

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

9 November 1999

(extract from Book 2)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

Professor ADRIENNE E. CLARKE, AO

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Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet	The Hon. G. W. Jennings

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FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Tuesday, 9 November 1999

The **PRESIDENT** (Hon. B. A. Chamberlain) took the chair at 2.03 p.m. and read the prayer.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE

Financial audit

Message received from Assembly seeking concurrence with resolution.

Assembly's resolution:

That, pursuant to section 17 of the Audit Act 1994;

1. Mr Douglas N. Bartley of KPMG be appointed to conduct the financial audit of the Auditor-General's office for the 1998–99 financial year in accordance with the conditions of appointment and remuneration contained in the report of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on the appointment of independent auditors to conduct financial and performance audits of the Victorian Auditor-General's office (Parliamentary Paper No. 7, Session 1998); and
2. The level of remuneration for this financial audit be \$10 750.

Resolution agreed to on motion of Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations).

FILMING OF PROCEEDINGS

The **PRESIDENT** — Order! Following a request from Ms Catherine Chauchat, an independent documentary film-maker, I inform the house that I have approved the filming of the inaugural speech of the Honourable Glenyys Romanes.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Electricity: winter power bonus

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN (Chelsea) — I direct the Minister for Energy and Resources to her refusal to address the issue I raised with her on the adjournment debate last week regarding the minority Labor government's lack of commitment to the retention of the winter power bonus. Will the minister now outline the government's commitment to the retention of the winter power bonus?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The matter raised in the adjournment debate concerned the previous government's commitment, which was provided for in the budget and

forward estimates. Those matters will be funded as provided for in the financial statements.

Industrial relations: workplace agreements

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — Will the Minister for Industrial Relations inform the house of the government's position on Australian workplace agreements in the Victorian public sector?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I thank the honourable member for her question and interest in the matter. It is no longer government policy to have Australian workplace agreements in the Victorian public sector. The Bracks Labor government has decided to phase out AWAs in the Victorian public service which will put an end to the secret contracts Victorian public servants were forced to enter into as a result of the policy of the previous government.

The Bracks Labor government encourages openness and transparency with collective bargaining. All future Victorian public sector employees will be employed under common-law arrangements that will be underpinned by appropriate awards.

Victorian public servants are no longer required, as was the case under the previous government, to have AWAs imposed on them. They will now have a choice. The Bracks Labor government will phase out AWAs to ensure that Victorian public sector workers are protected and receive fair and equitable conditions. They will no longer be required to sign up to the punitive, secret AWAs. The Bracks government has stopped the practice imposed by the previous government. I am pleased to inform the house that Victorian public sector workers are now protected.

Minister for Energy and Resources: responsibilities

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — Will the Minister for Energy and Resources advise the house why ministers other than herself administer more of the legislation and programs relating to energy and resources than she does as the minister with the title?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I understand the question refers to responsibilities that I have under the administrative orders for energy and resources compared with those of the Treasurer. My understanding of the administrative orders is that by and large they continue the allocation of acts that existed under the previous government. I look forward to working with the Treasurer on the implementation of Labor's policies in those areas.

Station Pier

Hon. R. F. SMITH (Chelsea) — Will the Minister for Ports inform the house of the rehabilitation of Station Pier?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Ports) — As some opposition members will be aware, Station Pier was built in the 1920s and is the largest timber pier structure in Australia. A rehabilitation study commissioned by the former government found that significant sections of the pier required maintenance and the substructure also required major rehabilitation if the pier was to remain serviceable. A contractor, Abigroup, has been awarded an \$11.2 million contract to undertake the rehabilitation of the pier. It includes extensive works on the inner west berth and the outer tip of the pier, installation of fenders along the outer east berth and repairs to piles.

Works are scheduled to be completed at the end of July 2000. When completed, all berths will be fully operational and sections of the pier will be reopened. The works have been organised so that there will be minimum interference with the cruise ships that have been visiting recently, including those that visited last week during the Melbourne Cup carnival, and also to TT line and the operation of the *Spirit of Tasmania*. The government looks forward to the completion of those works and the future operation of Station Pier.

