hon. E. J. POWELL — It had policies in its ministerial statement, but nothing has come out of it in 14 months.

The minister also talked about providing more apprenticeships and traineeships. He says in the statement:

The government will fund 2000 public sector traineeships and 4700 private sector apprenticeships and traineeships, including 1750 in trades experiencing shortages.

I applaud that because in many of the areas there is a shortage of trade apprentices, and particularly in country Victoria there is a shortfall of mechanics, electricians and so forth because apprenticeships in these areas are not being taken up.

When the coalition was in government it provided \$94 million over four years to train 50 000 young Victorians to undertake apprenticeships and training, so I take some umbrage at the suggestion that we did not do anything when in fact we increased the funding and made \$94 million available over four years to train 50 000 young Victorians.

Other honourable members have mentioned the youth employment line. In the ministerial statement the minister says:

The government will establish a youth employment line to provide access to information and assistance in relation to careers, wages and conditions, contracts of employment, apprenticeships and traineeships, occupational health and safety and employment opportunities.

I applaud that initiative. It would be great if it were online so that young people could access it; but 14 months later, I have rung the number and it is still not operating.

The minister has said that we are in the last stages of tender and hopefully that initiative will be online shortly so that young people can access that very important information.

In the ministerial statement the minister talks about the youth round table and says:

As a first step, I will be establishing a Victorian youth round table to advise both myself and the Office for Youth on a broad range of issues affecting young people. The purpose of the round table is to provide the opportunity for young people and organisations to exchange ideas on a range of issues which impact on young people. It is paramount that membership is made up of a diverse group of young people from a range of backgrounds and opinion — not just young people who are already recognised as youth leaders.

I will talk about that later. I understand there were to be four round tables, but to date there have been two in Melbourne, one in Sale, and not another yet in the country.

The minister spoke about enhancing regional youth committees. These committees were established under the former government's Minister for Youth and Community Services, Vin Heffernan. The minister was saying that the regional youth committees did not have guidelines and funding, but I can inform the minister that I was on one of those regional youth committees in the Goulburn Valley when they were first established in about 1995. I was a member for about three years, and we certainly had guidelines and we were funded.

Those committees were put in place to look at the duplication of youth services right across our region and to see if there were any gaps or other initiatives the government could take into account. We met every month, and it was an important committee to be on because I was able to establish what organisations there were and whether there were any gaps or duplications, and the minister took those into account.

So while I commend the minister for continuing those committees, I point out that they were put in place by the former government, and as a former member of one of the committees I can say that there is no doubt we did a lot of good work and the government listened to the strategies and information we gave it about youth at a local level.

The minister spoke in his statement about establishing a web site for youth. That has not been established yet, but I hope it will be soon. Consulting with young people on the ministerial review of post-compulsory education, training and employment is a big issue, and the former government put in place industry education boards right across Victoria to look at linkages between industries and education, and local government and the community.

One part of the statement was cheeky: it is a paragraph headed 'Re-engaging local government'. I am not aware that local government was disengaged. Local government had youth development officers who spoke with the youth committees and met with them regularly. After amalgamation nearly all of the councils now have youth development officers, so I am not aware of how local government is not engaged. My local council has a youth development officer, and it is funded.

Evaluating youth services delivery across Victoria is a good initiative, but that is what the regional youth committees were established to do, so I am not sure why the government has to do it all again.

There have been a number of discussions about the Freeza program, which also was established by the

former coalition government. We are not sure about its continuation but we hope it will be continued. As the minister said, he issued a press release saying he was committed to the Freeza program and I hope he will be committed to it for the longer term.

The Victorian Youth Development program (VYDP) is mentioned in the ministerial statement. Honourable members will recall that it was also established by the former coalition government. In fact, it was so successful that an extra \$5 million was provided in 1999 to ensure that the young people and schools accessing the program were able to use it. I have a brochure here outlining what the VYDP is about. I took this out of a file in my office because I have been involved with the VYDP quite a bit. It states:

The VYDP is a community service-based project introduced to secondary colleges by the Victorian government in 1997.

It takes students out of the classroom and offers them a range of opportunities that promote youth leadership and community service.

It is voluntary for both school and students.

Under the project, schools enter a partnership with one of several leading community organisations.

Hon. P. R. Hall — It is enormously popular.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — It is very popular. I know that the Minister for Youth Affairs visited the Victorian Youth Development program in Wodonga on one of his visits and he was able to see it working first hand. I am aware that the minister is conscious of the programs we have in country Victoria.

The Youth Enterprise South West program was also mentioned in the ministerial statement. It is a very valuable program which was also initiated under the former government. In 1998 the then Premier established five rural and regional forums which spoke with community leaders, businesspeople and members of Parliament right across country Victoria. One of the initiatives which came out of the regional forum in the south-west was to set up the Youth Enterprise South West program. The Northern Industry Education Board, an organisation I had the honour to chair for a number of years, spoke with the state development policy adviser, Martin Van Tijn, who initiated this program. It is based on the program the NIEB established many years ago to look at industry, training, community and education issues. It is a very worthwhile program. However, I have to say that while it is mentioned in the ministerial statement it is also one of the former government's policies.

I am very conscious of the time because I know the Honourable Andrew Olexander has some very pertinent issues to put on the record. I will briefly go through some of the programs initiated by the former government. One of them is the Here for Life program which conducted Youth Week. The program's executive director sent a letter to me saying:

In 1997 Here for Life conducted research with 2000 young people around Victoria, asking who has the greatest impact on them with a drug prevention message. A common response was young role models we can relate to.

In 2000 Here for Life recruited 65 football players from all 10 Victorian AFL clubs, Netball Australia players and gold medal Olympians.

...

We are committed to ensure that our next generation of children stay drug free and I strongly believe the Life's a Ball program is doing that.

Can you help me find financial support from the state government? Can you ask the Premier to provide some emergency funding?

I wrote to the Premier and his response was that he would pass on a copy of the letter to the Department of Education, Employment and Training which has the lead responsibility for drug education in schools. I hope that program will be strongly promoted.

The School Focused Youth Service was established under the former coalition government in 1998. It is a program which works with schools, welfare organisations and the community. I saw its work first hand when a young man in Shepparton committed suicide. He was very popular, motivated and a high achiever. The school community had no idea why this person would have committed suicide. The School Focused Youth Service brought in counsellors to work with the school, the parents, the teachers and the friends of this man. It is a very important service. As the Minister for Youth Affairs said, one of the big issues in country Victoria is mental health programs and the School Focused Youth Service provides much of the support for those areas.

One program which was fantastic for country Victoria but which has not been maintained by this government is the Young Rural Ambassadors program. The coalition government funded this program, it was initiated in 1999 and discontinued by this government in 2000–01. The program was very successful. It is important for country Victoria that we keep our young people in agriculture and the farming industry and the program was supported by industries in rural Victoria, by community groups and by the Victorian Farmers Federation. The program was about 48 young people in

country Victoria having an opportunity to be involved in agriculture and resources. Twelve young people travelled to Charlottetown in Canada to participate in the Agricultural Institute of Canada's very important Knowledge and Creativity — Keys to Agriculture's Future Conference. They then went on a study tour. The remaining 36 ambassadors who were not fortunate enough to go on the overseas trip received a \$1000 leadership bursary to pursue approved learning opportunities in agriculture and resources.

I raised this issue in the house with the Minister for Youth Affairs on 9 November 1999. I talked about the successful Rural Youth Ambassadors program where hundreds of Victorians applied to become ambassadors and 48 people were successful. I talked about their learning skills in farming practices, resource management, the sustainability of agriculture, the importance of learning new skills and new markets. As I said earlier, it is important that we continue to have our young people stay in the country so we have our brightest and best in country Victoria. The minister's response was that he understood that it was a significant program to establish role models for rural Victorian youth. The minister said he would:

... review the program within the department, including its current and ongoing status, and report back to the honourable member.

The minister did not report back to me. I again raised the issue on 20 January last year. I referred to further funding for the Young Rural Ambassadors program and said how important it was for rural people. The minister acknowledged it was a significant program and said he would discuss the rural service program with members of the regional youth committees when he met with them. He said he understood it was a one-off program and that he would look closely at how it could best work for rural communities. I still have no response some 16 months later! Did the minister speak with the regional youth committees, and if so what was the response? Will funding for the program continue? These are important issues for country Victoria. We must find ways to ensure our young people, particularly our bright young people who will be the leaders in our community, continue with agriculture in the new initiatives. I urge the minister to examine this wonderful program and tell honourable members whether it will continue.

Most of the programs to which I have referred were included in the minister's ministerial statement. The former Kennett government funded the Bridge youth service, which is a wonderful program for young people. I was on the board of the service and helped to initiate it because of the high unemployment, youth

suicide and young people living on the streets in our area. The program has been well serviced and supported by the community, and Mr Rick Harrison, the manager, is doing a wonderful job.

The program is funded until 30 December. It is important for rural programs to be funded for three years rather than year by year so that organisations do not have to go cap in hand to the government each year asking for extra funding. I urge the government to make sure programs, especially youth programs, in country Victoria are funded for three years so there is certainty and continuity, and more importantly so they can attract skilled people to work in the industry. If funding is for only one year there is no continuity because of doubts about whether the program will continue, and you must tailor your program to government funding, which is not appropriate. Organisations need discretionary funding to respond to local needs.

I put on the record a number of the initiatives taken by the Bridge youth service. It conducts a meals program, an activities program, youth friendly events, a young mums program, laundry shower programs, a drop-in centre, family reconciliation, support and counselling programs, advocacy, housing referrals and provides other information.

Two wonderful programs in my electorate are Kross Kolors and the community development program. Kross Kolors is a cultural program. My area has a large number of people from different ethnic communities, a high Aboriginal population and a number of people from Arabic-speaking countries, who have come as refugees.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — Mainly in Shepparton.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — Yes, but also in Cobram and Kyabram. Children attend the Bridge youth services program because it is regarded as youth friendly. It is called the Bridge because it is a bridge between a number of programs, some of which cannot be accessed by young people, who feel they are not youth specific. The Bridge program works with other programs as a bridge to those programs.

Shepparton has some problems with conflicts in the mall, in schools and in other areas.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Why didn't you raise this when Kennett was the Premier?

Hon. E. J. POWELL — The program was in place when the Honourable Jeff Kennett was the leader of the government. It is in place now. It has worked well in my community because it attempts to improve

relationships between young people of different cultural backgrounds and assist them to work better together.

I refer briefly to unemployment. The rate of unemployment in rural areas has risen under this government. The current Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that as at February of this year in the Goulburn–Ovens–Murray areas, which I represent, the unemployment level among people aged 15 to 24 is 12.4 per cent, an alarming figure. The unemployment rate has doubled since this government came to power. In February 1999 it was 6.1 per cent, and the Honourable Andrew Olexander will provide more details about that later. Although I could provide more details, I conclude my contribution by condemning the government for failing to look after young people through a lack of action and the provision of insufficient opportunities.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 28

Ashman, Mr	Furletti, Mr
Baxter, Mr	Hall, Mr
Best, Mr	Hallam, Mr
Birrell, Mr	Katsambanis, Mr
Bishop, Mr	Lucas, Mr
Boardman, Mr	Luckins, Ms
Bowden, Mr	Olexander, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Brideson, Mr	Powell, Mrs
Coote, Mrs	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Cover, Mr	Ross, Dr
Craige, Mr	Smith, Mr K. M. (<i>Teller</i>)
Davis, Mr D. McL.	Smith, Ms
Davis, Mr P. R.	Stoney, Mr
Forwood, Mr	Strong, Mr

Noes, 14

Broad, Ms	Madden, Mr
Carbines, Mrs (<i>Teller</i>)	Mikakos, Ms
Darveniza, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)	Nguyen, Mr
Gould, Ms	Romanes, Ms
Hadden, Ms	Smith, Mr R. F.
Jennings, Mr	Theophanous, Mr
McQuilten, Mr	Thomson, Ms

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Standing orders

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I seek leave to move my notice of motion in an amended form.

Leave granted.

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

That the Standing Orders Committee be required to undertake a review of the standing orders and make recommendations with the view to —

- (a) ensuring that they are expressed in clear and consistent language and in gender neutral language where appropriate;
- (b) eliminating redundant and obsolete standing orders;
- (c) incorporating so much of the sessional orders of the Council as seems appropriate; and
- (d) consolidating standing orders in accordance with paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) to ensure the more efficient operation of the Council.

The standing orders have not been revised for many years; many of them are now outdated, obsolete or inconsistent with amendments made. A complete review is now timely. The motion is similar to one agreed to in the past, but for a number of reasons no review was undertaken. The requirement that standing orders be expressly gender neutral, where appropriate, has been included in the motion in line with government policy. The committee should address that issue.

A draft set of standing orders has been prepared by the recently retired Clerk of the Parliaments, Allan Bray. The various leaders of the parties have had access to the draft and have received briefings from Mr Bray. It is hoped the committee can begin work on the reference during the winter recess and the committee will table its report. Then the house will have the opportunity to debate the report and any recommendations made. I urge honourable members to support the motion.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — The opposition supports the motion that the Standing Orders Committee be required to undertake a review of the standing orders. I received a copy, as most honourable members do, upon arrival in this place. Like some, I have spent time trying to come to grips with how the standing orders work and what they mean. All honourable members will accept that the book of standing orders is not the easiest document in the world to find one's way around or to understand. It is appropriate that the house moves to review the standing orders.

The manager of government business in the previous Parliament, the Honourable Rob Knowles, who knew his standing orders well, moved a similar motion in 1996. It is a matter of some surprise to all honourable members that despite that motion having been agreed to, nothing came of it until the Clerks and you, Mr President, decided it was a review appropriate to be undertaken.

As the Leader of the Government has said, Allan Bray, the former Clerk who had an outstanding record as Clerk of the Parliaments, has already commenced work on the project. Although I would never claim it to be presumptuous that work should go on behind the scenes before the motion had been moved here, it is excellent that Allan has been brought back to do work on the project, which the opposition views seriously. It is timely and appropriate that the work should be undertaken and the Liberal Party looks forward to it proceeding in the months ahead.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — The National Party is more than pleased to support the motion. There is no doubt that the standing orders are an important instrument to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the chamber. No matter what game you are involved in, a clear set of rules that everybody can understand is required. At times all honourable members have difficulty in understanding the words of the standing orders and, at times, the order in which they are expressed. Sometimes they are not as clear and concise as they should be.

Hon. R. A. Best — Will trial by video be acceptable?

Hon. P. R. HALL — Mr Best would know that the Standing Orders Committee is perfectly entitled to consider all submissions and I am sure it would welcome his submission at any time. The National Party has been fortunate in having been briefed by the former Clerk of the Parliaments, Allan Bray — an honourable man, indeed! I commend the preliminary work done by him on the standing orders. That will be an important basis from which the Standing Orders Committee may develop new standing orders. The National Party supports the motion.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I add my support for the motion. It is true that many aspects of the house's standing orders go back to the 1920s, and some go back to the 19th century. It is appropriate that the standing orders should be examined. When one tries to follow them, one finds they are often inappropriately grouped; that is one issue. Honourable members will be able to easily follow new standing orders and if the suggestions made are adopted by the committee, the standing orders will have a new numbering system.

About three or four years ago, when I was asked to visit Bangladesh to run workshops for Bangladeshi members of Parliament, I found I could quote their standing orders almost word for word because they had derived from the same British heritage.

I think the house is wise to take this course of action. The work of Allan Bray, which now goes back some five-odd months, gives the house a flying start on this issue. The Assembly has taken a different approach, whereby it is working through it on a clause-by-clause basis. In our case we have done the basic work through Mr Bray, and I believe that will greatly assist the work of the committee. I suggest that the committee would find some value in inviting Mr Bray to one of its early meetings on this project, but again that is up to the committee.

Hon. M. A. Birrell — Indeed it is; we might get the lower house Clerk to give evidence.

The PRESIDENT — Order! You might do, too. The question is that the motion having been proposed by the Leader of the Government and having, I believe, unanimous support be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

FUNDRAISING APPEALS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

The objective of the Fundraising Appeals Act 1998 ('the act') is to maintain public confidence in fundraising by requiring fundraising organisations to be publicly accountable for their fundraising activities. To assist government scrutiny and monitoring of fundraising, the act requires the identification of persons or bodies raising money from the public for charitable or benevolent purposes.

Since the act commenced in 1999, two separate areas of concern have been identified.

Firstly, the width of its operation has caused considerable concern in the community. Many people and organisations were required for the first time to notify of their fundraising activities and to be publicly accountable for the distribution of funds raised. Complaints have been received about the administrative burden imposed by the act, particularly on small community groups which are often run by volunteers and carry out limited fundraising activities.

Secondly, a number of recent fundraising cases have highlighted the need to tighten loopholes in the act to make it more difficult for unscrupulous fundraising

organisations to operate and thus improve the protection afforded to the public in this area.

Following public consultation proposed amendments were settled. There was widespread public support for an exemption for small community fundraising organisations from the requirement to notify government of their activity and for a move to a registration system for fundraising bodies.

Accordingly, the bill establishes a registration scheme for fundraising bodies administered by the Director for Consumer and Business Affairs (the director) and provides an exemption mechanism to assist small community-based organisations and certain other groups.

Registration will be for a 12-month period although provision has been made for registration to be granted for up to five years if this is considered appropriate by the director.

At the time of registration, fundraisers will be required to identify the beneficiaries on whose behalf they propose to fundraise. Any new beneficiaries on whose behalf they subsequently propose to fundraise must be notified to the director as soon as the registered fundraiser decides to conduct any such additional appeal. In some instances, specifying a benevolent purpose will be sufficient.

Registered fundraisers will be required to nominate a contact person for inquiries into their activities by members of the public. It will be necessary also for the person having managerial and financial responsibility for the fundraising activities (namely, the appeal manager or managers) to be identified.

Provision has been made for the director to approve, where appropriate, registration at state level by an organisation which carries out its fundraising through local branches which are subject to control by the state body but which would otherwise have had to register themselves. This will significantly reduce the administrative burden imposed at the local level whilst ensuring accountability of the organisation as a whole.

The bill replaces the current means of exemption by regulation with exemption from registration by an order of the minister. This will enable exemptions to be made quickly and more flexibly as required. Exemption from registration could include exemption from account keeping requirements where they are accountable under other legislation.

Orders can be made subject to conditions, can be revoked and will be reviewed regularly to ensure they afford only limited and appropriate exemptions.

It is proposed that small volunteer organisations will be given an exemption from the requirement to register if they raise less than \$10 000 gross in a financial year, and meet certain other specified criteria, including that they use volunteers only. Other organisations could also be exempted from registration where this is considered appropriate. For example, organisations that are accountable for their fundraising to the Victorian Parliament by other means may be given an exemption from registration. These other means include being required to table their annual report in Parliament, having their accounts audited by the Auditor-General, or being accountable to another Minister for their fundraising activities.

The bill will also strengthen enforcement powers under the act to further assist in the prevention of unscrupulous fundraising and the protection of the donating public. One of the key enforcement tools proposed under this bill is the naming power. This will enable the Minister for Consumer Affairs or the Director of Consumer and Business Affairs to issue a public statement identifying and giving warnings about non-compliant or disreputable fundraising organisations or fundraising practices.

A public register of fundraising organisations will also be established, which will be accessible by members of the public. This will assist people in finding out about fundraising bodies.

A range of other enforcement measures will ensure that disreputable fundraising organisations are deterred from operating and will assist Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria in monitoring compliance with the act. These measures include:

- requiring fundraisers, at the time of registration, to advise of the identity of the person or persons who will have managerial or financial responsibility for the conduct of their fundraising appeals and to update this information on an ongoing basis;

- enabling the director to require that consent to a police check is given prior to registration where necessary, by the fundraiser, its associates or proposed appeal manager. Associates are those persons who have or will be able to have a significant influence over the management of the fundraising entity and will include persons with a managerial role in a body corporate fundraiser;

providing grounds for the refusal of registration that include, for example, where the person seeking registration as a fundraiser, an associate of that person, or a proposed appeal manager is insolvent or has been found guilty of a disqualifying offence;

providing grounds for deregistration of a fundraiser that include, for example, that the court has ordered that an appeal be stopped; and

expanding the grounds under which the Magistrates Court can stop an appeal and ensuring the court can stop the conduct of an appeal with immediate effect.

At present, the act does not prevent disreputable bodies from raising large sums of money but only passing on small amounts to the relevant beneficiary or charitable purpose. The bill will enable a condition to be attached to the registration of a fundraising organisation requiring that a specified percentage of the proceeds of a fundraising appeal are distributed to the beneficiaries of the appeal where that is necessary to stop abuses and the register may include information detailing the proportion of the proceeds raised in a fundraising appeal by an organisation that has been passed on to the nominated beneficiaries.

Additionally, the director will have power to deregister or refuse renewal of a fundraiser and the court will have power to stop the conduct of an appeal, if satisfied that this is in the public interest. The concept of public interest can include a consideration of the level of administrative costs retained by a fundraiser.

The bill does not address the particular question of fundraising that is undertaken in accordance with a highway collection permit. This is an important matter and is currently under review as a separate issue. I will advise the house further on this matter when the review is complete and the appropriate course of action has been reached.

The government is committed to maintaining public confidence in fundraising. This bill is a major step in that direction.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe).

Debate adjourned until next day.

CORPORATIONS (ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS) BILL, CORPORATIONS (ANCILLARY PROVISIONS) BILL, CORPORATIONS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL, AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (VICTORIA) (AMENDMENT) BILL and CO-OPERATIVE SCHEMES (ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 14 June; motions of Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) and Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources).

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I am pleased to advise the house that the Liberal Party supports this handful of bills that are to be debated cognately. My inquiries have indicated it is an unusual event to debate five bills of this nature concurrently. I hope by the end of my contribution honourable members will be aware of the sound basis for doing so, and I hope they will leave the chamber with a better understanding of what is a very dry topic but one that has significant repercussions. As the saying goes, extraordinary problems sometimes require extraordinary solutions. This is such a case.

The need for this matrix of bills arises in the first instance from the *re Wakim* decision of the High Court, which I have referred to on numerous occasions in this chamber. The *re Wakim* case raised serious questions as to the constitutional validity of conduct and the decisions of the commonwealth in exercising state jurisdiction. Honourable members will recall that the *Wakim* decision revolved around the conferring of power by states to federal courts. Although the Australian constitution specifically allows the federal jurisdiction to be conferred on state supreme courts, the reverse does not apply.

A subsequent High Court decision last year in *The Queen v. Hughes* extended the uncertainty and the concern of the legal fraternity in that the High Court in that case determined that officers, departments and functionaries of the commonwealth exercising state jurisdictional powers may not have had constitutional validity unless there was a specific head of power in the Australian constitution pursuant to which they were conducting their duties and obligations. In that case not only the uncertainty as to the validity of the conduct of those officers and functionaries came into play, but it

also raised the serious consequence of perhaps exposing those officers, and of course through the element of vicarious liability the departments and the government, to civil repercussions for the doubtful enforcement of state laws. That arose through the uncertainty established in the decision in the Hughes case.

As a result of those two decisions, on 1 May the house debated the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Bill. Honourable members will recall that that was an unusual event in that the Corporations Bill and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Bill, which are currently before the federal Parliament, were tabled in the New South Wales Parliament and we in this place agreed to accept the text of those bills as part of the powers we as a state have now referred to the commonwealth under the provisions of the constitution. That has been done in an effort to ensure that that significant head of power which is required but which is in doubt under the Australian constitution has been adequately referred to the commonwealth, as states are entitled to do under the constitution.

It having been determined in *re Wakim* that notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of the states and the commonwealth in what I have indicated before has been termed cooperative federalism, the validity of the Corporations Law structure is in doubt. Under that structure certain cross-vesting arrangements and applied law schemes were negotiated between the states and the commonwealth going back to 1961 with the uniform companies act legislation, which was taken up by most of the states. However, let me say in passing that Western Australia was never part of that.

That continued until 1990 with the introduction of national Corporations Law, and now in 2001 with the commonwealth Corporations Bill. All that legislation was aimed at providing Australia with a uniform Corporations Act to which all Australians will be subject.

I have previously explained in this chamber the great significance of having a uniform law that provides Australia with stability, confidence and, most importantly, consistency of determination on a national rather than a state-by-state basis. That is one of the major reasons why the states and the commonwealth were so keen to cooperate and to seek an outcome that was not specifically provided for in the Australian constitution.

The impact of this type of legislation on Australian trade, commerce and finance — in fact, it permeates throughout all our livelihoods — cannot be

underestimated. Some 650 000 corporations are affected by companies law, and if there is a flaw or defect in that law the ramifications are obvious.

New South Wales and Victoria have taken the lead in this area, predominantly because those states are home to about 66 per cent of the companies affected. Having been put on notice as a result of the *re Wakim* decision that the structure set up cooperatively between the states and the federal government was in some doubt, we now await a number of events that relate to the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Act to which I referred earlier.

The bills before the house come as two blocks. The first tranche of bills contains the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill, the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill and the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill, all of which in one way or another are complementary to the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Act.

The second tranche contains the Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Action) Bill and the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill, which relate more specifically to cooperative schemes that have been entered into by the states and the federal government. The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemical (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill relates specifically to a scheme that has been signed off under the national registration scheme relating to agricultural and veterinary chemicals that have been affected by the decision in the Hughes case. The bills represent two separate products, if you like, but in the final analysis both marry into a commonality of interest for all Australian states and the federal government. All the states are undertaking similar processes as and when they choose to refer their corporation powers to the commonwealth in the form of a Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Bill.

The corporations legislation is somewhat complex, but it can be analysed fairly simply. The commonwealth Corporations Bill will represent the Corporations Law of Australia, and to implement that bill there is a need to provide for the transition between past conduct, from which there is still obviously an overflow, and the new corporate national scenario. That transition will clearly be ongoing for some time.

The Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill, which is a relatively short bill containing only four or five substantial clauses, amends some 130 state acts. That bill, when read with the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill, seeks to update the Victorian

legislation, but at the same time, because of the changes in terminology and references and the process that has been undertaken by parliamentary counsel not only in Victoria but also in New South Wales and at a commonwealth level, it cleans up a number of acts amended by the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Act. Some of those amendments are substantial and some are not, but all are necessary.

The bill provides that each corporation, notwithstanding the commonwealth Corporations Bill, will still require a home, if I can use that expression, or a base, and each will need to be registered in a particular state by a certificate of incorporation that identifies the state of registration for a number of reasons, including the overhang of the operation of state laws.

I do not intend to go through the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill completely. Suffice it to say that I urge members to quickly peruse the schedule to the bill, which sets out the 130-odd acts. Honourable members will see that there is a change in terminology from 'Corporations Law' to 'Corporations Act', and there are changes to the names of a large number of corporations.

To give the house an example of the queries I raised, I was wondering why in bill no. 5 there is reference to the Alcoa of Australia (WA) N. L. Act of 1971. Apart from wondering why there is a specific bill for Alcoa, I thought the amendment whereby section 3 of that act was repealed was interesting. I was advised — I thank the government advisers from the Justice Department — that it was an instance of a redundant provision. The Alcoa of Australia (WA) N. L. Act provided in 1971 for the conversion of Alcoa from a non-liability company to a public company.

As I indicated, the purpose of this bill is not only to make substantive changes but also to engage in a cleaning-up process. The consequential amendments bill seeks to amend specific legislation.

Given the nature of the whole arrangement, the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill is intended to pick up what has slipped through the gaps in other corporations legislation. It seeks to preserve what has happened in the past as well as to update references in the Victorian legislation to the Corporations Law and the terminology in the new commonwealth Corporations Act, once it is implemented. Again, this bill has transitional provisions that are more general than those in the consequential amendments bill, but their significance will be seen when the bill is read in conjunction with the commonwealth Corporations Act.

Honourable members will be aware that if there is a conflict between commonwealth and state laws, as a general rule under section 109 of the commonwealth constitution commonwealth law prevails. In the case of conflicts under the national scheme between the new commonwealth act, the pre-existing commonwealth Corporations Law and the pre-existing state Corporations Law, this bill says that if there is a direct inconsistency between the Victorian and commonwealth corporations laws, the state legislation will be invalid pursuant to section 109. But if there are only indirect inconsistencies, the state laws will not necessarily be invalidated, so it will be necessary to assess the situation on a case-by-case basis.

As I indicated, the concept is complex. However, I point out to honourable members that when I asked the advisers whether this was the way that matters would proceed, I was assured that detailed discussions had taken place between all state solicitors-general and all state parliamentary draftsmen and that the best brains in the country had combined to come up with this matrix of legislation to solve the problem. I guess we must accept their word if they say this is the way to go and this is the solution at this time. For the purpose of resolving this complex issue once and for all, we certainly hope they are right.

As a result of the changes and the decision in the Hughes case, in which, as honourable members are aware, the powers of enforcement of officers and functionaries of the commonwealth were put in doubt, we have before us the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill. As the title suggests, this bill unashamedly intends to retrospectively — —

Hon. R. M. Hallam — And appropriately.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — And as Mr Hallam says, it appropriately intends to validate the actions and conduct of certain officers and departments of the commonwealth. As honourable members would be aware, for example, the federal police, the federal Director of Public Prosecutions and all the officers of the National Companies Securities Commission, the precursor to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, were engaged in enforcing the law legitimately, honestly and as they saw, appropriately, always believing that their conduct was shielded by the law. If there is any doubt in that respect, it is clearly for the government and the legislators of the day to ensure that that past conduct is given the authenticity and legitimacy it had in the guise under which it was conducted. That is exactly what this bill does.

In passing I indicate that the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill is a most extraordinary bill in that effectively it retrospectively fixes anything that has happened by anybody who has behaved honestly and legitimately under the previous legislation — and it goes on, even if at the time there was no comparative officer or functionary in the other jurisdiction.

The fairly convoluted determination in clause 9 of the bill makes it clear that the state and federal governments in this instance are doing everything possible to ensure that the individuals and the departments who engaged in seeking to enforce what was perceived as lawful and constitutional legislation in the past will not suffer any ramifications or consequences in the future. Members should recall that future conduct will fall under the operations of the new corporations legislation and that therefore the problems with respect to future conduct hopefully do not exist.

Just as that applies to corporations and conduct carried out under the Corporations Law, similarly the Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill seeks to rectify the conduct of inspectors and analysts under the national registration scheme. In that regard the only scheme that is affected is the one contained in the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill. The Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill relates generally to all schemes. As I said, the only scheme in the bills before the house to which specific reference is currently made is contained in the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill. As occurs under the Corporations Law, that bill seeks to validate things that are done or are omitted to be done by authorities and officers pursuant to the national registration scheme.

As I have indicated, the purpose and object of the legislation is very simple, although the application is somewhat complex. Given the advice that has been received, the opposition hopes this will be the last time we need to refer to the Wakim and Hughes decisions in this context — although I suspect it will not be. The Liberal Party wishes the bill a speedy passage.

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — I wish to speak in support of the five bills that are the subject of the cognate debate before the house today. They are the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill, the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill, the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria)

(Amendment) Bill, and the Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill.

The five bills form part of a package of corporations bills that are necessary to support new arrangements under the national Corporations Law. The new corporations arrangements rely, naturally enough, on the states referring corporations powers to the commonwealth.

The Victorian government has made its reference under the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2001, which was debated and passed in this house on 1 May this year.

The two High Court decisions that have cast doubt on the constitutional validity of important elements of the Corporations Law scheme are those in *re Wakim: ex parte McNally* (1999) 163 ALR 270 and in the latter case of *The Queen v. Hughes* (2000) 171 ALR 155.

In the decision in *re Wakim* the High Court held that state jurisdiction could not be conferred on federal courts. The High Court decided that the commonwealth constitution permits jurisdiction to be conferred on federal courts in matters arising under laws made by the commonwealth Parliament only and not under laws made by state parliaments. As a result, only state courts can exercise jurisdiction in Corporations Law matters that arise under state laws. Likewise, territory courts continue to exercise jurisdiction in Corporations Law matters that arise under territory law. That decision was brought down in June of 1999.

The second High Court decision in point is *The Queen v. Hughes*, which was decided in May 2000. In that decision the High Court said that where a state gave a commonwealth authority or officer a power to undertake a function under state law, together with a duty to exercise that function, there must be a clear nexus between the exercise of the function and one or more of the legislative powers of the commonwealth, as set out in the commonwealth constitution.

The problem arose that if that view prevailed, the commonwealth would not be able to authorise its authorities or officers to undertake functions under state law involving the performance of a duty unless the function could be supported by a head of the commonwealth legislative power.

The effect of the two High Court decisions of Wakim and Hughes was to create uncertainty and inefficiency in the regulation of corporate and commercial activities. In order to overcome those perceived constitutional

gaps in the Corporations Law scheme, the states have agreed with the commonwealth that the states will in effect refer the Corporations Law to the commonwealth Parliament as a matter about which the Parliament of the commonwealth has power to legislate.

That is made possible by section 51(xxxvii) of the commonwealth constitution, which gives the commonwealth Parliament the power to legislate with respect to matters referred to the commonwealth Parliament by the Parliament or parliaments of any state or states.

The Corporations Law is a national system and operates as a law in each state and territory. To ensure uniformity of prosecutions, it was agreed that the commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions could prosecute many of the cases. Since the High Court decision in *Hughes* the commonwealth and state governments have met through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General to work towards how best to deal with the issues for the important sake of uniformity and consistency. Rather than hold a referendum to determine whether to refer the state's corporations powers to the commonwealth, the Victorian government has decided to refer those powers to the commonwealth but with safeguards enshrined in legislation.

In December 2000 the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, and the premiers and attorneys-general of Victoria and New South Wales, met and agreed to facilitate the referral to the commonwealth of their powers with respect to corporations legislation. That agreement saw the passing of the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Bill in May of this year and so resolved the difficulties as set out in the two High Court decisions of *Wakim* and *Hughes*.

It is important that the business community has confidence in a national cooperative scheme with respect to corporations, and this is needed to reinforce Australia's important position in the Asia-Pacific region. The commonwealth Parliament has passed legislation in the form of a new Corporations Act and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act. The actions of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and its officers or other commonwealth authorities or officers under the Corporations Law are dealt with by the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill.

All states will enact supporting legislation to provide for validation of every administrative action taken by a state officer or authority under the current or previous

schemes. Consequential amendments follow in the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill, which if my arithmetic is correct amends 130 acts that contain references to the Corporations Law. The transitional arrangements are contained in the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill. This national cooperative scheme was agreed to in 1990 in Alice Springs between the commonwealth and the states and came about by Victoria and New South Wales leading the way in passing supporting legislation to ensure the integrity and certainty of Corporations Law with respect to the business community.

The Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill was amended in the other place by the insertion of new provisions in clause 4 and the insertion of a new clause, which became clause 16, requiring the minister to refer to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC) draft proclamations for its consideration and report under section 4D of the Parliamentary Committees Act. This will ensure that in all the circumstances a proposed declaration relevant to a state act will be both appropriate and desirable. As honourable members know, it is a statutory responsibility of SARC pursuant to the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968, in particular section 4D(b), to report on any bill introduced into the Parliament and on any bill that repeals, alters or varies section 85 of the Victorian Constitution Act 1975.

In its *Alert Digest* No. 6 SARC states that it will write to the Attorney-General seeking further information about its concerns. Those concerns have been addressed and we now have the safeguards in clauses 4 and 16 of the bill. Clause 4 enables the relevant commencement time for the validation of the proposed act to be declared by proclamation. It establishes a procedure under which the minister must consult SARC before a proclamation is made declaring an act as a relevant state act or declaring a commencement time in relation to a relevant state act. Clause 16 amends section 4D of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 to confer on the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee the function of reporting on draft proclamations as submitted to it under the proposed act.

The final bill, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill, validates actions of certain commonwealth authorities and officers in response again to the *Wakim* and *Hughes* cases. In 1993 an agreement between the commonwealth government and the states saw legislation enacted in 1994 establishing a national registration scheme for agricultural and veterinary

chemicals. That was based on the Agvet code set out in the commonwealth Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Act 1994.

The High Court decision in *The Queen v. Hughes* raised serious doubts about and questioned the validity of the state's powers where there is no corresponding federal power that establishes the relevant authority or function.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended 12.59 p.m. until 2.07 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

AFL: Tipstar

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation to the Bracks government's pathetic footy tipping competition, which has failed to deliver anything close to what the government promised. How much of a failure does this dog of a footy tipping competition have to be before the government takes action to prop it up, allowing the top-up funding expected for various programs such as those on women in sport and sports medicine to flow to them?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank Mr Cover for his question, and I clarify for him that the control of that tipping competition lies with the Minister for Gaming in another place. I also clarify that the opposition has been disparaging about this concept from the very beginning.

The government has contributed substantial funding to women in sport and to developing sporting opportunities for under-represented groups in the community, far and above anything the opposition did while it was in government. Any additional money that comes from the Tipstar competition will assist in topping up those funds. They have not necessarily been directed to any specific program but have been identified in relation to a number of areas, which has been discussed in this house previously.

I reinforce the government's commitment to grassroots sport in this state, as it has proven by its continued funding and efforts. Unfortunately the opposition has failed to comprehend the government's substantial and ongoing contribution to grassroots sporting participation, which was not forthcoming from the opposition when it was in government.

Hon. M. A. Birrell — On a point of order, Mr President, the minister did not respond to the question, which was about Tipstar and how bad this betting competition would have to be before the government did something. The minister talked about how he wants to spend money on certain areas of sports, which the opposition welcomes, and criticised the person asking the question for not outlining it more, which he is not allowed to do in the question.

I ask you to draw him back to answering the question, which was about Tipstar, which the minister did not mention in his answer. Therefore his answer was not only not responsive but it did not even mention the competition, on which he has provided answers before and on which he has been able expand at length. I ask you to direct him back to answering the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is certainly true that the minister has answered questions about this competition in the past, particularly when it was first launched, but this question had two elements to it: one was on the failure or otherwise of the competition, and the second part dealt with the question of whether funding would be available to top up women's sport and some other things. The minister chose to deal more with the second part than the first. That is a matter for the minister, so I do not uphold the point of order.

Fuel: prices

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — Will the Minister for Consumer Affairs inform the house when terminal gate pricing is expected to commence in Victoria and whom it will affect?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — Recently in the house I was asked a question about when terminal gate pricing (TGP) would commence. I am pleased to be able to inform the house that terminal gate pricing will be introduced in Victoria from 1 August 2001 under the Petroleum Products (Terminal Gate Pricing) Act. The aim of the act is to increase the transparency of fuel pricing and to provide access to products at terminals at a competitive price.

The wholesale price from the terminal will now be based on the TGP, plus transport, delivery, credit, brand and equipment charges, less discounts and rebates. That means it will be far more transparent to those who wish to purchase.

The following suppliers will be required to set a terminal gate price: BP, Shell, Mobil, Caltex, and Trafigura Fuels Australia, who are importers of fuel through the terminal at Hastings. The fuels that will require a TGP will be leaded and lead replacement

petrol, regular and premium unleaded petrol, and diesel. The TGP for each of these fuels will be published daily on declared suppliers' web sites.

Fuel distributors and retailers will benefit most from the act through an increased transparency of the total added costs apart from the TGP, the ability to purchase fuel direct from the terminal at a reasonable price, and the ability to expand or commence new businesses or form buying groups knowing that fuel will be able to be accessed from the terminal. The new opportunities are likely to be particularly relevant to the independent rural resellers but are likely to be realised only in the longer term. That is something I have stressed in the Parliament before.

This initiative will ensure greater transparency, which will also benefit consumers. They will be able to compare pump prices to the Internet terminal gate price to see if the total add-on costs for fuel at particular locations appear reasonable. The act may also lead to more competitive prices for consumers in the longer term through greater opportunities and improved competition in the wholesale market.

It is not possible to wipe out discounting as a response to fuel pricing issues because of the requirements of the Trade Practices Act. However, this legislation will go a long way to ensuring that there is transparency in fuel pricing and that consumers have an opportunity to understand — —

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — She just said there was going to be discounting.

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — I just said this will not knock out discounting.

Hon. Bill Forwood — You said it will be not be possible.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — It will not be possible to knock out discounting. The legislation will enable consumers to see how the pricing of fuel is structured.

Melbourne Airport: security officers

Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. I refer again to the continuing and damaging industrial disruption at Melbourne Airport caused by the activities of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union. Those activities are continuing into yet another day and

as a result have caused anxiety for anyone who is using the airport to travel interstate or overseas. When will the Minister for Industrial Relations eventually publicly call for the union to stop its disruptive action? When will the minister try to exert any authority that she has?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — This is following on from an adjournment matter the honourable member raised last night. I restate that the union and the company have been negotiating with Qantas for several months and the matter has been before the commission on a number of occasions. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission, through the commissioner, has ordered the union to desist from its industrial action. The union has rejected that order, as it is entitled to do under the Workplace Relations Act, because enterprise bargaining principles allow the union to take protected action.

As always, the government calls on the parties to sit down and reach a negotiated outcome, as has occurred with a number of disputes at the airport. Unfortunately at the moment no offer has been made by the company to the union in any way. That has caused the dispute. The union is taking protected action. The honourable member should get in touch with the federal Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, Peter Reith, and ask him to change the act.

Commonwealth Games: athletics venue

Hon. R. F. SMITH (Chelsea) — In light of media speculation about the athletics venue for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, will the Minister for Sport and Recreation inform the house where these events are intended to take place?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank the honourable member for his question. I note that there is an article on page 3 of today's *Age* under the heading 'MCG may lose games athletics'. I wish to clarify the matter for members on the other side in particular and to clearly articulate that this article is wrong. No doubt the opposition is used to being wrong. Either the journalist or the executive director of Athletics Australia got it wrong. As the minister responsible for the games, I categorically deny the thrust of the article.

The original bid document, which was supported by both sides of the house, clearly sets out that the athletics program will be held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. As previously mentioned in the house, the government is considering models that will allow for the upgrading of the MCG, with the direct intention of providing the

best possible facilities for the hosting of the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

One of the key features of the games will be its legacy in terms of sporting infrastructure. Clearly, the hosting of athletics at the MCG will allow that objective to be achieved. As part of the athletics taking place at the MCG, Olympic Park will also be upgraded. Work on this upgrade has already commenced, and honourable members may have seen the demolition of buildings surrounding the precincts of the park. This will deliver significant long-term benefits for athletics in the state, which no doubt will be supported by Athletics Australia.

Electricity: generation investment

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I am sure the Minister for Energy and Resources shares my delight in the planned new investment in gas-fired electricity generation in Victoria. I am aware of six separate, newly announced projects totalling some 1300 megawatts of new generation capacity. Does the minister concur that this investment is a demonstration of confidence in the privatised Victorian electricity market, and does she have any concern that the Basslink project, if it proceeds, will simply serve to impede further such investment in Victoria?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — In addition to the already announced proposals for further investment in Victoria, I welcome the announcement, which the Premier made today in opening the new \$40 million gas-fired power station in Bairnsdale, of the first power station to commence operations in Victoria for almost 10 years. I am sure the honourable member knows that he is drawing a long bow if he thinks that I would give any support to the actions of the previous Kennett government in selling off the state's power industry.

As I have said many times in the house, the government believes the previous government did nothing after selling off the power industry to ensure there was further investment in Victoria. The Bracks Labor government has had to work very hard to facilitate further investment in the state. The Bracks government is pleased that in the time it has been in power it has been able to achieve investment proposals for Victoria totalling some 1000 megawatts.

In addition, the government has also indicated that it strongly supports the further development of interconnects with the Victorian network to facilitate the functioning of the national market. To that end, the

government commissioned Vencorp to do a study relating to the Snowy interconnect.

The government has made it clear all along that the Basslink proposal must go through the relevant planning and environmental processes before it can be considered as a proposal to provide additional capacity to the electricity network. Notwithstanding that the process is still in train, the proposals that have been secured, and the new power station that the Premier opened today, place Victoria in a good position — a much better position than the government inherited from the previous government — to ensure that Victorians have adequate power supplies for the future.

Victorian Road Transport Association awards

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — Will the Minister for Industrial Relations inform the house of her recent involvement in the promotion of employee excellence in Victoria?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — Last weekend I was proud to be a presenter of awards at the Victorian Road Transport Association's recognition of excellence awards. As the name suggests, the awards recognise the pursuit of excellence by individuals and organisations within the transport industry. The awards are an excellent example of the Bracks government's approach to industrial relations — that is, having high performance and cooperative workplaces.

The awards recognise all levels of employee involvement, including trainee of the year, receptionist of the year, personal assistant of the year, operations award of the year, fleet manager of the year, transport executive of the year, and a special initiative award.

The award winners were all thrilled to be recognised for their effort by their peers in the industry.

I commend the Victorian Road Transport Association, which is in the process of changing its name to the Victorian Transport Association to reflect the broadening membership, for the initiative in recognising employees throughout the transport industry.

The VRTA is one of a growing body of employers and employer associations that are committed to high-quality workplaces that are fair and safe. That was illustrated by their strong support of the Fair Employment Bill. Progressive organisations like the VRTA, unlike the opposition, are committed to fair and decent standards for Victorian workers.

The VRTA, quite rightly, does not believe the way to growth is by punishing the most disadvantaged workers. Unfortunately that is exactly what the opposition wants and that is the result of their rejection of the Fair Employment Bill!

Essential Media Communications consultancy

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to the contract for the communications strategy for the industrial relations task force between her department and Essential Media Communications. Is it not a fact that this communications consultancy was let in a seven-day period without a full public tender process and without a full advertising process and that Essential Media Communications, a firm of Labor mates, was given an unfair advantage?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — As has been released to the opposition, Industrial Relations Victoria let a contract to Essential Media Communications (EMC) to develop and implement the Youth Rights @ Work campaign. An independent industrial relations task force employed EMC to conduct its communications strategy for its report. That process of purchasing services from EMC was within the appropriate guidelines as set out by the department.

Hon. D. McL. Davis — On a point of order, Mr President, I did not ask about the guidelines. What I asked was for the minister to confirm that it was let in a seven-day period without a full public tender process and without a full advertising process. I ask the minister to confirm that fact.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister perhaps did not answer in the way the honourable member suggested, but the minister has categorically told the house that the matter was done in accordance with the guidelines and operations within her department. I believe that is an answer. I do not uphold the point of order.

Volunteers: marine safety

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — Will the Minister for Ports inform the house of the action the Bracks government has taken to honour the contribution of volunteers to marine safety in Victoria in this International Year of Volunteers?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Ports) — I am very pleased to advise the house that the Bracks government is honouring the contribution of many of

the more than 700 000 volunteers in Victoria who do such a terrific job.

The Bracks government has allocated \$1 million to celebrate, encourage and strengthen volunteerism now and into the future in this the International Year of Volunteers. The money is being used to fund a range of initiatives, including the recognition program where volunteers receive a certificate of recognition of their efforts, and the heroes award program, to highlight particularly outstanding contributions by volunteers.

In my portfolio of ports, there are many hundreds of people who volunteer their energy, enthusiasm and expertise to the cause of improving waterways safety in Victoria. They unselfishly donate their efforts not only in marine rescue, which can at times be a particularly hazardous thing to do, but they also spend many hours training people in waterways safety to make that as safe as possible as well as an enjoyable activity for people who participate in it.

This Saturday I will have the pleasure of presenting recognition awards to some of the volunteers involved in ensuring marine safety in Port Phillip Bay — some 80 or so representatives of clubs will be acknowledged for their special efforts. It will involve honouring the contribution of volunteers from various boating organisations, such as yacht clubs, coastguard squadrons and marine rescue organisations, extending from the port of Melbourne down as far as Hastings. I look forward to acknowledging the contribution of volunteers from other parts of the state during the rest of the year.

Coastal and marine safety is a priority for the Bracks government, as demonstrated by the introduction of boat operator licensing, recreational boating safety grants, signage grants and other safety initiatives. That is in contrast with the former Kennett government. It notably neglected the resourcing of a number of Victoria's important volunteer organisations, including the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, whose members contribute so importantly to improving water safety in Victoria.

Electricity: prices

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — My question is directed to the Minister for Energy and Resources. In relation to the wholesale electricity market price increases and the recent retail price announcements that the minister has referred to the Office of the Regulator-General, it would seem that price decreases as seen earlier this year are acceptable. Will the minister advise what is the government's position in

respect of increases in retail electricity prices which are a result of cost increases?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — It is the case that the government has exercised its powers, which it introduced in legislation to ensure that the government was able to exercise its prerogative, to require the independent Regulator-General to examine proposals such as the ones put to government.

At the outset the government made it clear that the guidelines it was imposing were that during 2001, when Victorian household and small business electricity consumers do not have choice of supplier and are therefore a captive market for the incumbent retailers, any proposed price increases outside of what would have applied under the maximum uniform tariff regime, which expired at the end of last year, by comparison with what would have applied adjusted in real terms, should be examined by the independent Regulator-General.

In relation to the retailers who have put forward proposals for price increases during the course of this year, it is the government's view that it is important the proposals be subject to scrutiny and the government should receive advice from the independent Regulator-General before making any judgment as to whether the proposed price increases are warranted.

One of the proposals meets the government's guidelines; that is the case in relation to Citipower. Nevertheless, that company has agreed that it, along with the other two, should be subject to scrutiny by the independent Regulator-General. In relation to another company, its proposed price increase has not been gazetted and the company has agreed to go through the process. The only company that moved to actually gazette a price increase was TXU. The government has acted to cancel, through order in council, decisively that proposed price increase and required that company to go through the same scrutiny.

In relation to the previous government, everybody knows that the only interest the Kennett government had —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am sure the house is anxious to hear the minister's response. I ask the minister to quickly go through that response.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — I am not surprised that honourable members opposite find this boring. The former government did nothing.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is not in the interests of the house to try to gag the minister by shouting at her. I suggest members of the opposition keep quiet and I ask the minister to wind up her answer.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — The former government did nothing to protect small business from price increases. The Labor government has taken action on a number of fronts to legislate and it intends to protect household customers. It has acted to facilitate further investment in capacity to assist in driving down prices in the wholesale market. The government is introducing an Essential Services Commission to further protect the interests of household customers. That is a great deal more than was ever envisaged by the former government.

Florida Direct

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — My question to the Minister for Consumer Affairs relates to complaints made against Florida Direct, an American-based trader that sells vacation vouchers for holidays in Florida. Will the minister explain what action has been taken to achieve redress for consumers who have paid money to Florida Direct for future holidays in Florida?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I know members opposite do not care about consumer issues, but for those in the chamber who do, Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria has had a number of complaints in the past year concerning Florida Direct.

Florida Direct is a US-based trader that sells vacations and vouchers for vacations for holidays in Florida that must be taken within a three-year period. Consumers are required to make an initial payment up front of US\$800, almost A\$1600, with a further US\$800 required for a second person to travel once the holiday is taken up. Florida Direct has been cold-calling Victorian consumers, ringing up from Florida in the evenings and using high pressure tactics to obtain consumers' credit card details and have them commit to purchasing this product. Consumers have not been told about there being a no-refund policy. This is counter to the laws we have here in Victoria for no-contact sales.

Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria made contact with Florida Direct and believed it might be able to resolve the dispute and seek redress for consumers. The trader offered to come to Melbourne to talk about this but failed to turn up, and then failed to respond to further contact that was made by Consumer and

Business Affairs Victoria. The agency contacted its sister consumer affairs agency in Florida, the Division of Consumer Services, to seek its assistance in resolving the issues for Victorian consumers. Through the work of both agencies consumers were able to seek and obtain refunds from Florida Direct, and there have been no further complaints regarding the trader.

It is important that as members of Parliament we stress to our constituency the need to be very careful about dealing with international companies and companies that are based overseas, as it is not always the case that Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria is able to be as successful in working with other agencies as it has with this case. It is important that consumers do not give over credit card details and do not enter into arrangements with overseas companies without being confident of what they are getting into.

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*.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. M. M. GOULD — The question numbers are 1439, 1629, 1685, 1720, 1729–30, 1732, 1758–60, 1762–4, 1766–9, 1772.

Further, there are a number of questions that I hope will be available to present them to the house later in the day before we adjourn, if leave is granted. Mr Katsambanis has written a letter to honourable members with respect to some answers to questions on notice saying he would raise that in the house. All the ministers here have endeavoured to get in touch with the ministers that need to sign off on those answers. However, we have not been able to achieve that by today. I give an undertaking to the honourable member that within a very short period we will send a copy of those answers that we would propose to table in Parliament under cover of a letter to the honourable member and then table them at the appropriate time when the house resumes, if that is acceptable.

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — On that matter, Mr President, I welcome the minister's undertaking to seek answers. However, it should be put on the record that the questions that the minister refers

to that are in my name were put on the notice paper on 22 March. They are not only questions relating to ministers in this place; they are a series of questions addressed to individual ministers who sit in this place with their individual portfolio responsibilities.

The procedures of this place and the standing orders state that these answers should be provided within 30 days of being placed on the notice paper. It is now three months since these questions were put on notice, and the minister should not rely on a reminder letter from me to implement procedures to get the answers. The answers go to the heart of the openness and transparency the government talks about. They go to sweetheart deals between this government and its mates.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think the honourable member has made his point.

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! He did not actually raise it as a point of order, he just stood up.

An Opposition Member — Except that it was by leave.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is right, I understand. Do you want to get into the same debate?

Hon. Bill Forwood — A different part of the same debate.

The PRESIDENT — Order! By leave?

Hon. M. A. Birrell — No, it is not by leave. He is doing it under standing orders.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The procedures are that if an honourable member who has asked a question has asked for an explanation from a minister he is entitled to stand up, as the Honourable Mr Katsambanis did, and Mr Birrell is quite right in relation to that. I am just not sure whether —

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! So this is a question Mr Forwood has asked?

Hon. Bill Forwood — Yes.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We have finished with the first one.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — On behalf of the opposition I thank the minister for her

efforts in getting so many of these questions answered today. The answer to question 1765, which I asked of the Minister for Planning, is also outside the 30 days, and I ask whether that will be one of the questions we will have answered later this day?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — My advice is that that answer is on the list. The answer to the question is in the works, and I hope to have it to the honourable member before the house adjourns today.

**CORPORATIONS (ADMINISTRATIVE
ACTIONS) BILL, CORPORATIONS
(ANCILLARY PROVISIONS) BILL,
CORPORATIONS (CONSEQUENTIAL
AMENDMENTS) BILL, AGRICULTURAL
AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS
(VICTORIA) (AMENDMENT) BILL and
CO-OPERATIVE SCHEMES
(ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS) BILL**

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — Before the suspension of the sitting I was speaking on the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill. That bill is part of a legislative process in response to the High Court decision in *The Queen v. Hughes*. The decision raised serious doubts about and questioned the validity of state powers where there is no corresponding or clear nexus with the federal power as set out in the commonwealth constitution under which the relevant authority or function has been established.

As one of five cognate bills this bill validates things that have been done or were omitted by commonwealth officers under the 1994 act and the Agvet code, so it introduces retrospectivity. In clause 6 officers are defined as meaning inspectors or analysts under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act.

Secondly, the section 85 statement will prevent any Supreme Court action being brought about any decisions made by commonwealth officers — that is, analysts or inspectors under the Victorian legislation — in support of the national registration scheme arrangements.

The bill will be proclaimed after the commencement of the commonwealth legislation, which is called the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation (Amendment) Bill of 2001. That will authorise the conferral of these state powers. The commonwealth bill was introduced into the Senate on 3 April. It is important that the farming, agricultural and veterinary communities are able to rely on such arrangements, as well as have confidence in the manufacturer's information on and instructions for the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals approved under the national registration scheme.

In the High Court decision in *The Queen v. Hughes*, Justice Kirby said:

Without enforceability the corporations law would be no more than a pious aspiration.

In the High Court decision in *re Wakim ex parte McNally* Justice McHugh said in paragraph 34:

The deficiencies and complexities of federal jurisdiction have been pointed out many times before, never more powerfully than by Mr Owen Dixon, KC, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission on the Constitution in 1928.

Further on he states:

... if Australia is to have a system of federal courts, the public interest requires that these courts should have jurisdiction to deal with all existing controversies between litigants in those courts.

At paragraph 55 Justice McHugh states:

There is no doubt that, as a result of cooperation between a state and the commonwealth, the commonwealth may achieve objects that are beyond the constitutional competence of the commonwealth. Similarly, as the result of joint legislation, a state and the commonwealth may achieve an object that neither could achieve by its own legislation.

Further Justice McHugh states:

Where constitutional power does not exist, no cry of co-operative federalism can supply it ... Try as they might, for example, the states and the commonwealth cannot defeat the operation of s92 of the constitution, no matter how burdensome or inconvenient its application to government activity may be. That is because s92 withdraws power from the states and the commonwealth over the area where it operates.

In conclusion, this package of five bills will ensure that the national corporate regulatory system is placed on a sound constitutional footing and reinforces Australia's reputation in the commercial sphere of the Asia-Pacific region.

The overall effect of these bills, as well as the commonwealth bills, will be to ensure that there is no barrier to commonwealth legislation incorporating companies or conferring jurisdiction with respect to the Corporations Law in the Federal Court, or conferring functions and powers with respect to corporations legislation on commonwealth authorities and officers. I commend the five bills to the house.

Hon. R. M. HALLAM (Western) — These five bills — the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill, the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill, the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill and the Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill — are designed to complement and could be described as the children of the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Act. On that basis they are certainly supported by the National Party. Indeed, the need for further extensive legislative changes was understood when the parent bill was passed last month.

However, while I was prepared to predict the need for additional legislative change, I do not now claim to understand the precise nature of the consequential changes. Nor do I profess to have more than an in-principle understanding of the effect of the bills currently before the chamber. As previous speakers, in particular the Honourable Carlo Furletti, have explained, they are quite intricate and very complex and legalistic. They go to not only the circumstances of which we are aware but also to a whole range of potentialities and contingencies, and therefore they have been framed very broadly indeed.

The bills share a common purpose and are designed to avoid a massive and incredibly divisive and unforeseen wound to the system of Corporations Law across Australia. The possible implications of not addressing that wound are too horrific to contemplate. The bills represent a recognition of that potentiality and the cooperation and goodwill that emerged across the jurisdictions in search of a remedy. The house has in front of it bills that represent Victoria's part in a quite complicated remedial package involving all the jurisdictions — that is, the states, the territories and the commonwealth. They are model bills that will be replicated across the other states and territories.

I do not intend to canvass the historic background of the bills, because I did that to some degree during debate last month on the parent bill. However, it is worth noting that the genesis of the bills can be traced, at least

in part, to the Australian constitution, which is a point made even more relevant by the recent centenary of Federation celebrations. In the simplest terms, the founding fathers quite deliberately — and in my view quite perceptively — structured a national identity in that constitution document based upon the concept of the federation of states. They were adamant that the states would retain their individual sovereignty and that the commonwealth government would become responsible for those issues that truly transcended the rights of the individual states and became recognised as issues of national importance — that is, matters such as defence and so on.

It is clear to all concerned that the federal constitution truly reflects that intent and that the recent complications arising from some interpretations of the constitution by the High Court further underscore what is clearly a very cleverly crafted document and demonstrate better than anything else I can say just how perceptive and sage were the architects of that original document. It is pertinent to note that that document was crafted when our nation was very new — in fact, it was at the time of its birth — and that now we have a quite sophisticated society. Massive changes have occurred in the 100 years since its inception. I am reminded that my father, who is sadly no longer with us, saw the Wright brothers take to the air and lived to see man land on the moon — those achievements occurred in just one lifetime. Transposing that level of progress to the corporate sector gives us some idea of the demands made upon a document written a little over 100 years ago, and yet that document has survived and its intent is just as clear and relevant today as it was when it was written.

However, it is of critical importance to note that, in defining and delineating what constituted a federal as opposed to a state issue, the regulation of company operations was clearly intended to be retained within the province of the states. Issues such as incorporation and so on remain the regulatory responsibility of each individual state. No-one could have predicted the incredible development that has occurred in the corporate sector, the explosion in technology — in particular, computers — or the degree to which those changes have transcended state boundaries. Indeed, we see the same issues being demonstrated in respect of national boundaries. There are clearly no boundaries in today's business sector; instead, we have a global business scene. Some might dispute the merits of a global economy but nobody can deny the reality of the international market place or the mobility of capital.

It is interesting that the same issues about state borders that emerged years ago are now being replicated to some degree at the national level. The Australian corporate high-flyers who today travel between the capitals of the Western world are probably the same people who just a few years ago communicated between the capitals of Australia. It was obvious that something had to be done to establish a rational system of company regulation and provide for some harmonisation of Australia's laws, because the advantages of doing so were clear. As it happens, I grew up with the 1961 version of the legislation — that is, the Uniform Companies Act, or the UCA — which, for a variety of reasons, was overtaken. If we wanted to promote investment growth and jobs at a national level, and in particular if we wanted to be successful in attracting the export dollar, it was clear that real advantage could be gained in administration and compliance costs.

You did not need to be too bright to work out that having eight fiefdoms across the national map of Australia was not in our best interests, that it would frustrate the truly national employer and lead to some forum shopping and that what we needed was some practicality and some commonsense. So over the years the states and territories have come to the table to pursue the issue of harmonisation of the regulations applying to the corporate sector across state borders. Perhaps some of them came unwillingly, but it was very clear to all those involved that there was some real advantage in that objective.

There have been a whole range of schemes — the 1961 version that I mentioned was simply one of those — and the latest that we have come to recognise was that which was born in 1991 when the commonwealth government enacted a set of model laws based on the Australian Capital Territory. That model was then adopted by each of the states and, although it was administered by the states, it effectively became a single national code.

So we were proceeding pretty smoothly. I think we got the balance pretty close to right. On the one hand we had what was to all intents and purposes a national system but one which preserved the sovereignty of the individual states. Then came along the two High Court decisions which ruined the party, the two that were quite rightly quoted recently in this context. The first was the Wakim decision which held that state jurisdictional power could not be transferred to a federal court. That simply meant that all the cross-vesting arrangements on which the enforcement

provisions had relied were effectively struck down. We have seen the solution to that in the form of two specific pieces of legislation, the Federal Courts (State Jurisdiction) Bill which was passed in this house in November 1999, and later the Federal Courts (Consequential Amendments) Bill passed in 2000. They were designed to reinstate the intended effect of those earlier cross-vesting arrangements.

Then, as if that was not difficult enough, there was the Hughes decision in which the High Court indicated that when a state gave a commonwealth authority or officer a power to undertake a function under a state law, together with the duty to exercise that function, there must be a clear nexus between the exercise of that function and a legislative power of the commonwealth set out in the Australian constitution.

It is very clear that if that view prevails, the commonwealth is unable to authorise its authorities or its officers to perform a function under a state law unless that function is supported by a head of commonwealth power. That has enormous ramifications. It arguably knocks down the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, it undermines the commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and it gets the National Companies and Securities Commission in the same breath, so clearly we have some major complications.

It is ironic that in the Hughes case the court held that the prosecutorial function of the commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions was in fact exercised validly. It actually removed the question marks in that case before the court! So it was not the ratio of the Hughes case that caused the heartburn; it was in fact the dicta of the High Court judges which raised a question mark over the general proposition. But worse still, the question mark indicated to the world that the validity of each individual action could only be determined on a case-by-case basis, in which case there was the prospect that the performance of those functions could be challenged. So what we faced was an absolute cock-up of the first order, a shemozzle.

The remedy comes in three parts, and I set the context in respect of the suite of bills we have before the house. The first tier of that remedy was the reference of the relevant powers relating to corporations and their regulation to the commonwealth Parliament by the various state parliaments. We had that debate not all that long ago. It was covered by the Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Act which this Parliament enacted last month. I said at the time that I thought it

was a very cleverly constructed piece of legislation because while it achieved the purpose we were looking for via the reference of those powers, that reference was restricted. So it was not the carte blanche transfer of authority to the commonwealth from the states. It was clear that it was meant to be a reversible reference because at the discretion of the individual states it could be reversed, and the bill came complete with a sunset clause. So even if the states did absolutely nothing it would simply fall off the statute books at the expiration of, I think, five years down the track. That was the first tier of the remedy.

The second tier was the legislation required before the commonwealth Parliament. I speak of the enactment of amendments to the commonwealth's new Corporations Act and Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act. I am not sure exactly where that has got to but it is part of the package, and I presume it is a matter of course that it will be formally enacted by the commonwealth. We simply have to rely on the advice we are given in that context.

And the third leg of the remedy is the one currently before the house — the suite of five bills that we hope will tie off all the loose ends! Like the Honourable Carlo Furletti, I am not entirely convinced that this is the last we shall hear of the Wakim and Hughes cases.

I will turn briefly to each of the bills honourable members are concurrently debating. The first of those, the Corporations (Administrative Actions) Bill, is designed to simply validate all the actions taken prior to the commencement of the new corporations legislation. It is designed to pick up the interim periods. We are presuming that everything is under control once the new legislation comes into being, but we need to go back and retrospectively fix the backlog.

I am assured that all states have passed legislation similar to that which is before us. The bill provides that all the things done by commonwealth authorities or officers will have force and effect as if they were undertaken by the state. The bill says that irrespective of the contingencies that have to be captured, any action taken by the commonwealth against that background is assumed to have been taken by the state and to have the authority that goes with that enactment.

The second of the five is the Corporations (Ancillary Provisions) Bill. It updates the references in Victorian legislation to the old Corporations Law to those in the new commonwealth Corporations Act — over and above those specific amendments in the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill.

This is the bit I found to be tricky. The new Corporations Act does not cover the complete field in the area of corporations. Accordingly, any indirect inconsistencies between the commonwealth and the state do not necessarily result in the invalidity of the state provisions. However, because of the referral by the state of the corporations power, any direct inconsistencies between Victorian law and the commonwealth act will result in invalidity. Therefore, to protect these new provisions legislation is needed to insert declarations that the new Corporations Act is not to apply. I hope that is now clear to everyone. It took me some time to get my mind around that, but I am fairly confident that I have captured what this bill is designed to do.

The third is the Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill. All it does is trawl through the Victorian statute book and amend all the titles and references that need to be amended as a result of the changes in the parent legislation.

That brings me to the fourth bill in the suite. I am not sure what the word for five is, given that 'quadrella' means four. This bill secures the constitutional basis — —

Hon. J. M. Madden — A handful.

Hon. R. M. HALLAM — Yes, it is a handful.

Hon. B. W. Bishop — A lot.

Hon. R. M. HALLAM — It is a helluva lot. The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill secures the constitutional foundation and the conferral of functions and powers on which the national registration scheme for agricultural and veterinary chemicals is based. Again, this is a direct response to the Hughes case. That scheme, now called the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals, has replaced separate state schemes for evaluating and registering chemicals since 1994. It is applied under the Agvet code and governs the clearance, registration, standards, permits and so on of chemicals up to and including the point of sale. However, the Hughes decision challenged the ability of commonwealth officers to lawfully act under state laws and raised the questions I referred to earlier in my contribution.

Here is a specific example of the sorts of questions that could be raised directly by the Hughes case. This bill is designed to overcome those deficiencies and

retrospectively validates the powers and actions of inspectors in that context.

The final bill is the Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill, which extends the protection mechanism to other schemes that are designed to apply cooperatively across state borders. That effectively extends the principle that applies in the registration of agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

I must say that I do not understand why we need both the Co-operative Schemes (Administrative Actions) Bill and the bill that relates specifically to agricultural and veterinary chemicals. I would have thought that one would have subsumed the other. It seems that it is a clear case of belts and braces. But like the Honourable Carlo Furletti, I am persuaded by this package, because I am assured that it is the product of the best legal brains from across the nation. Senior officers from the states, the territories and the commonwealth — and, indeed, the attorneys-general — have been involved in the search for a solution. I will therefore not raise an eyebrow about what appears to me to be a clear case of duplication. I simply ask why one bill seems to overlap the other. However, if it means there will be a solution, I am prepared to go with the flow.

The Wakim and Hughes decisions have kept us on our toes, but I think we have now devised a clever solution. However, I am not convinced that it is anything more than a bandaid solution. I certainly do not think it is a long-term solution. I have been around long enough to be sceptical, and in this sort of situation I have seen Murphy's Law apply more often than not.

The only real remedy is to secure a change to the Australian constitution. I think that is one point on which we would all agree, but it would mean that we would have to address some of the bogies of the past. It would mean that all the questions about state sovereignty and all the accusations about the voracious commonwealth and its determination to capture more and more territory would be raised again. I suspect that would open up some old wounds!

I am a supporter of competitive federalism and have been since I first took an interest in such issues. I see an enormous advantage and great discipline in cross-border contestability and I could give plenty of examples where that has served the Australian community well. There is always room to recognise a trade-off against uniformity on the one hand and the discipline that comes from contestability on the other. However, we should be adult enough to go back and ask some really basic questions about where the

boundaries should fall between the responsibilities of the commonwealth and those of the states and territories. I believe corporate regulation would be much more appropriately applied at the commonwealth level.

I take exactly the same view of industrial relations. The Kennett government's decision to cede industrial relations to the commonwealth was not just a brave but a good decision and one which will result in great advantages for our nation in the years to come. I note that the Bracks government is determined to claw back industrial relations so we should not expect to see logic win the day in any of these issues.

History has shown that it is hard for any change in the constitution to be secured or achieved. It is much easier to promote the status quo. It is much easier to pander to the innate resistance to change. It is much easier to terrify the electorate than it is to promote the need for change. I for one shall not be holding my breath.

However, I am really heartened by the level of goodwill and cooperation that has been demonstrated across the breadth of the country in the remedy we have before us. I said it was a bandaid but I do not sell short the enormous effort that has been made to secure that bandaid. I only hope the same will can be harnessed into devising an amendment to our constitution and selling to Australians the appropriateness of a change to the constitution. In the meantime the bills before the chamber need to be passed. I am pleased to report that the National Party offers its support.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I will be speaking on only one part of this cognate debate, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) (Amendment) Bill. I congratulate other speakers on the way they have wrestled their way through the debate and on the legal expertise and interest they have shown for the balance of this cognate debate. I am sure most of our farmers — it does not matter whether they are broadacre, pastoralists, horticulturists, grain growers, dairy farmers or others — do not even know the debate is taking place at this time. However, it is important that the debate takes place and that our users, suppliers and officers, both state and federal, are assured that the cross-vesting powers or arrangements developed across Australia allow the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals to operate with the full credibility and power of the law.

The principal act, which was introduced in 1994, provided for commonwealth officers to use powers that were available in Victoria. That was simply to

administer the national registration scheme across Australia. It worked well without any problems until, as most speakers have said, the Hughes case came along and created some doubt in the situation. During my time in this chamber I have noted that a good bit of our work is done in amending bills as we tidy up things as they occur from time to time.

The bill seeks to ensure that any future and past decisions on the national registration scheme are fully supported in law. We must ensure that registration in Victoria relies on and retains its integrity and is not challenged by any party. I will explain it in simple terms. The bill validates actions by commonwealth officers pre-1994. That is a fair and proper process. Those officers, due to the cross-vesting arrangements in place, were clearly of the belief that their actions were exactly right and believed they were fully protected by the full course of the law in whatever actions they took. Officers who acted in good faith can now relax with the surety that the bill will solve that uncertainty. The bill also prevents Supreme Court action on any of those decisions taken under the present arrangements. The bill also reaches forward to protect the future decisions of those commonwealth officers.

I will conclude by commenting briefly on the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals today. It is very sophisticated. In my time, when I was involved in the day-to-day decision making on the farm, the sophistication was really just coming into place. Now the industry's requirements on farmers in the agricultural and veterinary chemicals field are highly complex.

We need to guard against resistance in agriculture, whether it be with animals, drenches, injections or pour-ons, or in horticultural or agriculture, whether it be sprayed on the crops or on the ground, or through water or dusting. Across any industry there is a much higher and sophisticated use of chemicals. In the grain area, the move towards minimal till, particularly in the high rainfall areas, has accelerated the use of chemicals. There is now specific chemical use in agriculture, with different chemicals for different weeds, different insects and different applications — whether it goes on by a spray boom, a mister, or by aircraft. There are different requirements, different issues and different chemicals.

I am sure our suppliers and agronomists would want the security we are talking about today because they now use some innovative mixes in agriculture, again for different situations. At the end of the day it does not matter who you are in the industry — you must have

full confidence in the registration process. That is absolutely critical and it is obviously best, as other speakers have said, to have a national registration scheme.

Not only are chemicals expensive, but they can also cause damage and have lasting carryover effects in the soil itself. Sometimes when we spray chemicals on the soil they are deliberately designed to have a carry-on effect to do what they need to do, so it is a complex issue.

The bill gives security to the officers carrying out their duties, and I see it as a partnership between the state and federal governments and the territories to ensure the national registration scheme works well, and can have full integrity and confidence across the total industry — with suppliers, officers and users — backed up by the full protection of the law. I wish the bill a swift passage through the house.

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — Here we go again. This is the fourth set of bills that has been introduced in the past year or so to address the issues raised in the High Court decisions of Wakim and Hughes. This time we have a tranche of five separate bills to try to address these important issues. They strike at the heart of our system of government and of Federation, exactly 100 years after Federation.

The bills relate to the notions of competitive federalism. I am a strong supporter of competitive federalism because, as other speakers, especially Roger Hallam, highlighted, those competitive pressures drive better outcomes for all Australians.

When we look at issues of competitive federalism we must look at them in the modern context rather than in the context of 100 years ago. Yesterday was a perfect example of the sort of competitive federalism that is an absolute winner for all Australians, where the Queensland government — a government of the same political ilk as the current government in Victoria — upped the ante in relation to lower taxes and, in this case, lower payroll taxes. As Mr Best points out, it left Victoria behind, but it also upped the ante, and I hope and trust that other states will follow.

They are the good elements of competitive federalism that we need to maintain to keep a vibrant, prosperous Australia that increases living standards for all Australians. But at the same time we need to examine areas where we can work cooperatively within our federalist structure. After all, it was only through cooperation that we achieved a federalist structure.

One hundred years down the track we need to work out what is needed to maintain that competitive tension, and where we need to strive for cooperation and similarity. It is in this context that we must view these bills. They attempt to deal with a Corporations Law that has to play legal gymnastics with a constitutional structure which might well have been a good structure 100 years ago, but which has no relevance and certainly provides no comfort to the people of Australia today.

Our corporations are national and they invariably trade beyond state boundaries; in fact, for most of our corporations state boundaries are nothing but artificial creations with very little relevance to them. Increasingly corporations compete internationally in a global marketplace, and to compete they must have the certainty of the rule of law as it applies to them in their operations as corporate structures. To do that there is no doubt that an absolutely seamless national structure is the correct one, and that can be achieved only through federal legislation. Any other mechanism used, such as the current one we are embracing today, is a mere poor substitute, although it is the best attempt we can make under current constitutional restrictions.

These bills are the best solution that the best legal minds in our country can come up with to correct a problem that will dog us for many years to come, and I support them, as does the opposition. However, we need to consider a bigger challenge — one that seems daunting, but also one that will show the maturity we will need to create a vibrant economy in the next 100 years of our Federation, a commitment that will ensure that we have an adequate legal and regulatory structure for the conduct of corporate law.

It is not just the national imperative, it is an international imperative. To have instability in the law as it relates to our corporations — their ability to form, their ability to govern themselves and their ability to be regulated — sends a terrible message to international investors as well as to domestic players.

The challenge we have to embrace is one of constitutional change. It does not necessarily have to be broad constitutional change, but change that addresses simply, adequately and logically the issue of a national constitutional framework for Corporations Law in Australia.

Our legal system, Australia's corporations, and the international business community demand nothing less and nothing more of us, and we as legislators should show the maturity and vision to deliver Australia a modern corporate law structure through embracing constitutional change rather than running away from it.

That is what forums like the Council of Australian Governments should be about. It was disappointing to see that the recent round of COAG turned into a typical six premiers versus one Prime Minister fight. It does not matter who has been in power in each of the states or at the commonwealth level in my lifetime — —

Hon. M. M. Gould interjected.

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — I address the comment made across the table by the Leader of the Government and say that in my lifetime it has not mattered who has been in power at the state or federal level. Often premiers and a Prime Minister of the same political ilk have ended up having these meaningless arguments at COAG rather than addressing the big ticket issues such as the matter we are debating.

Certainty is absolutely fundamental to the conduct of a mature economy in a global marketplace. The sooner we realise that and embrace constitutional change in this important area of our Corporations Law the better off we will all be. If we do that we will ensure the certainty of the rule of law as it applies to companies in Australia and that we give the people of Australia the greatest possible benefit from a competitive federalism, where it is appropriate and beneficial, and from a cooperative federalism, where again it is of benefit to the people of Australia. In this way we will ensure that we continue to deliver increased living standards to Australians in the next 100 years of our federation.

CORPORATIONS (ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS) BILL

Second reading

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the second reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the second reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. In order that I may ascertain whether the required majority has been obtained, I ask those members who are in favour of the question to stand where they are.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

I thank honourable members for participating in the debate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. I again ask the honourable members who are in favour of the question to stand where they are.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

CORPORATIONS (ANCILLARY PROVISIONS) BILL

Second reading

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

I thank all honourable members who participated in the debate.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

CORPORATIONS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL

Second reading

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the second reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. In order that I may ascertain that the majority has been obtained I ask those members who are in favour of the question to stand where they are.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

I thank honourable members who participated in the debate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. I ask honourable members applauding the resolution to stand in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (VICTORIA) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the second reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. So that I may be satisfied that an absolute majority exists, I ask honourable members supporting the motion to stand in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. So that I may be satisfied that an absolute majority exists, I ask honourable members supporting the motion to rise in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

CO-OPERATIVE SCHEMES (ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS) BILL

Second reading

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the second reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. So that I may be satisfied that an absolute majority exists, I ask honourable members supporting the motion to stand in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. So that I may be satisfied that an absolute majority exists, I ask honourable members supporting the motion to rise in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

CONSTITUTION (METROPOLITAN AMBULANCE SERVICE ROYAL COMMISSION REPORT) BILL

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 14 June; motion of
Hon. M. M. GOULD** (Minister for Industrial Relations).

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — The Constitution (Metropolitan Ambulance Service Royal Commission Report) Bill was formerly called the Constitution (Parliamentary Privilege) Bill but because of considerable concerns expressed by opposition members the government was forced to change the title of the bill. The opposition has brought the government to account on this bill and now honourable members have before them a reduced version of the original bill to overcome the problem of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service Royal Commission report being published and printed between the autumn and spring sessions of Parliament.

The opposition supports the bill with its new title and provisions, which relate only to the royal commission. I refer to two reports of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. The first is its annual report for 1996–97 where on page 20 the committee recommends:

... when the Parliament is not sitting, parliamentary committees should be able to present their reports to the Presiding Officers and these reports shall then be deemed to have been presented to the Parliament and their publication authorised.

In other words, the committee is recommending that a report finalised by a joint parliamentary committee should be able to be published so that it becomes public property to enable information to be dealt with or considered and to cut down on the possibility of premature unauthorised disclosure of matters in the report.

The second Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report to which I refer is entitled *Annual Reporting in the Victorian Public Sector* and was presented to Parliament in May 1999.

Recommendation 5.9 at page 64 of the report is that:

The Standing Orders Committee of the Legislative Council consider what procedures are required to enable the council to allocate time to the scrutiny of annual reports.

Recommendation 5.8 is that:

The Financial Management Act 1994 be amended to provide that when the Parliament is not sitting and an annual report is due for tabling, the minister can forward copies to the Clerks of the two houses of Parliament for tabling on the next sitting day. Once acknowledgment of the receipt of the report has been made, the report should then be made public.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, through a subcommittee that I had the pleasure of chairing, together with the Honourable Bill Forwood of this place, came up with the suggestion that annual reports should be brought into the public arena during the non-sitting weeks for the process of scrutiny. In many respects the bill looked at satisfying the recommendations in its original form, but the way the bill was crafted and cobbled together presented real difficulties.

Many states and territories such as Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory, as well as the House of Representatives and the Senate, have legislation relating to reports being made public through an appropriate process during times when the parliaments in those states and territories and the federal Parliament are not sitting.

The original bill provided for not only royal commission reports but also reports of boards of inquiry; joint investigatory committees; all-party parliamentary committees; Ombudsman reports; reports under the Audit Act; reports laid before Parliament, which would include annual reports; and reports to be laid before Parliament, to be submitted during non-sitting weeks. There were wide-ranging suggestions in that bill.

Under the bill a minister of the Crown could by choice hold back the presentation of a report to the Parliament until a time that suited the minister. For example, a report could be dropped into the public arena at 10 o'clock in the evening on the Thursday prior to Good Friday and maybe the Parliament would not be sitting until a week or two after that time. There are obviously implications in a bill that allows a minister to choose to make a report public at a time suitable for some political reasons. Certainly if it does not suit a government to release a report and the act of the day allows a minister to hold something back, the

community has problems. It is not fair to the public that such a situation should be allowed to exist.

The committee brought those problems to the attention of the bureaucrats who were responsible for the legislation. Basically those bureaucrats, who were working with the appropriate ministers, were not in a position to remedy the legislation in time, and we have ended up with legislation that has been cut down to provide only for the royal commission report on the Metropolitan Ambulance Service to go through this process.

More work should be done to allow that process to occur for the reports that I referred to earlier. I believe the opposition will be happy to be involved in discussions and bipartisan consideration in order that the political traps to which I referred can be taken out of proposed legislation, and that there be a bill with which we are all happy. That will reduce the processes for reports to be lodged with the Parliament during non-sitting days, but should not allow political issues to be entered into by holding back reports or dropping them on the table when the politically appropriate time occurs.

That will happen in the future. It may happen prior to the spring sessional period. Who knows: it is up to the government to initiate that and to have meaningful discussions with the opposition in relation to it.

The bill contains a number of provisions. We expect the Metropolitan Ambulance Service royal commission report to be tabled about the end of July, and when that occurs it will be made public through the provisions of this bill. The bill provides for the publication of the report following the Governor in Council receiving a copy and the minister giving a copy to the Clerk of each house of Parliament. The bill says that the Clerks will then table this document in each house of Parliament on the next sitting day and, importantly, that such publication will, in accordance with the particular section, have absolute privilege, and the provisions of sections 73 and 74 of the Constitution Act will apply. That is the crucial point.

The bill's final clause is a sunset provision. I know I cannot quote him here, but I note that during debate on the bill in the other place the honourable member for Richmond said he believed it was arguable that the report would ever be tabled in this place on the basis that this house would meet one week after the lower house met, whether it be in August or September next. He is wrong, as both houses will meet on 16 August. If the royal commission report is presented to the Governor prior to 16 August, the Clerks of each house

will be obliged, as I understand it, to table the royal commission report on the next day of sitting, which will be 16 August.

Clause 5 says that the bill, once passed, will be repealed on the first sitting day of the Legislative Assembly. That is appropriate. Section 12 of the Acts (Interpretation) Act indicates that where a date is set for something to go out of existence by way of repeal, it will remain in force until the last moment of that day. I presume that means midnight on 16 August.

In conclusion, the opposition supports the bill. I am happy to be awake for its passage through this place, but I intend to be asleep when it ceases to be part of Victorian law.

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I am pleased to support the bill, which, I am also pleased to note, is supported by the opposition. The bill will amend the Constitution Act of 1975 to allow the report of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service Royal Commission to be published and to be given parliamentary privilege when Parliament is not sitting. The report is due to be delivered on 30 July.

The practice with previous commissions has been that their reports have been tabled in both houses of Parliament at the command of the Governor and ordered to be printed. That means the reports have attracted parliamentary privilege under the Constitution Act. That protects the publication of a report, but it also goes further in that it protects the staff of the commission and publishers of the report from liability. It gives those who may print extracts of the report in good faith some protection from legal action.

The bill is based almost entirely on the Longford Royal Commission (Report) Act of 1999, which provided that the commission's report be granted parliamentary privilege once it was published. It afforded all sorts of protection from legal action following the publication of that report. The purpose of the bill is outlined in clause 1.

Clause 3 amends the Constitution Act by inserting a definition of letters patent, which ensures the commission and the MAS are accurately defined. The clause also provides for a process of deeming. It means that when a copy of the report is given to the Clerk of each house of Parliament it is then deemed to have been ordered by the house to be printed. The report will then be tabled in each house on the next sitting day. That clause also applies parliamentary privilege to the report.

Clause 4 has been included to grant parliamentary privilege in case the bill affects the powers and

authority of the Supreme Court. Clause 5 includes a sunset provision, which means that the bill will be sunsetted on the first sitting day of the Legislative Assembly after the report has been delivered to the Governor. That provision has been inserted, as Mr Lucas said, at the request of the opposition.

Although the bill is small it is important in that it will ensure prompt public access to and scrutiny of that important report when it is handed down. I support the bill and am pleased the opposition supports it. I commend the bill to the house.

Hon. R. A. BEST (North Western) — The National Party supports the bill. As the house has heard, it provides for the report of the royal commission into the Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) to be published between parliamentary sittings. As the house heard in the minister's second-reading speech, the bill mirrors legislation introduced to allow the Longford royal commission to have its report tabled during a sessional period of Parliament.

As Mr Lucas rightly said, because of problems with its drafting the bill was heavily amended in the other place, so the one we are now debating is quite different from the one introduced into the Legislative Assembly.

The sunset clause in the bill means that the measure will lapse on 16 August, which is some 61 days away, so for all intents and purposes its life as a piece of legislation within the Victorian community will be quite short.

I wish to refer to two issues of concern, and I do not want to go over the ground that Mr Lucas put on the record. The first is the issue of parliamentary privilege and the opportunity that is provided by this sort of legislation and the whole notion behind the tabling of reports in between sessions. I was a member of the Economic Development Committee, as was Mr Lucas, in the last Parliament.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — And Mr Forwood.

Hon. R. A. BEST — And Mr Forwood, who was a very capable chairman. We identified that there were really good grounds for having reports tabled in between sessions. A good example that Mr Lucas would be very well aware of is the committee's recent inquiry into Workcover premiums. In order to get it tabled this session we basically had to sit as a committee for four days last week commencing at 8.00 a.m. when we met for an hour and a half in order to prepare the report to be tabled in this parliamentary session. It is an excellent report which reflects the view of the evidence that was provided. But the problem that

was confronting the committee was having that report tabled in time because, like so many other reports, it contained information that would be very valuable to the community. I believe there are a number of advantages for the creation of legislation that will see these reports tabled in between sessions. I think it is an opportunity for honourable members to receive more timely information, particularly with the publication of the report of the Auditor-General and annual reports of government agencies. It means that the information remains current and is not overtaken by subsequent events and it minimises the danger of premature, unauthorised disclosure by committee members of reports that are finalised during long recesses.

What often occurs is that this Parliament, like most other state and territory parliaments in Australia, sits for about 50 or 60 days per year, but there are long gaps between the parliamentary sessions. So I think the suggestion of Mr Lucas that a bipartisan or tripartisan piece of legislation dealing with this issue should be investigated is a very sensible and timely one. As I said, I think there are definite occasions when reports of committees are appropriate to be tabled between sessions.

However, that does not diminish or dismiss the responsibility of the government because if this legislation were to come into being, it cannot be used as a way of hiding information. It cannot be used by government to be sneaky about the way in which it releases what may be quite sensitive reports. There needs to be an issue of balance; there needs to be an issue of honesty in the way in which legislation is drafted and created that would ensure the appropriate level of openness and accountability.

As I said, this is not a big bill. It is accommodating the report of the MAS royal commission so that we can have that published, if required, between sessions. There is no guarantee that that will be the case, given that there have been a number of extensions to the royal commission already. However, it is appropriate that the National Party supports this legislation to ensure that there is a framework and an opportunity for that report to be released.

Having said that, the National Party welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this debate. Again, it reflects an issue that requires further investigation — that is, the way in which reports of a range of committees can be released in between sessions. I suggest the government should address that issue in the future. The only way that that can be addressed in a way that ensures support from the opposition and National Party is that the legislation that is drafted

meets all the criteria established for openness and accountability. I support the bill and, on behalf of the National Party, wish it a speedy passage.

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — The Constitution (Metropolitan Ambulance Service Royal Commission Report) Bill is straightforward and has tripartisan support in the house. It will attach parliamentary privilege to a report that is provided to government between sessions. There are often long gaps between one session and the next. The bill will allow urgent action to be taken during that period. It provides for publication of the report of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service Royal Commission and gives parliamentary privilege to that report when Parliament is not sitting.

The matter of making provision for the publication of the report is urgent and cannot wait until the next sessional period, which is some three months away. The government must be seen to be open and accountable to the Victorian community. If the opposition requests a direct response to the community we cannot wait until the next sittings of Parliament in this special year, with the sitting in August to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of Australian politics.

The bill is based on the Longford Royal Commission (Report) Act 1999, and this report can be dealt with in the future. I believe the community, especially the media, wants to know what is going on. The government must be seen to be open and accountable to the community, especially to the taxpayers. Victorians would like to be confident that members of Parliament and ministers will take care of the ambulance service. We must be seen to be doing our jobs when Parliament is not sitting. When Parliament is not sitting people think we disappear and that we are not around to take care of Victoria. The bill is important to show that we are always interested in taking care of the day-to-day activities of Victorians, and that the Parliament is always there to be responsible to the political system.

The matter of making provision for the publication of the report cannot wait. For six months each year the Parliament sits and for six months it does not.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — We are sitting for 50 days. You said you were going to sit more than that, and it is not happening!

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN — We are going to sit more days. We always sit long days and all necessary business is dealt with during the sittings. Many important bills, such as the Whistleblowers Protection Bill, have been dealt with in these sittings. The Bracks

government is committed to open and accountable government. In conclusion, I believe the bill is strongly supported, and I support it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. D. G. Hadden) — Order! I am of the opinion that the second reading of the bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. As there is not an absolute majority of members of the house present, I ask the Clerk to ring the bell.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. D. G. Hadden) — Order! So that I may be satisfied that an absolute majority exists, I ask honourable members supporting the motion to rise in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

I thank all honourable members for their brief contributions to a brief bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. D. G. Hadden) — Order! So that I may be satisfied that an absolute majority exists, I again ask honourable members supporting the passage of the legislation to stand in their places.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2001/2002) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 14 June; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL and BUDGET PAPERS, 2001–02

Second reading

Debate resumed from 19 June; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) and Hon. C. C. BROAD's motion:

That the Council take note of the budget papers, 2001–02.

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, Madam Acting President, after the minister delivered her second-reading speech yesterday some discussions took place led by Mr Hallam about the accuracy of that speech, which, according to page 2 of *Daily Hansard*, included the words that the state government net debt would be:

... \$2.5 billion by June 2005.

Page 152 of budget paper 2 states that state government net debt would be:

... \$3.5 billion as at June 2005.

Discussion then took place across the chamber during which Mr President suggested that the minister might find it possible to seek some guidance on where the house should go from there. Will the minister be able to

address the issue raised in that point of order about the accuracy of the second-reading speech and the budget papers?

Hon. C. C. Broad — On the point of order, Madam Acting President, I am not entirely clear what the point of order is. However, in the spirit of cooperation, I understand that subsequent to events yesterday some discussions have been held with Mr Hallam and that a number of the matters he raised, including the issue he raised during both the second-reading speech and the second-reading debate, will be addressed by one of the government speakers yet to contribute to the debate.

I am sure the honourable member is aware that there is no facility for me, as the minister representing the Treasurer, to speak in the second-reading debate. However, a number of matters have been canvassed with Mr Hallam, including the matter raised in Mr Forwood's point of order, and they have been discussed with the Treasurer. It is the government's intention that those matters will be responded to before the conclusion of the debate.

Hon. Bill Forwood — Further to the point of order, Madam Acting President, I thank the minister very much for her comments and I look forward to that response, which I understand will be made by Mr Theophanous during his contribution to the debate. Whether the second-reading speech is accurate is of some importance to the house, and I hope that will be addressed by Mr Theophanous.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — It is with much pleasure that I make my contribution to the budget debate. I will take a positive approach to budget issues in my contribution: in some instances I will be urging the government along; in other instances I will be giving credit where credit is due; and in yet others I will be criticising where appropriate.

I have had a couple of pet projects in Mildura, and I am delighted to see them moving along reasonably well towards completion. One of them is the Mildura Special Development School. That project was started by the previous government, and I am pleased to say that I hope it will be completed by this government in a very short time.

The Mildura special development school caters for disabled students from the wider Sunraysia community. I think it now has the capacity to cope with 75 students, and I suspect the number will be well past that when the school is completed. I commend the principal, Christine Wilson, who has always acted beyond the call of duty.

She has done a magnificent job for the school, as have the parents and volunteers.

Another project that has been on the books for some time is the Christie Centre, which also cares very well for the disabled members of our community. Again I give credit to the volunteers and staff, who perform beyond the call of duty. In particular, I mention Joy Teasdale and Glenda Hiskins, who, along with many others, have done a marvellous job not only in managing the Christie Centre but also in working towards the new building, which will be much better than the present one and will serve the community positively into the future.

I must also mention Ross Lake, who has made a huge contribution to the Christie Centre, in which I have also been involved. Ross runs a large fuel distribution business and is caught up in nearly everything around the place, including the arts and the water industry. I do not know how he finds the time, but he has done an extremely good job. I commend Ross Lake for the work he has done for the Christie Centre. No doubt the success of the new building will be due largely to his efforts.

One of the most important things to have happened in the Sunraysia and across Victoria is the standardisation of the rail gauge. That will have a huge impact on my electorate, which I share with the Honourable Ron Best. Without the National Party and the various local municipalities I do not believe the standardisation program would have gone ahead at this time. We have exerted considerable pressure to get it under way, because we are aware of its continuing worth right across Victoria and Australia.

Australia has made a mess of its rail situation. Some people say there are five different gauges, but the other day I heard that there are eight gauges across Australia. As a result of the territorial fights about the rail gauges, we have ended up with a very expensive fix.

Hon. P. R. Hall — You need to get Tim Fischer on to it.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — Yes. Mr Hall reminds me that last Sunday we had the pleasure of listening to the Honourable Tim Fischer speak at the launch of a pioneer railway at Red Cliffs, which was well attended. He is a railway buff, and his talk on the history of the railways was absolutely fascinating. There is no doubt about Tim Fischer: just give him a few ideas and he is on his feet. He can make any subject interesting, particularly the railways, of which he is a strong supporter. Like Tim Fischer, I think it is time we all got

on with the job of standardising railways throughout Victoria.

The pressure for that has mounted in my area. The mineral sands industry said it required access to the deep water port of Portland. Its business means a lot to our transport and port sectors, which have faced strong competition from South Australia and New South Wales. Three products come from the mining of mineral sands. Zircon is one, rutile is another and ilmenite, one of the less attractively priced products, is the third. In general those products are used in ceramics, paints, jewellery and even hip joints. They have a wide range of uses in Australia and on the international market.

The mineral sands industry has a huge future in my region and beyond, stretching across a fair area of Victoria and extending up into New South Wales. Mildura is fortunate because it is in the geographic centre of the mineral sands deposits.

It is estimated that the Murray-Darling Basin contains about 60 million tonnes of mineral sands with a value of about \$13 billion, providing employment opportunities for 450 permanent and about 1100 ancillary staff. It is big business, and it will probably last for 30 or 40 years. Murray Basin Titanium has a mine at a place called Wemen, which is towards Robinvale. It also has a separation plant with plenty of land at a place called Koorlong, near Mildura. It is great that there is plenty of space, because I hope we will be able to add more value to the product than is added now. A processing plant could be established there, and given Mildura's geographic position the industry could not only add value to the product but also add to employment and investment in the region. As I said, it is a long-term project of at least 30 or 40 years duration.

It is interesting that another company, Iluca, has started some investigatory work at Kulwin, whereas Murray Basin Titanium is looking at opportunities over the river in New South Wales.

It is important to note that this type of mining is environmentally friendly. Operators backfill and undertake stringent rehabilitation processes. Recently the operators of the Wemen mine held an open day, which, if my recollection is correct, 450 people attended. Everyone certainly had a good look around, and once they saw how the land would be rehabilitated with backfilling and the growing of crops, they were much more accepting of the mining process.

Some time ago, when the coalition government was in power, we held regional forums around Victoria. One of those forums identified the need for a decent study of the state's north-west freight requirements. That study has been going for months and months, and it is certainly time it was wound up. I call on the government to wind it up so we can get on with developing the Mildura river front and retaining the railway line so those opportunities can be realised. That includes moving the freight centre from the river front and placing it somewhere else so we can move on.

There has been a substantial amount of talk about the return of the passenger train to Mildura. I certainly support the return of the passenger train to Mildura. It may well come at a substantial cost. If it does I would challenge the Sunraysia community to use it or lose it. That will be an interesting challenge as the project evolves over time.

I emphasise that freight must be a priority as we go through the standardisation process. We must ensure that products reach their end destination. About 9000 containers a year — or a train a day — leave Mildura and go down to the Melbourne Port Corporation. They go out of the Merbein installations of Wakefield Transport, which is a true multimodal company. Wakefield Transport works very well and delivers all sorts of products, including wine and horticultural products — it does not matter what. In addition to its other activities the company is also involved in the mineral sands industry.

It is interesting that the passenger train has been mooted to come back to Mildura. I note that the budget sets aside a relatively small amount of money for the upgrading of the rail line. It is just as important to upgrade it for freight as it is to upgrade it for passenger travel. If under a 24-hour turnaround could be achieved in getting freight from Mildura into the ports that would put in place enormous efficiencies with transport.

As the National Party spokesman on transport, roads and ports I have been pleased with the standardisation program. I have also been pleased with the joint venture to introduce dual gauge lines in some of the ports — for example, the port of Geelong. That will provide great flexibility for transport into that port for rail traffic from not only Victoria but also southern New South Wales. However, I am concerned that the time table for the standardisation project is stretched out too far. It is a bit like many parts of this budget — some of it appears to be in the never-never. I urge the government to move more quickly on the standardisation project. If Victoria is to reach \$12 billion in food exports by 2010

sufficient railroad capacity must be in place to deliver those products to our ports.

As a vision for the future we could look at Mildura as being an inland port. It could be a huge accumulation centre, given the expansion of the irrigated areas around there and up and down the river. With a bit of vision that could occur, particularly with the Darwin railway coming into place. The railway line could be extended 200 kilometres north of Mildura and linked up with the transcontinental line. In addition, if the railway lines were standardised and a line from Ouyen to Pinnaroo were hooked up, that area of Australia, particularly country Victoria, would be given many options by which to deliver its products to those export markets on which it relies so much. I can see Mildura as an inland port with freight going in and out from the north, south, east and west. That should be part of the vision for the Sunraysia area — and I am sure it could rise to the occasion.

As I have said, one of my big concerns with the rail standardisation and upgrade is the time scale. Some areas are budgeted out to 2005 and there is no doubt that that will be too far out. We have now found out from the government that the \$96 million allocated to the standardisation is not contingent — I repeat, not contingent — on assistance from the federal government or the private sector. There was some talk with the budget papers that that would be a \$44 million requirement, but it is now clear that that is not necessary for standardisation to proceed.

It is important for the government to recognise the strong support across all of Victoria for these projects and not string them out to 2005 but move quickly in a continuous operation. It should start at the Mildura end, clear up the Ouyen–Pinnaroo side, and go down to North Geelong. It could continue immediately at the Robinvale–Kulwin end and move across the state in a continuous program. I believe that would capture the real economies of scale in the project and obviously speed up the benefits to be gained out of the program.

I urge the government to also include the Piangil and Swan Hill line, because there is also heavy traffic on that line. If we are to do the job in Victoria, let us do it properly. Let us do the whole state and ensure that with our grain and other horticultural products, and with our passenger service, all those lines in Victoria can be utilised to the utmost. It would make very good sense to do the lot while we are on the job.

I recall the discussions on funding. I recollect that last year \$40 million was allocated to rail from the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. I am not too sure

where that has gone. I am not sure whether it has gone into the \$96 million and whether that has been topped up. I would be interested to hear about that because, like many other members in this place, I found it a bit difficult to go through all the budget papers and get the exact answers.

I would like to comment briefly on the fast train projects the government is proposing for the regional centres of Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and Traralgon. It would be great to have fast trains, and that is fine.

Hon. J. M. McQuilten interjected.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — I thank Mr McQuilten for his interjection, but I think the jury is out on the cost. It started out costing \$400 million or \$500 million. Now I hear it will cost \$800 million and there has to be private sector development, so we are not sure. While it sounds like a great idea, let us look at the cost-benefit analysis and the real cost, and wait to see what eventuates as the planning and costing proceeds. That means the National Party is not against it. However, it is showing some responsibility with that project.

I move to the issue of the Robinvale bridge. The bridge has reached the end of its economic life. Some two or three years ago, out of the goodness of its heart, the federal government put up some funding — —

An Honourable Member — And it did not need to.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — And it did not need to. I thank those on the other side of the chamber for the interjection. The federal government did not have to put up that money, but it did. In this instance it put up \$17 million, and a lot of toing and froing has gone on ever since.

There have been arguments about which track it takes and who pays for what. When one does the sums — and I note the Minister for Transport, Mr Batchelor made some comments about it the other day — the total is \$40 million. Some \$17 million has been allocated by the federal government; in a media release the New South Wales government said it would kick in \$5.7 million; and Victoria will apparently put in \$7 million. That leaves about \$11 million short. The Minister for Transport said he believed the New South Wales government would pick up the extra and it probably should. There needs to be a bit of commonsense and a circuit breaker to get this bridge going. I believe the federal government has done more than its share. Victoria and New South Wales need to sit down, sort it out and get on with the job.

Mr Baxter also spoke about funding for bridges. The honourable member for Swan Hill in another place, Barry Steggall, and I have been critical of the government because \$700 000 was allocated in the budget for a number of bridges. We thought that would not go anywhere, and we rightly said so. We asked where the extra money was. The minister was critical of us and said there was \$44 million left. If the minister is right we are now assured that there is plenty of money in the bin to proceed with the bridge. When the bridge begins we expect the money will flow and the works will continue without any trouble.

The Robinvale bridge has had traffic lights on it for a long time and the locals have been really patient. It is starting to affect trade and it certainly would affect the social life between Euston and Robinvale and other towns across the river. I note my New South Wales parliamentary colleague from the other side of the river, the honourable member for Murray-Darling, Peter Black — I know Peter quite well but I do not think he has been at all helpful — has been pushing for another route for the bridge. He wants it to go straight on from Euston. It is a much more expensive alternative and creates a number of other difficulties.

Mr Stan Parke, a prolific letter writer, often writes to the Swan Hill *Guardian* and the Robinvale newspaper. A letter from Stan, as reported in the *Guardian* of 8 June, states:

There still remains a lot of argy-bargy between the states and federal government before we can expect to hear the thump of pile drivers working on the erection of our badly needed replacement bridge.

As I understand the situation route (A) has been costed at \$39.6 million, route (E), \$50 million. Route (E) would certainly create even further delays if it was ever seriously to be considered due to environmental, river flow, financial and 'sacred site' considerations.

Funds so far promised include \$17 million from the federal government, \$5.7 million from the New South Wales government and \$5 million from the Victorian government, making a total of \$27.7 million. Still \$12 million short of the funds required to complete the shortest route. A partly completed bridge would fall into the same category as a pub with no beer.

It is high time the states realised they are ultimately responsible for funding the whole of the bridge. The contribution that has been made from the federal government was purely voluntary. It is therefore up to the states to provide the shortfall, not the federal government.

It is high time Mr Black stopped playing dog in the manger in pushing for option (E), otherwise the bridge will never be built. In the meantime the grim reaper is hovering.