Mining: government policy

Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — Given that the Australian Labor Party has no published policy on mining, will the Minister for Energy and Resources urgently draft a mining policy for the minority Labor government?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — Last week I was pleased to attend the Mining Week dinner, which was also attended by the shadow minister for natural resources and energy. The Labor government is committed to the important contribution that the mining industry makes to the Victorian economy, and in particular to regional Victoria. At the dinner I advised the mining industry, including the executive officer and director, that as that was my first occasion to meet with and speak to them I looked forward to further meetings to implement government policies.

Opposition members interjecting.

Hon. M. A. Birrell — On a point of order, Mr President, the question was specific. It asked whether the government will issue a policy. The

government has policies on everything from bowls to motorbikes. Honourable members have heard about the bowls policy. The opposition is asking — and it is a question of relevance — the minister to address the question of whether the government will put out a policy on mining.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is no point of order. The minister was part of the way into her answer and I presume she will address that issue in her response.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — As I was saying, Mr President, my government is — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! A question has been asked of the minister. It is reasonable for the house to allow her to respond and for the response to be heard.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — The policy of the government is to secure the economic contribution the mining industry makes to Victoria. I made that commitment to the mining industry and it was well received. The mining industry has been reassured by the government's decision to recognise the importance of the industry's contribution to the state by creating a portfolio for resources and energy which did not exist under the previous government. As I have indicated, I look forward to further meetings with representatives of the industry.

Liquor: refrigerated backpacks

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — Will the Minister for Small Business inform the house of a 12-month trial at Colonial Stadium that will allow the sale of light beer in refrigerated backpacks by roaming sellers in selected areas?

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house should be aware that the Chair will not allow a barrage of interjections when an honourable member is speaking.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — Last month the Director of Liquor Licensing issued a liquor licence to National Venue Management to trial the sale of light beer in refrigerated backpacks at Colonial Stadium. I am prepared to table a drawing of what they look like for the information of honourable members. The trial will be conducted at Colonial Stadium because of the controlled atmosphere at the stadium. Victoria Police and Liquor Licensing Victoria have had discussions on the distribution of the

product. It will be sold in corporate and general public areas displaying appropriate signage advising the sale of the backpack.

Hon. M. T. Luckins — What about the girls, where do they get their wine from?

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — Women drink beer, that is right! The beer dispensed from backpacks will not be sold to anyone under the age of 18 and sellers will undertake training to ensure that that is adhered to. No sellers will be under 18 years of age. The government recognises the consumption of liquor at sporting events requires effective management to ensure that the enjoyment of the event is not compromised by drunken behaviour. The Director of Liquor Licensing and Victoria Police will be monitoring the progress of the trial.

Bellarine Peninsula: gas supply

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to a matter I raised during the adjournment debate last Thursday about the connection of natural gas to the Bellarine Peninsula, specifically to Portarlinton, Clifton Springs and Indented Head. In her response the minister said the matter was not part of Labor's election commitment. Was that a truthful answer, and is the minister now prepared to agree that such a commitment was given?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — In response to the honourable member's question and the matter raised during the adjournment debate last week I state that the matter drawn to my attention concerning the connection of gas supply to the Bellarine Peninsula was not stated in Labor's election policy documents. However, it is a matter on which the new Minister for State and Regional Development in the other house made a commitment on behalf of the government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. C. C. BROAD — Despite the fact that the matter was not referred to in any of Labor's election policy documents or financial statements issued as part of the election campaign, since the election the Minister for State and Regional Development has determined that as part of the new Labor government's state regional infrastructure fund the commitment he made during the election campaign will be funded.