Everyone needs to settle down and work together towards a common purpose and go for the preferred site

so we can get on with the job and see the Robinvale bridge started soon.

The next major project I refer to is the Mallee pipeline. Stage 7 is set to go; there is one stage left. The state money is okay and I am sure the commonwealth money will be okay. This has been a project valued at more than \$50 million and shared by the state and federal governments. Farmers have contributed with on-farm costs as well, and I congratulate the Wimmera-Mallee Rural Water Authority for the real commitment it has had to this project, particularly the chairman, Dr Goff Letts, who has done a great job, and the chief executive officer, John Konings. They all deserve a special mention.

My colleague John Forrest, the federal member for Mallee, has done a superb job in gaining the finance from the commonwealth government. The money has always been there, and there has been strong competition for the fund. I call on the federal government and the state government to undertake the next step of the piping for Wimmera-Mallee. There is no better time because the storages in the Wimmera are down to 11 per cent. A project steering committee, chaired by Cr Stewart Petering, has done an excellent job. The committee has been meeting for some time and has assessed that the project would cost out at about \$300 million, it could be done over 5 to 10 years and would save 85 000 megalitres of water in seepage and 15 000 megalitres in evaporation. As I said, there is no better time to start the project and it is essential that it proceed. The amount of \$300 million seems a lot of money but it is a good investment for the future because water is one of our scarcest commodities. Given the lack of a catchment over the past three years, the argument is very compelling.

However, I offer a word of caution. I have spoken to some of the members of the steering committee and I have suggested they take care of the recreational waterways and lakes. When we piped the Mallee, Lake Walpeup was filled by the drainage out of the channel. Obviously as there is now no channel the lake does not fill. It has removed one of the recreational facilities for the area. I have asked that the committee bear that lesson in mind when they move on to that project.

I cannot go past the water for the Snowy. The Honourable Peter Hall asked not so long ago where the \$40 million went in the budget. We do not know where it went, we would not have any idea, but we need to keep an eye on the fact the government has said it will put up to 28 per cent of the flows back into the Snowy. We all agree with the Webster report. It is a fair and

reasonable report which found that 15 per cent could be found from water saving. That is a win-win situation; if it is managed right and costed properly it is a benefit to the water authority, to irrigators and the state as a whole. If the government enters the water market it will certainly put at risk a lot of the developments we see going well at the moment along the river.

In that context I note that the consultative process of the Deakin report is soon to be completed. I have been invited to a meeting next Wednesday to look at the draft report. It is critical to our area that that process be continued and moved along quickly. I commend the chairman of that committee, Mark Hancock, who is now, as I understand it, chairman of the Sunraysia Rural Water Authority and I believe he will do a good job in both areas because of his experience in production, processing and his knowledge of water.

On that note I commend outgoing members of the water authority. They have all done a marvellous job, particularly Eddie Warhurst, who has chaired the organisation for some time and made a huge contribution to the water industry in Sunraysia.

I welcome the new members onto the authority. I am sure they will do a good job. The government has made a disastrous mistake, however, in appointing members to this board. It has totally ignored Robinvale, which is a huge irrigation area. Dougal Leslie, a member of the Sunraysia Rural Water Authority who was on the board, happened to come from Robinvale. He was deputy chairman, and now he is gone, and therefore the first-hand knowledge of the Robinvale area is gone as well. The government should act immediately and put either Mr Leslie or some other Robinvale person back on the board to ensure the interests of Robinvale are brought to the table in the most direct manner possible.

I hope the Deakin Project consultative process moves along quickly. It is vital for our land use and infrastructure and what happens with our water distribution authorities in that area. Some tough decisions may need to be made, but I am looking forward to viewing the draft report and seeing what direction it believes the area should take in the future.

The education area deserves a strong mention. It is great that \$4 million has gone into Swan Hill for a state-of-the-art training facility. People in that area have done a lot of work to obtain that grant. There was a well-documented need and a strong demand for skills to satisfy the local horticultural industry.

A further \$2.75 million is going to Mildura for a centre of excellence for irrigation and water management. On

that issue I also direct the government's attention to the Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre Lower Basin Laboratory, which I have spoken about before. It was set up originally in the unused offices of Lower Murray Water and shifted to the old hospital site. Now it has to move from there, and Victoria is in competition with South Australia and New South Wales again. I urge the government to act swiftly, as quickly as possible, on that research centre because Mildura is geographically well placed to service the health of the rivers.

The budget raises concerns about the Mildura courthouse. Some of the budget decisions are well out in the never-never. Twelve months ago there was a great hurrah because there was to be a new courthouse in Mildura. It is definitely needed, with the old courthouse having seen its best times some years back. An allocation of \$8.9 million was made — some for this financial year and some for the next two. But what has happened? Absolutely nothing. The minister appointed a committee chaired by Cr Peter Byrne, and he did a good job, as did the committee. They had a narrow reference on where they could recommend the courthouse be built. But I said, 'Why don't we show some vision and put the courthouse and police station — soon to be rebuilt — up at the old hospital site, have a co-location with fire brigades, the ambulance, the SES and all the emergency services?'. It was a great idea with strong community support, but did it get support from the Attorney-General? No. Did it get support from the local member? No.

Now I do not know what is going on with the courthouse. I suspect they are jammed for room, and may have to compulsorily acquire some buildings to build the courthouse, which is a great pity. Compulsory acquisition is not a good idea. Unfortunately — —

Hon. P. R. Hall — What about all the money that was there?

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — I hope it is still there, Mr Hall, but it is sad that a visionary idea strongly supported by the public has been brushed under the carpet, and now we will plod along with something that could be described only as a bit of a mess, when we could have done a lot better and built a world-class centre with sustainable savings. Whatever they do, I hope they get on with it so that the courthouse can be built.

To a certain extent, contributions to the budget debate round up the year but they look forward as well. We have heard some interesting contributions to debates, particularly from the Leader of the Opposition. One of

my disappointing times in this house was last week when we debated the Barley Marketing (Amendment) Bill. Victorian people spoke out as strongly as they could. When the single-desk process was put in place in 1993 we knew that in 1998 there would be a review in 2000; but this government chose not to have a review.

South Australia, our partner in that industry, had a review, and extended its single-desk policy. The industry then had two annual grain conferences, which both resulted in a strong vote for retention of the single desk policy. An independent survey was conducted and 84 per cent of growers were in favour. Five hundred-odd letters went out into the electorate of the honourable member for Mildura in another place, Russell Savage, and the result was 500 in favour and 10 against, which is not a bad vote.

Then in desperation the Victorian Farmers Federation, in support of a bill which the National Party had on the notice paper, and which was supported by the Liberal Party, conducted a poll. It received 84.5 per cent support for retention of the single desk for barley marketing. The vote was taken up by 64 per cent of the people, which is an amazing take-up rate. The Victorian Electoral Commission said 15 to 20 per cent would be about average. The voice of country Victoria was speaking, but the government did not listen and nor did Mr Savage. I notice in the media today Mr Savage is saying, 'We should have cooperation'. We had it before and they took it away from us!

It will be interesting to see how the industry looks upon the government in the future, because the first time the government was asked to listen, it didn't — and neither did Mr Savage. It did not understand or it did not want to understand the difference between domestic and international markets, which are totally different. It was a sad day when the government closed its ears to what was being said by people in the barley industry, as did Russell Savage.

To conclude, I think this is an up-and-down budget. I had a bit of trouble finding things in it. Honourable members had to fossick through and find what they could, and it certainly was not easy to understand. I make the point that a lot of the initiatives in the budget are a long way out and I would rather see them brought forward more quickly and crisply. I urge the government to do that, particularly with rail gauge standardisation, or I think our communities will become a bit disenchanted with future budgets as they stretch out into the never-never.

Hon. G. W. JENNINGS (Melbourne) — The 2001–02 Victorian budget overview document that was presented to the Parliament by the Treasurer is entitled *Delivering Today, Building for Tomorrow*. It is with a great degree of enthusiasm that I join the budget debate to re-emphasise the degree of confidence the government has in this budget and the fact that after 20 months in office it is delivering today and building for tomorrow.

The essential part of this budget is that it outlines a significant number of improvements the Victorian government has made to service delivery in this state in the past 20 months. It outlines in some detail, although perhaps not all the detail the opposition might require, the investment the Victorian government is making in key infrastructure to underpin the social and economic development of this state.

It is with a high degree of confidence that I support this budget because I believe that the government's expectations of improvements in service delivery and investment in infrastructure have been formed in a way that adheres to responsible financial management and is in accordance with the needs and expectations of rural and regional communities in Victoria. The budget places a high emphasis on investment in infrastructure and service delivery in the key areas of education, health and transport in particular, and it does so in a way that will attempt to underpin long-term sustainable economic growth and opportunities for job creation throughout the breadth of Victoria.

A key component of the government's intentions is to underpin broad economic sustainable growth throughout Victoria — growth that will cultivate and nourish a creative and innovative economy. Many measures outlined in this budget demonstrate that the government is delivering today and building for tomorrow.

In this debate a number of honourable members have listed their expectations of the budget. On a number of occasions honourable members have referred to their expectations about the degree of accountability and transparency that should exist in the structure of the material brought before the Parliament. I suggest that the government has tried in many ways to satisfy the expectations of the ordinary reader of budget material in the Victorian community. It has presented to the Parliament a range of budget documents, some of which are in plain English, such as the budget overview document I referred to earlier. A similar publication that provides a snapshot of the budget and its delivery of services to regional Victoria is entitled *Growing the Whole State*. It provides a ready reckoner for members

of the Victorian community to identify on a region-by-region basis where the government is delivering infrastructure and improved service delivery.

There has been much discussion about the content of the Treasurer's second-reading speech and that will feature prominently in a later part of this debate today. The involvement of the Auditor-General in signing off on the overriding economic parameters set down in budget paper 2 leads the government to believe that its construction of the prevailing economic trends and the structure of the budget is sound. On page 215 the Auditor-General has been prepared to sign off on the parameters of the budget and the structure of the issues outlined in budget paper 2.

The document that is perhaps the most difficult for the Parliament and members of the community to grapple with is budget paper 3, which outlines the budget estimates. They are heavy going. They delve into the program and output areas of each government department and agency. However, if one can stick with budget paper 3 there is ample opportunity to identify the specific program initiatives supported by the government. The budget outlines the way the success of those programs is to be measured through a listing of performance measures. It provides an analysis of how those performance measures have been reached, the success of those programs in the outgoing year and the anticipated result for the upcoming financial year. As members of the Victorian community would expect, that document is heavy going.

The criticism of the budget meted out in this chamber has probably been directed at budget paper 3, which is pretty much in the format constructed by the previous administration. While a number of people would enter this debate to extol the virtues of accrual accounting, the downside of accrual accounting documents is the difficulty the general community has in sourcing, accessing and understanding them.

Accrual accounting is an accounting method that the Labor government is happy to maintain and comply with, but it can lead to criticism in terms of its interpretation and understanding. It has possibly led to some members of the opposition in this place and in the other place being confused about the bottom line of the budget. A number of the contributions in the second-reading debate have falsely indicated the financial status of the budget. The government is absolutely confident it has a healthy amount of headroom in the operating surplus of the budget this year and in outgoing years.

It is the government's view that the budget is constructed on the basis of having clear forward estimates that will provide the Victorian community with a high degree of confidence and financial stability. It is paradoxical that on many occasions during the second-reading debate the opposition has questioned whether the government should provide forward estimates for the next three or four financial years on the basis of the anticipated date of the next election. Clearly the government believes that the financial stability of the economy is not just for this year, but for coming years. The forward estimates are an integral part of the documentation that the government brings before the Parliament.

A number of questions were raised about the ongoing stability and viability of the budget structure being susceptible to an anticipated downturn in the Australian and overseas economies. It is one of the reasons the government is dedicated to ensuring that a major component of the initiatives presented in this budget and the first budget of the Bracks government is to provide capital expenditure to build up the assets of the state. There has been a continuing effort to develop infrastructure. This budget provides the largest expenditure for infrastructure projects in Victorian history.

It is paradoxical that while the opposition believes it has the luxury of criticising the government as a high-taxing, high-spending government, time and again opposition members in their contributions to the debate were crying out for spending initiatives in their electorates. Some of the contributions of opposition members were galling in their hypocrisy, because on the one hand they were criticising the government for being profligate while on the other they wanted to add to the expectations within the Victorian community by making specific claims for spending on infrastructure or service delivery in their electorates.

The government is particularly mindful, with its emphasis on infrastructure spending and increasing the asset base of the state, of the stimulatory role the budget can play in withstanding the economic downturns that may occur in Australia and in the international marketplace. The government places a clear and distinct emphasis on the budget's stimulatory role in funding a number of programs. As I said earlier, the Treasurer has brought down a budget with an operating surplus of \$509 million and an average surplus of \$500 million in the following three years. The government is confident that it can maintain its forward estimates notwithstanding a potential slowdown in western economies, including Australia.

The budget has modest expectations of growth for the Victorian economy. In fact, the government anticipates economic growth will be 2.75 per cent despite a dampening Australian economy, particularly through the imposition of the GST and its consequential effects on business activity within the nation. It also comes at a time when Victoria is suffering a budget shortfall as a consequence of the Commonwealth Grants Commission formula that is compounded by the funding regime for the GST.

I refer to budget paper 2 at pages 128 and 129, where it clearly shows that Victoria continues to be disadvantaged in providing subsidies to other states through the application of the grants formula. Table 7.4 at page 128 headed 'Fiscal subsidy for 2001–02 on an equal per capita basis' demonstrates clearly that Victorians continue to be disadvantaged far more than people in any other state in terms of the effective subsidy they pay to the rest of the nation. According to the Commonwealth Grants Commission formula Victoria receives \$5323.6 million, whereas on a per capita basis it would expect to receive \$6291.3 million, a net loss to the state of \$967.7 million from what it would expect if it received an amount equal to that received by the rest of the nation. That equates to \$200 for each and every Victorian citizen.

Similarly the disadvantage that is currently meted out through the application of the GST funding formula to the state caused Victoria to miss out again. Table 7.5 at page 129 headed 'Fiscal subsidy for 2001–02 on a GST incidence basis' demonstrates that Victorians receive only 83 cents in the dollar on return for expenditure on the GST. That is the lowest figure in the nation. Only New South Wales has a negative return of 86 cents in the dollar. Victoria continues, on the application of GST funding income and on the basis of the Commonwealth Grants Commission formula, to subsidise the rest of the nation.

Budget paper 2 goes on to state at page 130:

Estimates by the Department of Treasury and Finance show that, if the latest relativities are maintained, then the amount of commonwealth grants redistributed from Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia to the other states and territories will grow from \$2.2 billion in 2001–02 to \$3.2 billion in 2005–06.

That is shown graphically on chart 7.6, which appears at page 131, under which it states:

The continued cross-subsidisation of the relatively well-off and mature economies of Queensland and the ACT is particularly unwarranted. A substantial overhaul of the CGC process is long overdue.

Certainly I would echo in my contribution to this debate the fact that Victoria continues to subsidise those that do not warrant that support, because time and again in terms of potential job growth, service and infrastructure delivery Victorians are subsidising well-off states such as Queensland and those Australian citizens who live in the Australian Capital Territory.

Notwithstanding those disadvantages, the Victorian economy continues to grow and perform better than the rest of the nation, particularly when it relates to growing jobs. The excellent news that is contained in the budget papers, and echoed by the Treasurer in his contribution to the debate, is that well over half of all new jobs created in Australia over the last year were created in Victoria. That is basically twice what one would expect to occur on a per capita basis. Victoria has doubled the nation's job creation capacity.

I am delighted to say that 2.3 million Victorians were employed in March of this year, which is 68 500 citizens more than a year ago, and the excellent news in terms of the government's commitment to growing the whole state is that more than one in three of these new jobs is in regional Victoria.

I direct to the attention of the house an interesting table outlined at page 52 of budget paper 2. Chart 4.8 headed 'Regional labour market performance by state' cross-references the connection between a reduction in the unemployment rate with the growth in employment across the nation by region. I am extremely pleased to report to the house that Melbourne and the rest of Victoria by far outstrip any other region across the nation in employment growth up until the first quarter of 2001.

Page 53 of the same budget paper outlines the employment growth trends in regional Victoria, which includes the report that in the Barwon–Western District employment rose in the last year by 16.1 per cent, and that the region's unemployment rate fell sharply over the past year to 6.2 per cent to be below Melbourne's rate.

In the Central Highlands–Wimmera region, however, the news was not so good. Employment levels fell by 3.2 per cent while the unemployment rate similarly declined to 7.4 per cent. That is indicative of a reduction in the participation rate in that region.

In the Loddon–Mallee region employment grew by 5.8 per cent and the region's unemployment rate fell slightly, to 8.4 per cent. In the Goulburn–Ovens–Murray region employment fell by 4.5 per cent, while the unemployment rate stayed at

6.7 per cent — again indicative of a fall in the participation rates in that time.

The Gippsland region achieved the excellent result — coming off a low base, it must be recognised — of 12.9 per cent growth in the last year, even though the unemployment rate stayed at above the state average. Overall, most Victorian regions saw significant employment growth last year. According to chart 4.8 on page 52 of budget paper 2, the remainder of Victoria outside the metropolitan area saw the highest growth in employment of any region throughout Australia by a very healthy margin. The policies adopted by the government and the emphasis placed by it on growing the whole state have been demonstrated by the healthy job growth figures in the majority of Victorian regions.

As I said earlier, the budget demonstrates that the government will maintain the pace of investment, particularly on infrastructure in growing the asset base of the state. Projects worth \$2.13 billion have been identified in the budget — the largest spending on asset investment in Victoria's history. In the next four years net spending on asset investment will increase by a massive 45 per cent. That is an extraordinary commitment on behalf of the Labor government to growing the state. In this financial year the government has added \$175 million to the original \$1 billion Growing Victoria infrastructure reserve, which is a significant opportunity for major construction and investment in Victoria's asset base.

The budget sees a healthy emphasis on particularly education, health and transport spending. I will briefly draw attention to those items because there has been a degree of concern and discussion in the community about the government's support of the education sector. The story that should be told and understood demonstrates an extremely ardent wish of the government to revive the health and vitality of the education sector in Victoria.

As the Treasurer said in his second-reading speech, since 1998–99 Victoria has moved from being the lowest spending state on a per capita basis to being the second-highest state. It has seen the introduction of targets to improve literacy and numeracy, with increased year 12 retention rates. The government seeks to improve the level of participation, particularly in regional and rural Victoria. The government has already reduced class sizes for years prep–2 and has the laudable aim of reducing class sizes to an average of 21 within the next two years.

The government has introduced an extra 2000 new staff into the education system, including 800 new primary

school teachers. The government has placed particular emphasis on investment in the middle years of school, resulting in \$67.5 million being added to the education budget to provide for numeracy and literacy rates, and to increase student attendances in the critical middle years of school. Victoria has had a healthy injection of \$249 million over five years to implement the school teacher classification and performance framework to link teachers' pay to improved educational outcomes.

The government has provided for innovation and creativity within the education sector by instituting a Victorian schools innovation commission to provide advice to the minister and the department on ways in which to bring about best practice and innovation, and creativity into the Victorian school system. Those specific operating programs are supported by a significant investment in the budget through infrastructure spending. That has seen \$386 million being put into hardware to support the work teachers undertake in schools; \$90 million for the modernisation of science laboratories, libraries and other facilities in schools; \$40 million over two years to modernise information and communications technology (ICT) facilities in schools; \$23 million extra to achieve a ratio of better than 1 to 5 for computers to students in government schools; \$15 million to improve the research and innovative capacity of a number of high schools, and to include the gene technology access centre at University High School and a new centre for space, science and education at Strathmore Secondary College.

They are exciting and innovative programs that will add to opportunities for Victorian students to immerse themselves in emerging technologies and job opportunities for the future. The budget has made a significant investment in the technical and further education (TAFE) sector through \$65 million to provide for high technology learning tools and the upgrade of obsolete and deficient ICT infrastructure. The budget has added \$11 million to the TAFE sector to increase the number of ICT graduates and open up additional places for apprentices and trainees to provide for scholarships to Victorian universities and to encourage research activity in those critical information and communications technology sectors into the future.

A clear aim of this government is to underpin activity in emerging areas of the economy. The government supports an industry that is based on our competitive strengths, including high educational outcomes, a high skills base and an eye for the international marketplace, particularly in e-commerce and information and communications technology.

While it is keen to underpin economic development in these critical areas, the government has not taken its eye off the need for key infrastructure spending in the human services portfolio to provide support for those in the community who may need it. That can be seen in the budget for health and community services, which provides \$1.4 billion for Victorian hospitals over the next four years to cater for the treatment of 30 000 more patients each year, which in turn will reduce waiting times in emergency departments. It is part of the Minister for Health's program to reduce demand in the hospital sector over the next four years.

It includes specific allocations such as \$150 million to improve the management of chronic conditions and reduce hospital readmissions, \$384 million to treat an extra 11 000 elective surgery patients and an extra 14 000 emergency admissions each year, and \$48 million for subacute care and home-based alternatives. The budget also includes \$35 million for improved ambulance services, \$9.6 million for free needles and other support for diabetics and for an expansion of breast screening, \$8.4 million to treat an extra 3000 Victorians in public dental services, and \$14 million to improve mental health services. The government has allocated \$500 million over four years to rebuild hospitals and nursing homes, including major redevelopments in 6 city and 10 regional country hospitals. The budget provides for a \$42-million boost over four years for the establishment of 2 new ambulance stations and the purchase of 24 new ambulances. The government will also spend \$42.8 million over four years on 300 additional crisis and transitional accommodation units as well as homelessness support services.

The government is clearly addressing the urgent health care needs of the community, including the growth in demand for hospital services. It is also very responsive to the needs of people on waiting lists and those in need of emergency care.

The government has also been prepared to deal with state responsibilities that have been swept under the carpet for too long. This budget supports the residents of Kew Cottages by underscoring a \$100-million redevelopment program. It will assist those who are among the most vulnerable and the most ignored in our community and who have suffered from the neglect of state administrations over a number of decades. These issues warrant our compassion and our urgent attention. I am pleased to be part of a government that has come to terms with the state's obligation to support the vulnerable residents of Kew Cottages. I look forward to the day when appropriate accommodation and support services are provided to those 462 people, who have

lived in that institution for far too long, and to their families and the staff, who have carried the burden for far too long.

This government has given a fillip to public transport, which, under the previous government, was flogged off and subjected to neglect. This budget provides an opportunity to enhance metropolitan and regional services. It allocates funds for the standardisation of the rail lines, which will underpin economic development throughout the state. This is the first time in a long while that a state government has taken responsibility to drive investment in public transport. For far too long state and commonwealth governments have focused on investing in the roads sector, ignoring the opportunity to invest in public transport. I am pleased that the Minister for Transport is driving major reforms that include connecting Melbourne to regional communities through fast rail links, standardising the rail gauge and adding to the fixed rail network in the metropolitan area. It comes at a time when the minister has introduced significant road safety initiatives in legislation that has been passed by the Parliament.

The budget provides for a number of environmental initiatives that have been subject to some consternation in Parliament in the past couple of weeks. The terms of the support the government has provided, particularly concerning fishery management issues, were contingent upon the passage of the marine parks bill. That will now not see the light of day in this session. There was significant investment within the budget, and support for marine parks in Victoria is an issue that the government wishes to pursue. It comes off the back of a significant achievement in the past 12 months by my colleague present in the chamber, the Minister for Energy and Resources, in playing a pivotal role in restoring environmental flows to the Snowy River, and was a major undertaking in last year's budget, and continues to be in this year's budget.

Significant investment has been put into tackling salinity and other environmental issues in this budget. It also comes off the back of important legislation introduced in the Parliament last year, including the healthy neighbourhood legislation, the legislation dealing with the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, and the initiative of the Minister for Planning in bringing enhanced environmental performance through the Rescode planning regime to housing and urban development in the state.

A component of the budget relates to modernising government. The Treasurer outlined a number of initiatives to improve the performance of government administration, including \$4 million spent to redevelop

the Victorian government portal for actively improving access to online government; approving a \$30 million information and communication technology strategy for health care, linking metropolitan health services; and providing \$30 million for an electronic version of the land titles register. I note that in an article that appeared following the budget, Tim Colebatch said the reform was first mooted in the 1970s, so I hope it occurs this year.

A \$3-million investment in a regional telecommunications infrastructure program to install high-quality collaboration, videoconferencing and Internet facilities was provided for in the budget. Those issues complement a number of significant legislative reforms brought to the Parliament in the past year by the government to deal with effective government administration, reforms designed to support improvements to the organisation of service delivery within the state and provide opportunities for Victorian citizens to more readily access services and government departments than in the past. The initiatives include a number of pieces of legislation including the essential services disputes resolution legislation, the training and further education bill, the Urban Land Corporation (Amendment) Bill, the Gas Industry Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, racing industry legislation, the Law Reform Commission legislation, new police regulations and the Whistleblowers Protection Bill. In the past 24 hours reforms to the state taxation and duties regime have been debated.

Those issues underpin a better connection between the Victorian government and its citizens. They provide greater opportunities of access for Victorian citizens, and taxation reforms provide support for the Victorian economy and businesses in Victoria to flourish and grow. Despite the accusations levelled during the course of the debate, a helpful reduction in the tax regime now applies within the state jurisdiction to Victorian business.

Finally, I refer to a range of measures the Victorian government has identified in terms of supporting communities and placing an emphasis on community building. They deal with areas of disadvantage and dislocation within the state and provide for pilot programs to support social and economic growth in areas of the state that may not have achieved uniform growth and distribution of services over the past decade. These measures will be administered by the Premier in cooperation with the Minister for Aged Care, who will support the Premier on community building.

These augment a number of important pieces of legislation that the government introduced this year, including the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill, the Racial and Religious Tolerance Bill, the Victims of Crime Assistance (Amendment) Bill and gaming legislation, which the Victorian government has introduced to support all members of the community by providing a new regime of Victorian laws that underpin the rights of a number of citizens who have been denied those rights in the past, to provide for reasonable controls in a number of areas of social activity that may have led to a degree of stress and anxiety within the community. Taken as a whole they demonstrate that the Victorian government has used its time in Parliament to add to the calibre of Victorian statutes to underpin a happy and productive life for Victorian citizens.

That has not universally been the case. There have been one or two spectacular failures in the government's legislative program, and the demise of the Fair Employment Bill was a low point for me during the course of the year. I have major concerns about the quality of life of 260 000 Victorian families who rely on the incomes of workers who are not guaranteed access to the proper wages and conditions that have been afforded to workers in the rest of the nation. I believe that situation is a blight on the Parliament, and it is extremely disappointing. As a government member I will be vigilant about improving the lot of Victorian citizens, and the demise of the Fair Employment Bill will not demoralise me but will reaffirm my commitment to ensuring there is a proper legislative base and proper support services for the people of Victoria. It is the intention of the government to deliver on those objectives.

I have confidence in this budget because it delivers what is in the domain of the government to deliver for today and it clearly invests in the name of Victorian citizens for tomorrow.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I am pleased to contribute to debate on the budget. I could take all the points made by the Honourable Gavin Jennings and discredit them a point at a time, but I will not.

Hon. E. G. Stoney — You could.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — I could, but I will not. Government members have been basing their contributions on a selective reading of the budget papers, adapting the material before the house to suit their own purposes and very much seeking to mislead the Victorian public about the budget. If the first Labor

budget put the brakes on Victoria's growth this budget has introduced a handbrake turn in the direction in which the state is going.

I intend to give a brief overview of the general application of the budget in restricted areas that are of most interest to me. With the indulgence of the house I will also address in particular those aspects of the budget that affect my electorate of Templestowe Province. The budget is a significant addition to the Bracks Labor government's activities over the past 18 months. It has halted development in Victoria. It is interesting that in his contribution Mr Jennings stopped at page 54 of budget paper 2, because if he had gone to page 58 he would have found the table that shows that in its own budget papers the government expects an increase in unemployment in this state over the next 12 months.

It is easy to say that you have created a lot of jobs, but if you are losing them faster than you are creating them clearly you will cause harm to the state. The government has clearly failed to utilise the inheritance left to it by the previous Kennett government to shore up and reinforce Victoria's position vis-a-vis the other states. Instead, as I said, the stabilisation — at best — of development will result in the eventual move of investment from Victoria to rival states that are offering far greater advantages and benefits than those the Labor government intends offering. That will lead to a self-generating loss of employment and further business closures. For confirmation of that one need only look at the anticipated employment growth forecast by the government in its budget papers from 1.5 per cent to a measly 0.5 per cent in the short to medium term. The state is currently losing 100 jobs a day.

I do not intend to put on record the same material and information as many speakers before me, other than to say that I do not share the glowing comments made by the Honourable Gavin Jennings, nor do I share his enthusiasm or his perception of what the budget will do. Major building projects are missing from the budget. It has not one building project. In 1997-98 the Kennett government had \$1.8 billion in major projects, all paid for, with no borrowings; this budget has no major building projects. The only development that could be described as a major project is the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre, which is in my electorate, and to which I will refer shortly. If one excludes that project then all the other projects that were in the pipeline only two years ago have gone. I do not need to remind honourable members that the investment by both the former government and private enterprise in major projects was the fuel for the economy that has maintained Victoria's position overall.

The much-vaunted tax package released last month is the greatest of shams. It offered \$774.3 million in tax cuts. What does the budget offer this year? It offers \$100 million. What does it offer after the next term of government? It offers up to \$560 million. In other words, more than 80 per cent of this much-vaunted tax concession to business in Victoria is to come after the next election. Other speakers have made the point that that is smoke and mirrors and a sham. I am amazed that the Victorian public has accepted it, but I am even more amazed that the financial commentators have accepted it in the manner they have. It should have been something about which the government was embarrassed. Nevertheless, it is important that it be put on the record.

I have concerns about areas in which I have an interest. For example, the budget figure for victims of crime counselling has been halved in this budget from \$11 million to \$7.6 million next year. Many people in dire need will suffer as a result of that savage cut.

The other area in which I have an interest is multicultural affairs, as honourable members may be aware. I expressed some very serious concerns about that budget area as well, predominantly because of the 944-odd pages of budget papers, multicultural affairs takes up a grand total of 2 — possibly 1½ but 2 to be generous! The result is an effective \$600 000 cut in the multicultural affairs budget, an area in which the Labor government holds itself out as being so progressive. At the same time, out of a \$3.9 million total, \$2.1 million is spent to provide briefings to government MPs on multicultural communities when funds are so desperately required by the small groups that provide contact and communication, particularly among the aged!

I speak specifically of the senior citizens groups, which are mainly in the Italian, Greek and more established communities but which are also throughout all multicultural communities. An amount should be set aside to provide for postage and communication grants to those groups. The funding for the Victorian Multicultural Commission small grants program has not increased by 1 cent. It is shown as an additional \$100 000 but — lo and behold! — that is the \$100 000 that was not spent last year. It is another example of a sham that this government is perpetrating. The multicultural affairs budget is being cut by 19.6 per cent this year despite an obvious need for funding given the difficulties of new migrants, refugee settlements and the like.

To touch on something that is very topical and significant, last week we had in this house the debate on

racial and religious tolerance. One of the major themes in that debate and one of the main aspects of the government's proposal was that it was absolutely essential that education play a major role in the area that the bill was intended to address — namely, racial and religious vilification — yet not 1 cent is allocated in the budget for education. It therefore remains to be seen where the funding will come from to implement the government's proposals for education.

Of course we remember the Labor government's policy of September 1999, when it said that it would:

Reduce the state government's reliance on revenue from gambling.

Guess what? Even the Honourable Gavin Jennings has had to admit that the government is enjoying the incredible increase in revenue from gaming, so much so that the budget expects poker machine revenue to rise by nearly 15 per cent and casino revenue to rise by 16 per cent, making a total increase in gambling of more than 20 per cent over the life of the Bracks government. Victoria is now dependent on gambling for almost one-fifth — that is, the 20 per cent I was talking about — of its state revenue, and of all the states in Australia it is now the most dependent on revenue from gambling. This is a state that committed itself to reducing its reliance on gaming!

I suspect that the house, with its relatively large number of new members, may have forgotten the days of the Cain and Kirner legacy. I would not like any Victorian to forget that legacy. As a forerunner to what I intend to address, let me quote from an article by John Ferguson in the *Herald Sun* of 16 May, the day after the budget:

... this government is prepared to spend, despite the legacy of its Labor predecessors.

The article concludes:

And as we discovered yesterday —

the budget day —

this is a government that is prepared to spend.

And it is! This is a big-spending, big-taxing government.

I refer to a commentary by Mike Nahan in the *Herald Sun* of 19 May. His concern is similarly about the government's expenditure. The article states:

The main concern lies with the growth of spending on operating costs — mainly public servants' salaries.

That is referring to additional spending. This budget is technically in the red. There is additional spending but

there are no real capital initiatives, no expenditure in areas of capital growth that would be an improvement in Victoria. The question is: where is the money going? Mike Nahan's article states:

During its first year, the government allowed this spending to increase by \$1.5 billion, or 10 per cent —

that is, spending on public servants' salaries —

which is large by any standards.

Mike Nahan goes on to say:

... in the latest budget ... this coming year's spending ... is forecast to increase by a further \$690 million, or 4 per cent.

He further states:

Far from being one-off adjustments, the spending base has been ratcheted up.

The money this government is spending is going not so much to those areas that will benefit the Victorian community, but to pay for public servants. We have seen it in the blow-out of the budget within the Premier's department and with the ministers' offices. At one stage the Leader of the Government in this place had three offices — and on it goes.

Further, the commentator says:

While the projected level of borrowings is no cause for concern, given the state's low levels of debt, the speed with which the inheritance has been consumed is a worry.

That is significant. It is exactly what the Victorian public should be aware of and be concerned about. Mike Nahan goes on to talk about the expenditure we should have concerns about and gives the example of:

the decision to open up the passenger train lines to Mildura, Ararat, Bairnsdale and South Gippsland, costed at \$33 million ...

saying it —

is really nothing more than a shopping subsidy for a few lucky pensioners.

That is from a financial commentator in a daily newspaper. He goes on to say that this government will tax Victorian communities at \$800 a person more than the tax take in Queensland and Western Australia, our main competitors.

It is obvious that we will suffer, not in the long term, but in the short term very seriously. The article concludes:

In summary, the Bracks government has done the easy things by quickly spending its fiscal inheritance.

And its claim to being a fiscally responsible new Labor government remain to be proven.

As I have done on a number of occasions in this house, I put on the record that I will not allow the Victorian community to forget the legacy of the Cain and Kirner years. The Cain and Kirner governments left behind actual and unfunded liabilities of almost \$60 billion — or \$60 000 million, incorporating a \$32 000 million budget deficit. I remember putting on the record in 1997 in my contribution on the budget what Victorians thought \$32 000 million was. Somebody did the calculation and worked out that if that amount was in dollar coins placed end to end, they would have gone around the world two or three times. That shows the magnitude of the debt that was the legacy of the Cain and Kirner years. That amount constitutes the cost of 10 brand-new Austin and Repatriation Medical Centres for this state.

In that period public sector debt, which I referred to a moment ago and on which I quoted Mike Nahan, rose from \$11 billion — or 8 per cent of gross state product (GSP) — to \$32 billion. That is 31 per cent. Honourable members will recall that in 1993 the unemployment rate was 12.9 per cent. That was the legacy of the Cain and Kirner years and that is the legacy we expect this government to lead us into — fiscal irresponsibility. It is unbelievable that in 1992-93 the government was borrowing money to pay interest. Its interest debt represented 16.1 per cent of its revenue. Honourable members on this side of the house would appreciate that if someone was trying to run a business and paying 16.1 per cent of its revenue as interest they would go bankrupt.

Hon. R. F. Smith interjected.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — I can understand, Mr Smith, that you have no idea of how to run a business. You are very good at getting free grog, but you have no idea — —

Hon. R. F. Smith — On a point of order, Mr Acting President, it is quite clear that Mr Furletti was being provocative, and I do not mind that. But he was being offensive when he stated that I was in receipt of free grog. I made it very clear last week in this house that I paid for that grog on behalf of my organisation. I ask him to withdraw.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — I withdraw, Mr Acting President. He got grog at a discounted price. I therefore say that Mr Smith would have no idea how to run a business, nor would many members on the other side.

Hon. R. F. Smith — On a point of order, Mr Acting President, again Mr Furletti offends me. I remind Mr Furletti that I ran a \$4-million-a-year business for nine years and so I have a very good idea of how to run a business. I ask him to withdraw.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon. R. A. Best) — Order! On a point of clarification, what is the remark Mr Smith has taken offence at?

Hon. R. F. Smith — That I would not know how to run a business.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — Mr Acting President, in the interests of the house, if Mr Smith is so thin-skinned that he finds comments of that nature offensive I am more than happy to withdraw. I am not quite sure what I am withdrawing, but I withdraw.

Hon. R. F. Smith — Thank you.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — Having said that, I repeat that in my opinion Mr Smith would have no idea of how to run a business, because he has never run a small business. He would not have any idea what pain payment of 16.1 per cent of revenue as interest would constitute to a business.

With this budget we have seen ourselves take the first step down the same road the Cain and Kirner governments took us over the 10-year period between 1982 and 1992. I again fear for Victorians and for my children, who may have to pick up the debts of this government.

I am aware of the timing element of this debate, so I would now like to comment on some aspects of the budget insofar as it affects my electorate of Templestowe Province.

The document entitled *Growing the Whole State* does not grow Templestowe Province one bit. It does nothing for Templestowe Province. I looked at the fine detail of the glossy brochure that has been put out and could not find one mention of Manningham, which is the biggest municipality in my electorate — not a cent. I found no mention of Nillumbik, the second-biggest municipality in my electorate. However, I found a couple of items under Banyule, which of course is in the electorate of Ivanhoe, and I will later refer to the contribution from the honourable member for Ivanhoe in another place in more detail.

An allocation of \$367 000 has been made to Macleod Secondary College and \$1.637 million to Montmorency Secondary College. That is interesting because the Macleod Secondary College funding was promised

back in 1997–98 when the former Kennett government agreed to a master plan worth some \$4 million, to which \$2.15 million was allocated in that year and money has been allocated ever since. What have we now? The principal, Mr Merv Jones, is reported in the *Heidelberg* of 22 May:

‘We are very pleased,’ he said.

He is further reported as saying:

... to complete the final stage of a three-year \$4 million school improvement master plan.

You do not have to be a genius to identify who proposed and allocated that funding three years ago.

I refer to the Montmorency Secondary College funding — and I give the honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place credit for acknowledging my contribution and that of my colleague in Templestowe Province, the Honourable Bill Forwood, in promising funding for Montmorency before the 1999 election, which has come through. There has been no new funding. As I said, the only real item of — —

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — What about the Austin hospital?

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — Would you just sit down and keep quiet! I am happy to stay here all night. As I was about to say, the only real item of capital expenditure is for the Austin hospital. Other speakers have identified anomalies in the budget papers and raised queries as to what they are. I picked up one about the Austin hospital. It is significant because this is a government that prides itself on misleading people and being deceptive!

In budget paper 2 at page 95 reference is made to the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre and to expenditure of more than \$325 million over six years, which takes us into two election cycles. However, in the glossy brochure entitled ‘Delivering today, building for tomorrow’ there is an addendum. When \$325 million over six years is considered, it is realised that it is promising today and building whenever we get there. The glossy magazine lists \$325 million for the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre but states in parenthesis:

Including \$15 million for training and research from non-government sources.

What is the real amount? If this trail of deception and misleading elements is followed, we finally find the real amount in another document entitled *Growing the Whole State* where the Austin and Repatriation Medical

Centre redevelopment and the Mercy Hospital for Women relocation is listed at \$310 700 million, so that it is obvious \$15 million is derived from other sources. Who claims credit for it? The honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place certainly did. It is a deception, a fraud and a sham.

When referring to the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre, I record my obvious affinity with that fantastic hospital and thanks from the Liberal opposition — I am sure I speak for the Honourable Bill Forwood as well — to Dr James Breheny and Miss Jennifer Williams, the chairman of the board and the chief executive officer respectively, for the terrific way they have carried on and continue to do so under difficult circumstances. Honourable members would be aware that in its pre-election campaign the government said that it would allocate \$115 million for the redevelopment of the Austin hospital. When it was announced, that figure of \$115 million was the subject of considerable mirth in many circles and many areas that were interested in knowing what was to happen to the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre.

It came to pass that, as usual, consultants were engaged to advise the government, and they said that the site on which to build a new hospital was the repatriation site on the corner of Waterdale Road and Bell Street. It was an obvious choice and nobody had any doubt that that would be the site. The board, the chief executive officer, the staff — everyone agreed that that was the site for a hospital. However, because of politics and the conduct of a few activists within the electorate the government has pursued its pre-election promise and decided to keep the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre on two campuses. Everybody agrees it is an incredible waste of money, resources and talent, as well as misuse of the asset.

A month or so ago, amidst great fanfare, I attended the first stage of the redevelopment — namely, the beginning of the demolition of the Leslie Jenner nurses home on the Austin hospital campus. The Liberal opposition’s position on the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre redevelopment is that if the development begins the Liberal Party will complete the work when it regains government at the next election. The Liberal Party looks forward to the redevelopment taking place as quickly and efficiently as possible in the interests of those who need to use the facility. However, I challenge the government to honour its commitment that the allocation of just over \$310 million will be adequate to finish that job in the way in which it has been proposed. I defy the government to substantiate the figures. Liberal members are not privy to them, and I am sure that in some years we will be here debating

the additional funding that is required to complete the proposed redevelopment.

I put the government on notice that any suggestion that it use the proceeds of the sale of any of the vacant land on the repatriation site to fund the shortfall in the development of the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre will be strenuously opposed by the Liberal opposition and by my constituency. I regret that the government has not achieved its stated objectives in the delivery of medical services. At the Austin, notwithstanding the incredible efforts made by all concerned in its administration and delivery of service, and notwithstanding the additional funding injected by the government, over the period from March 1999 to March 2001 there was a 163 per cent increase in people on waiting lists for semi-urgent elective surgery. In the same period there was an increase of 236 per cent in people on waiting lists for longer than an ideal period. In the same period there was an increase of 1213 per cent in emergency department stays longer than 12 hours — people waiting on trolleys. In the same period there was a nice round increase of 2000 per cent in hospital ambulance bypasses. That is the success in this area of the Labor government!

I read in the *Heidelberg* about the allocation of an additional \$4 million to complete the Heidelberg police station. I am on record publicly as welcoming those funds. The original \$9.2 million was plucked out of the air, and when it came to examining the proposal seriously the police said to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, ‘This is not enough. We will get halfway through and not have a good job done’.

I will quote from the *Heidelberg* of 13 February purely to correct the record, because the honourable member for Ivanhoe in another place has maintained that the injection of funds was the government’s idea. An article by Natalie Robertson states:

Regional police chief George Fisk wants the proposed \$9.2 million redevelopment of the Heidelberg police station and Magistrates Court complex shelved ... because he was not satisfied with it.

... There has not been enough money put in to do the job properly in the first place.

I give the government credit for listening to Superintendent Fisk, because he is a very sensible and experienced police officer and a good administrator. However, for the honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place to suggest for one moment that the government reconsidered is just not true. I look forward to that redevelopment because the conditions at present are very ordinary.

I conclude with one of the most significant concerns in my electorate at the moment, and it is again in Ivanhoe. I am pleased the honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place has picked up my prodding in this area.

The honourable member for Ivanhoe in the other place has somehow gained the impression that I am promoting a tunnel through Viewbank and under the Yarra River when in fact some honourable members may recall that earlier this month I raised with interest that proposal, which the honourable member had put to a meeting of the Warringal Conservation Society. It was at that meeting that he took on board the proposal for a 9-kilometre tunnel costing some \$3 billion — as estimated by the Public Transport Users Association, not by me. I chided the honourable member over that issue but in his contribution to the budget debate in the other place he suggested that I support the tunnel. He later acknowledged, quite rightly, that transport in the north–south corridor is a major issue. In his contribution — I hope this is government policy — the honourable member for Ivanhoe said there will not be an above-ground freeway joining Greensborough Road and the Eastern Freeway. He said that on reconsideration the tunnel may not work but he did not have an opinion one way or another. However, he also said there will not be a ring-road through Eltham or Warrandyte.

As far as I can see, that leaves the government with very few options. During a previous adjournment debate in this place I asked a question of the Minister for Transport as to what the government’s proposals are with respect to this very serious problem. I have also written to the minister asking for information relative to data and studies which have been conducted and there has been absolute silence for well over a month.

These are the issues my constituents are concerned about. I hope the government will address them and address them quickly. With respect to the budget as a whole, I think so far as the constituents of Templestowe Province are concerned, it is a major dud.

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) — My comments on the budget will relate to South Eastern Province and I think it is a very disappointing budget. It does not matter whether one lives in Hastings, Tooradin, Nyora, Somerville, Wonthaggi, Korumburra or Poowong, it is a disappointing budget. When one asks, ‘What is in it for us?’, as the good people of South Eastern Province could be expected to do, I have to turn around and say, ‘Not much at all, if anything’.

The general approach of this budget is a classical Labor philosophical document along the lines of the previous

state Labor governments — what we would call the Cain and Kirner governments. It is showing early signs of that: high taxing, big spending, warm inner glows and lots of money on lots of public servants. But when one gets down to infrastructure and the real nitty-gritty of day-to-day services expected by the average citizen in the rural, regional and near-city areas typical of South Eastern Province, there is not much at all. Therefore, I would say that this budget can be classified as a big-spending budget but with no real vision. It is clearly intended to reverse the trends and the economic progress made under great difficulty by the coalition government. It shows the first strong signs of being a classical Labor government budget — high taxing, big spending, but not much for the average citizen.

To substantiate that comment I would like to talk about some of the financial indices published recently by the Department of Treasury and Finance. Page 3 of one of the presentations showed that for 2000–01 there was an expected operating surplus of \$1207 million. This drops to only \$509 million for 2001–02. There is a forecast for 2002–03 of only \$346 million in surplus. That is an indication that all is not well and if there is a downturn in the economy, if there is a problem with the scheduling of those indices and the economy itself, this budget is heading for real trouble.

The total revenue of the state of Victoria is expressed in the Department of Treasury and Finance document as \$23 466 million and that shows no change over the 2000–01 budget period in terms of percentage. However, the expenses are rising at 3.1 per cent and the expenses for 2001–02 are estimated at \$22 957 million. That equates through the budget documents to a rather slim and, I think, rather perilous estimated operating surplus of only \$509 million.

The economic projections provided by the Department of Treasury and Finance are cause for an amber light because economic growth is not expected to rise significantly. For 2000–01 it is expected to be 2.5 per cent but only 2.75 per cent for 2001–02. Additional employment growth is only expected to be 0.5 per cent and the unemployment rate is expected to be 6.5 per cent. In practical terms that appears to be an abandonment of the well-publicised goal of 5 per cent Labor was trumpeting a few short years ago. The government has locked in at 6 per cent for 2000–01 and 6.5 per cent for 2001–02. I think that is very disappointing. This government is emerging into a government similar to the low-growth, high-taxing, big-spending classical Cain and Kirner governments.

I am concerned about the reported loss of jobs. For decades Victoria has been considered in this great

nation of ours as the manufacturing state — vital to the Australian economy. Earlier contributions have indicated that Victoria is losing jobs to other states at an average rate of 100 a day. That is a haemorrhaging of jobs.

I refer honourable members to an article in the *Herald Sun* of 28 May headed '3300 jobs lost in industry shifts'. The article gives details of businesses that are leaving Victoria, businesses planning to go and businesses that have gone. Reliable estimates are that 12 000 Victorian jobs are at risk. That is a real concern which affects everyone in the state, not just the province I represent. If Victoria is losing on average 100 jobs a day the government must get its act together and invest in infrastructure projects, encourage private investment and have an urgent examination of its policies to ensure they encourage private and public investment in this state.

The best social services the state can provide is to help wage earners and their families have sensible, reliable, permanent, economic jobs. I am greatly concerned about employment, because that affects people in my electorate as well as those in other electorates. Budget paper 2 indicates that in 2000–01 estimated payroll tax revenue is \$2555 million which will rise in 2001–02 to \$2607 million.

Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.03 p.m.

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN — Prior to the suspension of the sitting I was indicating my concern about the increase in payroll tax and gambling revenue. As I said earlier, budget paper 2 indicates that estimated payroll tax collections in 2001–02 will be \$2607 million. The government has an extremely high dependency on payroll tax. There is every expectation from the graphs that payroll tax collections will increase in the next three years. It has been said that payroll tax collections in coming years will decrease as an incidence of tax, but in terms of the current budget that is not the case.

I express disappointment at the performance of the Victorian Workcover Authority. During the past 12 months the management of Workcover is a cause for concern because of the potential for increased premiums. Workcover is absolutely necessary because we must provide for the welfare and wellbeing of injured workers — that is accepted and understood. However, the *Age* of 7 June has an article entitled 'Workcover loses \$651 million but premiums won't rise'. That is quaint. That statement is about as safe as saying that the sun will not rise tomorrow! That loss has been incurred over a short period, so it is inevitable that premiums will rise. The *Government Gazette* of

29 May discloses significant rises in Workcover premiums, and these were detailed in the opposition's statement of 11 June.

I underline my disappointment at the failure of the government to bring to the constituents of South Eastern Province a sizeable and substantial benefit in the budget. I am not satisfied that road maintenance is being well managed. A number of unfortunate accidents have occurred because of suspect road surfaces. I am definitely not satisfied with the maintenance of some of the high-traffic highways in the province, particularly the South Gippsland Highway and the Western Port Highway. In adjournment debates over recent months I have brought to the attention of the government — with one exception at Koo Wee Rup — the lack of any substantial improvement in the road surface. These highways are extremely important, and the standard of maintenance is not acceptable.

I was disappointed to learn that no freeways are scheduled for South Eastern Province. There is some road duplication around the Gurdies, but that will not alleviate some of the major traffic concerns. Again the Mornington Peninsula has missed out, and the duplication of the Western Port Highway south of the Frankston–Cranbourne Road towards Hastings is overdue. Given the volume and the mix of traffic, including high-density steel trucks and heavy liquefied petroleum gas tankers, the sector north of Hastings on the Western Port Highway, with its single lane in each direction, is a disaster waiting to happen. Not only is the roadway inadequate to deal with the volume and mix of traffic, but the road surface is unacceptable. The budget's failure to provide for the upgrade of the Western Port Highway between Hastings and the Frankston–Cranbourne Road intersection is a big disappointment.

The Monash Freeway near Dandenong is cause for concern. While it is technically not in my electorate, most of the tens of thousands of people in South Eastern Province who live in Cranbourne and on the eastern side of the Mornington Peninsula use that section of the Monash Freeway, which is at full capacity of a morning. It is not unusual for someone to take 30 minutes to travel from Dandenong to Warrigal Road. There have been no improvements, and that should be addressed.

The lack of budget funding for asset investment in South Eastern Province is a disappointment. Page 25 of the budget document entitled *Growing the Whole State* refers to investment in schools. The Somerville Rise Primary School will get \$634 304, and the Western Port Secondary College will be modernised to the extent of

\$376 000, but that is all for that area. The new Mornington East Primary School will receive \$4 million, and the Koo Wee Rup Secondary College will be upgraded to the tune of \$479 000. Given the number of new families and the pattern of new arrivals in this area, the money allocated for investment and upgrades, although welcome, is not enough. The community and I strongly object to the sale of land that has been reserved for the future Somerville Secondary College. The possibility that the government may sell that land is outrageous, and the minister has provided no comfort. That is totally unacceptable. There has been an underinvestment in infrastructure in the Mornington Peninsula, despite the population growing strongly.

I am unhappy with the ambulance bypass patterns on the Mornington Peninsula. It is not unusual to have to wait 2 to 3 hours in the emergency departments at the Frankston Hospital or other hospitals in the province. Despite the pride the government expresses in the number of dollars it is investing in health and hospitals, the end result has been no decline in ambulance bypasses and no improvement in treatment availability.

I am unhappy that the average waiting time in emergency departments has not significantly decreased. I pay tribute to the management and staff of the hospitals, including the doctors and nurses, who are competent, committed and enthusiastic but under-resourced. They are being asked to carry out their tasks with limited facilities — and those facilities have to be provided. I am disappointed that the under-resourcing of services in South Eastern Province is continuing.

The budget also underinvests in tourism. Phillip Island will not receive the funds it requires, and there is no real plan to promote the Mornington Peninsula or West Gippsland. I hope we get the fast ferry to Tasmania, but time will tell. I am extremely unhappy that so far as my province goes the budget confirms that this is a do-nothing government.

A substantial part of the South Eastern Province produces milk, cheese, flowers, vegetables and wines of the highest quality. For many years the agricultural, dairying, horticultural and wine-growing sectors of the province have sent wonderful produce for exhibition at the Royal Melbourne Show.

I am disappointed at the lack of major funding to upgrade the showgrounds. We justifiably talk about the pride we have in our wonderful libraries and museums, but it is about time the government seriously looked at the state of the Royal Agricultural Society

showgrounds. We have the ability to present to the nation and the world a befitting showcase of our produce, but we do not do it.

I am totally unhappy with the budget. It does not provide for the people of South Eastern Province. The budget may give the government a warm inner glow, but if I were to score it for expenditure, the provision of facilities, infrastructure and resources for the four seats that make up my province, it would get 2 out of 10.

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — As a member for Geelong Province I am delighted to support the budget. I congratulate the Treasurer on delivering such a socially progressive and financially responsible budget to Victorians. The Bracks government's second budget delivers and reinforces its commitment to growing the whole state. As a member of this house who represents a regional electorate I am particularly pleased that the government continues to reinvest in rebuilding regional and rural Victoria after the dark Kennett years.

My electorate has benefited enormously from this budget. In Geelong the budget has delivered major infrastructure projects in areas sorely neglected by the Kennett government — namely, health, education, community safety and transport. Much-needed money has been injected into projects and the kinds of facilities that Geelong people care about: delivering for today but building for tomorrow.

In education major money has been invested in infrastructure to build a new school and to upgrade run-down facilities at other schools. The government has delivered on its election promise for the proposed Lara secondary college with an allocation of \$4.5 million. The Lara community has been crying out for years for a secondary college in its community, but its cries went unheeded by the Kennett government. The Bracks government is delivering on its promise for Lara.

The wonderful James Harrison Secondary College in East Geelong was also sorely neglected by the previous government. It was badly run down. When I was newly elected to this house I visited the college and was astounded when I saw how that college had been allowed to deteriorate by the former government. The Labor government has committed \$2.5 million to rebuild that college and provide a wonderful facility for the community.

North Geelong Secondary College has received more than \$1 million to upgrade its science and technology wing. Corio Community College, another fabulous

college in the northern suburbs of Geelong, received \$1.2 million from the budget to reinstate and rebuild a hall that was destroyed by fire in the middle of last year. The college is very thankful for that money from the budget.

Leopold Primary School received \$1.76 million from the budget. It has been sorely needed by the school, which recently was found to have a serious structural problem to the point where the current school will need to be demolished. The school has been relocated to a series of portable classrooms, and it is pleased to have had \$1.76 million injected into its upgrade and rebuilding. Herne Hill Primary School received \$1.5 million to upgrade the library and information technology classrooms. Fyans Park Primary School has been allocated more than \$800 000 for information technology classrooms. That infrastructure has been desperately needed to enhance state education in Geelong.

In addition, every secondary school in Geelong has received substantial funding for the Middle Years of Schooling program. A major announcement in the budget was the injection of \$15.6 million to redevelop and upgrade the buildings at the Geelong Gordon Institute of TAFE with the emphasis being on information technology, the upgrade of the library and the cafeteria precinct. The Gordon institute has received the lion's share from the amount of money in the budget dedicated to infrastructure for technical and further education or TAFE institutes across Victoria.

I was pleased to attend a function at the Cafe on Track at the Gordon institute when the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment in the other place announced the funding. I heard sighs of elation from the people who gathered at Cafe on Track. Several turned around and shook my hand, and thanked the Bracks government for injecting so much money into the Gordon Institute of TAFE.

In the health portfolio the Geelong community will receive its fair share of the \$1.6 billion the government has injected into the health budget. The major infrastructure announced by the government in the budget is the upgrade of the Grace McKellar Centre, Geelong's icon aged care facility. Under the Kennett government the Grace McKellar Centre faced privatisation. The Geelong community was in uproar at the thought of Grace McKellar being privatised. The Friends of Grace McKellar group led an active campaign prior to the election to ensure that Geelong people understood the implications of the privatisation scheme being pushed by the former government.

The Bracks government has made sure that aged care at the Grace McKellar Centre will stay in public hands. The government was proud to announce in the budget an allocation of \$19 million to upgrade those facilities that had been allowed by the Kennett government to run down. That allocation has been warmly received by the people of Geelong. A couple of weeks ago the Premier travelled to Geelong to announce that funding. It was a great day for the Grace McKellar Centre. In addition, the Premier also announced funding of \$531 000 for the upgrade of the Peter Street, Grovedale site of the Grace McKellar Centre. That will provide an extra 15 nursing home beds. That funding has been well received by everyone at Barwon Health.

Another significant announcement in the budget was the \$1.1 million for the South Barwon ambulance station. That allocation was very much welcomed by the residents of South Barwon and is a boost to emergency services along the coast.

A major election commitment delivered in the budget was the linking of the key wharves of the port of Geelong to the national standard rail network. The budget announcement included \$1.86 million in partnership with Graincorp and the Australian Rail Track Corporation. This is a major boost to the infrastructure in Geelong and will make the port more competitive. There will be savings in freight costs, particularly for grain growers. It will add value to Graincorp's multimillion dollar investment in the port of Geelong, which will prove to be an economic driver not only for Geelong but also western Victoria.

Another key announcement in the budget was \$15 million to alleviate the flood-prone section of the Princes Highway between Geelong and Melbourne at Little River. Recently when we had an experience of heavy deluge rainfall in our region, the Geelong Road was cut and I experienced a very traumatic trip between Geelong and Melbourne Airport, which took me 5 hours of driving, including through the flooded section of Little River. I was very nervous about the whole experience and I was pleased to see that the Minister for Transport has allocated \$15 million in the budget to raise the road level at Little River and improve the drainage, which is good news indeed.

A major pre-election commitment that the Bracks government made was to build a 24-hour police station on the Bellarine Peninsula. I was pleased to see that \$5 million was allocated in the budget to build the 24-hour police station at Ocean Grove. The Bellarine community has been crying out for years for improved policing on the Bellarine Peninsula. These cries went unheeded by the former Kennett government. In fact

police services on the Bellarine Peninsula were continually threatened by the Kennett government and the honourable member for Bellarine in the other place. We saw the closure of the Ocean Grove police residence. The police residences at Portarlington and Queenscliff were also threatened. There were huge community campaigns to retain those residences. The Drysdale police station was also threatened by closure under the Kennett government.

Labor listened to those concerns and promised to deliver a 24-police station in its first term. We had already announced the site, on police advice, at Ocean Grove, and this budget delivered the \$5 million necessary to construct that police station. Work will commence in March next year and it should be finished by the end of that year. The important thing to remember is that this is on top of the existing services already afforded to the Bellarine community by the police stations at Drysdale, Portarlington and Queenscliff. I know that news was warmly received by residents across the Bellarine Peninsula.

Another major pre-election commitment was the announcement of \$1.5 million to subsidise the construction of a gas pipeline to the residents of North Bellarine. Honourable members will have heard me speak many times in this house about the construction of that gas pipeline to the townships of Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards. For about seven years that community had been seeking access to a reticulated gas supply. The Kennett government turned its back twice, not just once, on that community when it approached the former government for funding, once in 1997 and the second time in 1999. They were told to forget it. They just were not interested in helping them.

A Government Member — Pre-October 1999, I bet!

Hon. E. C. CARBINES — It was certainly pre-October 1999. But, of course, we were listening. We knew that that was important to that community, and we made a pre-election commitment to deliver \$1.5 million. Three people in that community did not give up. They were the people who were on the North Bellarine Natural Gas Committee. I would like to publicly acknowledge Alec Finney, Sue Wilson and Bob Gibb, who worked tirelessly for many years to see the delivery of that project. I was very pleased to work with them to make sure that we honoured our pre-election commitment. We attended a function a few weeks ago with the Treasurer, who is also the Minister for State and Regional Development, where he made that announcement to the Portarlington community. It was with great happiness that we saw the delivery of

that project — an announcement that will create about 40 jobs in that community and will save residents up to \$1200 a year on bottled gas prices.

So the Bracks government yet again is delivering its promises to the Geelong community. In the last couple of weeks we have seen sports announcements, arts funding of \$1 million for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, and over \$5000 to the Queenscliff Music Festival. But let us not just take my views on board. Let us listen to what some of the *Geelong Advertiser* readers had to say about the budget. They had a poll of readers and 40 people rang in to register what they thought of the Brumby budget. Of the 40 people who rang in, guess how many thought it was a great budget?

Hon. M. M. Gould — Thirty-nine.

Hon. E. C. CARBINES — It was 38 out of 40 — 95 per cent gave the thumbs up to the Brumby budget. Betty Snowden of Portarlington states:

I'm quite happy with the budget. I feel Geelong has not come out too badly and Grace McKellar is important if you are old. It's good to see the money put into health. It's great to have the new police station.

Paul Turner from East Geelong states:

I think the budget was quite reasonable. It's creating jobs, putting money into the schools, the roads and the hospitals, which is really a major issue in Geelong.

They are just 2 of the 38 positive reports to the budget.

My electorate of Geelong Province has benefited enormously from the Bracks government's second budget, and I congratulate the Treasurer on what he has delivered to the community of Geelong. We have had major announcements about many Geelong infrastructure projects that were so desperately run down by the former Kennett government. I congratulate Treasurer Brumby on his first budget and wish the bill a speedy passage.

Hon. E. J. POWELL (North Eastern) — I am pleased to speak on the appropriation bill. I acknowledge this is the second budget by the Bracks government, but it is the first brought down by Mr Brumby as Treasurer.

Again the budget is disappointing for country Victoria because no major projects have been announced in the country and it is important to get some major construction projects started there. The government inherited a strong, vibrant state with a substantial surplus, unlike the former coalition government, which in 1992 inherited a massive net debt of \$32 billion. To get that debt down the former government had to make

some hard and often unpopular decisions. However, it was able to get that debt down, and when I came to Parliament in 1996 the net debt was much smaller at approximately \$11 billion. It has been going down substantially since that time.

The budget is also disappointing because it does not promote wealth creation and there is no vision in it. The government needs to encourage and facilitate business in country Victoria in particular because it is important that we keep our young people in the country. One of the problems country Victoria faces is that its young people leave and go to the cities for jobs. It is important that all governments understand that to be able to keep young people in country Victoria we must provide them with jobs.

The government has not had a good record in employment for youth, and the youth unemployment rate in the Goulburn–Ovens–Murray region, which I represent, has doubled since the Bracks government came to power. The current Australian Bureau of Statistics youth unemployment rate for the Goulburn–Ovens–Murray region in February 1999 was 6.1 per cent, in February 2000 the figure was 6.8 per cent and in February this year it rose to a staggering 12.4 per cent. General unemployment across the region was 6 per cent last year and has risen to 6.5 per cent in 2001–02. The net debt in June 1999 was \$4.9 billion and the government has estimated that it will drop to \$2.5 billion in June 2005.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — The government's record on its forward estimates is not great, as Mr Hall knows.

A number of speakers have spoken about the blow-outs in some of the Bracks government's estimates and forecasts, and they have been well documented. The Honourable Bill Baxter spoke about the blow-outs in Workcover. The Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* of June 2001 shows that in the six months to December 2000 the scheme lost \$651 million, bringing the accumulated losses under this government to \$1.1 billion. The outcome is that it has increased premiums since coming to power, and it will do that again to try to bring Workcover back into the black. That means bad news for small businesses across the state — and it will hit harder in country Victoria.

The Honourable Barry Bishop spoke about the blow-out in the estimate on the fast rail service. When it came to power the government estimated it would cost \$80 million to provide a fast rail service. The figure has

now blown out to approximately \$800 million, so we need to be concerned about the government's forward estimates.

The budget is propped up by gambling revenue. The Victorian Local Governance Association sent me a copy of its June 2001 document. Under the heading 'Budget propped up by gambling income', it states:

At the risk of being boring, the VLGA must point out that the Victorian budget shows the Victorian government has increased its dependency on the gambling industry.

The state government has avowed its intention to decrease its reliance on gambling revenue but the trending is all in the other direction. At the VLGA we have taken out a 'book' on how long it will be until gambling money comprises 20 per cent of the state budget revenue! At over 17 per cent it is the highest proportion of the state's tax revenue of any Australian state. Poker machine revenue makes up 11.2 per cent of the state's own tax revenue, a figure of nearly \$900 million per annum and growing at more than 14 per cent per annum!

The introduction of a \$1200 machine levy will net the state government a further \$36 million.

The minority Bracks government was put into power with the help of three Independents, and they asked the government to sign an agreement called the Independents charter. In that agreement the Independents asked the Bracks government to say that it would be an open and accountable government, and the Bracks government signed off on every condition in the charter.

One area I would like to bring to the attention of the house is ministers not receiving deputations. In the past 20 months I have been trying to initiate a number of deputations to see ministers without success. That situation is sad because although a number of my constituents would like to be able to meet ministers and put their points of view across, the ministers have decided they will not meet them. While it might be a political issue for me, I believe it is sad for my community because I am the local member and I am trying to do the best for them. Getting them to meet ministers enables them to put their cases across and inform the ministers of some of their issues.

However, I cannot seem to get through to any ministers. I have made appointments with the Minister for Education and the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment, but on the day I went to see them they cancelled without any warning. I had taken six leaders from my community with me and was supposed to meet with the ministers at 9 o'clock in the morning. I was told that the ministers would not be available but that advisers would speak to us. After an hour of speaking to the advisers they asked me to write

to them about my concerns — and we had just been speaking to them for more than an hour! The government needs to look at that issue.

One issue I am concerned about — and it is not that we are trying to be underhanded as an opposition — is briefings with departments. I have no problem with the departments — they always try to make briefings available, and as a country member I always appreciate the advisers working with us — but the ministers' advisers also attend all meetings and write everything down. When you are trying to get information from the department sometimes you might ask a tricky question, and the department head will look at the minister's adviser before answering. That behaviour, which is off-putting, commenced when this government came into office, and it is regrettable. The department should be open and honest with all members of the Parliament.

This government also wants to nobble or get rid of the upper house to stop accountability and review of the government's legislation. The Parliament works exceedingly well, and National Party members are not at all obstructionist. In fact, we support the government's stand on many of the bills that come through the Parliament, and most of those we do not support we are able to amend. There are very few times when National Party members oppose amendments without absolutely good reason in the best interests of the communities we represent. I am pleased the Premier is now considering the establishment of a committee to look at the upper house. I agree with that because a committee would be a bit more independent.

I turn to some of the major issues in any budget. A substantial amount of the budget is taken up with health. When government members were in opposition they made many comments about hospitals closing or hospitals with waiting lists. A hospital that has recently had some problems with funding is the Nagambie hospital. That hospital is not in my electorate but it borders on it. It is a very good hospital and the local community relies on it heavily. Recently the hospital had to close its acute and emergency services units for a number of reasons: its occupancy rates are down, and since the collapse of HIH Insurance, which the Nagambie hospital used, it has had some funding problems of its own. I believe the government should underwrite essential services that are affected by the collapse of that insurance company while a solution is worked out. Obviously the Nagambie hospital is going through some fairly traumatic times while it awaits a solution.

Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton has received no extra funding in this budget. It was funded exceedingly

well under the previous coalition government, but it needs extra funding to carry out a master plan to map out how the hospital's infrastructure should be developed. The hospital believes it will not meet the demands of the next 10 years with the present funding structure, and it was looking for some funding to be able to map out some priorities to see it moving ahead for the next 10 years.

Goulburn Valley Community Health in Shepparton is an organisation that works very strongly in the local community and provides many services. It also provides an advocacy service for many other organisations. It has received no funding for capital works in the budget, and it is badly in need of extra accommodation as it is quite overcrowded. It has 23 staff members and many clients, but it has only three toilets, one of which is for disabled people. That organisation needs more toilets and more office space. It has appealed to the Minister for Health for funds and was told by a senior adviser that it would have to wait up to six years to receive any funding for infrastructure works.

The issue of nursing shortages has been in the public arena for a long time. The government states in its budget that \$431 million will be provided over four years to address nurse recruitment and retention in public hospitals. Any additional funding for nurses is always welcome, but the enterprise bargaining agreement that the nurses have signed has a ratio of 1 to 4 nurses for the base hospitals and 1 to 6 nurses for the smaller hospitals. Hospitals in rural Victoria have some problems getting qualified nurses. They tell me they have to source their nurses from the agencies and from Melbourne. While those nurses are qualified and acceptable to the hospitals, sourcing nurses in that way generates a higher cost. Those hospitals have to pay for transport for them to come from Melbourne and they also have to pay for accommodation, and that impacts on the hospitals' budgets.

The government needs to ensure that qualified nurses are available in country areas, because the blow-out in the budgets of some country hospitals is due to their having to source nurses from agencies and from Melbourne at a high cost.

I will also speak about public health risk. I noticed there was \$700 000 in the budget for communicable disease prevention and control. The issue of golden staph in hospitals was brought to my attention recently when the family of a constituent came to see me because a member of the family had died in a local hospital. That person had golden staph, and a number of other patients in the same hospital also had golden staph. I am not

saying this occurs just in that hospital. However, there has been no decrease in the incidence of golden staph in not only hospitals but also nursing homes and other areas where vulnerable people who are ill or who have had operations are together in large numbers. I was pleased to see that \$700 000 funding in the budget, and I hope it will assist in resolving the issue of golden staph.

I understand some new protocol initiatives have been developed. I hope they will be in the hospitals soon and that we can see a reduction in the incidence of golden staph. It is a terrible thing for older people going into hospital for an operation to be concerned about contracting a disease while they are there.

Another public health risk that has been in the news recently is legionnaire's disease. A number of honourable members spoke on the related bill in this house last year, and we all supported the bill. The government has allocated \$700 000 in its budget to implement new regulations to improve maintenance standards for cooling systems. As I recall from last year's bill, there are about 10 000 cooling towers in Victoria, and the government has put a system forward whereby those cooling towers now have to be registered and maintenance standards have to be approved. The recent outbreak at the Alfred hospital has proved that Victoria is still not winning the war against legionnaire's disease. I implore the government to pick up on that ongoing problem and look at how the disease can be eliminated — and if not eliminated, at least controlled.

One of the other big-budget items in any budget is education. Over the past year a number of school principals have told me that one of their concerns is that they are not able to meet the staffing levels their schools require with the amount of money they were given in the global budgets. I understand the principals moved a vote of no confidence in the Minister for Education, which is a fairly strong indictment of the education system.

The *Age* is not always supportive of the conservative government, but an article by Ewin Hannan on 7 June headed '\$28 million needed to top up shortfall in 590 schools' states:

More than one-third of government schools required top-up funding this year, despite education minister Mary Delahunty telling state Parliament that only a small number would need transitional support.

The state's Auditor-General, Wayne Cameron, has found that 590 schools — 36 per cent — require transitional funding as a result of the government's new funding formula.

Schools required transitional funding when actual salary costs were forecast to be greater than the government's initial funding allocation.

That is another instance of this government providing an allocation of funds before getting realistic costing.

Hon. P. R. Hall — No schools would be worse off was what she said.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — That is right, and that she would personally ensure that each school would have proper budget funding before it started the school year, which obviously did not happen. The article states further:

Mr Cameron criticised the government's handling of the introduction of the new funding formula, saying it generated significant confusion in schools.

He said the late release of school global budgets combined with the introduction of the funding formula and a new teachers' pay deal caused considerable confusion and anxiety for principals and school councils planning for the 2001 school year.

I put that on record because it is the sort of thing I was hearing in my own electorate, and often people who hear such criticism think it is just opposition members having a go at the government. This government needs to look at that because it caused considerable concern in schools prior to the start of the school year.

An article on 17 May in one of my local newspapers, the *Border-Mail*, quotes the education union's Victorian branch deputy president Ms Ann Taylor as follows:

Retention rates are an issue in country areas and this budget does nothing regarding staffing and support to keep kids at school ...

Kindergarten teachers earn 30 per cent less than primary teachers and we are losing them.

I will talk about that later. I was pleased to note in the Treasurer's speech that the government has reduced class sizes for years prep to year 2 and that it is on track to meet the target of an average class size of 21 students by the year 2003.

This government came in with a promise that class sizes would be down to a minimum — I am not quite sure what the numbers were — but instead of having a minimum class size we now have an average class size of 21. The government shirked its responsibility by saying one thing and then saying, 'No, it is a bit hard'. When in government members of the opposition parties knew that it is harder to reduce class sizes in some areas.

Hon. W. R. Baxter — It is fudging the figures.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — It is, Mr Baxter.

Hon. P. R. Hall — And changing the definition.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — Yes, and it shows that it is easy to say something when in opposition; it is much harder when in government to make the figures for class sizes smaller.

I noticed that the budget provides funding for the replacement of schools that have been damaged by fire. The Mooroopna Primary School, which is in the electorate I represent with the Honourable Bill Baxter, was damaged by fire in May this year. Recently a very strong community fundraising campaign and a Rotary auction raised more than \$12 000 for that school. I urge the government, if it has not already done so, to meet soon with the primary school representatives to discuss how it can support the school. It is a great school, and the children who attend were devastated when they came back to school to find a number of classrooms gutted by fire. The police have still to work out how the fire was lit. Investigations are continuing and it is hoped that somebody will be found soon.

I spoke earlier about the need to provide extra funding for preschool teachers. They are paid 30 per cent less than primary school teachers although they do the same exams and study for the same number of years — I think it is four. Preschool teachers are leaving the profession in droves and it is particularly hard to get them in country Victoria because preschool teachers have limited career prospects and access to other career moves. For the same reasons it is also very difficult to retain preschool teachers in country areas. A number of kindergartens are finding it hard to attract and retain qualified preschool teachers. We must deal with that issue. If we can pay them at the appropriate level and give them the appropriate support, I hope we will be able to keep our preschool teachers in country towns much longer.

Committees of management also need funding to provide continuity and expertise. The mothers who serve on preschool committees do a fantastic job but often they leave after one year because their children move to the next school, so continuity is lost. It is important to fund committees of management so that they can maintain some sort of part-time expert support.

Detoxification and rehabilitation centres or services in country areas are very few and far between. I have written to the Minister for Health on a number of occasions, asking for extra funding for services or even for the establishment of a centre, and the minister has

said that no funding will be forthcoming because insufficient people in my area need the service. But I have representatives of organisations coming to see me, for example, from the Percy Green Hostel, which has seven beds for Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people and needs a larger place to get rid of its waiting lists. Often after coming to the centre two or three times people on a waiting list try to get into a drug detoxification, alcohol or similar program and find it very difficult when they are turned down. They need to go into a program when they want to get off the drugs or alcohol.

The Ageing in Place program was instigated by the Kennett government a number of years ago. I agree with the principles of the program, but remind honourable members that we must be very careful to support the carers who are looking after those people and ensure they are not run down. Carers provide a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week service. They do not mind because they provide that service to their loved ones — often a spouse or family member — but we need to make sure there is support and respite for those carers as they look after people in their homes.

It is also very difficult because some retirement homes are now not being funded to a proper level. It is important that older people are allowed to have a choice of either staying in their own home or going into a nursing home. Patients now enter nursing homes at a much frailer age, so there is a greater need for nurses with higher skills. That also needs to be examined.

There is a funding allocation of \$6.6 million for an aged care facility at Echuca hospital, which I was very pleased to see in the budget. The \$22-million project will provide twin-share and single-bed accommodation for 45 elderly patients. It is a wonderful organisation. The facility will provide dementia care, palliative care, rehabilitation and general nursing home residency.

I turn to the issue of small business, which is the backbone of employment in Victoria. We need to ensure that small business prospers and grows. In this budget there has been no relief from stamp duty on properties and Workcover premiums have increased in almost all businesses. We have heard from the government about its business tax cuts, but since it has been in power there has been none.

In last year's budget the government announced tax cuts of \$100 million a year for 2001–02, which would rise to \$200 million a year from 2003–04. It announced further tax cuts of \$12 million in 2002–03 and 2003–04, and \$151 million in 2004–05. It will be interesting to see whether those estimates come to

fruition. The National Party will watch the next budget with interest.

Hon. P. R. Hall — We will not hold our breath.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — We will not hold our breath. Another measure small businesses keep asking governments for is payroll tax cuts. Since this government has come to office there has been none. This is its second budget and there has been no relief for small business with payroll tax cuts. But as of 1 July this year the tax will be cut from 5.75 per cent to 5.45 per cent. For some reason a year is missed and we go to 2003, when payroll tax will be cut from 5.45 per cent to 5.35 per cent. While there are minor cuts to payroll tax, it must be noted that revenue from payroll tax and other taxes will increase.

The Harvey review of state business taxes outlines that revenue raised from payroll tax in 1999–2000 was 24.8 per cent, that in 2000–01 it will be 31.3 per cent, and that in 2003–04 it will be a massive 36.2 per cent. Revenue raised from gambling taxes in 1999–2000 was 15.9 per cent, in 2000–01 it will be 15.9 per cent, and in 2003–04 it will be a massive 18.4 per cent.

I turn to an issue concerning local government, for which I am the National Party spokesperson. I have a strong rapport with and am a strong supporter of local government, as is the case with all my National Party colleagues. It has been very disconcerting for me to see the cost shifting from the state government to local government, while the extra responsibilities have been given to local government. They now need to employ specialist people, which will be more difficult in country areas. Sometimes they have to pay more to attract certain people to go to country areas. The type of specialists I refer to are planners. Local government finds it difficult to attract qualified planners into country Victoria. Other people that local government has a bit of trouble recruiting into small country areas are municipal health officers.

As honourable members would be aware from the number of measures that have been introduced in the past 20 months, local government is responsible for the administration and monitoring of several important community activities. While the former government increased funding for libraries, this government has reduced library funding. A number of councils have advised me that they are now finding it difficult to provide the services the community needs in libraries.

The Victorian Local Governance Association has commented on the issue of increased costs because of best value in delivering services. While most local

councils supported best value, I do not think they understood that there would be increased costs because of best value. That is now starting to come out and it needs to be monitored.

I turn to the issue of public housing. The government has announced an allocation of \$10 million over three years for a housing redevelopment in Wodonga, which is very good news. It is a mixed public and private housing development. Last year there was an announcement of an allocation of \$5 million over three years for the redevelopment of the Parkside estate in Shepparton. I had the good fortune of chairing the redevelopment advisory committee. Recently the Minister for Housing went to Shepparton to launch the first stage of the redevelopment. However, when the newspaper rang me to find out my views I said I was disappointed because I did not know the minister was coming to Shepparton and I was not invited. Even more disappointing was that I had written to the minister a number of times asking if the next time she came to Shepparton she could make time to meet with the advisory committee and explain the stages of the redevelopment, because the committee has a personal interest in it. But the minister went to Shepparton and did not meet with the advisory committee. I was very disappointed about that.

In his presentation the Honourable Bill Baxter referred to a number of bridges that are being funded. The bridges we are particularly interested in are the Cobram–Barooga and Echuca bridges in our area, as well as the Corowa and Robinvale bridges. It was interesting to see in the budget an allocation of \$700 000 for four bridges, but no forward funding for the bridges. The Minister for Transport also announced funding of \$11 million for the Cobram–Barooga bridge.

The future of the Beechworth prison is also being considered. The government plans to build four new prisons — two in Melbourne and two in country Victoria. In country Victoria there will be a 120-bed minimum security prison as well as a 100-bed minimum security prison. The sites have not yet been chosen. The mayor, Cr Peter Graham, and the chief executive officer, John Costello, of the Shire of Indigo will meet with the Minister for Corrections to ask whether the shire could be included in discussions and a study on the future of the Beechworth prison.

The council would probably support the closure of the prison if a new jail could be built in Beechworth. The closure would lead to the loss of 45 jobs, and there would be further flow-on effects. There are skilled staff in the town, the people support the prison being in their

community, and the services a prison needs are already available.

In the electorate I share with the Honourable Bill Baxter new police stations are to be built at Tongala, Chiltern and Yackandandah. We are pleased to see police stations being built in those small rural towns.

I will refer to environmental issues, which are important to country Victoria. In the budget \$2 million has been allocated for weed and pest management. We have been told that this month the government will release its integrated pest management strategy, another report on weeds and pest animals. Farmers are sick of strategies and reports. They keep saying they want to see work taking place on the ground. Farmers have problems with weeds and vermin on Crown land and adjoining farms, including hobby farms. Millions of dollars in revenue is being lost, in addition to the production lost from good land.

I compare the \$2 million that has been allocated for weed and pest management, and the cost to the environment and small business farmers, with the amount referred to in an article in the *Herald Sun* of 16 May headed ‘Ministers get \$15 million aid boost’:

The Bracks government is giving its ministers an extra \$15.2 million to do their jobs better.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet will spend an additional \$3.8 million a year for the next four years on ‘ministerial and parliamentary support’.

That is appalling. That allocation shows that the government is thumbing its nose at country Victoria.

Hon. P. R. Hall — Its priorities are wrong.

Hon. E. J. POWELL — As Mr Hall interjected, its priorities are wrong. Agriculture and country Victoria are not high priorities for this government.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Jika Jika) — I am pleased to support the budget, not only because it delivers on what has become the central pillar of Labor policy, which is financial management — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — It is okay if you do not like it, but that is the situation. It does that while delivering much-needed benefits for Victorians in health, education, community services and so on.

Hon. C. A. Furletti — It is all in the ‘and so on’.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — As someone who has insisted on the centrality of fiscal responsibility in

Labor policy, I am pleased that all the parameters of responsible financial management are addressed in the budget, including maintaining a surplus on the current account, reducing debt over time and increasing transparency and accountability, including the adoption of performance measures and the Auditor-General's review of the budget.

Before I refer to some of the issues raised by other opposition members, on behalf of the government I will respond to the major budget issues that were raised by the Honourable Roger Hallam. Some of them were raised during hearings of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, so they derive from that source. In passing I congratulate the committee, because its estimates inquiry process is more comprehensive than ever. The Premier now attends the estimates hearings and takes on the same role as other ministers in answering questions about his portfolio areas.

The first of the four major issues the Honourable Roger Hallam raised was why in this budget the government had reviewed output groupings and key performance indicators.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — That is not quite accurate: I asked why the government had done that in such a way that year-on-year comparisons were not available to the reader?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Firstly, this is not an excuse for not providing year-on-year comparisons.

As Mr Hallam and other honourable members will know, accrual output budgeting is a relatively recent development. It has had, and continues to have, cross-party support. In this context, performance measures and output definitions are still evolving, as I am sure they were under the previous government. It is acknowledged that it will take some time to refine output definitions and performance measures to provide the most appropriate information for resource allocation decisions and performance monitoring.

However, we cannot turn back the tide. We need to fully implement and refine performance indicators in the context of accrual accounting. That means there will be changes in performance measures year on year as they are improved.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — We agree; we concede.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — To the extent that there are differences, they are explained by the attempt to make the performance measures better than they were in the preceding year.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — But you do not give us the ability to compare year on year; that is the problem.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I am trying to respond to Mr Hallam's questions. It is not possible to keep old performance measures going indefinitely while you are trying to refine them. That is what we are trying to do, which I understand Mr Hallam supports.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — I am not suggesting that it is.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I will move on to the second issue.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Hang on, before we leave the first one, you still are not giving us the chance to compare year on year. That is the problem.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The chance to compare year on year is done as much as and to the extent that it is possible and necessary, bearing in mind the need to introduce more refined measures, and that is a process which we will continue.

The second point Mr Hallam raised relates to how the government rationalised the calculation of tax savings over forward years, when the figure cited in the budget includes the accumulated roll-up of savings expected in the out years. The cited figure of \$774.3 million does indeed represent the accumulated savings over the forward estimates period — that is, from the years 2001–02 to 2004–05. This is entirely justifiable on the basis that it represents the total reduction in taxes that taxpayers will enjoy over this period as a result of the government's tax reform.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — We are not trying to hide anything; we are just explaining. In other words, over this period Victorian taxpayers will pay a total of \$774.3 million less in tax than they otherwise would pay. Nowhere in the budget papers is it claimed that \$774.3 million represents an annual tax saving. Obviously if taxes are cut by \$100 million or \$200 million this represents a loss of revenue to the state and a benefit to taxpayers not just for the first year but for subsequent years as well. That is all that figure represents, and there is no attempt at misleading through the budget papers.

The third issue raised by Mr Hallam related to why the expected yield from gambling taxes, according to note 2 on budget paper 2 at page 202, was substantially less than that expected to be recorded as a receipt in the consolidated fund shown in table 4.2 on page 441 of budget paper 3. There is no underlying difference in the

expected yield from gambling taxes as presented in budget papers 2 and 3. Table 4.2 on page 441 of budget paper 3 presents cash payments of gambling taxes into the consolidated fund, whereas note 2 on page 202 of budget paper 2 presents gambling tax revenue earned by the Victorian government.

The difference between the aggregate gambling tax revenue estimates presented in these two tables reflects the remittance of tax revenue collected on behalf of other jurisdictions, which is expected to be \$39.4 million in 2001 and 2002. It is in relation to lottery sales in those other jurisdictions, and to a minor extent accrual adjustments for taxes receivable. There is a range of other jurisdictions, which includes Tasmania, the ACT, Norfolk Island, Nauru, the Christmas Islands, the Cook Islands, Fiji, and Western Samoa, which receive a remittance for tax revenue collected on their behalf by the Victorian government. That is the explanation of the two figures.

The fourth issue raised by Mr Hallam relates to the question of why the projected debt level cited in the budget speech of \$2.5 billion in June 2005 is different from that appearing in table 8.4 on page 152 of budget paper 2. Table 8.4 shows that total state non-financial public sector debt, excluding Growing Victoria, will decline to \$3.5 billion by June 2005.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — It is \$3.5 billion? Thank you, that is a good start.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — That is state non-financial public sector debt. State general government sector debt will decline to \$2.5 billion by 2005.

In answering Mr Hallam I point out that in the budget papers, net debt is the standard measure of indebtedness of the government. It is calculated in accordance with the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition in *Accruals-based Government Finance Statistics 2000*, ABS category 5517. Net debt is equal to gross borrowings less liquid financial assets. The detailed ABS definition is the difference between selected liabilities and selected financial assets. Net debt does not include accrued employee liabilities, unfunded superannuation liabilities or payables and receivables. The standard ABS definition has been consistently applied in the Treasurer's budget speech. The uniform presentation format of the balance sheet is also employed.

In explaining the two sets of figures, one set refers to the general government sector net debt. This shows

state net debt declining from \$5.9 billion in 1999 to \$2.5 billion in 2005.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — General government net debt! Be clear, it is general government net debt.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Yes, the general government sector net debt. That is a reduction of \$2.4 billion. The other figures refer to total state non-financial public sector debt.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Which the Treasurer described as state government net debt.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — No, I am choosing my words very carefully. The comparable figures are in 1999. The figure, which I do not believe Mr Hallam has — —

Hon. R. M. Hallam — I have all the figures. Don't worry about me; let's talk about the definition.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The figure for 1999 was \$6.2 billion.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — The figure for what, I am sorry?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Total state non-financial public sector debt.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Let's get it into the terminology employed by the Treasurer. Does that equate with state government net debt?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The figure for that is \$6.2 billion — —

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Does that equate with state government net debt?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — If Mr Hallam does not want to hear the answer, he should not listen to it.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — I would love to hear the answer, let's get it clear.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The comparable figures for that category are \$6.2 billion in 1999, reducing to \$3.5 billion in 2005.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — What did you describe that as?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — That is a reduction of \$2.7 billion.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — What is the description of the debt?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — This means that both figures show a reduction. In the case of the first figure relating to general government sector net debt the reduction is \$2.4 billion, going from \$4.9 billion to \$2.5 billion. In the case of the other figure, which Mr Hallam described — —

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Which I described?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Which Mr Hallam has issue with — that other figure is total state non-financial public sector debt. It goes from \$6.2 billion to \$3.5 billion, a reduction of \$2.7 billion. The figure quoted by the Treasurer shows a reduction of \$2.4 billion and the other figure I have quoted shows a reduction of \$2.7 billion. That indicates that whichever figure is quoted there is a significant reduction — in excess of \$2 billion.

To explain the figure for state non-financial public sector debt, this category includes such things as water authorities, the Melbourne City Link Authority, Victrack, Yarra Valley Water and so on, but it does not include financial sector authorities such as Workcover, the Transport Accident Commission and the Treasury Corporation of Victoria. The Treasurer's speech refers to the net debt declining to \$2.5 billion by June 2005.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — No, it doesn't, it refers to state government net debt.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — It is quite clear from the context of the speech and references to the numbers and text in budget paper 2 that the reference in the budget speech is to the decline in state general government sector net debt, which is consistent with table 8.4. It is not a reference to the total state non-financial public sector debt, which is also included in the table. This is simply a question of using the full terminology. However, I believe that the explanation I have given to the house indicates that whichever of the two definitions is used there is a substantial reduction in debt. In the figures quoted by the Treasurer it is \$2.4 billion and using the other category it is \$2.7 billion.

I hope that describes to the house the use of these terms within the budget. I want to go on and talk about some other aspects of what this government has done. The government has provided a full explanation to the house, including the full definitional requirements; and I will not keep going over them for the benefit of Mr Hallam because I am sure he understands exactly what has been proposed. However, I want to make a

brief comment about some of the issues relating to Workcover which are contained in this report just put before Parliament and which I am sure Mr Hallam would be interested in.

The Economic Development Committee report on the Victorian Workcover Authority is totally unbalanced in content. It is important to note that during the construction of the report 75 divisions were taken. Government members on the committee were given from 12.00 p.m. on Friday until 9.00 o'clock on Monday morning to produce a minority report. I am proud that at least those who wrote the minority report included an executive summary.

I refer to some things in the minority report that do not appear in the majority report. I urge all honourable members to examine them because they make interesting reading. They are the issues that the Liberal and National parties want to hide. For example, they want to hide the evidence that came before the committee — —

Hon. R. M. Hallam — What about the gerrymander?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Mr Hallam may be interested in this. The additional costs borne by small businesses for GST compliance were on average 22 times greater in the set-up year and 11 times greater on an ongoing basis. That is some of the evidence the opposition parties wanted to suppress.

Because of the shortness of time I will not go into all the details of the minority report, but given that Mr Hallam is present I am sure he would be interested to know some of the recommendations of the majority report, which I am sure he would never have accepted or even contemplated as the minister responsible for Workcover. They include the notion of moving away from the succession rule — opening up the floodgates so that if a business wanted to re-register as a different business it would get a fresh slate on its Workcover premiums.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Who argues against that?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — You should read the majority report. It also advocates that if a takeover of a business occurs the slate is run clean on the business taken over.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Says who?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Your colleagues, in the report.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — The succession rule has always applied.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Yes, and the opposition is saying it should be reviewed!

Hon. R. M. Hallam — What are you arguing?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I am glad that Mr Hallam is not opposing that. The government continues to argue for the succession rule. The opposition argued for and wants to open up the apportionment of costs to prior employers. It did not want to do that when the coalition was in government.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — I want to go back to the definition of net debt.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I know you do not want to hear this. I will indicate what the opposition wants to put in place as set out in the Workcover report: it wants to examine whether we can apportion costs to prior employers. For example, an employer of a person who sustains an injury in a workplace should approach the previous employer of the person and say, 'Hang on, maybe you should cop 40 per cent of this because he used to work for you'. What an idea! Imagine the litigation that would occur between employers if that kind of rule applied! It demonstrates how ridiculous the opposition is and the sorts of tactics it is prepared to use just because an employer at a public hearing says he should not have to pay the full cost of an injured person who worked for him because, he alleges, the worker injured his back with a previous employer!

The opposition wants to change the rules, but it never wanted to do that when Mr Hallam was the minister responsible for Workcover! Listen to this — this is another recommendation! It wants employers to have the right, if the Workcover authority or the claims agent says they should settle the case and a settlement is agreed — it may be \$20 000 — to override that settlement and go to court! That is what the opposition is proposing. I wish Mr Hallam was on the committee because he would never have agreed with that.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — What about your mates in New South Wales on the other side of the Murray River? What are they doing tonight? They are blockading Parliament because of the common-law issue!

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Mr Hallam, you never did any of these things because you were smart enough to figure out that if you gave the employer the right of veto over settlement and the right to go to court, you would get court case after court case. The doozey

was this: government members suggested if they were to bring this in maybe the employer — —

Hon. R. M. Hallam interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask Mr Hallam to settle down and allow Mr Theophanous to finish his contribution.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Were such things to be allowed you would get a flood of litigation, with the employer saying, 'I will go to court'. If he lost the court case and additional costs were borne by the authority they would flow to other employers because, as Mr Hallam knows, Workcover is a closed system.

These are some of the ridiculous recommendations contained in the majority report, where we have attempted to say to them, 'Well, it's just not true'. But the doozey of them all, which I must mention, is the committee finding that there will be an increase in Workcover premiums next year for small businesses based on the notion that the industry rate increases will mean that small business premiums will increase, despite the fact that the Victorian Workcover Authority issued a press release saying that no small business industry rate would be changed and that no small business would suffer an increase. The finding is wrong in fact. It shows the lack of any attempt to use a reasonable methodology or an appropriate process in arriving at a committee report.

The majority report is an absolute disgrace in the way it has manipulated the methodology. Everybody knows that when you talk about increases you must talk about rates and not in dollar terms. Did that stop opposition members talking about dollar terms? Not on your life! They were going to say how many dollars were involved, notwithstanding the fact that the dollar increase includes employment increases, inflation and a variety of other factors. This is a shonky attempt to raise the fears of small business. Let me tell honourable members, it is the same kind of thinking that brings the opposition into this place to criticise what is a fantastic budget for the people of Victoria.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN (Chelsea) — It is about time to put some commonsense back into this debate. It is remarkable that the honourable member would spend the last half an hour quoting himself from a minority report and implying that somehow the Workcover premiums in Victoria that are applicable to small businesses have not increased. Clearly that contradicts what small businesses are telling me in my province. It is not only what they are telling me, but they are

producing the evidence of last year's premium increase compared with this year's premium increase.

In some cases there have been increases of up to 150 per cent. The excellent report of the Economic Development Committee, chaired so capably by my colleague the Honourable Neil Lucas, confirming that the average increase was about 40 per cent, is highly accurate. Any suggestion by the Honourable Theo Theophanous to the contrary has to be treated as having been made with the usual cynicism and in the state of confusion that obviously he finds himself in, as he does with all the comments he makes. It is time to stop the deception and cease the rhetoric. Government members must stop behaving like demonic, sycophantic apparatchiks and take some responsibility. It is time for the blame shifting and the excuses to cease. There comes a time when every government member must acknowledge this government's failings.

I take this opportunity to highlight where the government has failed the people of Chelsea Province. The other elected representative of Chelsea Province, the Honourable Bob Smith, through his deafening silence, lack of enthusiasm, lack of professionalism and attention to detail, has proved in the 20 months he has been a member of the Bracks Labor government to be a complete waste of space.

The 2001–02 budget document *Growing the Whole State*, the propaganda document, refers at page 24 to the Melbourne south-east region and the economic make-up of the south-east of Melbourne. It also highlights population changes, refers to where the age bracket is most significant and gives a brief description of the industry breakdown for employment in the area.

Unfortunately it does not highlight the increase in the youth unemployment rate, which was mentioned this morning in debate on opposition business. That is significant in the Mornington Peninsula and is having a demonstrable negative effect on the domestic economy in the south-east of Melbourne. Equally it does not highlight the lack of investment that municipalities are struggling with in trying to find additional funds for people simply because there is a lack of leadership and vision by the government. Its regional focus is clearly targeted to areas of political opportunism and where any political improvement might be best met.

What I found extraordinary with the description on page 24 of the document was that it lists the major cities by municipalities. It lists the municipalities of Greater Dandenong, Boroondara, Knox, Monash, Whitehorse, Casey, Glen Eira, Yarra Ranges, Mornington Peninsula and Kington, but it does not mention Frankston as a

major city of the south-east. Irrespective of the fact that it is a regional city and the regional focus of the Mornington Peninsula and has a population of around 112 000 that is growing and will grow around 10 per cent each year, there is no mention or acknowledgment in the government's own document of how significant Frankston is not only to the Mornington Peninsula and the south-east economy but also to metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria overall. I find it an affront and an insult that the government's own document does not pay tribute and to acknowledge that when clearly it is justified.

However, it mentions in its asset investment highlights in the south-east the \$9 million Frankston Hospital redevelopment. The Frankston Hospital has been a moot point in domestic politics in that area for some time. It was undoubtedly a target of intense campaigning by the Labor Party in the lead-up to the 1999 general election and the supplementary election that took place in Frankston East. In particular the candidate, who is now the honourable member for Frankston East, Matt Viney, made it one of his passions — I say that cautiously — to try to highlight what he interpreted as inefficiencies in the Frankston Hospital at that time.

During the campaign he released a number of propaganda leaflets, one of which included Labor's six-point plan for Victoria. Labor said it would:

... make our hospitals cleaner and reduce emergency waiting times by redirecting \$18 million from the health network bureaucracy.

That was one of the six points the honourable member advanced in 1999 to try to fix the mess that he suggested was evident at Frankston Hospital.

On 14 May 1999 he issued a press statement entitled 'Hospital must come clean on financial positions', which stated:

Labor candidate for Frankston East, Matt Viney, has called on the Frankston Hospital to come clean on its current financial position in the wake of claims that Victoria's hospital system is in financial crisis.

Mr Viney is reported to have said:

For over a year we have seen the crisis continuing at the Frankston Hospital, with a doubling of waiting lists, extensive stays on trolleys in emergency, and the nursing and medical staff having to perform miracles every day due to cuts to the system and total administrative bungles.

The honourable member for Frankston East was implying that Frankston Hospital was operating under

duress and was not meeting its targets. He suggested that the hospital's financial system was complicated.

On 24 May 1999 his allegation was rebutted in the *Frankston Standard* by the chief executive officer of the then Peninsula Health Care Network, Mr Chris Fox:

Frankston Hospital has declared its finances 'sound'.

The hospital was also on target for a balanced budget this financial year, chief executive Chris Fox said.

At the time the Auditor-General's report confirmed that the finances of Frankston Hospital were fine. As I will explain to the house, there is a stark difference between the situation then and the waiting lists, ambulance bypass figures and other benchmarks referred to in the current *Hospital Services Report*.

On 14 June, in his contribution to the appropriation debate, the honourable member for Frankston East was still carping about the former government leaving Victoria with a downgraded system, having cut the number of nurses and closed hospital beds. The state of the Frankston Hospital was a critical issue in the last election campaign and the subsequent supplementary election. He said the hospital had been decimated by the cuts made by the former government and was pleading for funds for additional beds.

He went on to talk about Labor committing an additional \$21 million to the upgrade of the Frankston Hospital, which proved, he said, that the government had funded an additional 64 beds. He said the beds were operational and that funding was available for a further 76 beds. He said those steps would reduce some of the hospital's problems.

I was amazed that in his contribution to the debate in the other place the honourable member made no reference to the Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Folios*, which was released earlier this month, in talking about the extent of the operating and financial difficulties now faced by the Frankston Hospital. What is even more alarming is that the honourable member, having been the local member of Parliament for some time, has used the Frankston Hospital for political expediency. He is also the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health — a key position in the health portfolio — so he should be sufficiently well qualified and have enough knowledge to comment with a degree of authority.

Page 85 of the June 2001 *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* states at paragraph 3.2.17:

... while the financial performance of hospitals had improved in the 1998–99 financial year compared with the previous

year, there were eight hospitals that were considered to be operating under financial difficulty as at 30 June 1999.

As of 30 June next that will have increased to 12 hospitals. As set out on page 88 of the report, the forecast working capital position of Peninsula Health as of 30 June next is minus \$5.2 million.

In paragraph 3.2.28 the Auditor-General concludes:

... the financial condition of the public hospital system remains weak and vulnerable.

The conclusion is that Peninsula Health, of which the Frankston Hospital is part, is weak and vulnerable.

Hon. I. J. Cover — That is one they were going to fix.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — It is one the government was going to fix! Neither the honourable member for Frankston East nor the Honourable Bob Smith or other Labor members who may have an interest in the area have mentioned the true financial position. They do not want to acknowledge the truth, take responsibility for the government's failings or try to provide solutions for the serious problem at the hospital.

When the Minister for Health was asked by members of the media only last week to identify how he intended to fix the problem, he asked them whether they had any solutions. In 1999, when Chris Fox said the financial situation was healthy, there was no suggestion that the hospital was involved in a cover-up or that any attempt was being made to hide the truth.

Under the title 'Threat to health' an article in the *Frankston Standard* of 18 June states:

Peninsula Health has confirmed it is experiencing financial pressures due to increasing costs and demand for its services.

...

Peninsula Health has received additional funding in the state budget to help address financial pressures created by increased demand on services and cost pressures.

Extra demand has been generated by needs of aged patients and the peninsula's seasonal and full-time population growth.

I return to my earlier comment about the government's predictions about population growth. Frankston Hospital has acknowledged that, yet its financial situation does not paint a positive picture for the people who need to use its facilities.

Page 50 of budget paper 3 states:

The principal responsibilities of DHS include:

provision of high quality and efficient health care services through the public hospital system, community health centres and ambulance services ...

They are the government's own words, and that is what it is trying to achieve through the implementation of its health services policy.

Page 50 of the budget paper further states:

... waiting times for health, community care, disability and housing programs are at or below national benchmark levels.

That is what the department wants to achieve. Quite clearly the situation at Frankston Hospital is nowhere near national benchmark levels. If I could use the government's own formula for predicting growth, expectation of services, where the real need is going to occur and how it wants to try to achieve its benchmark figures, I have to point out that it is true that the government has provided for growth in the health budget for 2002–03 of 1.5 per cent, for 2003–04 of 1.85 per cent and for 2004–05 of 2.5 per cent.

However, if we use the government's own methodology and expectations of where the health services — particularly at Frankston Hospital — are going to be needed to ensure it can meet its budgeted benchmarks and that its efficiency in generating and delivering patient care as promised in its own budget documents is achieved, the real growth needed for it to achieve those objectives is as follows: for 2002–03 a 1.75 per cent increase in the total overall operating budget, not a 1.5 per cent increase; for 2003–04, 3.5 per cent not 1.85 per cent; and for 2004–05, 5.3 per cent, not 2.5 per cent. So even the government has not allocated sufficient funding in the total Human Services budget to meet that expected output level. That quite clearly is going to have an effect on the health budget and health operating services in the future.

What I find even more remarkable is the real situation at Frankston Hospital. Again I will briefly touch on it in an historical context. The local *Independent* newspaper of 7 September 1999 carries a glossy photo of the then opposition health spokesman in the other place, John Thwaites, and the then candidate for Frankston East, Matt Viney, in an article headed '\$12 million for hospital: ALP'. The article quotes Mr Viney and states:

'Waiting lists at the Frankston Hospital are far too long and patients have had to wait more than 24 hours on a trolley because of the bed shortage'.

On 14 September 1999 an article in the same newspaper headed 'Hospital waits disturbing: ALP', states:

The state opposition says new freedom of information data shows long delays in the Frankston Hospital emergency department.

Shadow Minister for Health Mr John Thwaites said figures show more than 300 patients waited longer than 12 hours on a trolley in the emergency department in one month.

Mr Viney is quoted in this same article as saying:

'The Kennett government's massive budget cuts and bed closures have led to long delays in the hospital emergency department and blown out waiting lists ...

The story continues, because up to a point Mr Viney has been proud of his achievements in trying to provide some difference in the operating efficiency of the Frankston Hospital. That is confirmed by his comments reported in the *Frankston Flier* of 15 March 2000, where he is quoted as saying:

'The Bracks government is getting on with the job of building a public health system which provides a proper standard of care for all Victorians. After seven years of neglect, the community can start to regain confidence again in our local hospital'.

Disappointingly it was about that time when the story started to change and the real financial position at Frankston Hospital was identified as being of concern. The waiting lists and other operating performance benchmarks were increasing at a level that was unprecedented in the hospital's history.

In the *Frankston Standard* of 16 October 2000, under the heading 'Hospital crisis', my colleague the honourable member for Frankston in the other place, Andrea McCall, is reported as having highlighted some of the increases in benchmarks which were of note and which contradicted the government's own operating expectations. They were considered to have sufficient newsworthiness to be highlighted in this news article to inform the Frankston community of what the real situation was. The article also states:

Frankston East Labor MP Matt Viney defended the government's commitment to health, claiming 'it takes a short time to destroy a service, but a long time to mend it'.

Hang on! Only six months ago Mr Viney was taking credit for improving the system. He was saying that Frankston Hospital was operating fantastically well, that there was nothing to worry about and that the Bracks government in its first six months of office had fixed and totally improved the situation. Six months later he has got to a stage where he is trying again to pass blame on to the former government and suggest it was all the former government's fault and was going to take a long time to fix. I wonder what Mr Viney has to say about the real situation at Frankston Hospital.

Mr Deputy President, with the indulgence of the government, I seek leave to incorporate into *Hansard* four graphs that I have been assisted in preparing. I have cleared this with the President. They are in a format that is agreeable to *Hansard* and I will provide *Hansard* with an electronic copy for ease of incorporation.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Is leave granted?

Hon. M. M. Gould — What is it?

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — Four graphs.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! It is a graph that has been — —

Hon. M. M. Gould — I assume it has been checked with the President.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Boardman said that was the case.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — I have checked with the President. These graphs are in exactly the same format as the *Hospital Services Report*.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! And *Hansard* has been informed?

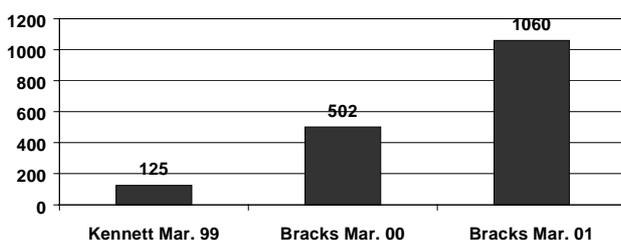
Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — I have advised *Hansard* and they can be incorporated. These are figures from the *Hospital Services Report* for March 2001 that were benchmarked each year previously. I shall go through the categories I have highlighted in each graph individually. There are four graphs.

Hon. M. M. Gould — Leave is granted.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — I appreciate that from the minister.

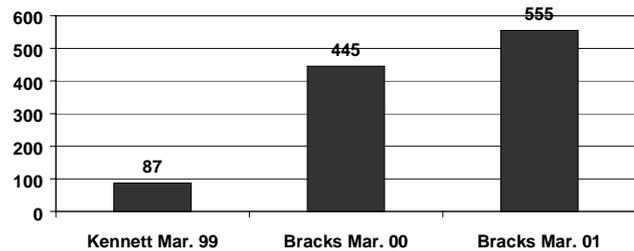
Leave granted; graphs as follows:

**Frankston Hospital:
People on Waiting Lists Longer Than Ideal
(Semi-Urgent)**



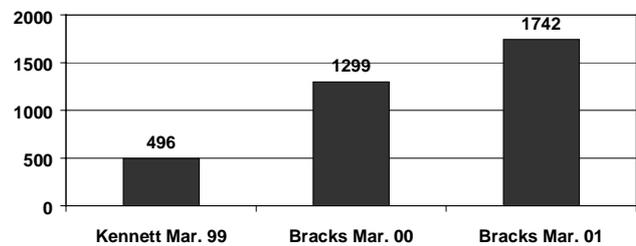
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Frankston Hospital:
Emergency Department Stays
Longer than 12 Hours**



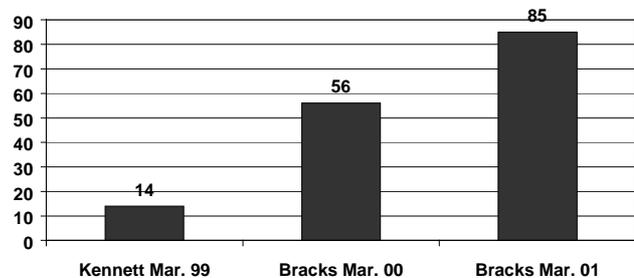
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Frankston Hospital:
People on Waiting Lists for Elective Surgery
(Semi-Urgent)**



Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Frankston Hospital:
Hospital Going on Bypass**



Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — These are the true figures, and they cannot be argued with. The first graph is headed ‘Frankston Hospital: people on waiting lists longer than ideal (semi-urgent)’. At the end of the March 1999 quarter, when the Kennett government was in power, there were 125 cases. In the first quarter of March 2000, in the Bracks government’s first year, there were 502 cases. Astonishingly that had ballooned to 1060 cases by March 2001, an increase over the two years — they are directly comparable, the previous government versus this government — of 800 per cent.

The second graph is headed ‘Frankston Hospital: emergency department stays longer than 12 hours’. In

the March 1999 quarter 87 cases were reported; in the March 2000 quarter, 445 cases were reported; and by the March 2001 quarter the figure had skyrocketed to 555 cases. That represents an increase of around 637 per cent in the same comparable two-year time frame. That is the same category that Mr Viney in the other place and others highlighted as being deficient at the time of the election, and during the seven years of the Kennett government. I am not sure how Mr Viney can explain a 637 per cent increase in this important benchmark target. He has been directly responsible and had a position of authority in the health department.

The third graph is headed 'Frankston Hospital: people on waiting lists for elective surgery (semi-urgent)'. In the Kennett March 1999 quarter there were 496 cases; in the Bracks March 2000 quarter there were 1299 cases; and by the end of the March 2001 quarter the figure had ballooned out again, to 1742 cases — which is a 350 per cent increase in the number of people waiting for elective surgery.

The last graph shows the number of times the accident emergency department at the Frankston Hospital went on ambulance bypass. In the March quarter 1999 there were only 14 cases; by the end of March 2000 that figure had risen to 56; and by the end of March 2001 it had ballooned to 85 cases — which is an increase of approximately 600 per cent.

That is the true situation for the Frankston Hospital today. Not only has there been an increase of more than \$1.4 billion in the government's global budget but I can identify a direct increase at the Frankston Hospital of approximately \$50 million in the past 18 months. I am not sure how the government, and in particular Mr Viney and Mr Bob Smith, can justify the expenditure when quite clearly it has resulted in a worse performance for the hospital than ever before in its recorded history.

I challenge the government and my colleagues with whom I represent the Frankston area and who have responsibility for the Frankston Hospital. Perhaps they would like to justify their quite obvious incompetence and provide an explanation to the Frankston community as to why the increase in funding to the Frankston Hospital has resulted in such a woeful performance. I understand Mr Bob Smith is the next speaker in the debate. I will sit down and listen in anticipation.

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — I am pleased to support the 2001–02 budget. Yesterday the house heard a great deal of discussion about honour and the title 'honourable'. This budget continues to honour the commitments made by the Bracks Labor

government on the four pillars: financial responsibility, growing the whole state, improving services, and restoring democracy and accountability. In particular I will concentrate on the rebuilding represented in this budget of the human services system that was given a battering under the Kennett government.

The budget provides a \$1.4 billion boost to the human services system. Important components of the budget for the human services system are the rebuilding of the public hospital and aged care systems, and initiatives to take pressure off emergency departments with a patient management strategy. Some \$150 million has been allocated over four years to divert elderly people and those with chronic conditions from ending up in emergency departments in hospitals. Extra funding has been provided for disability services, family support and protective care for young people, and for measures to address homelessness.

The Department of Human Services output budget for 2001–02 is \$7937 million, an increase of \$684 million, or 9.4 per cent, on the previous budget. Extra asset investment is provided to the tune of \$514 million. The Office of Housing, a non-budget sector entity, is providing a further \$352 million in housing asset investment.

The boost in the human services system from this budget reflects the emphasis of the Bracks Labor government on building communities and promoting early intervention and prevention services, supporting individuals and families and social inclusion. The emphasis in the government's commitment to tackling problems of homelessness is very important. Although it is a modest component of the budget it is a vital part of it.

In 2001–02 there is additional funding for assistance to the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. That builds on last year's budget, which provided an extra \$17.4 million for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. When the Bracks Labor government increased funding for SAAP last year and again in this budget, it reversed what happened over five years under the Kennett government, when there was no growth in this sector. No extra services were contracted and no strategies were in place for tackling the very difficult issues of people on the edge, people without accommodation, without a future, without security — people who are homeless.

Under the previous government there was no honouring of award obligations to staff. That has continued, with the commonwealth government failing to support the state government in funding award obligations to staff

working in the sector. That has led to widespread burnout and deteriorating morale among those who provide these vital services to some of our most needy citizens.

The commitment of the Bracks Labor government to social inclusion and to caring for the most vulnerable groups in our community is in stark contrast to the disinterest of the previous government, which provided no extra funding in this area for the last five years of its period in office. I contend that the way a government and a community approach a group like the homeless or those on the verge of homelessness is an important measure of the heart and soul of that government and that community and it reflects the humanity of both groups. Many people in our community may not be aware of homeless people because they are not always readily visible. How aware members of the community are of the housing needs of certain groups may depend on where they live.

That is not the case in my electorate in inner Melbourne, where there are important centres providing services for people in housing crisis and the homeless, like the Salvation Army's Flagstaff centre and Ozanam House in the west and north of the city. In fact, the demand for supported accommodation and crisis housing is disproportionately high in my electorate, given the population living in the inner city.

I am reminded on almost a daily basis of the problem of homelessness. One very graphic picture stays in my mind. As I ride home from the office at 7 o'clock or 8 o'clock at night I often see a man sitting in a bus shelter outside the Royal Melbourne Hospital. The man lives in that bus shelter, and I have seen him lying on the seat in the shelter later in the evening. He is often there wearing his beanie and with a blanket wrapped around him. He often has a glass of wine, and people come to speak to him. He is a stark and constant reminder — and also a bold statement — of the inequities in our society, where there are people in great need. One always wonders where he moves on to as the nights get colder.

I am also reminded of an experience I had earlier in the year when I travelled to Toronto to look at integrated public transport systems in North America. I saw in Toronto — in temperatures of minus 15 to minus 30 degrees — people in sleeping bags and blankets sleeping on the ground, lying prostrate in front of people during the day and the evening and forcing members of the public to step over or around them. That was, again, a very confronting sight.

However, we should not limit our perception of the homeless community to those who live on the streets, under bridges or in parks, or those who squat in derelict houses or use railway carriages for temporary shelter. The document entitled 'Victorian homelessness strategy — consultation paper', which was issued a few months ago by the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Bronwyn Pike, describes those who live out on the streets as the primary homeless, but there is a further definition of people who suffer from homelessness — that is, the secondary homeless, or those who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. Secondary homelessness includes people using emergency accommodation such as hostels or night shelters for the homeless, teenagers staying in youth refuges, women and children escaping domestic violence and staying in women's refuges, and people residing temporarily with other families.

There is also a third category of homeless people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis and who do not have the security of tenure provided by a lease. I commend the government and the Minister for Housing for undertaking the Victorian homelessness strategy currently in progress. That is a genuine attempt to bring all departments and programs together to improve the coordination of service delivery for those very much in need.

The 2001–02 budget provides expanded assistance for homeless people. It provides an additional \$3.2 million in recurrent funding, which represents a commitment of \$12.8 million over four years for assistance to the homeless or those at risk of homelessness.

That funding includes \$2.2 million to expand the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, which provides services such as case management assessment and referral, supported accommodation, living skills programs, counselling and advocacy. There is also an additional \$1 million for the Housing Establishment Fund to boost it to \$6 million to help 33 500 households. In addition to that recurrent housing funding, the Department of Human Services mental health program will also provide a further \$500 000 to assist people with a mental illness who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Complementing that recurrent funding and services is an allocation in the housing budget of \$28 million for the acquisition or construction of 300 crisis support or transitional housing properties. Of that \$28 million \$1 million is for the leasing of 130 additional properties for transitional housing and \$27 million is for a further 170 crisis support or transitional housing properties to be acquired or constructed. Furthermore the

government has made clear that it will give priority in its initiatives to homeless people with a history of psychiatric illness, to young people exiting the juvenile justice system and to people leaving prisons — all important boosts to crisis accommodation, and sorely needed.

In 1999 in inner city Melbourne those running services for people in need of housing and the homeless reported that only one in three people seeking assistance could be accommodated. Major deficiencies need to be addressed, as does the need for the supply of crisis accommodation that meets the requirements of different groups such as youth, families, women and children, or single people. Appropriate accommodation is also necessary so people do not gravitate into the city but can have their needs met within the communities where they have grown up.

I am pleased to advise the house of an announcement made by the Minister for Housing at a community forum in May of a funding injection of \$225 000 to improve crisis support services for homeless families and single adults in the eastern suburbs, as well as funding for 10 local organisations to improve support services, with homeless services to be further improved when a new crisis accommodation service for families and single people is acquired in the Ringwood area. The government has allocated \$2.34 million to acquire the Ringwood facility and \$450 000 annually to operate it. That is part of the planning for crisis accommodation services in outer suburban and regional areas. It is very important because people in my electorate are concerned that if the services are provided only in the inner city people will gravitate into one area when in fact services for people in need should be available throughout the community. This is an important yet modest part of the overall budget. It is complemented by the expanding and improving supply of social housing for which the housing budget also provides.

By any poverty or need indicators the three essential requirements of people in any community are food, water and shelter. Other needs and services such as education, health and employment are at another level, but the most basic needs are food, water and shelter. Secure housing or shelter is critical for the underlying security of people who do not have the resources of those who are better off.

The Bracks government has given a very high priority in the budget to tackling homelessness. I believe the government has got it right. It is showing that it does have a heart and soul and that it cares for the most vulnerable people in our community. I commend the budget to honourable members.

Hon. M. T. LUCKINS (Waverley) — This is a budget full of inconsistencies. It is a budget that fails to match rhetoric with action. It fails to deliver a sustainable surplus, it fails to provide community infrastructure, it fails to plan for our future and it even fails to satisfy the unions.

Mary Bluett, the secretary of the Australian Education Union, has been variously quoted as saying that this was the cruellest budget in a decade. An article in the *Age* of 17 May states:

On Tuesday, union state president Mary Bluett declared the budget was the cruellest — rather than the worst or most meagre — in a decade. It was cruel because Labor's election promise to make education its 'number one priority' had not been matched with dollars.

Similarly the secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, Leigh Hubbard, was scathing in his comments published in the *Australian Financial Review* of 16 May. The article states, in part:

... the budget failed to balance infrastructure and recurrent spending on education, community services and industry development. What the community wants is some dollars, not more promises ...

This is a typical Labor budget — high taxing and high spending, with a debt incurred for future generations. It is the Guilty Party resurrected. I refer to Workcover. Labor plus Workcover equals a blow-out, and we have seen that occur very quickly under the Bracks Labor government. The budget forecasts Workcover to blow out by \$27.4 million per annum, and that is after the Auditor-General identified a \$600 million loss in six months.

Business throughout Victoria is suffering as a consequence of Minister Cameron's mismanagement of the Workcover system. The minister said that premiums for business would not increase by more than 17 per cent, but the fact is that premiums have increased between 40 per cent and 100 per cent for many Victorian businesses.

In addition, the government did not bank on its significant increases in wages for nurses and teachers. In fact, it has a blow-out of \$560 million over four years to fund increased salaries. Nurses alone for this year will have put a \$96.2 million hole in the budget. I certainly commend all the nurses in Victoria for their hard work and their commitment, and I acknowledge that their pay claim was well justified. However, the government had an obligation to plan for its commitments to fund salary increases over its term of government — and again it failed.

The winter power bonus has gone. The \$60 that previously went to all Victorian households has been canned by the minister, who purports to represent, with the Labor Party, low-income earners. The winter power bonus assisted low-income earners, not just the top end of town. It was to be in place until full market contestability in the electricity industry was established. The minister has deferred that industry contestability, and she has also removed the winter power bonus.

Before the last election the Labor Party made a big deal of having costed policies and trying to remove the Guilty Party tag it earned for clear and reputed financial mismanagement under the Cain and Kirner years. It lauded the fact that Access Economics had costed its policies and that it was committed to keeping the budget out of deficit. It has abandoned that commitment as well as others, and I will talk about that during my contribution.

Typical of a traditional Labor budget is an increase in the public sector work force, which has blown out by an extra 2000 people in this budget. There is still more to come. There are union pay claims from preschool teachers, police, and health care workers, and a current industrial relations dispute is crippling the health sector, with medical scientists and other health service workers putting on bans in public hospitals.

The Report of the Auditor-General on the Finances of the State of Victoria, 1999–2000 says at page 28:

The rate of increase in state expenditure has exceeded the increase in the gross state product ... it will be important for the government to monitor future trends in expenditure to ensure that the state's financial strength is maintained.

That is an ominous warning indeed. The Auditor-General made that assessment prior to this budget coming down. In the report the Auditor-General refers to the state's financial strength. I remind the house that it was the Kennett government that reduced the debt racked up by the last Labor governments in Victoria from \$33 billion, which represented 30.7 per cent of gross state product, down to \$6 billion — a very manageable figure. It also left the Labor government with a war chest with which to fund its election promises in its first budget.

This government's second budget is more about what we can expect from a Labor government, not just in this term but into the future. The budget documents are quite illuminating about the proposed financial management of the Labor government. Page 294 of budget paper 2 refers to the government finance statistics net lending position for 2000–01 being \$606 million. That is forecast to go from a net lending

position to a net borrowing position of minus \$423 million in 2001–02.

The general government sector cash flow statement at page 300 of budget paper 2 shows a \$1.199 billion surplus in 2000–01 going to a minus \$22 million deficit in 2001–02. This budget going into deficit within one year is tempered by the fact that the superannuation liability is predicted to grow to \$13 billion by 2005 — just when a large group of Victorians, the baby boomers, are set to retire and will be looking for their superannuation entitlements. It will be my generation and that of my children who will end up paying the liability that this government has allowed to blow out.

In the budget the Bracks government has also forecast that the economy will slow significantly. After Victoria led the country in economic growth indicators under the Kennett government, this Bracks budget targets growth of only 2.75 per cent, which is a full 0.5 per cent lower than the commonwealth forecast of 3.25 per cent. In 1998–99, under the Kennett government, there was a 7 per cent growth in Victoria's economy.

Employment growth was also very strong under the previous Kennett government. When it came to government, unemployment was around 13 per cent — and it reduced that by about a third. In this budget the Bracks government has ditched its commitment to attaining a 5 per cent unemployment rate, forecasting instead 6.5 per cent unemployment in Victoria.

Businesses are clearly losing confidence in this new government and are packing up to head overseas and interstate. We have already seen many companies in metropolitan as well as regional Victoria packing up and going elsewhere. The reasons for that are Workcover, the rate of industrial disputation, and the fact that with state taxation we have lost our advantage and our reputation as a state that is open for business.

Victoria used to be on the move, but under Labor it is moving into deficit, with increasing imposts on business. Business has no incentive to invest or employ in Victoria under the Bracks government. The Harvey report, which was lauded by the government to represent state taxation reform, is an absolute furphy. The fact is that the tax package takes a billion dollars and gives back only \$100 million.

Many of the tax cuts are budgeted for not during this term of government but during the next term. For example, \$351 million of the \$774 million in tax cuts offered over four years is budgeted for in the next term of government, with the possibility of \$560 million

being provided after the next election if it is held before July 2003.

The unions are also extremely concerned about the government's lack of capacity to keep jobs in Victoria. I quote from an article in the *Herald Sun* of 14 May that refers to Mr Terry Breheny, the assistant secretary of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union:

He said a clear message needed to be sent to the Bracks government that it had to fight harder to prevent the flow of manufacturing jobs interstate.

If your friends are not with you, who is? The Bracks government has clearly demonstrated that it is losing union support, despite the fact that it is pandering to the unions on industrial matters.

One of the starkest contrasts between this government and the previous government is in the health portfolio. When he was in opposition we all had to put up with the current Minister for Health ambulance chasing and carping and moaning about the perceived inadequacies of the health system. I have not heard any explanation from the minister about the consistently poor performance figures in the *Hospital Services Report*, which comes out every quarter.

The Bracks Labor government has plunged the Victorian health system into its deepest crisis yet. The latest report, which was released last week, shows that the waiting list has grown from 39 542 in March 1999 to 42 899 in March 2001. That is an increase of 3357 in the number of people who are waiting for hospital treatment. At the Monash Medical Centre in my electorate the situation is even more stark. In March 1999, 594 patients were waiting for treatment; in March 2001, 1325 patients were on the waiting list, an increase of 731.

The figure for patients waiting on trolleys for more than 12 hours has similarly increased. In March 1999, the state figure was 1614. By March 2001 that had leapt to 6062, an increase of 4048, or 375 per cent. In March 1999 the Monash Medical Centre recorded that 415 people had waited on trolleys for more than 12 hours. In March 2001 that had leapt to 706, or an increase of 70 per cent.

The increase in the number of ambulance bypass cases is even more disgraceful. It has gone up from 72 cases in March 1999, when the Kennett government was in power, to 822 cases in March 2001, a massive increase of 1140 per cent. At the Monash Medical Centre the number of bypasses went up from 9 in March 1999 to

123 in March 2001, an increase of 114, or 1267 per cent.

Those figures provide a clear contrast between the performance of the previous government and that of the Bracks government. The Bracks government has failed to provide Victorians with accessible and timely medical attention. These are not just numbers or statistics; they represent ill or injured people who are having to wait when they are desperate for treatment. It is about time the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Planning, started to concentrate on one portfolio. He has clearly been distracted by Rescode and has not paid enough attention to his more complex and important portfolio, which is health.

The Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios*, which was tabled in the Parliament last week, contains more disturbing news for the health sector.

Hon. D. G. Hadden — Not in Ballarat it doesn't. It is doing very well in Ballarat.

Hon. M. T. LUCKINS — I have been up to Ballarat and spoken with the local hospitals. They are not very happy with you at all in Ballarat.

According to the Auditor-General, the Southern Health care network is facing a massive negative working capital position, with a forecast net debt of \$35 million over assets. This accounts for a staggering 55.28 per cent of the total negative forecasts for the 12 hospitals that are all technically insolvent. That is an absolute disgrace. Under the heading 'Paying for a public health remedy', the *Age* editorial of 18 June states:

State Labor must accept responsibility for problems with Victoria's hospitals.

When health minister John Thwaites was health spokesman for the opposition, he was often critical of the state of Victoria's public hospitals, particularly the length of their waiting lists. In July 1998, when then Treasurer Alan Stockdale was defending his government's spending on health, Mr Thwaites said: 'Mr Stockdale has ignored all expert advice that what the hospitals really need is extra money'. Now that he is in government, however, Mr Thwaites is finding that hospital waiting lists remain stubbornly long.

Further on the editorial says:

Now Mr Thwaites is accusing the media of being overly critical. He challenged journalists to come up with a better health plan. 'You guys are all so smart about it ... seriously, come up with the ideas'.

But that's your job, minister.

The editorial ends by saying:

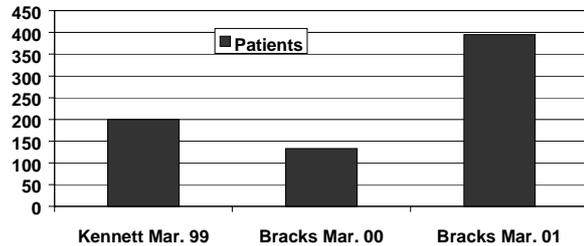
Labor has a responsibility to match its words when in opposition with action and remedy the problems in our public hospitals.

It is about time this government matched its rhetoric with action. It is about time the government admitted that it used scare tactics to dishonestly win the last election — and it won it by the skin of its teeth.

I seek permission to incorporate in *Hansard* some graphs relating to the Monash Medical Centre from the latest *Hospital Services Report*. I have provided copies to the government and sought permission from the President.

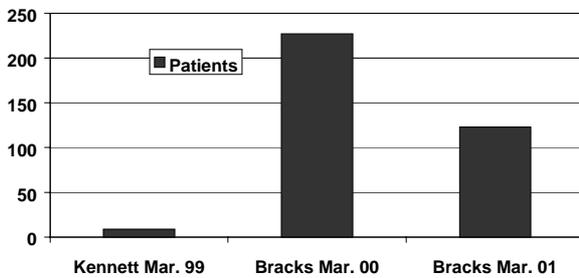
Leave granted; graphs as follows:

**Monash Hospital:
People on Waiting Lists Longer Than Ideal
(Semi-Urgent)**



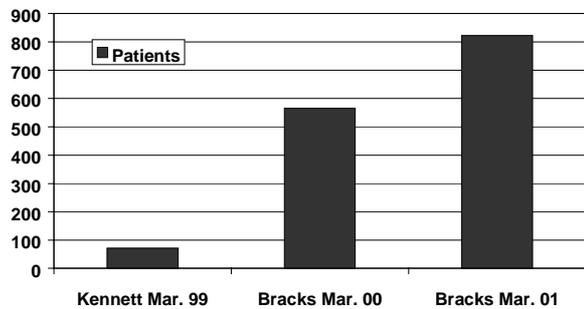
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Monash Hospital:
Emergency Department on Bypass**



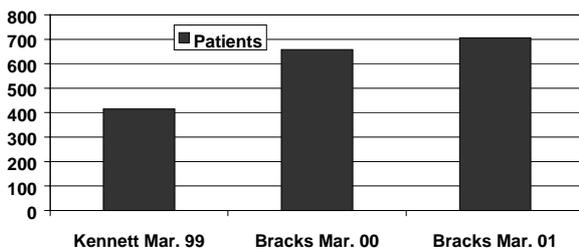
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

Ambulance Bypasses



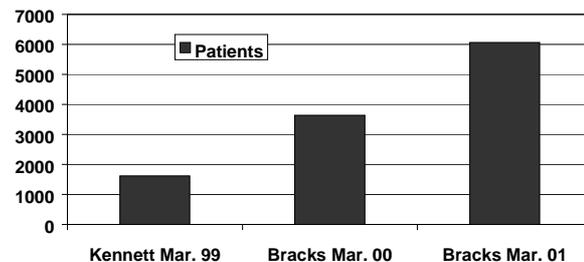
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Monash Hospital:
Greater than 12 hours in an Emergency
Department**



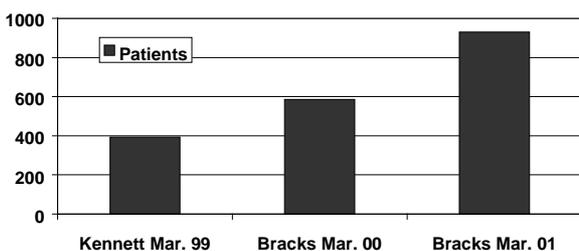
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Emergency Departments For Longer
than 12 Hours**



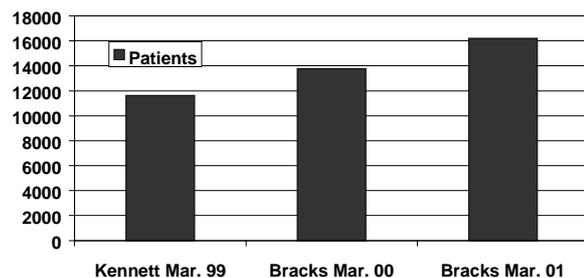
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**Monash Hospital:
People on Waiting Lists for Elective Surgery
(Semi-Urgent)**



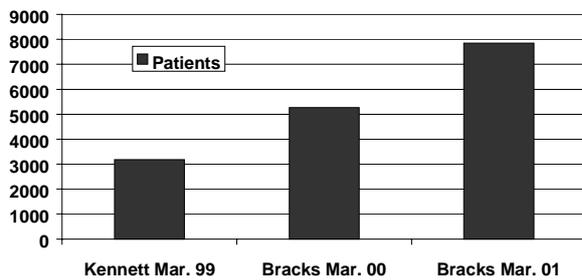
Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**People on Waiting Lists for Elective Surgery
(Semi-Urgent)**



Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

**People on Waiting Lists Longer Than Ideal
(Semi-Urgent)**



Reference: *Hospital Services Report March 2001*

Hon. M. T. LUCKINS — I shall touch on some serious concerns in my electorate. One is the Scoresby freeway. This house recently debated a motion about the Scoresby freeway. The fact is that this budget provides only \$2 million. This is after the federal coalition government has provided \$220 million. So what is that \$2 million for? A public transport consultancy!

Last week I had the privilege of moving a motion in this place about the state of preschools in Victoria. The government has clearly failed preschools by not providing any capital works money, by not providing increased pay and improved conditions for teachers, by not releasing the Kirby report, and by not assisting voluntary committees of management.

On 5 September last year and 16 May this year I raised in this Parliament concerns about the future of the School Focused Youth Service program. The Monash City Council has a contract with the government which is due to expire in September. It is very concerned about the future of the program. It has been informed now that its funding will be extended only as interim funding until the end of December and the project is being reassessed. The fact that this very important project was being reviewed was alluded to in last year's budget. It is about time the government did something about it.

The Freeza program was mentioned this morning during opposition business. The Minister for Youth Affairs has halved the funding for Freeza this year. An article in the *Waverley Gazette* of 5 June states:

Youth workers fear their youth music program, Freeza, is in danger of closing, despite assurances from the state government that its funding will continue.

Monash council youth project worker and Freeza coordinator Shlom Eshel is furious that funding for the statewide program, which was launched five years ago —

by the Kennett government, I might add —

was cut to \$1 million in the state budget.

'It's a shambles, absolutely ridiculous, that it hasn't continued. It's one of the most successful projects in Monash', Ms Eshel said.

So the government failed again.

The government has halved the number of counselling places for victims of crime. It has reduced by 19.6 per cent the funding for multicultural affairs in Victoria, and that unit is of great consequence in my electorate, where people from 140 nationalities reside.

Another hypocritical notion to conclude on is the fact that the Labor Party was so critical of the Kennett government about its reliance on gaming funding. The fact is that under this budget gaming tax revenue in Victoria is set to increase by \$100 million on last year's budget. This government is a disgrace. This is not a touchy-feely budget, as Labor members would have us believe. It is full of inconsistencies, does not back up rhetoric with action, and clearly demonstrates this is a government that is floundering and cannot possibly make any decisions. Some 300 consultancies are current at the moment, and after 20 months it is about time the government started taking responsibility for governing this state instead of just relying on consultants and on projects that were put in place by the previous government.

Labor was very lucky to win government with the assistance of the Independents, and it is also very fortunate to have inherited a massive surplus resulting from the former coalition government's fiscal management. I condemn the budget.

Hon. R. F. SMITH (Chelsea) — I support the appropriation bill. I do so on the basis that it is a good budget, as is clearly demonstrated by the fact that it delivers something in the order of a \$509 million surplus this financial year and a further \$500 million in each of the next two years. That puts to rest the lie or the myth, if you like, being put forward by the Liberals and the other conservatives in this house that the government is not able to manage the public purse strings. In fact, I would argue that it is very capable of managing the public funds of this state. In support of that view I shall quote an extract from an article in yesterday's *Australian Financial Review* headed 'Running the numbers: ALP v. Liberals,' which reviews Victoria's financial position over the past 25 years — 13 under ALP rule and 12 under coalition rule. It states:

... neither side emerges as a clear winner. In some areas the ALP delivers a superior outcome, on others it is the coalition.

Stock market investors have done very well with the ALP in office —

isn't that a shock? —

with the all ordinaries index registering more rapid increases compared with the period when the coalition has been in government.

I wonder what the opposition's supporters think of that. It continues:

Significantly, the Australian stock market expands at a faster rate than the US market when the ALP is in office, albeit by a small amount, while it significantly underperforms relative to the US market while the coalition is in power.

There is a bit of a surprise! It continues:

At the same time, the rate of economic expansion is significantly faster when the ALP is in power and this delivers growth in job creation at a pace double that of the coalition.

That suggests to me that a myth has been perpetrated by the coalition about its capacity to deliver good financial and fiscal policy as well as economic growth.

There is broad support in the community for the government's budget, including support from the business sector — much to the shock and horror of the conservatives. The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Australian Industry Group among others are actually giving the government a tick. It must really get up the noses of members opposite when people on their side, from their constituent base, actually tick Labor for financial responsibility.

This budget continues to deliver on Labor's 1999 election promises in that it increases spending in the areas that the public has demanded be funded. They are the social service areas like police, for which extra funding has been provided. I am sure the Honourable Cameron Boardman would appreciate that. In education a significant number of teachers are being recruited. I think the coalition sacked only about 8000 of them and closed 306 schools to demonstrate its bona fides in the area of education. In health the government is doing its utmost to entice as many nurses as possible back to the system by increasing their wages, improving their conditions and doing everything else it can to attract them. I think we have got about 1000 to date, but more are needed because there are still problems in health, and the government is working on them. The Scoresby freeway — —

Hon. D. G. Hadden — A federal matter.

Hon. R. F. SMITH — It is also an interesting matter for us, particularly in Chelsea Province. The Scoresby freeway will deliver significant benefits to the constituents of Chelsea Province and all the seats in the residential and industrial development areas. The conservatives opposite try to con the Victorian public into believing that they are funding the Scoresby freeway and it is the government's fault that it will not happen at the moment. How tricky and sneaky are they? We have a by-election called, and all of a sudden the little bloke in Canberra decides to offer Victoria \$220 million! It is a road of national importance and the state could legitimately expect 50 per cent — fifty-fifty is the norm — but the federal government offered 25 per cent. The federal government was being a little bit tricky — but do not tell anyone. It gave the state \$220 million and asked how much the government had. Put aside the fact that the state had purchased all the land necessary to provide for the freeway — —

Hon. B. C. Boardman — Over 30 years.

Hon. I. J. Cover — You're not going to tell us Bracksy bought all the land.

Hon. R. F. SMITH — I did not say that; I said 'the state'. I know your ears are not painted on, so I will say it again: the state provided those resources. Victoria has a legitimate expectation that the federal government will provide 50 per cent of the funding necessary to deliver the Scoresby freeway. What did it get? It was offered \$220 million. Why? Because the Aston by-election was called. The problem for the coalition is that the constituents of Aston are not silly; they know that the feds are trying to con them. The federal government says it will deliver the Scoresby freeway, but just this little section. The problem is that without the completion of the total Scoresby freeway that little section will end up being a car park, with cars going nowhere. A lot of water will go under the bridge before that deal is done, but I dare say that the Scoresby freeway will be built and the federal government will provide the funds Victoria is entitled to have. However, it will not be a coalition government but a Labor government that delivers it later this year.

The government clearly demonstrates in this budget its belief that Labor is about fairness and equity in our society, including fairer wealth distribution. I know this is terrible, but that is the way it goes, Ms Smith: Labor is about fair and equitable distribution of wealth in this state. How do we go about it? One of the things the government tried to do was deliver a fair industrial system for those people who were being cruelly left behind by the conservatives. I have an idea why they did it. Some 260 000 workers in this country — funnily

enough, they all reside in Victoria — do not have access to the federal awards that protect workers and give them and their families reasonable pay and conditions. Why are only workers in Victoria affected? Could it be that members opposite were looking after their mates? I suppose it is simple accountancy: the less their mates have to pay their workers, the more profits they generate for themselves, and of course the more support members opposite have. I suppose one could argue that the opposition is looking after its constituent base, but how cruel that is. It is absolutely disgraceful that 260 000 people are exposed as they are.

One Saturday afternoon Mr Boardman, the other honourable member for Chelsea Province, and I attended a meeting in Springvale and listened to people talking about how they were being exposed. They were piece workers in the rag trade and Vietnamese one and all. Did he listen? No. He came in here and voted against the bill. He did not want them getting a fair chop, even though he had heard those people tell their stories. Mr Boardman refused to listen and supported their employers. What a disgrace!

The very things we hear consistently from the conservative side of politics guarantee that unions will continue to exist. Labor parties, along with their unions, will exist far beyond the conservative parties. Labor has been around for 100-odd years; the Liberals have had more names than I have had hot breakfasts. The Labor Party and the unions will be here long after the Liberals are gone. Every time an employer or a conservative government attempts to disadvantage working people they fight, and honourable members opposite hate it — they squeal. It does not matter that the conservatives literally turned the dogs loose on members of the Maritime Union of Australia.

Hon. B. C. Boardman — Who let the dogs out?

Hon. R. F. SMITH — Good question, and we have the answer: the former federal Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, Peter Reith, at the insistence of John Howard. If members think I am exaggerating, they should cast their minds back to that day in federal Parliament when the Prime Minister was asked why the workers in Townsville were sacked despite having world best practice on the wharves and a lack of industrial disputation? Why were those workers at Ridsden wharf in Hobart sacked despite the fact that they had world best turnaround times for shipping and no industrial disputation? He gave the disgraceful answer, 'They were sacked because they were members of that union.' How fair is that? How Australian is that? I think not!

The Prime Minister will be condemned for many years to come, and that is not to mention what is coming to Reith at the next federal election. How ironic that a member of that very union will do him over. There is a God after all!

Hon. P. A. Katsambanis — Coming from an atheist!

Hon. R. F. SMITH — I beg your pardon! I have a strong view. I have expressed it in this house before and I do so again tonight. Unions have a significant role to play in this country, both democratically and industrially. They lift the floor. By that I mean they lift the living standards of ordinary people and as a consequence drive up the living standards of everyone else, including non-union people. Those people like to think their increased pay packets come from somewhere else, but they have a relativity to blue-collar workers and automatically get a pay rise, just as electorate officers will get a pay rise at some stage riding on the backs of union members. All the electorate officers of members opposite will pick it up gleefully, but they will not mention that it came from the union's pursuit of improved working conditions.

I have talked about the unions and what they have done and delivered for working people in this country. I have talked about the big ticket items such as the 38-hour week, the 40-hour week, long service leave, sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave and leave loading. The electorate officers are getting back their entitlement to leave loading because the union has pursued it. All those things have been delivered by unions

In the early 1980s the manufacturing industry was in the doldrums and generated about 8 per cent of all the wealth in the country. Its exports were minimal but imports were overwhelming. The union movement embarked on a strategy it called Australia Reconstructed, under which it reviewed all awards and did what was necessary to make the industry competitive. It succeeded in most of that to the point where now a huge amount of wealth has been created from manufactured goods, particularly exported manufactured goods. Some people in the union movement will disagree with that — in fact some are running a campaign against it now — but they are ignoring the fact that the manufacturing industry has significantly increased its exports of high-quality manufactured goods.

Without question Australian unions have performed at world best practice. No other unions in developed countries have delivered to working people to the extent that the unions have in this country. That is

something we should all be proud of and grateful for. Every one of us benefits from the increased living standards that are achieved by unions. I have to say that on the odd occasion there have been problems in the union movement, particularly with some unions — —

Hon. I. J. Cover — Like Johnson Tiles this week!

Hon. R. F. SMITH — Mr Cover refers to Johnson Tiles Pty Ltd, where it is said that some members of the union ran amok and perpetrated assaults.

Hon. I. J. Cover — They caused \$100 000 damage.

Hon. R. F. SMITH — Some say it was \$300 000. I absolutely unequivocally condemn it. The union movement does not support that sort of activity. However, let me say that it is irresponsible to say they were members of the union or members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, because it is not clear as yet whether they were members of the union. Until that is proven union members are entitled to the benefit of the doubt and a presumption of innocence. If it is proved that the people concerned were members of a particular union and individuals are charged, those individuals should face the full weight of the law in exactly the same way as I would demand that those people who broke down the doors of Parliament House in Canberra should face the full weight of the law. They were not faced with that, and the opposition parties were in power federally so I want to know why not.

Hon. M. A. Birrell interjected.

Hon. R. F. SMITH — What goes around comes around. The Labor Party does not condone thuggery in any way, shape or form. It condemns it. Let's face it, they could have been agents provocateurs. It would not be the first time employers have sent thugs in and blamed unions for it.

What is the difference between that and the way some people perform on the job? What is the difference between those responsible for that and the executives of One.Tel, who have destroyed that company and all the jobs in it. Who is worse? What about the president of National Textiles, the Prime Minister's brother? No, the opposition does not want to talk about that because it is too close to the bone. What about the banks ripping off all and sundry, particularly the elderly! Who is worse? That is a good question, and maybe we should debate that on another occasion, perhaps during the next sessional period.

The budget shows once and for all that the Bracks Labor government has demonstrated and will continue

to demonstrate financial responsibility and deliver to and for all Victorians.

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — I also contribute to the budget debate, although on hearing the previous speaker I was not sure whether I was following in the budget debate, given that many of the issues canvassed by him had little reference to the budget or the electorate he represents. We heard nothing of that area or what the budget may have done for it. Far be it for me to comment on that particular electorate, which is ably represented by the Honourable Cameron Boardman on this side of the house. At least his contribution, which I was pleased to be in the house to hear, related to issues directly pertaining to that electorate and in particular to the Frankston Hospital.

I am aware of time constraints placed on the debate this evening, but I am keen to take the opportunity to look at some of the matters in the budget relating to the portfolio responsibilities that I have in the Liberal Party for sport, recreation and youth. Many of those areas were canvassed earlier today during opposition business, in particular with respect to youth. I do not wish to waste any more of the time of the house in discussing the reference to the Freeza program in the budget, which has had a disappointing budget cut from \$2 million to \$1 million in the year ahead.

I shall spend some time talking about the electorate I represent, Geelong Province. Earlier this evening the other honourable member for Geelong Province referred to how the budget relates to Geelong Province. I share her delight at the Gordon Institute of TAFE, an educational institute that I attended, receiving some \$16 million in recent weeks in a post-budget announcement. The honourable member said that in attending that announcement by the responsible minister she had her hand shaken by many people who thanked her for the contribution.

It is worth noting that in the previous seven years under the Kennett government some \$50 million was spent on the same institute, which was headed by \$23 million for the manufacturing centre in east Geelong. I can recall attending the opening of the manufacturing centre by the former Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, Phil Honeywood. I think people who were delighted to see that money being poured into that educational institution shook his hand and mine and those of other members in the Geelong area. Such support for the Gordon Institute of TAFE is not new or unique to this budget. It is important to acknowledge that it had been done before.

It is also important to recognise and acknowledge that there was mention of \$15 million for flood alleviation work on the Geelong Road upgrade, which is currently taking place. Clearly it was because of time constraints placed on honourable members that the other honourable member for Geelong Province forgot to mention that the Geelong Road upgrade commenced with the support of the previous Kennett government. I am happy to show her the line items in the previous budget where \$118.5 million was allocated for the upgrade, which was matched by the federal government. We should welcome the \$15 million for flood alleviation work and acknowledge that \$118 million was committed by the previous government to the Geelong Road upgrade, which will be of great benefit to Geelong people and all Victorians who travel to and from the city and the region that I am proud to represent.

The next challenge for the government will be to provide for future road infrastructure in and around Geelong. As traffic volumes to Geelong increase with the upgrade of Geelong Road, further works and associated road projects will be needed. Currently a proposal to build a ring-road is being examined. It is high on the agenda of the people of Geelong, given the obvious future needs in Geelong. Studies are being carried out on both the western and eastern ring-road proposals. I am disappointed that the budget does not contain some allocation for a serious eastern ring-road study. Such a proposal has the ability to provide economic and social benefits to Geelong.

Beyond Geelong is the Geelong–Colac road duplication, which was a commitment of the Kennett government prior to the last election. There is no mention of that in the latest Bracks government budget. I urge the government to examine and revisit what was a good proposal.

When talking about transport infrastructure for Geelong, the ALP candidate for South Barwon at the 1999 election strongly supported the construction of the Grovedale railway station. That has been a subject much talked about in Geelong and both sides of politics support it. However, no mention has been made of it in the budget. I understand a report has been prepared into the construction of the Grovedale railway station. I look forward to some progress on that proposal; that progress could start with the report being released by the government.

Mention was made earlier by the Honourable Elaine Carbines about building an ambulance station in South Barwon. That is welcomed, but at the same time there is no indication from the government as to its location.

A further challenge for the government is to see that a location is announced to best suit the needs of people in the area.

I also refer to the earlier mention in the debate of the purchase of land and the proposed construction of a 24-hour police station at Ocean Grove. It is imperative that the government ensure that any 24-hour police station is fully resourced, and that in such resourcing the police stations at Portarlington, Queenscliff and Drysdale remain open. Some people fear that those three stations will close so the resources can be made available for the 24-hour police station. As I said, the challenge is for the government to see that the 24-hour police station is fully resourced and that the other stations remain open.

The house also heard about the \$1.5 million allocated for the North Bellarine connection to natural gas. The other member for Geelong Province described it as a great happiness to attend that announcement with the Treasurer. At the same time it was a great sadness for me to read a report of the visit by the Treasurer in the Bellarine *Echo*. Apparently the Treasurer was approached about providing the same sort of support for the extension of natural gas supplies to Barwon Heads. He was reported as having said he had never heard of the project.

Hon. E. C. Carbines — He didn't say that.

Hon. I. J. COVER — He said it! I can show the Honourable Elaine Carbines the quotation on the front of the Bellarine *Echo*; I have previously quoted it in the house. If the Treasurer does not know about it now, I urge the other member for Geelong Province to approach him and have him dig deep in the vast reserves of the government to see that Barwon Heads is connected to natural gas in the same way as North Bellarine.

Mention was made earlier of the \$1 million allocation in the budget for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre. That is welcome. It is a great facility and presents great programs. It is well patronised and supported. At the same time it should be noted, as I have mentioned with the upgrades over many years of the Gordon Institute of TAFE and the Geelong Road, that the Geelong Performing Arts Centre benefited during the term of office of the Kennett government to the tune of \$2 million from the Community Support Fund. It is all very well for Mrs Carbines to grin as though they are not the facts — —

Hon. E. C. Carbines — Two million dollars over seven years!

Hon. I. J. COVER — You talk as though no money had been given to the Geelong Performing Arts Centre. I remind you that it was established by the Hamer government. In other words, the initial commitment for the centre was made by a Liberal government and a further \$2 million came from the Kennett government. Don't you come in here saying that nothing was spent in Geelong by the Kennett government!

The ACTING PRESIDENT
(**Hon. Jenny Mikakos**) — Order! Mr Cover should address the Chair.

Hon. I. J. COVER — Nineteen million dollars has been allocated to the Grace McKellar Centre in Geelong. The ugly spectre of its privatisation was constantly raised by the then opposition, now unfortunately the government. It may be worth noting that the previous government had committed to a \$57 million redevelopment program for the Grace McKellar Centre, which included tendering out some of the beds at the centre to institutions such as the Uniting Church, which has a great record in running such facilities and aged care activities. Yet it is patently clear that the Labor government talks about privatisation as though it is something bad, nasty or ugly.

Hon. E. C. Carbines interjected.

Hon. I. J. COVER — I am telling you that the Uniting Church has done a fine job for many years, and it would have done a fine job had it been given the opportunity. Stop peddling the bit about privatisation being bad for the Grace McKellar Centre! Your \$19 million for it constitutes only one-third of what should have been committed to the Grace McKellar Centre over the next three years.

In conclusion, the house heard from the other member for Geelong Province about matters that she quoted from the *Geelong Advertiser* following the announcement of the budget. I balance that contribution by quoting from the *Geelong Advertiser* of 16 May — the day immediately following the handing down of the budget. The front page carried the headline, 'There's little joy for Geelong region in state budget'. Among other things, a report by Denis Craven states:

However, the Geelong region — where the seat of Geelong, held by Labor's Ian Trezise by just 16 votes, is the state's most marginal — fared poorly in handouts.

It went on to say:

The budget allocated an additional \$470 million for fast rail links between Melbourne and key regional centres of Ballarat, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley, on top of the \$80 million allocated in last year's budget.

However, Geelong people are waiting to be told how and when the money will be spent on the line to Melbourne.

So we will wait and see what happens there, but I am not holding my breath. The article further says in relation to projects in Geelong:

... if Geelong people thought they would hear good news about the Guggenheim museum bid, a multicultural and educational centre at the D. W. Hope Centre, North Geelong, and the upgrading of the Barwon River rowing course they were disappointed.

And I think 'disappointed' is a word that clearly should be applied to this budget.

Hon. E. C. Carbines — What about schools?

Hon. I. J. COVER — I take up the interjection. Yes, there are some capital works for schools applied in the budget for the Geelong region, but again I might point out this is not something that has not happened in the past. During the seven years of the Kennett government Geelong schools, both primary and secondary, benefited through capital works to the tune of \$40 million. So I welcome the fact that the Bracks government is continuing to support schools in Geelong with its capital works program. Again, don't make out as if there was nothing spent before. I have just said \$40 million was spent over seven years without taking into account maintenance works. Those were capital works, including the Torquay Primary School, which is under construction and will be open soon. It is a brand-new primary school, and no doubt Labor members will come down, and I dare say we will see the other honourable member taking part in the opening and claiming all the credit for something that was started by the previous government. Interestingly enough — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. I. J. COVER — I have just welcomed the Bracks government spending money in Geelong on schools, and the honourable member for Geelong Province says I am talking a load of rubbish. Perhaps I should not have welcomed it.

Hon. E. C. Carbines interjected.

Hon. I. J. COVER — I might say it is interesting that in the South Barwon electorate no money has been allocated in the budget to major capital works projects; that will be because the Torquay Primary School was under construction already. But in the other place when my colleague from South Barwon, Alister Paterson, mentioned the fact that no money had been allocated for school capital works in South Barwon, the Minister

for Education interjected to say, ‘Well, it is now someone else’s turn’. There is a fair indication of the way this government does business. ‘It’s someone else’s turn now’. Forget about treating projects on their merits. It is someone else’s turn.

Hon. E. C. Carbines interjected.

Hon. I. J. COVER — Thank you. I did mention that the *Geelong Advertiser* had made certain observations about the budget. So, too, did the *Australian Financial Review*, which also described the Bracks government’s second budget as a disappointing document in an editorial — again on 16 May. It said that the budget reflects ‘a disappointing lack of fiscal discipline from this new Labor government’. I return to the *Geelong Advertiser*. On 22 May, a week after the budget had been handed down — —

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, Madam Acting President, it would be useful if a minister could come into the chamber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT
(**Hon. Jenny Mikakos**) — Order! There is no point of order.

Hon. Bill Forwood — I beg your pardon. There is a point of order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT
(**Hon. Jenny Mikakos**) — Order! There is now a minister in the chamber. On the point of order, there is a requirement that a minister be present. A minister is present in the chamber and Mr Cover can continue.

Hon. I. J. COVER — Thank you, Madam Acting President. Let the record show that following Mr Forwood’s point of order, a minister did enter the chamber.

I conclude by referring to an article in the *Geelong Advertiser* by Noel Murphy on 22 May, a week after the budget and after the same newspaper had recorded that the budget contained little joy for Geelong. That, of course, sent the ALP into a spin, both centrally and locally, and it published letters from the honourable member for Geelong North and one from the Treasurer to shore up its position. But Noel Murphy was not intimidated by that approach. He wrote on 22 May that the budget had some concerns underlying it, particularly in terms of whether or not the Bracks government was providing sound financial management in Victoria. He said:

... Treasurer John Brumby evidently went considerably further than the more astute finance observers appear to consider wise.

How? By hauling the government’s finances from a cash surplus of \$1.2 billion this financial year to a deficit of \$22 million in 2001–02 and a projected deficit of \$300 million the following year.

So much for the sound financial management that Bracks and co. wanted to claim.

...

... but how might Victorians expect them —

these deficit projections —

to be financed?

Noel Murphy observes:

Regrettably, Labor’s record suggests only one way — on the never-never.

Rest assured, it will try to make a social virtue sending the budget further into deficit — the line will be that a deficit can be carried by a strong economy.

But the question is for how long, if you want Victoria’s credit rating to stay high and for its competitiveness to stay ahead of other states.

The answer is simple — not long.

He concludes by saying that the government’s position is not as buoyant:

... as Spring Street would have us believe or as prudent.

He goes on:

It’s hardly surprising then, that criticism of the budget’s failure to provide infrastructure more geared to economic development for this region —

being Geelong —

might strike a nerve among local Labor MPs.

He says that business has to be encouraged and revenue has to be created. The only way that that can be done is through improving the economic strengths of the state. Noel Murphy says:

Labor, it seems, still hasn’t learnt that the best way to provide social justice is through economic justice.

It is my contention that this budget delivers economic justice neither for Victoria nor for Geelong.

Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) — In speaking on the budget papers and the appropriation bill, I will provide a bit of history. I go back to the time of George Higinbotham, after whom my province is named. George Higinbotham lost the seat of Brighton to Thomas Bent. It is interesting that someone like Thomas Bent, who was at that stage only the local rate collector, could displace one of the Victoria’s premier statesmen.

One of the key reasons given for Higinbotham's demise was that unlike Thomas Bent he tended to concentrate more on global issues and less on pork-barrelling in his own electorate. I believe my electorate — not as a result of any pork-barrelling I have done — has done quite well in the budget, which allows me to take the George Higinbotham route and talk about more global issues.

Firstly, I turn to an issue that the Honourable Mark Birrell raised when talking about the proposed World Heritage listing for the Royal Exhibition Building. Some derogatory comments were made by him and by other speakers about the additions made to the building throughout the many decades of its history — in particular, the glass mirror annexes.

I have an interest in and a need to say something about that, if only to defend my father-in-law, who did some of the work. It so happens that my father-in-law was the architect who, at the direction of the then exhibition trustees, was involved in maintaining the exhibition building as a useful premises for exhibitions over the years. Although some people may be critical, and I admit some of the additions were not in keeping with the style of the main building, one must remember that very few old buildings survive through time.

When a new building is created it has a particular function. Over time that function may not last or the building may not perform the function for which it was designed as well as it once did because of changes in technology or people's lifestyles. Many buildings experience midlife crises where they are no longer relevant, and some are consequently demolished. As a result, a great deal of history is lost.

One can look around our suburbs and note the number of Victorian terrace houses and Edwardian houses that were out of fashion 40 or 50 years ago but are now treasured and looked after. These buildings had midlife crises which they had to survive so they could go on and be the gems they are. I believe the work that was done on the Royal Exhibition Building over many years kept it relevant and useful and let it live through its midlife crisis so that it could be saved and become the wonderful building it again is. One cannot afford to be too demeaning of what is done to keep buildings going.

I turn to look at some of the issues raised in the budget, and in particular to examine its philosophy and where it is leading us. This is clearly a public relations budget. It looks good and it is full of good-sounding, promotional-type slogans, but the question to be asked is whether it advances the state. Does it set Victoria up for the future? Does it make the state more competitive

in the world in which we live? Does it protect and build a future for Victoria and Victorian enterprises? Does it do the hard yards, or does it just look good for the day? I believe it just looks good for the day, because it has been able to use up all the fat that was left to it by the previous Kennett government.

The budget also looks good because it always talks about what will happen — and for a while we can all talk about that. We all remember that when the government was elected one of its pledges was to provide \$500 million in tax cuts to business through the budget. What has happened since? We are now two years into this government's term yet this budget has only \$100 million in business tax cuts. However, even that is a fraud, because a half to two-thirds of that has been clawed back by changes in the definitions of business expenditure. Many of those savings are over the horizon: we are told that they are coming and that therefore we must just be patient. There is talk about reaching the nirvanas of the future, but there is very little in the way of things presented today.

In the short time available I will deal with two of the major line items in the budget, which are education and health. I will put into context where Victoria stands in those two areas by separating the rhetoric and the public relations surrounding the budget from the actuality.

I turn to the Auditor-General's June *Report on Ministerial Portfolios*. On the subject of education he states:

The Office of Schools has identified 590 schools (36 per cent) requiring transition funding, that is, actual salary costs are forecast to be greater than the funding allocation ...

That looks as though it will cost something like \$28 million in the 2001 school year. Let us say to ourselves, 'Okay, the Auditor-General has identified a shortfall there. That is real, and we have no reason not to believe him. Let us look at the budget to see what it says'. You would think the budget should show an increase in expenditure in that area. What does it show? If we turn to page 218 of budget paper 2 for 2000–01 we see that under the heading 'Note 10: Total expenses from ordinary activities by department' the figures for the Department of Education, Employment and Training show a reduction from the 2000–01 budget to the 2001–02 estimate of \$31 million. Isn't that amazing! The estimate for the next year, 2002–03, is for a huge spending increase of \$15 million on a base of over \$6 billion. The estimate for the following year — 2003–04, the third year out — shows a reduction of \$20 million on a base of \$6 billion. Over the three-year period the budget shows an estimated net decrease of

\$36 million on a \$6 billion base in a portfolio that the Auditor-General has already identified as having a shortfall in spending.

Budget paper 3 of 2001–02 contains some fascinating information. If we look at some of the performance measures for school education on page 22, we see reference to parent satisfaction with primary schooling on a 100-point scale. That performance measure shows that there has been no increase at all in parent satisfaction, either actual or projected. That is no wonder, given that according to the budget funds are being reduced. The performance measure for the morale of primary school teachers is stuck at about 75 per cent. Clearly the government is not anticipating any changes among primary school parents or teachers.

The same things applies to the performance measures for secondary schools. The 2000–01 target for parent satisfaction was 75 per cent and the 2001–02 expected outcome is 71 per cent. The government is admitting that parent satisfaction with secondary schooling is projected to fall by 4 per cent. The target for the following year is again lifted to 75 per cent.

The performance measure of the morale of secondary school teachers is even worse. It fell from a 2000–01 target of 58 per cent to an expected outcome of 57 per cent. The target for the following year is 58 per cent, which is pretty abysmal but not surprising, when you think of where the money is going.

I turn to some of the other smoke-and-mirrors items. Page 23 of budget paper 3 contains the quantity performance measure of senior secondary education student participation in vocational education programs. The budget projects that the number of students participating will increase from 18 000 in 2000–01 to 24 000 in 2001–02 — in other words, a one-third increase. Over the page the budget paper also projects a one-third increase in student contact hours in vocational education training. However, when we look down the table at how much money is being spent, we see a 1.8 per cent increase in expenditure. The budget obviously estimates enormous productivity gains throughout education. One could understand the scepticism of both parents and teachers about that, given the performance measures.

The performance measures for tertiary education and training appear on page 29 of budget paper 3. They are another example of smoke and mirrors, of the way the budget is built on propaganda rather than actuals and of how the good times are always coming but never arrive. Annual government-funded enrolments in technical and further education are estimated to increase by

something like 3.3 per cent, with an estimated decrease in government-funded student hours of 6.4 per cent. The government is saying it will put 3.2 per cent more students through the system while providing 6 per cent fewer contact hours. The government will get away with spending less money because teachers will spend significantly less time in contact with their students.

More of the same sort of thing appears under ‘Adult and community education places and community support’ on page 30. That shows module enrolments falling by 5.7 per cent and government-funded contact hours falling by 18 per cent. Once again the government has budgeted for significant reductions in contact hours for students. That can hardly give confidence to parents. It might give confidence to teachers, but you would not think so when you look at the performance measure of their morale. The reductions in contact hours are obviously serious.

When we look at hospitals in Human Services, what do we find? To put it in context, the Auditor-General states on page 5 of the June 2001 *Report on Ministerial Portfolios*:

There are 12 hospitals which, based on hospitals subject to our analysis, are expected to be operating under financial difficulties.

The report states further:

Sustainable financial structures need to be in place to reward innovation and cost effectiveness if this ongoing issue is to be placed on a sounder footing in the future.

So what happens when we look at the budget? Again I turn to budget paper 2 for 2000–01. What do we find in human services? On page 218 we find an increase in projected expenditure. The base is about \$7.2 billion and there is an increase of \$82 million. In the following year, 2002–03, there is an increase of \$63 million, once again on a base of \$7.3 billion, which is something like a 0.8 per cent increase in expenditure. The following year we find a 0.012 per cent increase in expenditure. So once again in those two areas, which are major line items of the budget for the main service delivery areas, the budget shows either a reduction in expenditure or absolutely pitiful increases.

Page 57 of budget paper 3 for 2001–02, which in the acute health services output area, mentions increasing throughput in separations from 2001 to 2002 by only 2.5 per cent and on a weighted inlier equivalent separations, or WEIS, scale it is 2.8 per cent. When one looks at the huge increases in hospital demand, again one can quite easily see that that is underestimated very considerably.

In summary, when you look at the detail you are left to ask: what is really being delivered? When you look at the detail as I have in those two major line items, you see the increases are pitiful, virtually zero. When you look at the output measures, you see why there is great dissatisfaction in the education area and that the increases in throughput in the hospital area are fundamentally unrealistic.

In one way, from the point of view of those on this side of the house, you could well say this is a terrific budget because, frankly, it will not live up to the rhetoric and the government will be shown to comprise hollow people who are great at turning out the spin and the propaganda but who fail to deliver. Unfortunately, as always, the state and the people of Victoria will suffer.

This budget, as I have shown by considering some of the key indicators, is doomed to disappoint and fail. Alternatively it can be guaranteed to blow out, because on the figures presented there is no way it can meet what it sets out to achieve. That is unfortunate. The over-the-horizon tax cuts that we hear so much about will no doubt not appear because the budget will blow out and they will be lost.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — It is a pleasure to speak briefly on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. Tonight I shall touch on three items. The first is the beginning of the contribution by Mr Theophanous, who returned to the issue raised by my colleague Mr Hallam on a number of occasions — that is, the language used by the government as part of the budget speech and also in the budget papers.

I gave Mr Theophanous considerable marks for his performance tonight. He came in here under difficult circumstances and he genuinely attempted to respond to the issues raised by Mr Hallam. He was given a script and told to read it, which he did very well. I am happy to give him high marks for his performance but not much for content — but he did not control the content.

One thing that is absolutely certain is that the words contained on page 2 of *Daily Hansard* of 19 June state:

... state government net debt ... will decline ... to \$2.5 billion by June 2005.

As long as the English language is what it is those words will always contrast with:

... state government net debt ... is projected to fall ... to \$3.5 billion as at June 2005.

At the end of the day, no matter what weasel words come out of Treasury in the attempt to obfuscate what happened and to apologise, the words will stand forever

in *Hansard* and the budget papers. One document states:

... state government net debt ... \$3.5 billion as at June 2005.

And the other document states:

... state government net debt ... \$2.5 billion by June 2005.

And there is no explaining it away, despite the valiant attempts of Mr Theophanous.

The second issue I turn to goes to policing in this state, in particular in the City of Banyule, which is part of the electorate I have the honour to represent. In the local newspaper of 8 May an article headed 'Move for police shopfront in Greensborough' mentions the mayor, Cr Colin Brooks, who represents Bakewell ward, saying about Greensborough that:

... he hoped his fellow councillors would back his idea to increase the police presence in the area.

He wants to establish a shopfront proposal in Main Street and goes on about his idea to do this. He is, of course, the mayor of the city. Later he says that this would require the backing of councillors and various other people. He goes on to say:

Although policing is not primarily a council responsibility, it is important that we assist police in strengthening their presence —

in the local government area. Cr Brooks is reported as having said that he:

... had written to the new police chief commissioner, Christine Nixon, and police minister, André Haermeyer, seeking their views on the proposal.

Given that the mayor is pushing this so hard, it is not surprising to find in the budget papers that for the City of Banyule, although not recommended by the officers of the council, there is an unlisted amount of \$90 000 that is coming not out of general revenue but out of the cash reserves, as shown in the 'Banyule City Council new works and services budget 2001–02' under the heading 'Community services'. It shows \$90 000 coming out of the cash reserves for a police shopfront in Greensborough.

The Banyule council is an interesting one. Three of its councillors are also staffers for Labor Party members of Parliament. Dean Sherriff works for George Seitz; the last mayor, Dale Peters, works for the police minister, André Haermeyer; and — would you believe it? — the current mayor, Colin Brooks, also works for the police minister. This is the man who has taken \$90 000 from the cash reserves of the City of Banyule to establish a police shopfront in his ward. This is the man who said

he had written to the police minister. He must have hand delivered the letter. Or perhaps he is the guy who is writing the response!

It is extraordinary that in this day and age somebody like Cr Brooks can use his position as mayor to help out his friend and employer, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, by raiding the cash reserves of the City of Banyule to come up with \$90 000 this year. We do not know whether the \$90 000 will be an ongoing amount that they will take out year after year.

I say to Cr Brooks, to his colleague from the Honourable André Haermeyer's office, Dale Peters, and to the member of Mr Seitz's staff that on 25 June they will have the opportunity to do the right thing by the people of Banyule. They will have the opportunity to fix the budget, because it is just the draft budget. I suggest strongly that they take a long, hard look at themselves about raiding the reserves of the council for such purposes. I intend to pursue this matter. It is an absolute outrage that the police minister's staff can disregard the normal ways of getting policing into their local government patches and raid the council coffers. If they want policing in Greensborough they ought to go to the police minister — after all, they work in the same office.

The third issue I raise goes to the matter of the constitutional commission, which is shown on page 269 of budget paper 2. There is no money this year for the constitutional commission, but there will be \$1.6 million for the coming year 2001–02, and \$400 000 for the following year. As we know, the constitutional commission has been appointed by the Premier. As I recollect, the Premier announced the constitutional commission on 19 March. If you go to the parliamentary library's home page you will find a web site that leads you to the constitutional commission web site; I recommend honourable members visit it. It contains some interesting things — for example, you will find questions and answers, funded out of the \$2 million that has been allocated in this budget, I presume. There are three questions on the site. You can click on questions to see the responses. The first question is:

I have been told that the Victorian constitution before 1975 was an act of the United Kingdom Parliament, is this true?

The answer is:

Yes. Up until the passage of the Constitution Act ...

The second question is:

In the United States there is a bill of rights. Could the Victorian Parliament enact something similar?

The answer is:

There appears to be nothing in the Victorian constitution that would prevent the Parliament from enacting a bill of rights, if such a bill was considered right or necessary.

That was from Richard Wright, who was the head of the Residential Tenancies Tribunal in the old days. The third question Mr Wright put up is:

Apart from the chairman, who is a former judge, what qualifications do the commission members have that particularly recommend them for this work?

The answer is:

The chair of the constitutional commission is the Hon. George Hampel, QC, a former judge of the Victorian Supreme Court. The two other members, the Hon. Ian Macphee, AO, and the Hon. Alan Hunt, AM, are both lawyers, former parliamentarians and senior government ministers.

Mr Macphee and Mr Hunt bring an unparalleled depth of skill and parliamentary experience to the commission's task, as set out in the terms of reference.

I do not know much about Mr Hampel and his background, or about Mr Macphee, although I know he was a Liberal member of federal Parliament. I hope they bring an independence to the commission that will enable them to take and weigh up the evidence wisely. I think there is a great fear in the community that it is not an independent or open constitutional commission but in fact a commission that has — absolutely — an agenda that is marching to the Labor Party tune.

I recollect the Labor Party's response to the Independents charter, in which said the Premier said:

I commit a Bracks Labor government to:

...

Adopting a proportional representation system.

In the same document he also said he would:

Actively campaign for the introduction of proportional representation in the upper house until such time as it is achieved.

In the same document he said that he would structure a constitutional commission so that this work could take place. I do not think too many people from the Labor Party historically or today would deny the fact that they are hell-bent on an agenda to bring in proportional representation. On 19 March they established a commission designed to achieve that end.

I turn to the people who have been appointed to the commission, in particular Mr Hunt. I note that well before 19 March, when the Premier announced the

constitutional commission, there was an inspired leak in the *Age* of 21 December 2000 headed 'Bracks seeks Liberals to head inquiry'. The article stated that Mr Alan Hunt, a former local government minister, had been approached to sit on the constitutional commission and see where it went. What sort of person is the Alan Hunt who has been appointed to this commission by the Bracks Labor government? As many honourable members know, Alan Hunt spend 31 years as a Liberal member of this house. In July 1961 he was elected as the honourable member for South Eastern Province and served in this place until October 1992. I understand by his own claim that he is the only person who has been the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition and the President in this place. Thirty-one years is a long time.

In mid-1991 he was beaten for preselection by the Honourable Ron Bowden. Sometimes people do not know when to leave. That is an interesting way to finish one's career, particularly for someone who has claimed to have been the Deputy Leader of the Government and the Leader of the Government.

Hon. G. R. Craige — Be fair dinkum! Is that all you have to say? Come on, you started it, you might as well finish it. If you don't, I will!

Hon. Philip Davis — Don't pull any punches, Bill.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — What sort of person is Mr Hunt? Some people have said he has an over-inflated sense of his own importance. Others, of course, remember him as the person who moved the spill motion against the then Leader of the Opposition in 1986. So successful was that attempt that it was lost and he lost his position as Leader of the Opposition in this place. Many honourable members will recollect the speech he gave at state council in early 1988 when he apologised for his lack of judgment in moving that spill motion. Perhaps that was an indication that sometimes his judgment is not always entirely appropriate.

An article in the *Sunday Herald Sun* of 2 June 1991 headed 'Truths life has taught me' reports on Mr Hunt and lists 10 lessons he learnt in politics. Under the subheadings 'Player in a tough game' and 'Prominent Australians share their wisdom gleaned from the lessons of life', it states:

6. Honesty isn't just the best policy: it's the only policy. Honesty and integrity in your words, in your dealings and in your intentions. A single lapse could undo all your good work and destroy the good reputation you have painstakingly built.

Many people would agree with Mr Hunt's words. The same article continues:

7. There is no such thing as a free lunch. If you are not prepared to return the favour, don't accept it in the first place.

It is interesting that he accepted the position on the constitutional commission. I finish with lesson 10:

Jealously guard your reputation for integrity, professionalism and loyalty. Doing so will help you avoid pitfalls.

Is this the person who has brought to the constitutional commission honesty, openness and integrity? Is this the person who comes to the constitutional commission with clean hands? This is a man with a long and involved history in the Liberal Party, and after more than 30 years he says he jealously guards his reputation for integrity, professionalism, loyalty, et cetera.

Many honourable members will remember that on 26 November 1999 the government introduced a proportional representation bill into the other place. Honourable members know that the Liberal opposition set about thinking how it would react to that and put in place a small committee that sought advice from people left, right and centre. One of the people opposition members thought we would have a chat with was this person who had spent 31 years in the Liberal Party and had been the President, Leader of the Government and Leader of the Opposition in this place. Some of my colleagues — not me — rang him and met with him. He provided them with some information about his views on this issue.

I will share with honourable members a few words from his views under the heading 'Proportional representation proposal, Alan Hunt, 31 December 1999'. He worked over Christmas and met with some people from the Liberal Party later in the next week. His first sentence states:

We accept the principle of moving to proportional representation in the Legislative Council.

No wonder the government chose Mr Hunt to serve on its constitutional commission. He is not coming to this with an open mind or clean hands; he is coming with a closed mind. To quote his own words to his former party:

It will also represent a fundamental and practically irreversible change in the constitutional framework of this state, which will have profound effects upon the process, nature and stability of government for the foreseeable future and beyond.

Hon. Andrew Brideson — He's biased. He ought to disqualify himself.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — I thank Mr Brideson. He is biased; there is no doubt he is biased.

The opposition is not frightened of the constitutional commission. What the opposition would like it to be is honest, open, fair and independent; not closed, not biased and not running to the Premier's agenda, as is already on the record. The opposition suggests that for the first time in his life — for once in his life — Mr Hunt should do the right thing, fess up, acknowledge his well-established bias — established out of his own mouth — resign from the constitutional commission and allow the government to find somebody who at least would bring an open, honest, fair and independent mind to the task.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I will make a few brief points on this year's budget papers because it is important in these debates that all honourable members take the opportunity to raise issues that are relevant both to their portfolios, where that is appropriate, and to their constituents.

In regard to this year's budget I guess that my overall reaction is that nothing ever changes in politics: we see coming into this place budgets drawn up by the ALP that reflect its basic disposition to taxing the electorate and spending the money — because obviously the government knows best! This is a high-taxing, high-spending budget in the grand tradition of previous Labor budgets. Having said that, in my view it is a mean budget. I shall come back to that point shortly.

I shall mention a couple of issues that relate specifically to my particular interests. I note that in last year's budget there was no allocation to continue funding initiatives for aquaculture. There has been debate in recent times about marine resource issues. It has been pointed out, quite properly, that with the decline in the capacity of wild-catch fisheries to sustain the level of harvest over the long haul and the growth in demand for fish resources in feeding the nation, we must see a significant growth in aquaculture. Given that Victorian aquaculture represents something of the order of 1.5 per cent of the national aquaculture industry, there is obviously a lot of capacity.

It was disappointing to the aquaculture industry, and particularly to coastal communities, that the aquaculture initiative established by the previous government was abandoned by the Minister for Energy and Resources in last year's budget. In fact, strident criticism from aquaculture interests has embarrassed the government into making an allocation in this year's budget of only \$500 000, compared with the \$1.5 million per annum that was available previously. I am sure that over time the government will come to realise just what an important contributor aquaculture will be. With its potential growth it is probably the most significant

primary industry in the state and one that will affect rural communities in the medium term.

It is important to note that the budget papers are not designed to provide useful information to members. I have received calls from people who are directly involved in catchment management issues — issues that I know are very dear to the hearts of all members of Parliament who represent rural electorates. Many honourable members have a keen interest in following the way we have improved the management of Victoria's natural resource environment through the establishment of regional catchment management authorities.

It is interesting to know that even as we speak on this 20th day of June, 10 days before the end of this financial year and the commencement of the new financial year, not only do the budget papers not reveal what funds are allocated to catchment management authorities in this state but the authorities tell me that the government has not yet advised them what their budgets will be for the next financial year. It is appalling that the government has not properly discharged its public administration responsibilities, that those matters cannot be settled and that the works programs, which are vital to managing our environment, are unable to be planned and implemented properly.

Another catchment and land management issue that affects rural Victoria is the serious concern expressed by constituents in Gippsland and north-eastern Victoria particularly, but also across the state, about the level of commitment to the program to control wild dogs being unknown — and inadequate in any event. Last Friday evening at Omeo there was a meeting of rural land-holders who are concerned about the impact of wild dogs. Ms Smith will be interested in this.

Hon. W. I. Smith — I thought there was a meeting of wild dogs!

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Wild dogs present a very significant problem for land-holders in the high country and other areas of the state where properties adjoin state parks and forests. The wild dogs are not dingoes. Generally speaking they have been bred from domesticated dogs, particularly problem dogs. They attack sheep, and in some cases calves —

Hon. M. A. Birrell — It would be all right if they got the feral cats!

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Yes. The problem with wild dogs is that they are uncontrolled, and their numbers are not being stemmed by the limited dogging

program presently in place. On a statewide basis it is presumed that there are 18 full-time equivalent positions allocated to the dog program. The problem is that those doggers are reallocated to other activities, including pest plant control and fire crews. That means there is not a continuous effort to control wild dogs. This problem has long been on the agenda, and I know that successive ministers responsible for programs relating to the control of pest plants and animals have been vexed by it. However, the anecdotal evidence is that this is now at a significant level far beyond that which has been of concern previously.

At the meeting last Friday at Omeo, the East Gippsland and Towong shires from north-eastern Victoria were represented by their respective mayors. A motion was moved that action be taken to make representations to government to set up a better process to manage this problem on a statewide basis, because the wild dog problem does not recognise state borders.

The issue we really need to confront is that this problem has not been addressed by the government at all. A year ago a discussion paper on this issue was released by the Minister for Environment and Conservation in the other place. That discussion paper has been on the table for a year with no action and clearly no intention by the minister to implement any changes to the way these programs are run. Land-holders are calling for an increased level of effort, not only to improve the activities of the current dogmen but also to reduce the waste in administration and down time for the dedicated Department of Natural Resources and Environment officers involved in this program. It is clear that there are efforts to encourage land-holders to move away from the suppression of dog numbers as a priority to a process of removing or eliminating them from private land by the use of electric fencing. However, the experience of high country farmers and those whose properties abut forests and parks is that this is not a successful means of restricting stock losses.

There is now anecdotal evidence about the wild dog populations being such as to be intimidating to people who have been camping in some areas. A story was recounted at the meeting last Friday evening about some bushwalkers who had had to retreat to their vehicles and sit in them for an extended period because a large pack of dogs was interested in them. The bushwalkers were very intimidated by the dogs. I am sure wise people will be concerned about this sort of anecdote. Whether these dogs were wild dogs or dogs that may have escaped from — —

Hon. G. R. Craige — Prison?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — No, from an organised hound-hunting exercise, the truth is the population of wild dogs is expanding and not much effort has been made to deal with it in the past 20 months.

Having talked about wild dogs, I want to get back to something more marine in interest.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — Back on the budget?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Yes, back on the budget. I want to talk about the meanness of this budget. I want to use the experience of recent weeks in relation to marine parks and this year's budget to make some observations about the priorities of the government. The government has allocated funds in the budget for the introduction and implementation of marine parks. The government allocated \$43 million, of which \$14 million was to be provided for enforcement. The government has made it clear that these funds will now not be spent on doing the work the fishing industry has acknowledged is required and the government has acknowledged needs to be done to ensure the protection of our marine resources and in particular to deal with the very high level of poaching, illegal take, of abalone. The government has been so pathetic in facing up to its responsibilities that it has declined to continue to commit to improving enforcement in fisheries management.

This is a disgraceful approach by the government. It has recognised a problem and allocated funds to deal with it, but in a fit of pique, presumably frustrated by the legislative process because it could not propose a bill to the Parliament that would get the approval of the community and thus the Parliament, the government has decided to take its bat and ball and go home and not do the enforcement that is required to protect our marine resources.

That shows a mean spirit. It is clearly the case that because of the government's meanness with compensation it has failed to achieve an outcome with the implementation of the marine parks legislation. The government has the capacity, as demonstrated in the budget, to allocate sufficient funding for fair and equitable compensation.

The experience of recent weeks with the Parliament dealing with the marine parks legislation and the budget debate demonstrates how out of touch the government is in providing Victorians, particularly rural Victorians, with a fair go. There is no doubt rural Victorians and particularly those with a coastal interest see this issue for what it is — an act of meanness. Unless the

government acts quickly it will not be successful in its priorities with marine parks.

On that same theme of meanness, I am fascinated by the government's environmental credentials and its commitment to implement environmental flows in the Snowy River. It is prepared, in partnership with the New South Wales and commonwealth governments, to invest \$375 million in increasing flows in the Snowy River. Professor Brian Finlayson, the head of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Melbourne, said recently that it would not be possible to measure a change in the flow of the Snowy River at Jarrahmond upstream of Orbost after \$375 million is invested. He said it will not be possible to see any significant change in the flow in the lower Snowy River! When a geographer of that standing makes that observation, one has to wonder about the wisdom the government has displayed with its environmental priorities. It is not prepared to back its commitment to marine parks with a proper and adequate allocation of funds to ensure fair compensation and transition arrangements are provided for, but it is prepared to commit funds to the Snowy River for an outcome that a reputable scientist questions in terms of the benefits to the whole community.

Having said that, there is no doubt both of these debates will continue for some time. It will be a test of the government's ability to focus on a proper outcome or approach to environmental management rather than, as it is presently doing, opting for a partisan, political and opportunistic approach to marine parks and the Snowy River that so far has not resulted in real or significant benefits to the environment.

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — Having listened to a lot of speakers make their contribution to the appropriation debate today and on previous days, I have noted that the constant theme is for the government to do more. I will reverse that because I believe it is essential for the government to focus on doing less.

This budget of lost opportunities highlights that if the government had done less it may have achieved better outcomes for all Victorians. It needs to do less in taxation, where it has done nothing to address the fact that Victoria is quickly moving from being one of the lowest taxing states to one of the highest in the nation. It needs to be less profligate with uncontrolled spending, because it is becoming known, like so many other Labor governments in the past, as a high-taxing and high-spending government with the cost spiral going out of control. It needs to interfere less in the markets and in people's lives. It needs a lot less rhetoric

and a much greater focus on the real issues facing Victorians, instead of camouflaging them in a budget it describes as a responsible economic document that is securing the future of Victoria, because it is not doing that.

The mismanagement of the government is putting the gains of the past decade at grave risk. There is a lack of focus in providing a clear, definable vision for the future. The government has missed a number of glaring opportunities with taxation. It inherited an extraordinarily large surplus, but after 18 months it has managed to spend nearly all the surplus with little result in outcome or delivery, and certainly no definable reduction in the taxation burden of all Victorians. In the past few weeks it has been shown up by two neighbouring and competitive states.

Firstly, New South Wales completely abolished the bank accounts debits (BAD) tax. That tax is quite rightly called a BAD tax. It is now slugged on bank account depositors in Victoria and not slugged on bank account depositors in New South Wales. It will lead to a flight of money from financial institutions based in Victoria to those in New South Wales just as through the 1980s and early 1990s money flowed to Queensland, which had no financial institutions duty (FID) or BAD taxes when other states did. That will have a significant impact in the financial services sector, which employs many people in this state.

Only this week in its budget the Queensland government announced a further reduction to its payroll tax, already the lowest in Australia. Unlike this government, the Queensland government reduced payroll tax effective from 1 July; it did not promise some tax cut that might take place in future years, that people have to wait for or that might happen assuming everything that has been predicted in the budget for future years turns out to be true and assuming the wisdom the Treasurer has imparted actually comes to pass.

The government took the \$60 winter power bonus out of the pockets of each and every Victorian who pays electricity bills. It has taken away a benefit and effectively increased the burden on Victorian taxpayers by abolishing that winter power bonus. That is one more sign that the government is going backwards and is not interested in delivering tangible benefits to Victorians. It is not interested in cutting the taxation burden on Victorians and in creating an environment where Victorian businesses, Victorian jobs and Victorian opportunity can continue to grow into the future. Instead, the government is sending the state quickly backwards. It is ensuring that investment is

becoming less attractive. It is sowing the seeds for a decrease in our economic growth and for fewer jobs in the future, and as a result for lowering living standards.

The proof is in the budget, which predicts a decline in the rate of economic growth and an increase in unemployment. It is clearly predicting a decline in investment opportunities. We have already seen major corporations choosing to invest in other states, Virgin Airlines being one example, and there has been an outflow of jobs, particularly in the manufacturing area, throughout Victoria. Unfortunately, through the lack of action by the government, and through its high taxes, policies and inability to realise that only through providing a low-tax environment will it encourage new investment, the government has given away a particular advantage that Victoria had over the past seven or eight years — that is, the advantage of being a low-tax state. It has allowed New South Wales and Queensland to not only catch up but go ahead. It is threatening the future prosperity of the state and of each and every Victorian.

I now wish to focus on a number of line items of importance to the state where again the government has dropped its bundle. In education the government has not set reading standards for year 7 students whereas there are reading standards in primary schools. The government has provided no new money for professional development for teachers to ensure that they continue to remain at the forefront of education to impart knowledge to our children. It has continued its ludicrous and insane policy of centralised control of our school system when other governments of similar ideological persuasion have gone in the other direction. In particular the Blair Labour government in England is providing more autonomy and more flexibility for individual schools to set their programs and budgets and to assist their school communities to work out what is best for the community and for the children — who should be at the forefront of our education system.

Instead of taking that path, the government is burying its head in the sand and continuing to develop an education system run by and for the benefit of the teacher unions. That is sad because it is not any longer some ideological divide; it simply highlights that it matters who is placed at the forefront of the education system — the students or the teacher unions. The government has made a clear choice and the public of Victoria will judge us in due course.

I now turn to health, which is an area of continuing poor performance. The hospital services report of March 2001 for the Alfred hospital, my local hospital, shows that on any objective measure the government

has done a terrible job. Over the past few years there has been a huge increase in the number of people on waiting lists for elective surgery or semi-elective surgery. People are waiting on lists longer than the ideal time. People are waiting in emergency departments for longer than 12 hours on the famous trolleys that we heard about from the Minister for Health when he was shadow minister. The figure has risen from fewer than 100 in March 1999 to more than 600 in March of 2001. The number of ambulance bypasses at the Alfred hospital increased from about 5 or 6 in 1999 to more than 70 in March 2001 — a record of extremely poor performance.

Some people say all we need do with the health system is pour more money into it. That is what the government said when it was in opposition. The previous government increased real spending on health and the Labor government has done the same. But has performance improved? No. Performance has declined, particularly under this government. In the period of the former Kennett government, objectively on any measure, performance improved according to most performance measures. Under this government, despite more money being allocated, performance has declined, again proving that not more money but better management will improve the system.

Honourable members have highlighted that fact. Victoria now has 12 hospitals effectively in liquidity. Hospital waiting lists are blowing out, as are ambulance bypass figures. The number of patients waiting on trolleys in emergency departments is blowing out and more money is effectively being poured down a black hole because no management and no control are being exercised over the health system. Victoria has a part-time health minister who has taken his eye off the ball and ensured a worse performance in the health system in the almost two years he has been at the helm of his portfolio.

Probably the most glaring of all the figures I could find in the budget reveals that although in this current financial year the number of hospital treatments of patients increased by 45 000, for the 2001–02 budget year the government has budgeted for an increase of only 25 800 patients, or approximately 50 per cent fewer than this year, despite everything the community knows about an ageing population and an increased demand for health services.

The budget has said that next year fewer patients will be treated in the hospitals than this year. That is astounding, but it is not surprising because it again proves that the government has no idea of what is happening in the health system. It is making up the

figures. Not only is it a best guess, it is probably a hopeful guess to ensure that on the bottom line of the budget the government still comes in as having delivered a surplus.

If the government provides enough funds to treat at least the same number of additional hospital patients — that is, 45 000, or maybe even more — the budget may go into structural deficit. The opposition will watch what happens in the ensuing year; it will watch all the government's targets and figures. I would find it astounding if the figures for hospital treatments of new patients increased by only 25 800, as allowed for in the budget.

Multimedia is extremely important for Victoria because it is the area of new job growth and jobs for the future. The government has actually budgeted for a decrease in spending on information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and services, from \$12.1 million to \$8.9 million. Although it budgeted to spend \$12.1 million in this financial year, the budget documents reveal it will have spent only \$6.6 million of that allocation. To be unable to find ways to allocate funding in a growing area that is likely to be a powerhouse for new investments in the future shows the government has no idea about information technology.

So far as the information superhighway is concerned, the government is lost in the back blocks. When it comes to the Treasurer's and Premier's home pages, they should buy up the www.noidea.com domain because that highlights what they are doing in this area.

Also, because the government had no policy when it came to office, in November 1999 it released the Connecting Victoria statement. In that it promised to deliver broadband access across Victoria. It is important that access to broadband be provided to as many people as possible to encourage new investment and facilities to be built in Melbourne and across regional and rural Victoria. What has it done about providing that? Nothing. I repeat: the government should buy into the web site www.noidea.com — it is as simple as that.

The government again fails to protect the environment, particularly the marine environment. In Port Phillip Bay the imported pest the North Pacific seastar is breeding in plague proportions. What is the government doing about it? Nothing. What is it doing about other marine pests throughout Victoria's waters? Nothing. The budget contains no new initiatives.

What is the government doing about controlling weeds and feral animal pests in Victoria's parks? Nothing. No

new initiatives are contained in the budget. The weeds and feral animals in Victoria's parks are out of control. The government's document on the state of Victoria's parks told everyone so. The budget provides nothing by way of initiatives to tackle those problems.

Should I address the issue of Workcover?

Hon. K. M. Smith — No!

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — In brief Mr Smith knows, as do I, that the government does not want to address the issue of Workcover. It wants to run away and hide. However, the Auditor-General's report tells us that Workcover is spiralling into debt once more. At a time when the New South Wales government is trying to rein in its deficit this government is taking more of a monkey-see-nothing, monkey-hear-nothing, monkey-do-nothing approach that has highlighted its performance in so many other areas. Rather than take up the time of the house in highlighting once more its failures in Workcover, I say only that the government's record speaks for itself. It is a shabby, broken record that is again threatening the future viability of the Workcover scheme of this state and the people of the state.

In summary, this budget is about more spin, more rhetoric, more taxes, more profligate spending and more interference in markets and people's lives. The best thing this government could do in the future would be to look at reducing the tax burden on all Victorians, and particularly on new investments in this state. It should also look at reining in its profligate spending. In 18 months it has managed to fritter away a solid legacy of a \$2-billion surplus and has delivered an almost balanced budget. In the future I see structural deficits returning if the government continues on its profligate and uncontrolled spending spree — a spending spree that is not improving performance in the delivery of services and is threatening the future viability of this state by not allowing for proper, long-term tax cuts. I hope that in the future this government can come up with a better budget than the one that it has delivered this year.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — It is with pleasure that I rise as the final speaker. I can see that all other honourable members are pleased that I am the final speaker. There are some things that I need to put on the record. Firstly, this has been a far and wide-ranging debate, as all budget debates are, and it has been an interesting experience to hear all the speeches. I do not resile from the view of the conservative members of the opposition that this is a high-spending and high-taxing budget. There is nothing

in this budget for the constituents of Waverley Province. I specifically want to focus on Waverley Province and what the budget does not do for my constituents.

If we look in the budget papers at the government's asset investment highlights for each area we see they are under headings of inner Melbourne, north-west, et cetera. The lower house electorates of Clayton and Oakleigh, which are both held by Labor and are part of Waverley Province, come under the south-east area of the asset investment highlights but are not even remotely mentioned, apart from the plan for the Scoresby freeway. I know of nothing in the budget that has been allocated specifically for the Oakleigh and Clayton electorates. This is evident when you look at the *Hansard* report of the speech in the other place of the honourable member for Clayton, where he struggled to come up with any news for his electorate, opting instead to recite from favourable newspaper clippings that basically had no relevance to Clayton.

The honourable member for Oakleigh did likewise. She was unable to highlight anything from this year's budget. In fact she made mention of capital works in schools which were raised in last year's budget and which were in fact Kennett government initiatives. She also mentioned that there was a new ambulance station in Carnegie. Carnegie is not even in the electorate of Oakleigh or in Waverley Province but in the electorate of the honourable member for Caulfield. That was again an initiative of the Kennett government.

The only thing specifically mentioned that in a sense could directly affect Clayton constituents was the funding allocated to the Scoresby freeway. This is a great disappointment to people living in the south-eastern suburbs. Although the federal government has contributed \$220 million to the project, as many honourable members have mentioned the state government has pledged only \$2 million towards planning, despite the fact that in the budget there was over \$1 billion in planning initiatives.

Of specific concern to my constituents is that the Dingley and Mornington Peninsula freeways, which are of huge importance to all people in the south-east area of Melbourne, have not cracked a mention in this year's budget. In last year's budget there was mention of \$30 million for construction of the Dingley bypass, but to date no works have been commenced.

I turn to touch upon black spot funding. In last year's budget a figure of \$240 million to be spent over three years was announced in relation to black spots. The worst black spot in Victoria, which is well known to

many honourable members, is the Princes Highway–Springvale Road intersection. The intersection has been recognised and nominated as being in serious need of attention to make it safer, by putting an underpass under the Princes Highway. This junction carries 35 000 vehicles a day and over 8000 cars per hour during peak periods. An article in the *Herald Sun* earlier this year stated that 3 people were killed and 177 injured in 108 crashes between 1995 and 1999. There is no question that something needs to be done about this intersection. I call on the government to act quickly to supply the funding for this very important project in my area.

That is in stark contrast to the opportunities that were seized by the previous Kennett government in the Clayton electorate. It was my privilege earlier this year to attend the opening of the \$37 million Springvale bypass project, which involved the widening of Westall Road.

The project was advocated for and signed off by the Honourable Geoff Craig. It is an example of the sort of project the Kennett government provided in the Labor-held electorate of Clayton. In stark contrast today, the Labor government has totally ignored the Labor electorate of Clayton.

Some other black spot areas need to be put on the record because they are worthy of attention. The first is the intersection of Clayton and North roads, where there have been 25 casualty accidents in five years. The second is the intersection of Wellington and Blackburn roads not far from Monash University where in the past five years there have been 11 right-turn casualty accidents and 23 casualty accidents. Another important intersection that needs to be addressed in the Springvale shopping centre is the intersection of St Johns and Balmoral avenues.

In his address the honourable member for Clayton in the other place spoke of his enormous pride when he thinks of the 'fine institution', to quote him, that is the Monash Medical Centre. I agree with his sentiments, but, as is evidenced in the budget, the government does not hold that hospital in such high esteem. I do not wish to go through the statistics because my colleague the Honourable Maree Luckins, the other member for Waverley Province, has incorporated into *Hansard* some graphs relating to the distress that constituents are feeling about the Monash hospital. Since the Bracks Labor government came to office more people are on waiting lists for elective surgery, more people are on waiting lists longer than the ideal, more patients are staying in emergency departments for longer than 12 hours, and there have been more ambulance

bypasses at Monash hospital. Those figures are on the record.

I turn briefly to education, particularly capital works funding for schools, which has been underspent in the electorate of Clayton. A classic example is the Clayton Primary School, which was able to secure a \$700 000 one-off grant to demolish half its buildings and refurbish the remainder over the next two years. The grant was negotiated last year and was expected to be received in this year's budget. The funding was granted on the condition that half the school buildings on the campus would be demolished because they were considered to be too much work, and the remaining buildings would be refurbished with the remainder of the grant. It is a plain example of where the government is underfunding capital works on a school that is in dire need of an upgrade.

I know that some important educational projects are included in the budget, but the people of Clayton and Oakleigh are really not interested in the Space Science Education Centre at Strathmore or the Bacchus Marsh science and technical education centre, which are multimillion-dollar developments. I would like to see just a few thousand dollars spent on some of the schools in the Clayton electorate.

I turn briefly to multicultural affairs, which the Honourable Carlo Furletti touched on, because 76.5 per cent of the constituents of Clayton are either first or second-generation migrants. It is indeed a multicultural community. Mr Lim stated in his address that ethnic and multicultural affairs are areas close to his heart. The Labor government has allocated \$600 000 less for multicultural affairs, which translates to a budget cut of approximately 20 per cent.

There are no increases in multicultural grants, and again there was money not spent in last year's budget that is being pushed into this year's budget. I hope the grants the Kennett government gave to multicultural organisations around Victoria continue, and I will be keeping a very close brief on what happens to the Cambodian Association of Victoria, which is an organisation that Mr Lim and his relatives and extended family have significantly benefited from in the past.

Prior to the last election my office undertook a comprehensive survey in Clayton, and two issues stood out. One was law and order, and the other was gaming. I am appalled that in relation to gaming in the next financial year the Labor government is relying on 17 per cent of state revenue coming from gambling taxes. The government is utterly hypocritical in its approach to gambling. I will not elaborate any further

because other honourable members have done so in their contributions. However, I put on the record that in the budget papers I can find no money from gaming revenue that has been put back into the Oakleigh electorate.

The Clayton police station, built in the early 1940s or 1950s, is located on Clayton Road at a T-intersection directly opposite the Monash Medical Centre. It is in great need of a significant upgrade. There is limited parking for police vehicles and there is almost no chance for the public to park there. In next year's budget I would like to see the government relocate the Clayton police station.

Other honourable members have mentioned the cuts to victims of crime support, and I note that in the current financial year 16 000 victims will receive counselling support, but in the budget papers just published that figure is cut by half to 8000. It is just not good enough, and the way the Bracks government is treating victims of crime is an absolute sham.

I put on the record that in schools, in particular primary schools in Waverley Province, the government has drastically failed to achieve its student-teacher ratios. In a survey of primary schools it was found that 17 out of 27, which is 63 per cent, have class sizes above the state average; 18 out of 27 primary schools, which is 67 per cent, have maximum class sizes of 28 or above; 4 schools have maximum class sizes of between 30 and 32 students; and 12 out of the 27 primary schools have prep to grade 2 class sizes greater than 25 pupils. If possible I would like the government to address those issues in my province in this year's budget — and if not, certainly in next year's budget.

There is one other matter, which I also raised during the adjournment debate three or four weeks ago. Many speakers on the conservative side have talked about the meanness of this budget. I plead with the Minister for Community Services in the other place to have a close look at the situation of the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre in. That school has to vacate its current premises and find premises for next year by December. It requires a paltry \$90 000 to keep its head above water. I visited the education centre two or three years ago, even though it is not in my electorate. The centre runs superb world-class programs using a system called conductive education. It is an absolute shame that the government has neglected it, and I implore the Honourable Christine Campbell to have another look at the centre's funding situation.

In conclusion, the highlights of this budget are that it is a higher taxing budget and a higher spending budget

that provides for lower economic growth and lower employment growth. It contains reduced investment levels, increased borrowings, increased deficits, increased unfunded superannuation liabilities and no new major projects — and it has nothing in it for the families of Waverley Province.

APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL

Second reading

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

BUDGET PAPERS, 2001–02

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The question is:

That the Council take note of the budget papers, 2001–02.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I have some further answers to questions on notice. The numbers are: 1688–9, 1693, 1722, 1735–40, 1773–4, 1776–7, 1783–7, 1794–7, 1836.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Thursday, 16 August 2001, at 10.30 a.m. at the town hall, City of Ballarat, or until a day and hour to be fixed by the President, which time of meeting shall be notified in writing to each honourable member, whichever is the earlier.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Casey: community bus

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I raise with the Minister for Energy and Resources, who represents the Minister for Transport in the other place, a matter relating to public transport services in the City of Casey. I draw the house’s attention to the council’s draft budget, which, according to a press release, was adopted on 12 June. In that draft budget the council made an allocation of \$172 000 for the provision of a community bus.

The reason the City of Casey made that allocation for a community bus, which will have as its focal point the Fountain Gate Shopping Centre and will service the surrounding suburbs, is the inadequate public transport bus services provided by the government. It is extraordinary that a local council has to dip into its own resources to the tune of \$172 000 to provide facilities and infrastructure that the government should be providing.

I have an email from one of the councillors of the City of Casey stating that the council has had to increase rates by 0.5 per cent to fund this community bus, which the Bracks government should be funding. I ask that, rather than relying on local government to fund his government’s responsibilities, the Minister for Transport provide the required funding to ensure that the ratepayers of the City of Casey do not have to pay for a service that the government should be providing.

Schools: nurses

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I raise with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who represents the Minister for Education in another place, a matter concerning the secondary school nursing program. I acknowledge from the outset that 100 nursing positions have been made available to 200 secondary colleges throughout the state. It is an admirable program: with 100 nurses being shared by 200 secondary schools, one nurse will spend two and a half days in each of two schools.

The issue I raise concerns the way a nurse’s time is allocated between the two schools. For example, in my electorate a secondary school with 300 students and a secondary school of 1500 students each receives two and a half days per week.

It would seem to me it would be fairer if the allocation of this nursing resource could be made, at least in part, on the basis of the number of students attending the school. I seek an explanation from the Minister for Education as to why the number of students in each school was not given some consideration when allocating the time that those nurses are spending in each respective school.

Gas: Barwon Heads supply

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Energy and Resources. Will the minister comment as to whether the government would support the Office of the Regulator-General applying section 27 of the Gas Industry Act 2001 — which gives an exclusive franchise for proposed new construction of gas infrastructure — to a proposal by TXU, or any other company, for the construction of a gas pipeline to Barwon Heads?

The PRESIDENT — Order! The adjournment debate provides the opportunity to pose a query, make a complaint or make a request. I am not sure whether a request for a comment comes within that. I am trying to be helpful. I am trying to put it in the form of a request, not for a comment but for justification or action in relation to that matter.

Hon. E. C. CARBINES — Thank you, Mr President. I am asking whether the government would support that action by the Office of the Regulator-General.

St Kilda Legal Service

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — I direct a matter to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, as the representative of the Attorney-General in another place. I refer to an article in the *Port Phillip Caulfield Leader* of 4 June regarding the St Kilda Legal Service. I am very concerned to learn that a government review of the service could threaten its future. I quote from the article, which states:

St Kilda Legal Service administrator Suzy Fox said the service met an important community need and was struggling to survive.

Further it states:

The St Kilda service provides free legal help to the disadvantaged in the Port Phillip, Bayside and Stonnington municipalities. Last year it helped 4000 people with legal advice and information.

I ask the Attorney-General to give an assurance that the St Kilda Legal Service will be given additional funding to compensate it if the current review of community legal centres is implemented.

EPA: meeting

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Energy and Resources, for the attention of Minister for Environment and Conservation in another place. Some of my constituents have become concerned that the Environment Protection Authority is conducting public meetings in north-eastern Victoria to discuss odours that might well circulate in an area, whether as nuisance caused by smoke from a neighbour's wood heater or as a detriment brought about by burning off and the like.

Although there is no objection to meetings being called to discuss those things — although I would have to say I personally have some nervousness about what the intent might be — the nature of the complaint on this occasion is the lack of notice being given for these meetings, which increases my apprehension. The meeting was called in Wodonga at very short notice and many of my constituents complained to me they were unaware of the meeting until it was over. It particularly came to my attention when I saw an advertisement in the Albury-Wodonga *Border-Mail* of 13 June for such a meeting in Bright that very evening. I would have thought that was absolutely insufficient notice.

I invite the minister to suggest to her colleague that at least one week's notice would be highly desirable for these sorts of meetings.

Workcover: premiums

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Jika Jika) — I raise through the Leader of the Government a matter for the Minister for Workcover in another place. In its recent report the Economic Development Committee brought down the following finding:

The committee finds that smaller employers classified under any of the 66 industry groupings that experienced multiple industry rate rises in 2000–01 will continue to experience 20 per cent premium rate increments in future premium years until they reach their respective industry's prescribed rate ...

The chief executive officer of the Victorian Workcover Authority put out a press release on 24 May 2001, which states:

Under the system which has been in place since 1993, a significant number of small businesses incur an automatic increase of 20 per cent in their premium rate each year as they gradually move to the 'true risk rate' for their industry.

Had we continued with this system for 2001–02, more than 65 000 Victorian businesses would have received an automatic premium rate increase ...

However, after consulting widely with small business we have decided to minimise year-on-year changes to Workcover premium rates.

For 2001–02 businesses with annual remuneration of \$1 million or less will pay the same premium rate as they did for 2000–01.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Opposition members might not like it but it happens to be true! I know they do not like the fact that small business is not going to get — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I am quoting Bill Mountford. He also stated:

As a direct result of this decision, almost 96 per cent of Victorian businesses will incur no increase in their Workcover premium rate.

An honourable member interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The honourable member should listen to the finding. It says the premium rate will go up! That is what the finding states.

I ask the minister to confirm Mr Mountford's announcement of 24 May. If it is confirmed, will the minister request that the Economic Development Committee correct its factually incorrect, misleading and mischievous finding?

Pest management: industry insurance

Hon. J. W. G. ROSS (Higinbotham) — The matter I raise with the Minister for Consumer Affairs relates to the pest management industry, yet another industry which has been adversely affected by the HIH Insurance collapse. I have received a letter from Mr Doug Howick, the national executive director of the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association, which has its headquarters in my electorate. Mr Howick points out that it is a condition of membership of his association for pest management companies to carry professional indemnity and public liability insurance. HIH provided about 60 per cent of the coverage to that industry and its collapse has left many of the members in great hardship. Not only have they had to obtain alternative cover, but in some instances their claims were outstanding at the time of the collapse.

Mr Howick has requested me to urgently make representations to ensure that such outstanding claims in the pest management industry be recognised as hardship cases, to ensure they received assistance under the planned rescue packages. I therefore ask the minister to give sympathetic consideration to the plight of the pest control operators with a view to having deserving cases included in the rescue package.

Sport: regional assemblies

Hon. E. J. POWELL (North Eastern) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Last week Mr Wyatt, the chief executive officer of Valley Sport, the former Goulburn Valley Sports Assembly, came to my office. Valley Sport is one of the 10 regional sports assemblies across Victoria. There are nine in country Victoria and one in Melbourne. Valley Sport has been informed that funding to the regional sports assemblies will be reduced by 35 per cent when the Australian Sports Commission, which is the federal body, terminates the contracts with the state departments of sport and recreation as of 30 June this year. The federal government has said it did not cut the funding but that it has never funded the assemblies. It is important that Valley Sport continue its funding.

Valley Sport is a very reputable organisation that was established in 1985. It services the City of Greater Shepparton and the shires of Delatite, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi and Strathbogie, which is quite a huge area. It provides leadership, advice and assistance to sport and recreational organisations throughout that region. It promotes the social, health and economic benefits of sport and recreation, and it facilitates many worthwhile programs, such as the program for the responsible serving of alcohol. Mr Barry Senior, who is responsible for that program, also told me that he has concerns about the funding cuts and the future of that program.

This is an urgent issue. In about three weeks time, on 1 July 2001, many programs and services may be cut in sports assemblies right across Victoria. Mr Wyatt will have to reduce his hours drastically. He will have to work part time, and he told me he will probably be looking for another job. The measure means that country Victoria will lose expertise from sports assemblies across the region. I believe the federal government has asked the state government to come up with a method of sports funding utilisation, and the funding has been reduced for three months while the decision is made.

Does the minister have a commitment to sports assemblies in rural Victoria and their ongoing future

and funding, and will he ensure that the funding decision is made quickly to allow the sports assemblies the continuity of their programs?

Petrol: substitution

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — I draw the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs to a letter dated 6 June from Peter Anderson, the director of APCO Service Stations Pty Ltd in Geelong, to the minister. I will make a copy available to the minister. His letter states:

I am writing following up letters I have sent previously.

He then goes to the issue of the blending of ethanol with petrol. At the outset I make the point that Mr Anderson is not saying that anyone is dudding the tax department or adulterating the fuel; he is just talking about ethanol and petrol being mixed. Further in the letter he states:

On a recent trip to Queensland I drove through many country towns and became aware of a company blending and selling ethanol. They had signage as I have requested you to look at but have so far not acted on. This gave the consumer the choice, ethanol blended or not.

He said he enclosed some photographs — which would obviously be in the minister's office — of the signs the service stations put up so that when pulling into service stations motorists have the choice of buying straight fuel or fuel blended with ethanol. As the minister would be aware, at the moment in Victoria petrol that has been blended with ethanol is being sold. Is it not time that Victoria also had signs in petrol stations so that people know whether they are buying ethanol-blended fuel or straight fuel?

Mildura: mental health research centre

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Industrial Relations, who represents the Minister for Health in the other place. A huge amount of work has been done in the Sunraysia area so that a centre for rural mental health research can be established. Mildura is well positioned as a centre for a tri-state — perhaps I should say a region — arrangement. Mildura also has a vigorous health sector, excellent existing links with major research institutions, a very supportive community consultative committee and good linkages with community health and human services agencies.

The Mildura area consultative committee has provided infrastructure and funding to pursue the proposal for the national centre. Support has been received from Monash University, La Trobe University, the

University of Sydney, Flinders University in South Australia, and the University of Wollongong. Support has also been received from the commonwealth — from John Forrest, the member for Mallee; the mental health branch of the commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care; the office of the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Dr Michael Wooldridge; and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson.

It is becoming obvious that it is no longer appropriate to apply findings of urban research into mental health to rural settings. So a centre needs to be established which recognises in an ongoing way what support is required for mental health issues to ensure the ongoing wellbeing of our rural communities. Will the Minister for Health advise me of the status of this proposal, which would see a centre for rural mental health research established in Mildura?

Local government: travel expenditure

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN (Chelsea) — I refer a matter to the Minister for Energy and Resources as the representative of the Minister for Local Government in another place. No doubt during the winter break some honourable members will be embarking on overseas travel for the benefit of their own careers in the Parliament. As part of the overseas travel honourable members would be aware of their obligation and responsibility to justify their travel and report to the Parliament, with their report being tabled in the parliamentary library for public scrutiny.

Unfortunately the same level of accountability does not lie with local government. I refer to two examples. The first is a much-publicised trip by the former mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong, Cr Angela Long, to The Hague in the Netherlands for a greenhouse gas emissions conference. Her sole justification for attending this conference was to go into the council chamber and tell the world that she enjoyed her time there.

Secondly, the Labor-dominated council in Frankston has voted to send not one but four councillors to a crime prevention conference in Canberra this week that is primarily discussing transnational and technologically driven crime, with little relevance to local government. In addition to the four councillors, two council officers are also attending. I am concerned because of the expense of \$6500 to local ratepayers.

My suggestion to the Minister for Local Government is that he should take a close look at how councils are utilising public funding and the justifications for travel

requirements, which seem to be completely lacking. I request that the Minister for Local Government initiate some guidelines for local councils so they can have greater control over the expenditure of public funds when it comes to travel arrangements and that justification and accountability mechanisms are made much stronger than they are at the moment.

Olympic Park: redevelopment

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation to the proposed redevelopment of the Olympic Park precinct. The minister has spoken about it on a number of occasions in this place, and I know his department is continuing to work on this redevelopment. I seek assurances from the minister tonight about the continuation of the use of the historic name Olympic Park for any new redevelopment. That name links the precinct and stadium to the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne. Will the minister assure the house that that name will continue to be used, or is it to become another ground that is renamed to reflect sponsors and the need to provide further funding for development?

The other assurance I seek from the minister is about the location of the athletics track at any new redevelopment. The minister has spoken about that new track in the past. Will the minister give the house an assurance that the track will be located in the general vicinity of the current athletics track, or is it likely to be relocated to some other part of the Olympic Park precinct?

Banyule Community Health Centre

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I refer the Leader of the House as the representative of the Minister for Health in the other place to the matter of the Banyule Community Health Centre. Under the direction of Mr Jim Pasinis the centre is performing a fantastic task in very difficult circumstances. My colleague the Honourable Bill Forwood and I have been communicating with the centre since 1997 with a view to finding funds to improve the facilities in which it is providing a service to the Ivanhoe community and surrounding areas. This year the budget made no provision for funds to allow for the redevelopment of the centre on the corner of Catalina Street and Alamein Road, which the community was expecting. Instead, shortly before the budget was brought down, the Banyule Community Health Centre received notification out of the blue that it may be moved to the repatriation hospital site in Bell Street.

That caused some concern because the Banyule Community Health Centre is looking to an imminent redevelopment program. Now the people at the centre are obviously concerned because not only are they not sure whether there will be a redevelopment on the existing site, but they may be moved to a new site. I ask the Minister for Health to put to rest as expeditiously as possible the concerns of the Banyule Community Health Centre and let the board know what the government's intentions are for the centre, which is providing such an important service to the community in the Ivanhoe electorate.

Waverley Park

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation to the issue of Waverley Park. Today is the day of reckoning. I invite the minister again to admit that the government has failed to meet its election promise to the residents of the south-eastern suburbs. On page 6 of the *Herald Sun* of 12 September 1999 the Premier is reported as saying:

The first call I'll make as Premier is to (AFL chief executive) Wayne Jackson to say you can have improved bus lanes to Waverley and we'll give you revenue from our footy tipping competition.

On the next day the minister signed a letter which was used in the election campaign and which states:

Labor will fight to save Waverley and make it better. Keep it for you and your kids. Keep it for football.

... Only Labor has a plan to save Waverley and make it a first-rate sporting complex ...

Remember this Saturday — a vote for Labor is a vote for Waverley!

In April and May the minister admitted he was having discussions with the Australian Football League regarding various options for Waverley Park and with the Urban Land Corporation regarding potential creative outcomes.

What has the minister achieved? Waverley Park has had no AFL premiership matches for almost two years. It is described in the media as an eyesore; the machinery, equipment, furniture and goalposts have all gone; and it is up for sale.

On 3 April the Premier said on radio 3AW:

I assigned Justin Madden as the sports minister to do the negotiating with the AFL to try and achieve that. We lost that. The AFL have not scheduled AFL matches at Waverley Park.

Well we've lost. I'm saying we've lost —

this is the Premier —

on the scheduling of the AFL games.

Will the minister now admit that he has failed in keeping AFL football at Waverley Park?

Rowing: Barwon River upgrade

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — I also raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I noted yesterday's launch of the World Masters Games for Victoria in 2002, which includes events for Geelong — including baseball — which it is estimated will return some \$1 million to the local economy. The figures show that the staging of sporting events in Geelong is most beneficial to the community that I represent.

That is why the people of Geelong are desirous of seeing rowing events maintained on and attracted to the Barwon River. It is to assist the staging of rowing events such as the Schoolgirls Head of the River regatta, which is under threat because of the government's reluctance to fund an upgrade of the river, that I raise this matter.

On 16 May, just over a month ago, I directed to the minister's attention the study of rowing and water sports complexes around Victoria that is mentioned in the budget. I would have raised it during my contribution to the budget debate but for time constraints, so I am raising it now instead.

A month ago I asked the minister what was happening with the water sports study, given that the budget reports that it was completed in April. The minister pointed out last month that he would release the report of the study shortly. In fact, he said that he had signed off on the study for public release and for its forwarding to the relevant stakeholders.

Because this is the last adjournment debate for these sittings, it is the last opportunity to get a response from the minister on this important issue for Geelong — the proposed upgrade of the Barwon River. Does the minister know when the report will be released?

AMWU: industrial violence

Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — I raise a matter for the consideration of the Minister for Industrial Relations not only in her capacity as the relevant minister but also as the representative in this place of the Premier. I refer again to the violent rampage through two Melbourne business premises by about 40 individuals, most of them wearing balaclavas and some of them also wearing gloves to avoid the possibility of leaving fingerprints.

I welcomed the minister's comments in question time that the government does not condone that behaviour, and I welcomed the Honourable Bob Smith saying during the budget debate that he condemned such behaviour. It has been widely reported, including by the *Age*, that the group comprised members of the AMWU, led by the secretary of that union, Mr Craig Johnston.

If it is discovered that one of the individuals who were wearing balaclavas is in fact a member of the government's Manufacturing Industry Consultative Council, and if that person is charged, I ask the minister whether the government will keep that person on its consultative council, or will it ask that person to resign?

HIH Insurance: Savcor Pty Ltd

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — The matter I raise for the attention of the Leader of the Government, in her capacity as the representative in this place of the Minister for Finance, concerns a company called Savcor Pty Ltd, which operates in the electorate represented by Mark Birrell and me and also by Ted Baillieu, the honourable member for Hawthorn in another place. It is a small electrochemical engineering firm in Hawthorn that employs about 80 people. I have raised this matter in the house on two other occasions, but today the matter is truly urgent.

This small firm, a victim of the HIH collapse, has suffered because of an outstanding claim that was indemnified by HIH Insurance. The collapse has left the firm not only without insurance but facing a significant legal claim by the Victorian government through Vicroads. I refer to a letter I received today from Mr Nicolas Psaltis, the managing director of Savcor, which relates to the vigorous and never-ending pursuit by the government, through Vicroads, of the legal claim, which would bankrupt this firm and throw 80 people out of work.

The government has claimed that it has worked hard to deal with the HIH collapse and that it has been prepared to step forward and help a number of firms. But in this case — —

Hon. J. M. McQuilten — The federal government.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — No, in this case the Victorian government has claimed it has been prepared to step forward and assist firms and provide a way through the difficulties the HIH collapse has caused. But in this case a government instrumentality, Vicroads, is pursuing this firm, at a potential cost of 80 jobs. I will quote just one sentence from the letter. Mr Psaltis asks for an adjournment of the proceedings to enable a way to be found through this difficulty so

his firm and the government can come to some sort of suitable arrangement. He states:

Whereas an adjournment would allow the alternative sources of recovery (government rescue packages, re-insurance creditor payout etc.) to be assessed. Furthermore, the Victorian government is taking the moral high ground by claiming that it is trying to assist Victorian companies which have been victims of the HIH collapse, whilst actively behaving otherwise.

Will the minister consider some way of slowing down the proceedings against this particular firm or providing some sort of arrangement for it?

Member for Gippsland West: *Yellow Pages* advertisement

Hon. K. M. SMITH (South Eastern) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs because I know that her department can look into misleading behaviour by consultants. Imagine my surprise when I was looking through the *Yellow Pages* for a plumber and just happened to stumble on someone advertising themselves as a political consultant! I wondered how much a political consultant would earn, how much of their time they would have to put into their job, and how many staff and how much equipment they would have to use. I then thought a little about the staff and equipment that a member of Parliament receives. We are not issued with a great deal but I thought particularly about the additional staff and equipment given to an Independent. Some say that about an extra \$1 million of taxpayers' money goes to the Independents every year to indulge themselves a little. I checked the register of members' interests and found that no member of Parliament has disclosed being a political consultant.

Could the minister advise the house whether a member of Parliament who advertised themselves as a political consultant working from their electorate office using taxpayer-funded staff and equipment would be advertising in a false and misleading way, particularly if the advertisement paid for by the taxpayers was in at least two editions of the *Yellow Pages*? If the member was doing government consultancy work, would they be in breach of section 55 of the constitution and being in an office of profit lose their seat in Parliament? Does the minister think that the advertisements by the honourable member for Gippsland West in the other place, Susan Davies, are worthy of investigation?

Responses

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Honourable Theo Theophanous raised a matter for the Minister for Workcover

regarding the Economic Development Committee report. I will raise that with the minister and ask him to respond in the usual manner.

The Honourable Barry Bishop raised a matter with the Minister for Health with respect to mental health research in rural Victoria and in Mildura in particular. I will raise that with the minister and ask him to respond.

The Honourable Carlo Furletti raised a matter with the Minister for Health regarding the Banyule Community Health Centre and asked that an indication be provided expeditiously as to its location. I will ask the minister to respond in the usual manner.

The Honourable Mark Birrell raised the totally unacceptable behaviour of people at two workplaces in Bayswater — Johnson Tiles and Skilled Engineering. He asked whether anybody found guilty of those actions, which the police are investigating, would be allowed to remain a member of the Manufacturing Industry Consultative Council. The government would find it difficult to have somebody found guilty of an offence serving on a government body. The Manufacturing Industry Consultative Council is not in my portfolio area but, as I said, I believe the government would have extreme difficulty with someone remaining on the council if they were found guilty of a criminal offence.

The Honourable David Davis raised a matter for the Minister for Finance regarding Savcor. I will refer that to the minister and ask her to respond to the member in the usual manner.

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips raised a matter for the Minister for Transport regarding the City of Casey community bus and community bus services. I will refer that matter to the minister.

The Honourable Elaine Carbines asked whether the government would support the Office of the Regulator-General giving an exclusive franchise to proposed new gas infrastructure constructed at Barwon Heads by TXU or any other company. The Bracks government made provision in the Gas Industry Act 2001 for the provision of exclusive franchises for newly constructed infrastructure. The government did this, at least in part, because following the sale of the state's gas supply system under the Kennett government very few provisions were made for expansion of the system. The provision the Bracks government has introduced is designed to deal with this problem. Accordingly, the government would certainly support the Office of the Regulator-General considering proposals for the

application of section 27 of the Gas Industry Act for greenfields sites.

The Office of the Regulator-General has already determined that the gas extension to Barwon Heads is economically feasible. It has provided an interim policy relating to financing costs which were of concern to TXU at one point. Therefore, there are no barriers to TXU proceeding with the project regardless of whether an application is made under section 27 of the act.

The Honourable Bill Baxter raised a matter for the consideration of the Minister for Environment and Conservation regarding adequate notice for public meetings convened by the Environment Protection Authority. I will refer that matter to the minister.

The Honourable Cameron Boardman raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government regarding strengthening accountability for overseas travel by local government councillors. I will refer that matter to the minister.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — The Honourable Andrea Coote raised a matter for the Attorney-General in relation to the St Kilda Legal Service and a recent article in the local newspaper about funding shortfalls that may arise because of a review that has been undertaken into community legal services. I will pass that on to the Attorney-General for him to reply directly to the member.

The Honourable John Ross raised a matter concerning HIH and the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association. I again point out to the honourable member that I am not responsible for HIH matters other than the Housing Guarantee Fund, that being an area within my responsibility. I suggest that it would be worthwhile for the association to contact the federal government in relation to its hardship package. The federal government may be able to assist in that regard. I am sorry I do not have the details, but I will forward them to the honourable member.

The Honourable Bill Forwood raised with me a letter from Peter Anderson from APCO Service Stations about the blending of ethanol and petrol and signage thereof. I will seek advice from my department in relation to that matter and inform Mr Forwood in due course.

The Honourable Ken Smith raised a matter that is not the preserve of Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The Honourable Peter Hall raised with me the secondary school nursing program and the allocation of time regarding those nurses. I will refer the matter to the Minister for Education.

The Honourable Jeanette Powell referred to Valley Sport and regional sports assemblies. I appreciate the significance of regional sports assemblies and the advice and assistance they provide to volunteer organisations, particularly the relationship they have with the successful good sports program and the networking opportunities they provide to the program. I also appreciate that a number of the regional sports assemblies provide the older adults recreation network, which is particularly significant in regional areas.

As I have recently explained in the house, I have written to the federal sports minister, the Honourable Jackie Kelly, seeking at least a transitional funding relationship so some of the programs can be managed. At this point I have not heard from the federal minister. The government's commitment to regional sports assemblies is demonstrated by the increased level of funding over the term of the government. I hope the federal minister will at least consider transitional funding and I am awaiting advice from her in relation to that.

The Honourable Peter Katsambanis asked me about Olympic Park and the surrounding precinct. The track will remain where it is and the works will take place around the track and in and around the precinct. I would expect that the name of Olympic Park, being synonymous with the history of the precinct, is of such significance that it would remain in place well into the future.

The Honourable Neil Lucas again referred to Waverley Park. The government has fought a fight that the former government was never prepared to take up. Mr Lucas was as stony silent in government as he is vocal in opposition. While the government has remained consistent, Mr Lucas has taken the easy road of opportunism on every occasion.

The Honourable Ian Cover referred to me the water sports review. I would expect the stakeholders will be in receipt of that report this week or early next week.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 1.32 a.m. (Thursday).

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.

Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.

Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.

Wednesday, 20 June 2001

Corrections: prison costs

1439. THE HON. B. C. BOARDMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Corrections): In relation to HM Prison Ararat, HM Prison Barwon, HM Prison Beechworth, HM Prison Bendigo, HM Prison Dhurringile, HM Prison Langi Kal Kal, HM Prison Loddon, HM Melbourne Assessment Prison, HM Prison Tarrengower, HM Prison Won Wron, Fulham Correctional Centre, Metropolitan Women's Correctional Centre and Port Phillip Prison, respectively —

- (a) What was the actual annual average cost of keeping a prisoner for each of the years ended 30 June 1999 and 30 June 2000.
- (b) What was the budgeted annual average cost of keeping a prisoner for each of the years ended 30 June 1999 and 30 June 2000.
- (c) What is the budgeted annual average cost of keeping a prisoner for the year ending 30 June 2001.
- (d) How many prisoners were actually held as at 30 June 1999, 31 December 1999, 30 June 2000 and 31 December 2000.
- (e) What was the design capacity as at 30 June 1999, 31 December 1999, 30 June 2000 and 31 December 2000.
- (f) What was the operational cost of running the prison for each of the years ended 30 June 1999 and 30 June 2000.
- (g) How many — (i) full time; (ii) part time; (iii) casual; and (iv) full time equivalent staff were employed as at 30 June 1999, 31 December 1999, 30 June 2000 and 31 December 2000.
- (h) What was the average staff/prisoner ratio as at 30 June 1999, 31 December 1999, 30 June 2000 and 31 December 2000.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

- 1. An all inclusive average cost of keeping a prisoner for the year ended 30 June 1999 was \$58,420. This includes depreciation for capital infrastructure and expenditure by other departments (e.g. education & training). The average cost per prisoner for the year ended 30 June 2000 was \$58,918.
- 2. The budgeted annual average cost of keeping a prisoner for the years ended 30 June 1999 and 30 June 2000 was \$59,000.
- 3. The budgeted annual average cost of keeping a prisoner for the year ending 30 June 2001 is \$59,000.
- 4. & 5. This information is provided in the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner publication, The Victorian Prison System Statistical Profile 1995/1996 – 1999/2000.

6. See table 2 below.

Table 2. Direct Prison Operational Costs (\$ '000)

Prison	1998/1999	1999/2000
Ararat	*	9,345
Barwon	*	15,391
Beechworth	*	4,281
Bendigo	*	3,000
Dhurringile	*	4,103
Fulham	25,455	26,490
Langi Kal Kal	*	3,465
Loddon	*	11,397
MAP	*	15,094
MWCC	9,533	10,583
Port Phillip	30,099	34,772
Tarrengower	*	1,580
Won Wron	*	3,772

*Breakdown of costs for CORE prisons not available

7. & 8. Staffing information is readily available only for prisons operated by CORE – the Public Correctional Enterprise.

In relation to prisons operated by CORE, the information sought in parts (7) and (8) is set out in table 3 below:

Table 3. Staffing Category Breakdown, CORE prisons, including staff/prisoner ratio.

Prison	30 June 1999						31 December 1999						30 June 2000						31 December 2000					
	Full Time	Part Time	Cas	Total	F T E	Staff Pris Ratio	Full Time	Part Time	Cas	Total	F T E	Staff Pris Ratio	Full Time	Part Time	Cas	Total	F T E	Staff Pris Ratio	Full Time	Part Time	Cas	Total	F T E	Staff Pris Ratio
Ararat	107	0	19	126	111	.43	104	0	22	126	109	.39	103	0	34	137	114	.41	105	2	36	143	114	.39
Barwon	128	0	54	182	156	.59	123	0	69	192	166	.57	121	0	63	184	180	.63	136	2	43	181	156	.5
Beechworth	47	0	14	61	51	.44	47	0	22	69	59	.5	50	0	7	57	52	.4	48	0	6	54	49	.37
Bendigo	35	0	5	40	35	.48	35	1	4	40	37	.47	37	0	4	41	37	.47	48	0	6	54	49	.63
Dhurringile	40	0	23	63	41	.35	39	0	23	62	42	.36	40	0	3	43	43	.36	44	0	10	54	46	.38
DPFC (MWCC)																			110	1	7	118	116	.7
Langi Kal Kal	34	0	19	53	34	.36	35	0	19	54	36	.49	34	0	25	59	35	.38	32	1	19	52	33	.3
Loddon	112	0	14	126	126	.48	107	1	27	135	123	.42	115	1	31	147	131	.43	122	2	26	150	139	.45
MAP	157	1	24	182	180	.59	151	1	32	184	175	.6	156	1	23	180	171	.6	159	3	11	173	172	.59
Tarngower	14	1	3	18	18	.5	15	0	3	18	18	.5	15	0	2	17	16	.47	17	0	2	19	18	.37
Won Wron	35	0	2	37	36	.35	34	0	2	36	35	.35	34	0	1	35	34	.27	36	0	2	38	37	.3

Note:

1. DPFC is Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, formerly known as MWCC came under CORE management during December 2000 quarter
2. Staff /Prisoner Ratio has been calculated by dividing the FTE by the average number of prisoners for that location during the period
3. The FTE has been rounded to the nearest whole number

Environment and Conservation: dispute mediation

1629. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to dispute mediation covering the period 31 October 2000 to 22 March 2001:

- (a). What disputes has the Minister or the Department endeavoured to settle through mediation.
- (b). Who were the mediators appointed.
- (c). What has been the estimated cost to the Department for each mediation.
- (d). What have been the outcomes of each mediation.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Bracks Government is committed to working with communities to ensure that they are involved in government decision making. Mediation and conciliation provides an opportunity to resolve issues before expensive legal costs are incurred.

- (a) In relation to the period 31 October 2000 to 22 March 2001, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment settled by mediation a dispute regarding the integrity of the Porepunkah waste water treatment ponds and the proposed location of a winter storage pond involving North East Water. A small part of the Porepunkah community had been concerned at the process put in place by North East Water Authority to resolve this issue.
- (b) The mediator appointed was Mr Bob Smith, Senior Associate at the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne.
- (c) The cost of the mediation from 31 October 2000 to 22 March 2001 was approximately \$20,000.
- (d) The mediation process is now complete and North East Water is implementing the preferred option for the upgrade of the sewerage treatment ponds which was announced by the Minister on 6 March 2001.

Premier: gaming revenue

1685. THE HON. J. W. G. ROSS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What has been the tax revenue gained by the Government through electronic gaming in the year 2000 in the suburbs of — (i) Beaumaris; (ii) Bentleigh; (iii) Bentleigh East; (iv) Black Rock; (v) Braeside; (vi) Brighton; (vii) Brighton East; (viii) Cheltenham; (ix) Cheltenham East; (x) Cheltenham North; (xi) Dingley; (xii) Elsternwick; (xiii) Elwood; (xiv) Hampton; (xv) Heatherton; (xvi) Highett; (xvii) McKinnon; (xviii) Mentone (part); (xix) Moorabbin; (xx) Moorabbin East; (xxi) Mordialloc; (xxii) Oakleigh South; (xxiii) Ormond; (xxiv) Parkdale; (xxv) Sandringham; and (xxvi) Springvale South.
- (b) What funds have been provided from the Community Support Fund in the year 2000 in the suburbs of — (i) Beaumaris; (ii) Bentleigh; (iii) Bentleigh East; (iv) Black Rock; (v) Braeside; (vi) Brighton; (vii) Brighton East; (viii) Cheltenham; (ix) Cheltenham East; (x) Cheltenham North; (xi) Dingley; (xii) Elsternwick; (xiii) Elwood; (xiv) Hampton; (xv) Heatherton; (xvi) Highett; (xvii) McKinnon; (xviii) Mentone (part); (xix) Moorabbin; (xx) Moorabbin East; (xxi) Mordialloc; (xxii) Oakleigh South; (xxiii) Ormond; (xxiv) Parkdale; (xxv) Sandringham; and (xxvi) Springvale South.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The secrecy provisions in section 139 of the Gaming Machine Control Act 1991 limit the information that I can provide about the tax revenue gained by the Government through electronic gaming in individual suburbs. I would be contravening the Act if I were to divulge the information requested, as it would be possible to calculate details of the commercial affairs of individual venues.

However, I can report consolidated figures of the total State duty and contributions to the Community Support Fund.

Total State duty for the period 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2000 gained by the Government through electronic gaming in all twenty-six suburbs was \$33,651,616. The total contributions to the Community Support Fund for the same period in the same suburbs came to \$7,561,858.

- (b) Funds from the Community Support Fund can be allocated to programs specific to particular local communities, or to programs of statewide benefit.

In 2000, \$181.4 million of CSF funds were committed to projects of statewide benefit. This represented 88.4 per cent of total commitments of the CSF in 2000.

The Government did not receive any applications for funding of projects specific to these suburbs.

Transport: W class trams

1688. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the details of all expenses incurred by the Department of Infrastructure and the Office of Public Transport, in attempts to return the ‘W Class’ trams to service on the metropolitan tram network.

ANSWER:

Expenses at the time the question was asked were \$186,463 in accordance with the following table. A further \$288,450 is committed for an additional 10 tram sets of track brakes.

Item	Qty	Date	Amount
Equipment			
TRAS Data Logger	5	Oct-00	\$32,560 (plus card reader and software)
	5	Feb-01	\$40,843
Track Brake	2 sets	Mar-01	\$100,507
Consultants & Engineering Services			
S Braham		Mar-01	\$1,716
G Rumble		Nov-00	\$96
G Rumble		Dec-00	\$96
G Vallance		Oct-00	\$2,043
Worley Services		Jan-01	\$8,602
			\$186,463

Transport: City Circle trams

1689. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the patronage figures for the City Circle Trams for each of the months from January 2000 until February 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

2000

January	416,433
February	330,633
March	309,024
April	168,545
May	389,461
June	271,248
July	150,448
August	111,229
September	112,562
October	161,971
November	131,654
December	153,053

2001

January	187,087
February	142,577

Transport: railway station staff

1693. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): Which railway stations have been allocated additional station staff since September 1999.

ANSWER:

1. The Bracks' Government made a commitment to introduce 100 additional staff throughout the metropolitan rail network with priority to be given to outer suburban locations to meet the safety needs of passengers arriving at stations late into the evening.
2. On the 20 November 2000, the Bracks Government announced that 100 Roving Safety Officers would be introduced to improve personal security and customer services on Melbourne's train network.
3. The 100 Roving Safety Officers patrol Melbourne's train network including stations, car parks and on-board vehicles.
4. These new Roving Safety Officers operate from the base stations of Noble Park, Essendon, Mount Waverley, Regent, Eaglemont and East Ringwood and travel throughout the train network on a seven day a week rotating roster.
5. In addition to this Government initiative, both Bayside Trains and Connex Trains will be converting 5 existing Non Premium stations to Premium status which will increase station staff by an additional 12 staff.
6. The new Premium Stations will be at Narre Warren, Mooroolbark, Surrey Hills, Bayswater and Macleod Stations. These Stations will be staffed from first to last train.

State and Regional Development: Regional Infrastructure Development Fund

1720. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): In relation to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund:

- (a) Who sits on the Fund Interdepartmental Committee.

- (b) How many Committee meetings were held in 2000.
- (c) How many Committee meetings have been held so far in 2001.
- (d) How many applications have been received in 2000 and 2001, respectively.
- (e) How many applications have been rated 'higher priority project proposals' in 2000 and 2001, respectively.
- (f) How many applications have been rated 'lower priority project proposals' in 2000 and 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

The Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Interdepartmental Committee (RIDC) comprises senior representatives of the Departments of State and Regional Development, Infrastructure and Premier and Cabinet. A representative of the Department of Treasury and Finance also sits on the Committee in an observer role, when applications seeking RIDF funding of \$2 million or more are under consideration.

Seventeen meetings of the RIDC were held in 2000.

As at 22 May, seven meetings of the RIDC have been held in 2001.

In 2000, 165 applications were submitted to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. As at 22 May, 19 applications have been submitted in 2001.

During 2000, 15 projects were rated as 'higher priority projects', and as at 22 May, 9 projects have received this rating in 2001. It should be noted that some applications received in one calendar year may not be assigned a priority until the following calendar year, as additional information may be sought or provided by the applicant to allow full and proper assessment of applications. Furthermore, it should also be noted that assessment of a number of applications has been deferred, at either the applicant's or Department's request, pending resolution of outstanding issues.

During 2000, 100 applications were deemed 'lower priority projects', and as at 22 May, 14 applications have received this rating in 2001.

Transport: Monash Freeway upgrade — Gardiners Creek

1722. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): In relation to Gardiners Creek between Warrigal Road and the Yarra River and the upgrade of the Monash Freeway:

- (a) Were risk assessments carried out in respect of private properties along the Creek, when and by whom.
- (b) What works were carried out in relation to the Gardiners Creek water flow and by whom and at what cost.
- (c) Who requested such works to be carried out.
- (d) Did the works decrease the risk of flooding of private properties along the Creek.

ANSWER:

- (a) I am not aware of any formal risk assessments being carried out in respect of private properties along the creek.
- (b) A section of Gardiners Creek was relocated in a tunnel under Burke Road as part of the Grade Separation Project. This project was undertaken to eliminate the signalised intersections on the South Eastern Arterial at Toorak Road, Toorong Road and Burke Road. Some realignment and reshaping of the creek was also

undertaken at several locations as part of the project, including the creek crossing under Toorak Road. The works on Gardiners Creek were carried out as part of the \$76.5 million contract awarded to Leighton Contractors.

- (c) The contract was awarded by Vicroads.
- (d) The creek works decreased the risk of flooding in areas such as the section between Burke Road and Tooronga Road, which had been subject to frequent flooding prior to the upgrade of the South Eastern Freeway.

Education: schools — new funding model

1729. THE HON. ANDREW BRIDESON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): In relation to the new funding model for Victorian Government schools, introduced for the 2001 school year:

- (a) How many schools require transitional funding in 2001 as a result of this new funding model.
- (b) Which schools are involved in this transitional funding arrangement.
- (c) How much money is the Victorian Government providing for this transitional funding.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

I refer the Honourable Member to the Report on Ministerial Portfolios by the Auditor General.

Education: *Parent Link* magazine

1730. THE HON. ANDREW BRIDESON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): What is the total cost to the taxpayer of the new “Parent Link” magazine.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The approximate cost of Parent Link is \$70,000 per issue or approximately 7 cents per parent.

Education: schools — sample testing

1732. THE HON. ANDREW BRIDESON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): In relation to the Government’s promise to begin sample testing in Year 7 in 2001:

- (a) What will be the sample size for these proposed tests.
- (b) What method will be used in collating the sample for the testing and on what date will this testing occur.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

- (a) All schools have been invited by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to participate in the Year 7 testing program in 2001.
- (b) The testing will occur on August 21 and 22.

An approved psychometric model will be used by the contractor to collate the results of the sample schools to determine the statewide achievement levels in literacy and numeracy, and to report these results against the national benchmarks.

State and Regional Development: Regional Economic Development program

1735. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Further to the answer to question no. 1469, given in this House on 1 May 2001, regarding the Regional Economic Development Program:

- (a) Which rural councils were the recipients of the 22 grants approved.
- (b) Which private enterprise firms were the recipients of the 22 grants approved.
- (c) For what specific program did each of the individual recipients use the grant.
- (d) What is the anticipated total funding to be made available for this Program in 2000–01.
- (e) What was the total funding allocation for this Program in 1999–2000.
- (f) What are the eligibility criteria for funding under this program.

ANSWER:

As the Honourable member would be aware, investment attraction grants to firms are regarded as commercial in confidence and neither the current Victorian Government or the previous Victorian Government provided details of these grants.

In relation to other matters, such as assistance to regions through local councils, these matters are disclosed in the Department's annual report, as indeed they were under the previous Government. The annual report will be available later this year.

The anticipated total funding made available for this Program in 2000/2001 is \$1,492,000.

The total funding allocation for this Program in 1999/2000 was \$1,650,000.

The eligibility criteria for this Program outlined in Attachment 1.

ATTACHMENT 1

Eligibility Criteria - Regional Economic Development Program

Investment Support – the focus is on investment projects which involve the expansion of existing country Victorian firms, or the attraction of new or existing firms to country Victoria. All applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria

- the firm must be operating or intending to operate in the manufacturing or tradeable services sector
- the project has been assessed as commercially viable and of benefit to the region
- the firm can demonstrate the financial strength and management capability to implement the investment proposal

Support for Existing Businesses – this overall program provides assistance either directly to businesses based in rural Victoria, or to local Councils, to ensure access for rural firms to a range of business development programs. These programs are Business Development Program, Enterprise Development Grant and Business Planning Workshops. The general eligibility criteria for applicants is as follows

- Need to be Victorian based or Australian owned and intending to locate in Victoria
- Must have sound management ability
- Must be committed to strategic planning and growth
- Must be financially viable

State and Regional Development: Council and Regional Development Bodies program for economic development

1736. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Further to the answer to question no. 1470, given in this House on 1 May 2001, regarding the Council and Regional Development Bodies Program for economic development:

- (a) Which councils were the recipients of the 38 grants approved.
- (b) Which regional development bodies were the recipients of the 38 grants approved.
- (c) Which service providers were the recipients of the 38 grants approved.
- (d) For what specific project did each of the individual recipients use the grant.
- (e) What is the total funding allocated for this Program since 1 July 2000.
- (f) What is the anticipated total funding to be made available for this Program in 2000-2001.
- (g) What was the total funding allocation for this Program in 1999-2000.
- (h) Was all the allocation of funding for 1999-2000 distributed.
- (i) What are the eligibility criteria for funding under this program.

ANSWER:

In relation to assistance to regions through local councils and regional development bodies for economic development, these matters are disclosed in the Department's annual report. The annual report will be available later this year.

The total funding allocated for the Council and Regional Development Body program in 2000/2001 is approximately \$4,619,000, made up of \$2,619,000 for the Regional Group component and \$2,000,000 for the Priority Project component.

Total funding allocation for this Program in 1999/2000 was \$1,500,000. The expenditure for the program in 1999/2000 was \$316,170.

The eligibility criteria of this Program are outlined in Attachment 1.

ATTACHMENT 1

Eligibility Criteria

Regional Group Projects

A matching grant to be made available to either groups of Councils, Regional Development Bodies or individual Councils for projects that encompass a broader regional application and multiple Local Government Areas (within Council areas as defined under Section 3(a) of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act 1999).

The following criteria will apply:-

- A matching dollar for dollar contribution to be provided (not including salaries and operating expenditure of the applicant organisation, except where the person or persons are to be employed specifically for that project);
- The project must relate to a new activity or project and be business/economic related;
- The project must be consistent with the Department of State and Regional Development's regional program;
- Councils may apply individually for assistance, but the project must have a regional perspective beyond the applicant council's boundaries;
- The Regional Development Body must be an incorporated not for profit organisation;
- Where councils combine, a council must be nominated as the auspice body; and
- Funding will not be as of right.

Priority Projects

Grants will be made available on a dollar for dollar basis to Councils and/or Service Authorities in regional Victoria for projects that can be demonstrated to be of a priority to the Council.

The following criteria will apply:-

- A matching dollar for dollar contribution to be provided (not including salaries and operating expenditure of the applicant organisation except where the person or persons are to be employed specifically for that project);
- The project must be business/economic related;
- The project must be consistent with the Department of State and Regional Development's regional program;
- Funding will not be as of right.

State and Regional Development: local initiatives program

1737. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Further to the answer to question no. 1472, given in this House on 1 May 2001, regarding the local initiatives program:

- (a) Which councils were the recipients of the 10 grants approved.
- (b) Which community organisations were the recipients of the 10 grants approved.
- (c) Which private firms were the recipients of the 10 grants approved.
- (d) Which environmental organisations were the recipients of the 10 grants approved.
- (e) For what specific events did each of the individual recipients use the grant.
- (f) What are the eligibility criteria for funding under this program.

ANSWER:

In relation to assistance to regions through the Rural Leadership and Community Events Program, these matters are disclosed in the Department's annual report. The annual report will be available later this year.

Councils from the 47 Rural and Regional Councils and 9 urban-rural fringe Councils, and incorporated bodies are eligible to apply for funding under the Rural Leadership and Community Events Program. Eligible applicants are required to demonstrate that the proposed leadership project or community event:

- Has strong support from the community
- Addresses the needs of rural and regional populations
- Involves local people and fosters community partnerships
- Provides a range of short and long term benefits to the community
- Promotes positive community messages
- Is viable and likely to be effective.

State and Regional Development: local initiatives program

1738. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Given that the local initiatives program has been consolidated under the Rural Leadership and Community Events Program:

- (a) What is the total funding allocated for this consolidated program.
- (b) What is the breakdown of funding for — (i) the Local Initiatives Program; (ii) the Rural Leadership Program; and (iii) the Community Events Program.
- (c) What is the total number of grants approved under this program since 1 July 2000.
- (d) What is the breakdown of the number of grants approved for — (i) the Local Initiatives Program; (ii) the Rural Leadership Program; and (iii) the Community Events Program since 1 July 2000.
- (e) Who are the recipients of each of the grants under — (i) the Local Initiatives Program; (ii) the Rural Leadership Program; and (iii) the Community Events Program since 1 July 2000.
- (f) What are the eligibility criteria for funding under this program.

ANSWER:

The consolidated Rural Leadership and Community Events program has total funding of \$3.705 million over a three-year period. There is no breakdown of funding for the consolidated program.

In relation to assistance to regions through the Rural Leadership and Community Events Program, these matters are disclosed in the Department's annual report. The annual report will be available later this year.

Councils from the 47 Rural and Regional Councils and 9 urban-rural fringe Councils, and incorporated bodies are eligible to apply for grant funding. Eligible applicants are required to demonstrate that the proposed leadership project or community event:

- Has strong support from the community
- Addresses the needs of rural and regional populations
- Involves local people and fosters community partnerships
- Provides a range of short and long term benefits to the community
- Promotes positive community messages
- Is viable and likely to be effective.

State and Regional Development: Rural Communities program

1739. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Further to the answer to Question No. 1473, given in this House on 1 May 2001, regarding the Rural Communities Program:

- (a) Which 31 councils were the recipients of the 77 grants approved.
- (b) For what specific projects did each of the 31 councils use the grant.
- (c) What are the eligibility criteria for funding under this program.

ANSWER:

In relation to assistance to regions through local councils, these details are disclosed in the Department's annual report. The annual report will be available later this year.

The eligibility criteria for Rural Community Development Program funding requires that projects:

- Demonstrate broad community and financial support
- Provide for long term community benefits
- Renew and enhance community facilities
- Maximise e-commerce technology and 'IT' opportunities
- Do not require recurrent funding
- Are supported by a feasibility analysis, and
- The land on which the development is proposed should be either:
Municipal property, a Crown reserve, land owned by a public authority or land held for public purposes by trustees.

State and Regional Development: Living Regions, Living Suburbs Support Fund

1740. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): Further to the answer to question no. 1474, given in this House on 1 May 2001, regarding the Living Regions, Living Suburbs Support Fund:

- (a) Which councils were the recipients of the 11 grants approved.
- (b) Which State Government departments were the recipients of the 11 grants approved.
- (c) Which not-for-profit community organisations were the recipients of the 11 grants approved.
- (d) For what specific projects did each of the individual recipients use the grant.
- (e) What are the eligibility criteria for funding under this program.

ANSWER:

Assistance to the regions through the Living Regions Living Suburbs Program are disclosed in the Department's annual report. The annual report will be available later this year.

Eligibility criteria for this Program are outlined in Attachment 1.

ATTACHMENT 1

Eligibility Criteria - Living Regions Living Suburbs Program

New opportunities in IT

This initiative is designed to increase the access of Victorians to new information technologies within a framework that complements the government's policy document 'Connecting Victoria'. Both statewide and regionally focused programs will be supported.

Urban and Regional Renewal

This initiative is targeted towards projects that can demonstrate revitalisation of local communities. A particular focus will be towards areas with a high level of disadvantage, for example as shown through the proportion of population unemployed and/or local access to services and facilities.

Key elements of this initiative include:

- An emphasis on capital projects but can include limited recurrent funding or funding for studies which will lead to capital works. The capital works projects must be on land that is in public ownership.
- Projects that can demonstrate revitalisation of local communities.
- Projects which link together a range of existing government programs to better target the needs of disadvantaged areas
- Heritage and/or tourism infrastructure programs must have a related economic value added component.
- The opportunities for integration of Commonwealth, State and Local Government programs and for cross-sectoral action in effective partnerships, including with the private sector.

Major Events in Regional and Rural Victoria

This initiative is designed to boost economic activity through support for major events in regional Victoria.

The events supported will generally be of a sports and/or cultural nature, however funding will also be available to assist with major conferences and /or 'expos' in regional areas.

Living Country Racing

This initiative is designed to assist with the upgrade and improvement of facilities at country thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing venues.

Assistance will be directed towards capital works projects and significant asset equipment purchases that have a demonstrable community benefit in addition to the racing aspect.

Projects that have a recurrent expenditure component will not be considered.

Housing: social housing innovations project

1758. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing): In relation to the Minister's Social Housing Innovations Project:

- (a) What councils has the Minister liaised with in order to build partnerships with local government.
- (b) What councils does the Minister currently work with in terms of the Social Housing Innovations Project.
- (c) What arrangements have the councils and Government arrived at in each of these scenarios.

ANSWER:

- (a) In relation to the Social Housing Innovations Project, the Office of Housing notified all Local Government Agencies of the request for proposals process.
- (b) The Office of Housing is currently working with a range of councils in relation to their proposals to the Social Housing Innovations Project. The Office of Housing is available to discuss with all Victorian Councils their proposals and objectives for social housing. Those Councils with current proposals under discussion include:

Boroondara City Council
 City of Darebin
 City of Glen Eira
 Hume City Council
 City of Moreland
 City of Port Phillip
 City of Whittlesea
 City of Wodonga
 Macedon Ranges Shire Council
 Mount Alexander Shire
 Shire of Campaspe
 Warrnambool City Council

- (c) The Office of Housing expects to establish funding contracts for the development of approved housing projects resulting from the recent Request for Proposals with the following councils:

City of Moreland
 City of Port Phillip
 City of Wodonga
 Macedon Ranges Shire Council
 Shire of Campaspe

Housing: social housing innovations project

1759. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing): In relation to the Minister's Social Housing Innovations Project:

- (a) Has the Minister approached housing organisations in the City of Port Phillip; if so, which organisations has the Minister approached.
- (b) What organisations is the Minister currently working with in relation to the aforementioned project.

ANSWER:

- (a) The Office of Housing is managing the process for developing Social Housing projects with a number of organisations. This process commenced with a formal Request for Proposals advertised in major newspapers on 4 November 2000.
- (b) The Office of Housing is currently working with the following organisations in the City of Port Phillip, in relation to the Social Housing Innovations Project:
- City of Port Phillip
 - Geelong PowerHouse Co
 - Jewish Community Services
 - Prahran Mission
 - St Kilda Housing Assoc Inc
 - St Kilda Rooming House Issues Group Inc

Community Services: Intellectual Disability Services State Plan

1760. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): What are the names of all organisations consulted during the current preparation of the Intellectual Disability Services State Plan.

ANSWER:

The Department of Human Services State Disability Plan Project Team has provided the following information in regard to your request for the names of the organisations consulted during the development of the State Disability Plan. As the Plan has not been finalised at this point the information is accurate as of the time of preparation.

People Directly Receiving Information on the State Disability Plan

The State Disability Plan Project Team has provided information regarding the development of the Plan directly to 2,611 people who are registered on the State Plan’s mailing list. Information provided to date includes a series of six consultation papers, four information bulletins and the Consultation Report.

Overview of the Consultation Process

The State Disability Plan is being developed in partnership with the Victorian community. The consultation process was informed by people with a disability, their parents, families and carers, service providers and members of the broader community about their views and the issues they believe need to be addressed in the Plan.

To Date, the consultation process has operated on a number of levels:

Community Consultations

Community Consultations provided an opportunity for people with a disability, their parents, families and carers, service providers, community groups, local government and members of the broader community to have direct input into the State Disability Plan. A total of 789 people attended 22 community consultations held at a range of locations across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held for people with a disability, their parents, families and carers. The focus groups were designed to maximise opportunities for people with a disability to have input into the consultation process. People who attended the focus groups included:

- People with complex communication needs
- People who are Deaf, Deafblind or hearing impaired
- People with an acquired brain injury
- People with an intellectual disability
- People with neurological impairment
- People with degenerative and genetic disorders
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Parents who have a disability.

A total of 537 people attended 42 focus groups held across metropolitan and regional Victoria

Service Provider and Regional Department of Human Services Staff Forums

These forums were held to ensure that the staff directly involved in managing and delivering services for people with a disability had adequate opportunity to contribute to the Plan. A total of 317 people attended 17 forums across Victoria.

Written feedback

Written feedback was received by post, email, via the Internet and other means of communication appropriate to people’s abilities. The written feedback came from a variety of sources, including:

- People with a disability
- Parents, families and carers
- Service providers in the disability services sector

- Providers of generic health and community services
- Local government
- Other interested individuals and organisations (such as academics).

More than 140 written submissions were received on a range of issues which people believe need to be addressed by the State DisAbility Services Plan

Overall Participation in the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process

In total, more than 1,700 people participated in the consultation process. Information collated from organisation details on the mailing list and from participant registration forms at each of the forums has been used as the basis for providing a list of organisations consulted to date in the development of the State DisAbility Plan.

Approximately 930 organisations have participated in the development of the State DisAbility Plan to date. Some of the larger organisations have a sub-organisational or regional structure; each of these agencies has been counted as a separate organisation.

The attached list provides details of the 930 organisations that have participated in the consultation process for the State DisAbility Plan.

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
A.R.B.I.A.S. Inc
Abbyville
Abercare Family Services
ABI Slow to Recover Program
Able Community Services Inc
Aboriginal Community Elders Services Inc
Aboriginal Community Liaison Interlink HACC
Access Audit Australia
Access Employment Sunraysia Inc
Access for all Abilities Program - Wyndham City Council
Access Inc
Ace info
ACR & RSV Alpha West
ACROD
Action for Community Living Inc
Action On Disability Within Ethnic Communities Inc
Action Resource Network
Active Learning in Disabilities
AdS Training & Consultancy Pty Ltd
AGAPI CARE Inc
Alamein Community Committee Inc
Alkira Centre-Box Hill Inc
Allinjarra Aboriginal Association Inc.
Alpine Health
Alpine Shire Council
AMIDA
Anchorage Hostel
Anglicare Gippsland
Anglicare Victoria
Ansett
Anti Cancer Council
APEX Australia - Victoria Division
AQA Victoria Limited
Arafemi

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Araluen Centre (ATSS & Residential)
Arana Family Services
Ararat & District Disabled Persons' Association Inc
Ararat Rural City Council
Ararat/Stawell Advocacy Services
ARN - Disability Justice Advocacy
Arona Family Services
ARPA
Arthritis Foundation of Victoria Inc
ArtLife
Arts Access Society Inc
Arts Project Australia Inc
Ashburton Support Services
Ashcare Inc
ASPIRE Inc.
ASR Research
Association for Children With A Disability Inc
Association of Support for Care Homes
Austin & Repatriation Medical Centre
Australia Homecare
Australian Community Support Organisation
Australian Home Care Services Pty Ltd
Australian Huntington's Disease Association (Vic) Inc
Australian International Health Institute
Australian Labor Party - Strzelecki Hill Branch
Australian Physiotherapy Association (Victorian Branch)
Australian-Polish Community Services Inc
Autism Victoria Inc
Autistic Citizens Residential & Resources Society of Victoria
Autistic Family Support Association Inc
Avalon Centre Inc
Aware Industries Ltd.
B.R.I.T.
Bacchus Marsh - Melton Stroke Support Group
Back To Back Theatre Inc
Bailey House
Bairnsdale Regional Health Service
Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd
Ballarat City Council
Ballarat Community Centre
Ballarat Community Education Centre Co-operative Ltd
Ballarat Community Health
Ballarat Health Services
Ballarat Parish Mission Outreach Centre
Ballarat Regional Industries (Incorporated)
Bellarine Peninsula Community Health Service
Balwyn Welfare Association
Banyule City Council
Banyule Community Health Service
Baptist Community Care Ltd
Baptist Union of Victoria - Boronia Baptist Church

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Barwon Disability Resource Council
Barwon Health
Barwon Psychiatric Resources Council
Barwon South West Carer Respite Centre
Barwon's Health (B.A.S.S)
Bass Coast Shire Council
Bass Valley Community Group Inc
Baw Baw Shire Council
Bayside City Council
Bear in Mind
Beaufort & Skipton Health Service
Bedford St Outreach Services Inc
Bellarine Peninsula Community Health Service Inc
Benalla and District Support Group for Children with Special Needs Inc.
Benalla Support Group for Children with Special Needs
Bendigo Access Employment Inc
Bendigo Community Health Services Inc
Bendigo Community Preparation Program Inc
Bendigo Dja Dja Wrung Aboriginal Association Inc.
Bendigo Health Care Group
Bendigo Post Polio Support Group
Bendigo Uniting Church Outreach
Bentleigh Bayside Community Health Service Inc
Berry Street Incorporated
Bethany Family Support Inc
Bethlehem Community Inc
Bethlehem Hospital Inc
Better Hearing Australia (Victoria Branch) Inc
Blind Citizens Australia
Boroondara City Council
Borough of Queenscliffe
Brain Foundation Victoria Limited
Brighton and Districts Branch Helping Hand Association for Intellectually Disabled Inc
Brimbank City Council
Broad Insight Group Inc
Broadmeadows Disability Services (Helping Hand Association)
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Brunswick Public Tenants Association
Bulleen and Templestowe Community House Inc
Buloke Shire Council
Bundoora Extended Care Centre
Burke and Beyond - The Community and Further Education Association Inc
Caladenia Day Centre Inc
Campaspe Shire Council
Canterbury Centre
Caraniche Pty Ltd
Cardinia Community Health Services Inc
Cardinia Shire Council
Care Connect Inc
Carer Link West
Carer Links North

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Carer Respite Centre
Carer Respite Centre Southern Region
Carer Support Services
Carers & Parents Support Group Inc
Carers Association Victoria Inc
Carers Choice- Central Grampians
Carlton Contact Neighbourhood House Inc
Carlton Senior Citizens Centre Inc
Caroline Chisholm Society
Casey City Council
Casey Community Health Services
Castlemaine District Community Health Centre
CBAS
CCDH
Centacare Community Connections
Central Access Limited
Central Bayside Community Health Services Inc
Central Bayside Disability Service
Central Gippsland Health Service
Central Gippsland Institute of T.A.F.E.
Central Goldfields Shire Council
Central Grampians Primary care office
Central Highland Dairy Consultant Committee
Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria
Centrelink
Cerebral Palsy Support Network
Cheryl Nash and Associates Pty Ltd
Child and Family Care Network
Children Australia Inc
Children's Welfare Association of Victoria
Children's Protection Society Inc
Chinese Community Social Society Centre
Chisholm Institute of TAFE - Dandenong Campus
Chisholm Institute of Technical & Further Education - Frankston Campus - Work Education
Chiscare
Christie Centre Inc
Church Of Christ Community Care
CIDA - Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies
CIPAID - Community and Institution Parents Action in Disability
Citizen Advocacy - Inner East
Citizen Advocacy Western Region Inc
City of Heidelberg Handicapped Persons Bureau Ltd
Client Services Heidelberg
Co As It Italian Assistance Association
Co Care
Co Care Gippsland
Cobaw Community Health Service Inc
Cobram & District Intellectually Handicapped Persons Welfare Assoc Inc
Cobram Adult Training Centre
Colac Adult and Community Education Inc
Colac Citizen Advocacy Program Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Colac Community Development Association Inc
Colac Community Health Services
Colac-Otway Disability Accommodation Inc
Colac-Otway Shire Council
Colanda Centre
Collaborations: planning with your community Pty Ltd
Collins St Baptist Church
Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service Australia
Communication Aid User Society Inc
Communitique Pty Ltd
Community Access Recreation Project - Northern Region
Community Access Recreation Project - Southern Region
Community Accessibility Inc
Community Accommodation Support Team Inc
Community Care
Community Connections (Vic) Ltd
Community Housing Project
Community Interlink
Community Interlink Shepparton
Community Living and Respite Services Inc
Community Options Brokerage Service Inc
Community Recreation Outreach Program (CROP)
Community Visitors
Connect Support
Connor House Respite Care Service Inc
Continuing Education Centre (Albury-Wodonga) Inc
Cooinda Day Training Centre Terang Inc
Cooinda Family Support Group Inc
Cooinda Hill
Corangamite Shire Council
Corio Bay Innovators Inc
Corryong Parent Support Group
Council for the Disabled Inc
Council of Adult Education (Consortium)
Country Wheels News Letter Group Inc
Cystic Fibrosis Victoria Inc
DAIS
Dame Pattie Menzies Centre Inc
Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative
Dandenong area Community Visitors program
Dandenong Valley Job Support Inc
Darebin City Council
Darebin Community Health Service
Darebin Youth Services
DDLAS
Deaf Blind Association
Deaf Communication Centre
Deaf Infolink
Deaf-Blind Association
Deakin University - Student Services
DEAL Communication Centre Inc.

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Delatite Shire Council
Department of Education, Employment and Training
Department of Family & Community Services
Department of Human Services
Department of Infrastructure
Department of Justice
Department of Premier & Cabinet
Department of Psychology and Disability Studies, RMIT University
Department of Social Work and Social Policy
Department of Sport & Recreation
Dhauwurd-Wurrung Portland & District Aboriginal Elderly Citizens
Dianella Community Health Inc
Disability Access and Information
Disability Advocacy and Information Service Wodonga
Disability Attendant Support Service Inc (DASSI)
Disability Committee for Glen Eira
Disability Discrimination Legal Service
Disability Employment Action Centre (DEAC)
Disability Foundation of Australia Inc
Disability Justice Advocacy
Disability Resources Centre Inc
Disability Rights Victoria
Disability Services Commission
Disability Support and Housing Alliance
Disability Support Pensioners Australia Inc.
Disabled Motorists (Victoria)
Distinctive Options Ltd
Diversity@Work
Dja Dja Wrung
Djerriwarrh Health Service
Do Care Geelong Co-operative Ltd
Doncaster Community Care and Counselling Centre Inc
Doutta Galla Community Health Service Inc
Doveton Neighbourhood Place Inc
Downs Syndrome Association of Victoria Inc
Dutch Community
Dyson Consulting Group
E.W. Tipping Foundation Inc
East Burwood Counselling Centre and Nunawading Citizens Advice Bureau Inc.
East Gippsland Arts & Recreation Access Group Inc
East Gippsland Institute of TAFE
East Gippsland Shire Council
East Grampians Health Service
East Wimmera Health Service
Eastcare
Eastern Access Community Health Inc.
Eastern Advocacy Network
Eastern Polio Support Group
Eastern Recreation and Leisure Services
Eastern Region Parent Support Network
Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Eastwork Employment Inc
Echo Australia Inc
Echuca Regional Health
EDAR
Edenhope District Hospital
Eltham Community Health Centre Inc
Elwood-St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre Inc
Employability (Central Murray) Inc
Employment Access Service
Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria Inc
Epworth Foundation
Eltham Community Health Centre
Faculty of Law
Fairhills High School
Families of Children with a Disability (FOCDSG)
Family Planning Victoria Inc
Family Plus Inc
Family Support
Far East Gippsland Health & Support Services
First Base Eastern
Fitzroy Learning Network Inc
Footscray Community Arts Centre Ltd
Footscray YMCA
Forest Industries Employment and Training Services Inc
Foster Grandparent Scheme (Victoria) Inc
Frankston City Council
Frankston Community Health Centre Inc
Frankston Orthopaedic Services
Frontier Leisure Pty Ltd
G&H Training
Gannawarra Shire Council
Gateway Centre Inc
Gateway Hawthorn
Gateway Social Support Options Inc
Gateway Wantirna
Gateways Support Services Inc
Gateways Support Services Parent Support Program
Gawith Villa Inc
GDP Industries
GECA
Geelong Adult Training & Education (Gate) Inc
Geelong Employ Ability Incorporated
Geelong Ethnic Communities Council Inc
Gelantipy District Bush Nursing Centre Inc
Gellibrand Residential Services Inc
Genesis
Geoffrey Murdoch, Rural Community Opportunities Inc (Murdoch House)
George Gray Centre Inc
Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd
Gippsland Carers Association Inc.
Gippsland Citizen Advocacy Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Gippsland Disability Resource Council
Gippsland Personnel Open Employment Association Inc
Gippsland Southern Health Service
Gippsland Vocational Training Unit
Girrawheen Community Inc
Glen Eira City Council
Glenelg Shire Council
Golden City Support Services Inc
Golden North Centre
Golden Plains Shire Council
Good Shepherd Aged Services Inc
Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service Inc
Gordon Institute of TAFE
Goulburn Valley Centre Disability Services
Goulburn Access to Employment Enterprises Inc
Goulburn Options Inc
Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE
Goulburn Valley Family Care Inc
Goulburn Valley Health
Grace McKeller Centre
Grampians Community Health Centre Inc
Grampians Disability Network
Greater Bendigo City Council
Greater Dandenong City Council
Greater Geelong City Council
Greater Shepparton City Council
Guide Dog Association Of Victoria
Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-Op Ltd.
Hampton Rehabilitation Centre
Harrison Community Services
Hastings Community House Inc
Hawthorn Community Education Project Inc
HDG Consulting Group
Headway Gippsland Inc
Headway Victoria - Acquired Brain Injury Association Inc
Healesville Living & Learning Centre Inc.
Health & Community Services Union
Helen Schutt House Association Inc
Helping Hand Assoc. for Intellectually Disabled Persons Northcote-Preston Branch Inc
Helping Hand Association for Persons With An Intellectual Disability Inc
Helping Hand Association for The Intellectually Disabled of Coburg and Districts Inc
Hepburn Health Service
Hepburn Shire Council
Hesse Rural Health Services
High City Industries
Highlands Personnel and Support Services Inc
Hindmarsh Shire Council
Hobsons Bay City Council
Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
Home Care Solutions Pty Ltd
Hoppers Crossing Specialist School

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Horsham Rural Access
Horsham Rural City Council
Housing Resource and Support Service Inc
HSUA - Health Services Union Australia
Hume City Council
Hume Employment Service (Vic) Inc.
Ideas That Work
Impact Leisure Service Inc
InBusiness Consulting Pty Ltd
Indigo Shire Council
InfoXchange
Inglewood & District Health Service
Inner East Community Health Service
Inner South Community Health Service Inc
Inner West at Waratah
Inner Western Region Migrant Resource Centre Inc
Institute of Disability Studies, Deakin University
Integ Work Crew Incorporated
Intellectual Disability Review Pane (IDRP)
Interact Australia (Victoria)
Interact Learning centre
Interchange (Inner East) Association Inc
Interchange Family Program - North West Region Inc
Interchange Loddon-Mallee Region Inc
Interchange Northern Region Inc
Interchange Outer Eastern Region Incorporated
Interchange Western Region Assoc. Inc
Interway Respite Inc
IPAG
Irabina
Isis Primary Care Inc
ITES - Industry Training and Employment Services
Ivanhoe-Diamond Valley Centre for Intellectually Disabled Adults
Jaffe Consulting Pty. Ltd
Jesuit Social Services Limited
Jewish Community Services Inc
Job Focus
JobCo Employment Service Inc
Kangan Batman TAFE
Kankama Association Inc
Kaoma Special Needs Kinder
Kardinia Network
Karingal Community Programs
Karingal Inc.
Karkana Day Centre Inc
Keilor Support Group for the Intellectually Disabled
Kensington Community Centre Inc
Kerang & District Hospital
Kevin Heinze Garden Centre Inc
Kew Community House Association
Kew Cottages Parents Association

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Kew Residential Services
Kew Residential Services, Unit 13
Kildonan Child and Family Services
Kilmany Family Care
Kindilan Society Inc
Kingston Centre
Kingston City Council
Kirinari Community Services (Vic) Inc
Kirrae Health Service Inc
KLCK Architects
Knox City Council
Knox Community Health Service Inc
Knox Community Leisure Services
Knox Community Volunteers
Knox YMCA Disabled Persons Project Inc
Knoxbrooke Inc
Koroit & District Memorial Health Services Inc
Kyeema Centre Inc
Kyneton District Health Service
La Trobe Community Health Service Inc.
La Trobe Lifeskills Pty Ltd
La Trobe Shire Council
La Trobe University
La Trobe Valley Enterprises
La Trobe Valley Helping Hand Association for Intellectually Disabled Inc
La Trobe Valley Supported Employment Service Inc
Lady Byrnes Centre
Lake Park Aged Service for the Deaf
Lakes Entrance Community Health Centre Inc
Lao-Australian Welfare Association Inc
Laryngectomy Association of Victoria Inc
Leisure Action
Leisure Action South East
Leisure Networks Association Inc
Life Care Services Association Incorporated
Linc Church Services Network Darebin Inc
Lion's Adult Services Colac Inc
Lions Club International
Living and Learning for Disabled People Inc
Loddon Campaspe Sports Assembly
Loddon Mallee DeafLink
Loddon Mallee Housing Services Ltd
Loddon Shire Council
Lodge Program
Lyndoch Warrnambool
Macarthur & District Community Outreach Services Inc
Macro, Mansfield Adult Autistic Services Ltd
Macedon Ranges Shire Council
MacKillop Family Services
Mallacoota District Health & Support Service Inc
Mallee Accommodation and Support Program Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Mallee Family Care Inc
Mallee Sports Assembly
Mallee Track Health and Community Service
Mambourin Enterprises Inc
Manangatang & District Hospital
Mannagum House
Manningham City Council
Manningham Youth and Family Services
Mansfield Autistic Centre
Mansfield Support Group for Children with Special Needs
Maribyrnong City Council
Marillac House Limited
Maroondah City Council
Maryborough District Health Service
Maryfields Centre Bendigo Inc
Mawarra Centre
McCallum Disability Services Inc
MCHS
McIvor Health and Community Services
MECCA
Mecua Access Service
MECWA Community Care Inc
Melba Support Services Inc
Melbourne City Council
Melbourne City Mission - Northern Region
Melbourne City Mission Western Region
Melbourne City Mission - Statewide ABI Case Management Service
Melbourne City Mission Inc
Melbourne Health
Melton Shire Council
Member for Frankston East
Member for Sunshine
Member of 'STAR'
Menieres Support Group of Victoria
Mental Health Foundation
Mercy Public Hospitals Inc
Merino Health Services Inc
Merrimu Services Inc
Metabolic Dietary Disorders Association
Midland Support Services Incorporated
Mildura Aboriginal Corporation
Mildura Rural City Council
Mill Park Community Services Group Inc
Millward Brown Australia
Milparinka Adult Training Unit Inc.
Minibah Services Inc.
Minkalla PTY Ltd
Mirridong Residential Inc
Mitchell Community Health Services Inc
Mitchell Shire Council
Moe Life - Skills Community Centre Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Moira Child & Family Support Inc
Moira Shire Council
Monash City Council
Monash Link Community Health Service Inc
Monash Medical School
Monash University
Monash Volunteer Resource Centre Inc
Monkami Centre Inc
Moonee Valley City Council
Moonya ATTSS Inc
Moorabbin Association for the Int Handicapped
Moorabool Shire Council
Moorefield's Community Rehabilitation Service
Moreland City Council
Moreland Community Health Service Inc
Mornington Peninsula Leader
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Motor Neurone Disease Association of Victoria Inc
Mount Alexander Shire Council
Mountain District Women's Co-operative Limited
Moyne Shire Council
MS Society of Victoria Ltd
MSSA Care Services
Mt Eliza Community Contact Inc
Mulleraterong Centre Inc
Mulleraterong Residential Services Association Inc
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Victoria Ltd
Municipal Association of Victoria
Murray Hume Services Incorporated of Echuca
Murray Human Services Inc
Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd
Murray Valley Centre for The Intellectually Handicapped Inc
Murrindindi Community Health Service Inc
Murrindindi Shire Council
Muscular Dystrophy Association Inc
NADRASCA Inc.
National Council of Women Victoria
National Employment & Psychological Services Centre
Nepean Centre for Physically Handicapped Inc
NERSA - Access for all Abilities
Network Q Inc
Newhurst Securities Pty Ltd
Ngrampians Comm Healt Centre/ NG Disability Network
Ngwala Willumbong Co-operative Ltd
Nillumbik Shire Council
Njernda Aboriginal Corp.
NMIT
Noah's Ark Family Resource and Toy Library for Children
North Balwyn Citizens Welfare Assoc. Ltd
North East Citizen Advocacy Inc
North East Regional Sports Assembly Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
North East Training and Employment
North West Employment Group Inc
North Yarra Community Health Inc
Northern Care and Share Inc
Northern Disability Services Inc
Northern District Community Health Service Inc
Northern Grampians Shire Council
Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
Northern Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc
NOVAS (Numurkah Occupational and Vocational Adult Service) Inc
Noweyung Centre Inc.
NPHHA
Numurkah District Health Service
Oakleigh Centre for Intellectually Disabled Citizens Inc
O'Connell Family Centre
Office of the Public Advocate
Oleander House
One Voice Disability Network
Onemda Association Inc
Open Door (Seaford) Inc
Orana Family Services
Otway Health and Community Services
Outdoors Inc. "Doing Things"
Outer East Employment Service
Ovens & King Community Health Service Inc
PACE
Paediatric & Adolescent Support Service
Paramount Personnel
ParaQuad Victoria
Parent Carers Support Network Inc
Parent Support Network - Eastern Region Inc
Parent to Parent Inner East Inc
Parents & Friends Assoc. of Ascot Vale Special School
Parkinson's Victoria Inc
Peninsula Access Support and Training Inc
Peninsula Community Health Service
Peninsula Health Care Network
Peninsula Support Services Inc
Penumbra Centre Inc
People Outdoors
Perry House
Personnel Group
Peter Harcourt Services Association Inc
Physiotherapy Department, Royal Children's Hospital
PINARC Support Services
Plenty Residential Services
Plenty Valley Community Health Services Inc
Polio Advisory Committee
Polio Network Victoria
Port Phillip City Council - Joint Councils Leisure Access Service
Portland and District Community Health Centre

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Portland District Hospital
Prahran Mission Inc
Prahran Neighbourhood House Inc
Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education Inc
Prioletti Consultants
Priority Care Plus
Prism Management Consultants
Probus
Psychiatric Care Consultants Pty Ltd
Pulse Data Australia
Pyrenees Shire Council
Quality and Home Care
Quantum Community Care Inc
Queenscliffe Borough Council
Ranges Community Health Service
RecLink
Recreation Activities for Integration Development (RAID)
Recreation Options
RecruitNet Inc
Redevelopment and Health
Regional Extended Family Services Inc.
Regional Information & Advocacy Council of Mildura
Reinforce, Victorian Association of Intellectually Disadvantaged Citizens Inc
Resolutions Group
Resurrection Parish
Richmond Fellowship of Victoria
Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria Inc
RMIT - Psychology and Disability
RMIT- Department of Social Science
Robinvale District Health Services
Rochester Further Education Service
Ronald Cameron Hostel
Rosanna Fire Station Community House Inc
Royal Children's Hospital
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre
Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind
Roytal Enterprises Limited
Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd.
Sacred Heart Mission St Kilda Inc
Salvation Army
Salvation Army - Eastcare
Salvation Army - Melbourne Central Division
Salvation Army - Victorian Social Programs Consultative Unit
Salvation Army (Victoria) Property Trust
Sandybeach Community Co-operative Society Ltd.
Schizophrenia Fellowship of Victoria Incorporated
School of Law and Legal Studies- Latrobe Uni
School of Nursing, Deakin University
Scope Disability Services
Scope Quality Learning Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Sea Lake & District Health Services Inc
SEARCH Association Inc
Selby Community House Inc
SensWide Sensory Employment Resource Victoria Inc
Service Quality Australia
Services Disability Programs, Dept of Family & Community Services Disability Programs
Seymour Parents Support Group
SGHS
Shepparton Access
Shepparton Parents Support Group
Silver Circle, Western Region
Singleton Equity Housing Limited
Skills Innovative Training Enterprise Inc
SkillsPlus Peninsula Inc
SMB
SNAP
Society of St Vincent De Paul Pty Ltd
Sokol Melbourne Inc
South Eastern Disability Services Inc
South Gippsland Headway
South Gippsland Shire Council
South Port Parks Parish Mission
South West Access Network Inc
South West Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service
South West Gippsland Moonya ATSS Inc
South West Healthcare
South West Institute of TAFE
South Western CASA
Southern Child Care Support Team
Southern Citizen Advocacy Inc
Southern Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault
Southern Grampians Shire Council
Southern Health Care Network
Southern Mental Health Association Inc
Southern Peninsula Community Care Inc
Southern Region Employment Access Service Inc
Southern Region Recreation Reference Group
Southwest Advocacy Association Inc.
Span Co-Operative Ltd
Spastic Centre of NSW
Spastic Society of Keilor
Spastic Society of Victoria Ltd
Special Needs Access Program Inc
Specialist Consulting Rooms
Spectrum Accommodation
Sport and Recreation Victoria
Sports Focus
Springvale Community Centre Inc
St John of God Services Victoria
St Jude, Nursing Home, 2 Newton St
St Laurence Community Services (Barwon) Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
St Laurence Disability Services
St Lukes Anglicare
St Lukes Disability Support Service
St Nicholas Parent Association
St Pauls School
St Vincent De Paul Society
St Vincents Hospital - Polio Unit
St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited
Star Victoria Inc
State Trustees
State Wide Women's Community Housing
Statewide Autistic Services Inc
Stawell Intertwine Services Inc
Stawell Neighbourhood House Inc
Stonnington City Council
Strathbogie Shire Council
Strathdon Community
Success Works
Sunraysia and Mallee Disable Persons Self Help Group
Sunraysia Community Health Services Inc
Sunraysia Disability Group
Sunraysia Mallee Disabled Person Self Help Group
Sunraysia Residential Services Inc
Sunshine Hospital
Sunshine House
Sunshine, Keilor and Districts Helping Hand Association
Sunspec Support Group for Parents & Carers of Children with Special Needs Inc
Supported Work Options Incorporated
Surf Coast Shire Council
Swan Hill & District Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd.
Swan Hill District Hospital
Swan Hill Rural City Council
Swinburne University - School of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Swinburne University of Technology
TAC - ABI
TAC - Major Injury Division
TADVIC Co-operative Ltd
Tallangatta Health Service
Taralye
Taskmasters Inc
Telstra Corporation
Telstra Research Laboratories
Terra Firma
Territory Health Services
The Village
The Wool Factory Inc
Towong Shire Council
Traralgon Secondary College
Travellers Aid Society
Tri-State Care and Respite Inc
Uniting Care Community Options

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Uniting Care Connections
Uniting Care Victoria
Uniting Church in Australia (Toorak)
University of Ballarat
University of Ballarat - Horsham Campus
University of Ballarat - TAFE Sector - SMB Campus
University of Ballarat, Mount Helen Campus
University of Melbourne
University of Melbourne - School of Physiotherapy
University of Melbourne - School of Social Work,
Upper Hume Community Health Service Inc
Upper Murray Family Care Inc
Upper Murray Health and Community Services
Upper Yarra Community Co-Operative Ltd
Upper Yarra Community House Inc
Urban Frontiers Program - University of Western Sydney - Macarthur
Urimbirra Williamstown Inc
URS
VALID - Victorian Advocacy League For Individuals With Disability Inc
Vantage Inc.
Vatmi Industries
VCOD
VDDS
VICDEAF
VICNORD
VICRAID
VICSRAPID
Victoria University of Technology
Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Pty Ltd
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Co-operative Ltd
Victorian Children's Centre
Victorian Council of Deaf People Inc
Victorian Deaf Society
Victorian DisAbility Advisory Council
Victorian Disabled Sports Advisory Committee Inc
Victorian Local Governance Association
Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council Inc
Victorian Netball Disability Service
Victorian Network on Recreation & Disability
Victorian Offender Support Agency Inc
Victorian Road Accident Support Association
Victorian Vocational Rehabilitation Association
Victorian Women with Disabilities Network
Villa Maria Society for The Blind
Villamanta Legal Service
Vision Australia Foundation
Volunteer Friends Program
Volunteering Victoria Inc
VSDC Inc
Wallara Australia Ltd
Wangaratta Centre for Continuing Education Inc

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Wangaratta District Base Hospital
Wangaratta District Specialist School
Wangaratta Parent Support Group
Wangaratta Rural City Council
Warrnambool and District Accommodation Support Service Inc
Warrnambool City Council
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative Ltd
Wattle Human Services Incorporated
Wavecare Inc
Waverley Adult Training Centre for Intellectually Handicapped Persons Inc.
Waverley Helpmates Inc
Wavlink Inc
WCIG
Web Page Access-Taskforce, Internet Industry Association Australia
Wellington Shire Council
Wellington Special Needs Network
Wesley Accommodation and Support Services
Wesley Central Mission
West Gippsland Healthcare Group
West Wimmera Health Service
West Wimmera Shire Council
Western Community Health Association Inc
Western District Employment Access (WDEA)
Western District Health Service
Western Port Employment Support Service Inc
Western Port Speaking Out
Western Region Disability Network
Western Region Health Centre Ltd
Western Region Parent to Parent and Parent Support
Western Suburbs Spastic Relief Association Inc
Western Vocational Association Inc.
Westernport Speaking Out Inc
Westgate Community Initiatives Group Inc (WCIG)
Wheelchair Soccer, Leisure Action Program
Whitehorse City Council
Whittlesea City Council
William Angliss Institute of TAFE
Wimmera Community Care
Wimmera Health Care Group
Wimmera Hearing Society Inc
Wimmera Job Match Management Committee Inc
Wimmera Uniting Care
WiN Support Services Incorporated
Winchelsea Social Development Committee Inc
Windaring Central Highlands Association for People With Disabilities Inc
Windaring CHAPD
Windaring Parents & Friends
Windermere Child & Family Services Inc
Wodonga Institute of TAFE
Wodonga Regional Health Service
Wodonga Rural City Council

Organisations that have participated the State DisAbility Plan Consultation Process
Wombat Lanigiro Housing & Support Services Inc
Women with Disabilities Australia
Women's and Children's Health Care Network
Women's Health Victoria
Women's Health West
Wongabeena Association Inc
Wonthaggi & District Hospital
Woodbine Inc
Woorinyan Incorporated
Work Integration & Supported Employment (W.I.S.E.)
WorkBased Occupational Services Pty Ltd
Worktrainers Inc
WRESACARE Inc
Wyndag
Wyndham City Council
Yalundah Support Services Inc
Yarra City Council
Yarra Ranges Shire Council
Yarra Valley Friendship Club Inc
Yarram and District Health Service
Yarram Community Education Committee Inc
Yarrawonga Community Health Centre
Yarrawonga District Health Service
Yarrawonga Parent Support Group for Children with Special Needs
Yarriambiack Shire Council
Yooralla Society of Victoria
Young Men's Christian Association of Whittlesea Ltd
Young Parkinson's Support Group
Youth & Education Services, Australian Red Cross

Community Services: kindergarten integration aid support

1762. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the kindergarten year 2001, in each region:

- (a) How many children at kindergarten are receiving integration aid support.
- (b) How many applied, but did not receive support.
- (c) What is the highest and lowest amounts received.
- (d) How many appeals into departmental decisions were received and how many were successful.

ANSWER:

Region	No of Applications	No of Applications Funded	No of Appeals	Highest/Lowest Amounts Received
Preschool	Support	Model		
Barwon	23	18	nil	9 hours support/week (highest)- 4 hours support (lowest) – according to need
Hume	56	26	8 (3 successful)	4 hours/week
SMR	77	62	3	5 hours/week
WMR	97	74	6	6/5/4/ hours/week – according to need
Individual	Preschool	Support	Model	
EMR	118	82	8 (5 successful)	\$3,040 per child
Gippsland	46	32	9 (1 successful)	\$3,040 per child
Grampians	25	23	nil	\$3,040 per child
Loddon Mallee	35	28	1	\$3,040 per child
NMR	82	73	4	\$3,040 per child
Total	559	418		

A total of **418** children across the state have been funded under this program for the 2001 preschool year.

Small Business: Small Business Advisory Council

1763. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business: Further to the answer to question No. 1462, given in this House on 1 May 2001, regarding the Small Business Advisory Council, while acknowledging that age is not a requirement of the council, are there any members who are under 30 years of age to assist in ‘promoting participation by ... young Victorians...’.

ANSWER:

Information regarding age is neither sought from members nor known for many of the members. I am unaware of the ages of any of the members and am therefore unable to provide any details of who may or may not be under 30.

Small Business: Small Business Advisory Council

1764. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business: What activities or initiatives have resulted from the Small Business Advisory Council in its key priorities of — (i) e-commerce; (ii) practical support for business; (iii) promoting participation by women; (iv) promoting participation by young Victorians; and (v) identifying issues that the Government can help address.

ANSWER:

The Small Business Advisory Council has input on a number of issues of concern to small business including a number of these issues and this is provided on a confidential basis.

Major Projects and Tourism: tourism online project

1766. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): In relation to the tourism online project:

- (a) How many private sector tourism operators have registered on www.visitvictoria.com as at 1 May 2001.
- (b) How many private sector tourism operators have registered on www.visitvictoria.com as at 1 May 2001, in the tourism regions of — (i) The Bays and Peninsulas; (ii) Goldfields; (iii) Goulburn Murray Waters; (iv) The Grampians; (v) The Great Ocean Road; (vi) Lakes and Wilderness; (vii) Legends, Wine and High Country; (viii) Macedon Ranges and Spa Country; (ix) Murray Outback; (x) Phillip Island and Gippsland Discovery; (xi) The Murray; (xii) Yarra Valley, Dandenong and the Ranges; and (xiii) Melbourne.
- (c) How many Internet users have accessed the www.visitvictoria.com site as at 1 May 2001.

ANSWER:

2424 tourism operators had registered on www.visitvictoria.com as at 1 May 2001.

The regional dispersal of all operators registered on www.visitvictoria.com, as at 1 May 2001, is outlined in Attachment 1.

411,810 Internet users accessed the www.visitvictoria.com web site from the time of the launch of the original site in May 2000 up to 1 May 2001.

ATTACHMENT 1

Regional Dispersal of Operators Registered on www.visitvictoria.com.

REGION	SIGNED UP AS AT 01/05/01
Sign-up by region:	
Bays and Peninsulas	64
The Goldfields	45
Goulburn Murray Waters	57
The Grampians	26
Great Ocean Road	305
Lakes and Wilderness	43
Legends Wine & High Country	92
Macedon Ranges & Spa Country	49
Murray Outback	38
Phillip Island & Gippsland Discovery	58
The Murray	17
Yarra Valley Dandenongs & Ranges	80
Melbourne	60
Sub-total	934
Pre-registered with State-wide campaigns*	570
Sign-up in progress**	920
Total	2424

* The technology used does not divide these groups according to product region.

** As the sign-up process is completed, operators are then assigned to the relevant product region.

Health: Tobacco (Amendment) Act — consultation

1767. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): In relation to the consultation process on the *Tobacco (Amendment) Act 2000*:

- (a) What process was followed to select Moreland City Council, out of the 78 Victorian local councils, to participate in the Smoke Free Dining Advisory Committee.
- (b) What process was followed to select Moreland and Darebin City Councils, out of the 78 Victorian local councils, to participate in the Retailers' Advisory Committee.
- (c) Why were no rural or regional councils appointed to either of the Smoke Free Dining or Retailers' Advisory Committees.

ANSWER:

- (a) In relation to the consultation process on the *Tobacco (Amendment) Act 2000*, the Department conducted seminars in February 2000 to collect views in relation to the smoke free dining reforms and the reforms affecting tobacco retailers. Local Government peak organisations attended these consultations and the Department has had ongoing dialogue with these organisations, regarding the tobacco reforms.

The purpose of the Victorian Government's Smoke Free Dining Advisory Committee is to provide advice to Government about effective communication strategies to stakeholders affected by the smoke free dining reforms. The committee includes representation from local government peak organisations (the Australian Institute of Environmental Health, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association), health promotion organisations and peak organisations representing hotels, licensed clubs and restaurants.

As you may be aware, the Municipal Association of Victoria is a peak body that represents the interests of local governments across Victoria. The Victorian Local Governance Association is a further representative body for local government and the Australian Institute of Environmental Health is a professional organisation that facilitates professional development for those Environmental Health Officers and other council staff who choose to be members of the Institute.

The Public Health Services Coordinator from Moreland City Council was selected to participate in the Smoke Free Dining Advisory Committee in his capacity as State Councillor at the Australian Institute of Environmental Health. Therefore at the Advisory Committee, this officer acts as a representative for those local council Environmental Health Officers who are members of the Australian Institute of Environmental Health.

- (b) The purpose of the Victorian Government's Tobacco Retailer Advisory Committee is to provide advice to Government about effective communication strategies to stakeholders affected by the tobacco retailer reforms. The committee includes representation from local government peak organisations (the Australian Institute of Environmental Health and the Municipal Association of Victoria), health promotion organisations and peak organisations representing tobacco retailers.

The Victorian Local Governance Association was originally represented on this committee. However, at the request of this association's representative (who is councillor at Darebin City Council), an officer from Darebin City Council has participated in the Retailers' Advisory Committee in that representative's absence.

- (c) The Smoke Free Dining and Tobacco Retailer Advisory Committees were established to seek the views of relevant stakeholders regarding the information campaign for the smoke free dining and tobacco retailer reforms. As stated previously, all local councils, including rural and regional councils, are represented on these committees through the three main local government peak bodies. These peak bodies have also been consulted regarding the introduction and implementation of the range of tobacco reforms – particularly in relation to the funding levels and performance indicators for the 2000-2001 financial year.

Additionally, in March 2001, the Department of Human Services' Tobacco Policy Unit formed the Tobacco Education and Enforcement Network. The aim of this network is to consult with Environmental Health Officers and local government peak bodies on an ongoing basis, about the implementation and review of the tobacco reforms. Councils from metropolitan Melbourne and rural and regional councils are represented on this network.

In addition to the advisory committees and consultation with local government peak bodies, information has been provided to Environmental Health Officers at seminars conducted for all councils in Victoria, in November 2000 and May 2001. To date, seminars have been conducted in Melbourne and six rural sites, being: Bendigo, Ararat, Wangaratta, Traralgon, St Arnaud and Warrnambool.

Major Projects and Tourism: Country Victoria Events program

1768. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism):

- (a) What projects have received funding under the Country Victoria Events Program since 1 July 2000.
- (b) What was the funding allocation for each and who was the funding recipient.

ANSWER:

Country Victoria Events Program October 2000 round

NAME OF EVENT	AMOUNT FUNDED (\$)
Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields	2,000
Rye Beach National Sandsculpting Championships	2,000
Whittlesea Country Music Festival	2,000
Echuca Riverboat Jazz, Wine and Food Festival	5,000
Macedon Opera by the Lake	3,000
Mildura Wentworth Arts Festival	8,000
Yackandandah Folk Festival	1,000
Queenscliff's Carnival of Words	3,000
Ararat Jailhouse Rock n Roll Festival	3,000
Mallacoota Festival of the Southern Ocean	4,000
Beechworth Harvest Celebration	2,000
The Mansfield High Country Festival	5,000
90 Mile Beach Country'n'Folk Festival	3,000
Puffing Billy Centenary : Worlds Longest Party	1,500

Country Victoria Events Program February 2001 round

NAME OF EVENT	AMOUNT FUNDED (\$)
Bairnsdale All Australian Line Dancing Championships	1,800
Bendigo Easter Fair	5,000
Bright Autumn Festival	5,000
Broadford Motocross Festival	3,600
Casterton Working Dog Event	2,700
Celebration of Song and Gospel Music Festival	4,000
Central Goldfields South Pacific Veteran Cycling Classic	4,000
Lavandula Regional Autumn Harvest Festival	1,000
Maldon Jazz, Food and Wine Festival	2,000
Mildura International Balloon Fiesta	6,000
Morwell Celebration of Roses	2,500
Mount Beauty Music Muster	2,500
Red Cliffs Folk Festival	2,000

NAME OF EVENT	AMOUNT FUNDED (\$)
St Arnaud Festival	2,000
Sunraysia Jazz Food and Wine Festival	5,000
The E.C.Griffith Cup	3,000

Major Projects and Tourism: Tourism Victoria board meetings

1769. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): How many meetings of the Tourism Victoria Board has the Minister for Tourism attended since October 1999.

ANSWER:

Since October 1999, I have met with the Tourism Victoria Board members both formally and informally, on a number of occasions.

In addition, and as a matter of high priority, I meet regularly with the Chief Executive of Tourism Victoria to discuss those matters listed for consideration by the Board.

Major Projects and Tourism: gold — discovery anniversary funding

1772. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): In relation to the answer to Question No. 1466, given in this House on 16 May 2001, and in particular the decisions that unsuccessful applications for Gold 150 funding will not be made publicly available, what is the justification for not releasing unsuccessful applications.

ANSWER:

All applications for State Government Gold 150 funding were forwarded to the Country Victoria Tourism Council, and considered by a council selection panel, in confidence. The details of all organisations or projects that received public funding have been provided.

Community Services: preschools — participation rate

1773. THE HON. M. T. LUCKINS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services) In relation to preschools in each region:

- (a) What was the percentage participation attendance rate for 4 year olds at preschool in December 2000 and February 2001 respectively.
- (b) How many children attended preschool in December 2000 and February 2001.

ANSWER:

Preschool participation rates are not measured in December. The preschool participation rate at February 2000 was 95.4%.

Unlike previous years, the preschool funding data collection process was conducted in April in 2001, rather than February, to provide robust figures about actual enrolments. As such, February preschool participation rates are not available. The preschool participation rate at April 2001 is 96%.

Community Services: Lake Bolac and District Kindergarten

1774. THE HON. M. T. LUCKINS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the funding announced in Parliament on Thursday 3 May 2001 for Lake Bolac and District Kindergarten:

- (a) What was the application process.
- (b) What were the assessment criteria.
- (c) From where were the funds sourced.

ANSWER:

- (a) The Lake Bolac Relocation Subcommittee invited the Department of Human Services Grampians Region to a meeting to discuss the relocation of the Preschool from Westmere to Lake Bolac.

After this meeting, representatives from the Subcommittee met with the Regional Director, and requested funding for the relocation.

The Region recommended the allocation of funding to the Lake Bolac Subcommittee for relocation which was agreed to by the Minister for Community Services.

- (b) Funding for the relocation of the Lake Bolac and District Kindergarten was based on local need, and funds available to meet this need.
- (c) Funding was sourced from the Grampians Region Annual Provisions Fund.

Community Services: preschool funding

1776. THE HON. M. T. LUCKINS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What are the names and locations of preschools which have received funds or an allocation of funds for re-location since October 1999.
- (b) What funding was provided to each of these preschools.
- (c) What was the application process.
- (d) What were the assessment criteria.
- (e) From where were the funds sourced.

ANSWER:

- (a) Lake Bolac Preschool, Grampians Region
Rokewood Preschool, Grampians Region
Undera Preschool, Hume Region
Katamatite Preschool, Hume Region

- (b) Lake Bolac preschool - \$15,000
Rokewood Preschool - \$7,000
Undera Preschool - \$15,000
Katamatite Preschool - \$10,000

- (c) The preschool services that have received relocation funds since October 1999 contacted their Regional Office to request relocation funds.

- (d) Funds were provided based on local need, and funds available to meet this need.
- (e) Funds for the Lake Bolac and Rokewood preschools were sourced from the Grampians Region Annual Provisions. Funds for the Undera preschool were sourced from both the Hume Region Annual Provisions, and from the Children's Services Budget. Funds for the Katamatite preschool was sourced from the Children's Services Budget.

Community Services: School Focused Youth Service program

1777. THE HON. M. T. LUCKINS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) Program:

- (a) What is the budget allocation for 2001–02 and 2002–03, respectively.
- (b) What is the name and location of each current SFYS provider.
- (c) What is the amount of funding allocated since the commencement of the program to each provider.
- (d) On what date will the current funding conclude for each provider.
- (e) When will the next funding round for the program commence.
- (f) What is the application process.
- (g) What are the assessment criteria.

ANSWER:

(a) What is the budget allocation for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, respectively.

The budget allocation for the SFYS in 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 will remain at \$5.02 million. The \$5.02 million is comprised of \$4 million from Department of Human Services and \$1.02 from Department Employment, Education and Training.

(b) What is the name and location of each current SFYS provider.

See attachment for the name and location of each current SFYS provider.

(c) What is the amount of funding allocated since the commencement of the Program to each provider.

Each provider is funded for three years at \$120,000 per annum per school cluster region to fund a coordinator position and a minimum \$50,000 in brokerage for additional services.

(d) On what date will the current funding conclude for each provider.

All SFYS providers were funded under contracts for three years from the establishment of the program. These were to be concluded for the majority of providers between October and December 2001. The Minister for Community Services, the Hon Christine Campbell MP has recently approved an extension of funding for these services until 30 December 2001. The Wimmera Community Care SFYS service was established at a later date and is funded until 31 March 2002.

The extension of funding will allow for the Victorian Government to consider a broad strategy for youth and options for the way forward that draws together an integrated youth strategy.

(e) When will the next funding round for the Program commence.

The date for the next funding round will be confirmed when the Victorian Government's broad strategy for youth is further considered and options for the way forward that draws together an integrated youth strategy are completed. An announcement will be made when these decisions have been formalised

(f) What is the application process.

The application process is not finalised at present as it will need to reflect the outcomes of the Government's decision for an integrated youth strategy.

(g) What are the assessment criteria.

The assessment criteria are not finalised as they will also need to reflect the outcomes of the Government's decision for an integrated youth strategy.

DoE Cluster Area	City
Colac/Geelong Bellarine/Geelong N./Barwon S.	Geelong
Hamilton/Portland/Warrnambool	Warrnambool
Boroondara	Camberwell
Knox	Ringwood
Maroondah Manningham	Lilydale
Monash	Ringwood East
Whitehorse	Glen Waverley
Yarra Ranges	Wantirna South
Baw Baw, Latrobe, Wellington	South Melbourne
Bass Coast, South Gippsland Shires	Wonthaggi
East Gippsland Shire	Lakes Entrance
Central Grampians (1)	Stawell
Wimmera (2)	Horsham
Highlands (3)	Ballarat Mail Centre
Shepparton	Shepparton
Wangaratta	Wangaratta
Wodonga	Wodonga
Seymour	Seymour
Southern District	Kyneton
Central and Swan Hill Districts	Kerang
Mildura District	Mildura
Woodlands	Glenroy
Yarra Valley	Eltham
Greswell	Lalor
Merri 1	Coburg
Merri 2	Watsonia
Glen Eira/Port Phillip/Stonnington	Caulfield South.
Frankston	Frankston
Mornington Peninsula	Rosebud
Casey/Cardinia	Narre Warren
Kingston/Bayside	Sandringham
Greater Dandenong	Dandenong
Keilor Melton	Melton
Melbourne/Moonee Valley	South Melbourne
Footscray/Sunshine	Footscray
Hobson's Bay/Wyndham	Laverton

Community Services: socioeconomic disadvantage and prevalence of disability consultancy

1783. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What was the total cost of the ‘Socioeconomic Disadvantage and the prevalence of Disability’ consultancy undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre of the University of New South Wales
- (b) Did this consultancy go to tender.
- (c) Why is the report marked “confidential”.

ANSWER:

- (a) The total cost of the consultancy was \$39,098.15
- (b) The consultancy was costed at below the threshold for tenders, (\$100,000). Therefore, selection was through the assessment of written submissions by a panel of three departmental officers. Written submissions were sought from six organisations. Four organisations met the written submission deadline. The panel assessed the documentation, held interviews and selected the university of New South Wales to undertake this work.
- (c) The report is not confidential. It is available publicly on the Department of Human Services Internet site, under the research section of the Disability Services Division web page.

Community Services: toward client focused funding consultancy

1784. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What is the total cost of the ‘Toward Client Focused Funding’ consultancy undertaken by the Australian Institute for Primary Care.
- (b) Did this consultancy go to tender.
- (c) Is the final report publicly available.

ANSWER:

As part of DisAbility Services commitment to continuous improvement, the DisAbility Services Division commissioned Australian Institute of Primary Care, La Trobe University to undertake the *Service Improvement and Funding Allocation Project*. The total cost associated with this project is \$97,350.

The consultancy was costed at below the threshold for tenders (\$100,000).

The Australian Institute of Primary Care were appointed following a selected invitation submission process to complete an analysis of the current DisAbility Services output structure and complete a discussion paper including recommendations.

The report titled *Towards Client Focused Funding* is currently being finalised.

Community Services: disability services division — information services review

1785. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What is the total cost of the Information Services Review within the Disability Services Division.
- (b) Who is undertaking this review.

- (c) Did this consultancy go to tender.
- (d) Is the final report publicly available.

ANSWER:

Departmental officers have undertaken this review.

The scope and tasks of the Information Services review is within the day-to-day operational responsibilities of the Department therefore, no submissions have been called for to complete this review.

Subsequently, there has been no additional cost to the Department in undertaking this review.

The key issues identified as part of this review were highlighted with Non-Government Organisation service providers at a recent DisAbility Services Information forum held on 7 May 2001.

The report is an internal working document.

Community Services: disability services division — case management review

1786. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What is the total cost of the Case Management Review within the Disability Services Division.
- (b) Who is undertaking this review.
- (c) Did this consultancy go to tender.
- (d) Is the final report publicly available.

ANSWER:

As part of the strategies to achieve within the Bracks Government's vision for DisAbility Services and respond to issues raised in the Auditor General's Report – Services for People with an Intellectual Disability (November 2000), DisAbility Services Division is undertaking a review of the case management framework for Victorian DisAbility Services.

In line with Victorian Government Purchasing Board Supply Policies and Guidelines, the Department of Human Services sought and gained my approval to engage Dr Chris Bibgy and Ms Jo Pollett to assist in the review and the development of a integrated and responsive case management framework within disability Services. Part of the review are also undertaken by the Department staff. The total cost of the project is \$86,900.

The consultancy was costed at below the threshold for tenders (\$100,000).

Dr Chris Bigby of the Department of Social Work, La Trobe University is an internationally recognised and published expert in case management and the Victorian disability services system.. Ms Jo Pollert who has extensive experience and expertise in case management in a range of program area, and together with Dr Bibgy has recently led the Competencies project relating the expansion of Intake, Access and Response teams.

The report on the *Redevelopment of the Case Management Framework* is currently being finalised.

Community Services: disability services division — therapy review

1787. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services):

- (a) What is the total cost of the Therapy Review within the Disability Services Division.

- (b) Who is undertaking this review.
- (c) Did this consultancy go to tender.
- (d) Is the final report publicly available.

ANSWER:

Departmental officers have undertaken this review.

The scope and tasks of this review is within the day-to-day operational responsibilities of the Department therefore, no submissions have been called for to complete this review.

There is no additional cost to the Department in undertaking this review.

A final report will be available for consultation and discussion.

Consumer Affairs: Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria services

1794. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: Further to the answer to Question No. 1114, given in this House on 16 November 2000, which Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria services will be the subject of consumer awareness surveys.

ANSWER:

The survey recently undertaken to determine levels of consumer awareness of Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria (CBAV) and its services related to CBAV services for consumers and tenants.

Community Services: commonwealth–state disability agreement for day programs

1795. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to funding for unmet needs under the Commonwealth–State Disability Agreement for day programs, in 2001–02:

- (a) What new funds will the Commonwealth provide to Victoria.
- (b) What is the amount of additional recurrent and capital funding committed by Victoria from its own resources, respectively.

ANSWER:

The Honourable Marsha Thomson, Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services) the answer is:

- (a) The Commonwealth provided no funds for day programs from the funding for unmet needs under the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement.
- (b) Victoria has provided \$7 million from its own resources for the futures for young adults program to meet additional demand. Many young people will use their futures for young adults funds to purchase day program places.

Community Services: commonwealth–state disability agreement for home support

1796. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to funding for unmet needs under the Commonwealth–State Disability Agreement for home support in 2001–02:

- (a) What new funds will the Commonwealth provide to Victoria.
- (b) What is the amount of additional recurrent and capital funding committed by Victoria from its own resources, respectively.

ANSWER:

- (a) \$5.9 million of the Commonwealth unmet needs funds provided under the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement will be used to deliver home support services in 2001/02.
- (b) Victoria will provide \$6 million recurrently from its own resources in 2001/02 for shared supported accommodation services to complement Commonwealth funds for home based services.

In last year's budget, as part of the suite of Labor financial statement initiatives, \$15 million (total end cost) was allocated to disability services for the construction and purchase of additional community residential units. This amount was cash-flowed over three years so that \$5 million of capital funds will be available in 2001/02.

Community Services: commonwealth–state disability agreement respite services

1797. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to funding for unmet needs under the Commonwealth–State Disability Agreement for respite services, in 2001–02:

- (a) What new funds will the Commonwealth provide to Victoria.
- (b) What is the amount of additional recurrent and capital funding committed by Victoria from its own resources, respectively.

ANSWER:

- (a) \$3.3 million of the Commonwealth unmet needs funds provided under the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement will be used to deliver respite services.
- (b) Victoria is not providing new funds from its own resources for respite services in 2001/02. Victoria has already far exceeded the requirement to match the commonwealth contribution of funds for new services to assist in meeting unmet demand. The Commonwealth provided \$12.3 million in 2000/01 and will provide a further \$12.3 million in 2001/02 – a total of \$24.6 million. Last year Victoria provided \$38.4 million for new services and this year will provide an additional \$13 million – a total of \$51.4 million, which is more than double the Commonwealth contribution.

Housing: public housing waiting list

1836. THE HON. R. H. BOWDEN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Housing):

- (a) What was the number of applicants waiting on the list for access to public housing for the December 2000 quarter for — (i) each region; (ii) the whole of Victoria; and (iii) each segment within the waiting list.
- (b) What was the number of applicants waiting on the list for access to public housing for the March 2001 quarter for — (i) each region; (ii) the whole of Victoria; and (iii) each segment within the waiting list.

ANSWER:

See attached pages.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TOTAL PUBLIC HOUSING WAITING LISTS (NEW AND TRANSFER APPLICATIONS)

Public Housing Waiting List for Victoria December 2000 (Total New and Transfer Applications)

	Recurring Homeless (Seg. 1)		Supported Housing (Seg. 2)		Special Housing Needs (Seg. 3)		Other Early Housing*		Wait Turn (Seg. 4)		Total	
	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer
Eastern Metro	31	1	36	1	202	61	33	21	4,632	438	4,934	522
Northern Metro	58		17	6	426	174	26	47	6,653	850	7,180	1,077
Southern Metro	78	1	51	8	405	156	16	87	12,815	1,410	13,365	1,662
Western Metro	13	2	27	55	259	83	21	19	6,013	791	6,333	950
Barwon South West	3		2	1	33	18		12	1,097	234	1,135	265
Gippsland	2		1		8	2		1	523	88	534	91
Grampians				1	15	11		3	575	114	590	129
Hume	15	1	1		45	10	1	1	828	109	890	121
Loddon Mallee	8	1	4		102	36	3	5	1,729	251	1,846	293
Movable Units									94		94	
Waiting List												
Total Waiting List	208	6	139	72	1,495	551	100	196	34,959	4,285	36,901	5,110

* Other early housing includes stock management and redevelopment transfers and sponsored housing nominations

Note : Public housing includes the Rental General Stock and Movable Units programs

Public Housing Waiting List for Victoria March 2001 (Total New and Transfer Applications)

	Recurring Homeless (Seg. 1)		Supported Housing (Seg. 2)		Special Housing Needs (Seg. 3)		Other Early Housing*		Wait Turn (Seg. 4)		Total	
	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer	New	Transfer
Eastern Metro	43		39	1	232	78	33	31	4,550	449	4,897	559
Northern Metro	48	1	30	9	470	182	28	50	6,759	871	7,335	1,113
Southern Metro	94	1	60	14	441	160	22	73	12,985	1,414	13,602	1,662
Western Metro	21	2	23	35	298	114	17	19	6,259	806	6,618	976
Barwon South West	3	2	2	1	36	14		9	1,079	234	1,120	260
Gippsland	1		1		10	8		1	500	98	512	107
Grampians	2		5		23	6		3	643	117	673	126
Hume	21				44	15	1	5	870	120	936	140
Loddon Mallee	16		7		83	36	1	14	1,812	268	1,919	318
Movable Units									98		98	
Waiting List												
Total Waiting List	249	6	167	60	1,637	613	102	205	35,555	4,377	37,710	5,261

* Other early housing includes stock management and redevelopment transfers and sponsored housing nominations

Note : Public housing includes the Rental General Stock and Movable Units programs