Olympic Games: soccer

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — What progress can the Minister for Sport and Recreation report regarding Melbourne's hosting Olympic soccer at the Melbourne Cricket Ground?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The Victorian government has entered into an agreement with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) for 12 soccer matches over 7 sessions to be staged at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The opening match, to be held following a gala opening ceremony, will involve the Australian team. That opening will occur on 13 September next, two days before the official Olympic Games opening ceremony in Sydney.

I consider it a wonderful achievement that Victoria will stage that event. Victorians, as fantastic sports followers, will have the opportunity to view and appreciate the Olympic Games in their own home city. The government hopes for a crowd, the size of which will be not unlike that which attended the Iran versus Australia soccer World Cup clash last year. Tickets are selling well, but all Victorians will have the opportunity to apply for tickets in the next release of SOCOG's tickets.

Workcover: common-law rights

Hon. R. M. HALLAM (Western) — I refer the Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover to the government's commitment to reintroduce common-law access for seriously injured workers in Victoria. Will the minister explain how 'seriously injured' is to be defined?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover) — The government's policy is to reintroduce common-law rights. However, it is the major responsibility of the Minister for Workcover in the other place, and I will refer the question to him.

National greenhouse strategy

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — Will the Minister for Energy and Resources inform the house of the government's commitment to a national greenhouse strategy?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I thank the honourable member for her question and her interest in that most important issue. I hope honourable members watched last night's *Four Corners* program on the issue, which is one of the most

important issues the government and the community must face in the next millennium.

The national greenhouse strategy was released in November 1998 and is the primary mechanism for meeting Australia's international commitments under the framework convention on climate change and particularly the emissions target agreed to as part of the Kyoto protocol established in December 1997. It includes a wide range of measures targeted towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing greenhouse sinks and improving an understanding of the impacts and potential impacts of the greenhouse effect. The Labor government will actively pursue its commitments under the national greenhouse strategy.

As stated in Labor's Greener Cities policy statement released during the recent election, the government will develop a comprehensive strategy to address greenhouse issues in Victoria. The strategy will be reflected in Victoria's implementation plans for the national greenhouse strategy in consultation with local government and the federal government.

FEDERAL COURTS (STATE JURISDICTION) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business), by leave, introduced a bill relating to the ineffective conferral of jurisdiction on the Federal Court of Australia and the Family Court of Australia with respect to certain matters, to amend the Competition Policy Reform (Victoria) Act 1995 and the New Tax System Price Exploitation Code (Victoria) Act 1999 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

- Agriculture Victoria Services Pty Ltd — Report, 1998–99.
- Catchment Management Council — Report, 1998–99.
- Chief Electrical Inspector's Office — Report, 1998–99.
- Dairy Industry Authority — Report, 1998–99.
- Emerald Tourist Railway Board — Report, 1998–99.
- Environment Conservation Council — Report, 1998–99.
- Environment Protection Authority — Report, 1998–99.
- Justice Department — Report, 1998–99.
- Legal Practice Board — Report, 1998–99.

Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust — Report, 1998–99.

Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre Trust — Report,

1998–99.

Tourism Victoria — Report, 1998–99 (two papers).

Victorian Institute of Sport — Report, 1998–99.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 4 November; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Hon. G. W. JENNINGS (Melbourne) — I am proud to be part of the incoming Bracks Labor government. The election of our government was a surprise to most commentators and many people in the Victorian community, and a shock to the majority of members of this house. The election result is something we all have to grow into and come to terms with.

During the first sitting of the house last week I delved into the standing orders and at one stage contemplated asking you, Mr President, to invoke standing order 44, which would have removed strangers from the chamber. Such an order would have left few members in the house apart from yourself, Mr President, and the learned Clerks, because it appeared all honourable members were feeling strange on that day as we were starting to become accustomed to our new orientation following the enthusiastic shift from the left to the right of the chair or the understandably reluctant move from the right to the left.

The government has been elected with an extensive program. The program was outlined in the Governor's speech last Wednesday and it is the subject of my address-in-reply today. I will highlight some aspects of the government's program to indicate the breadth of commitments made to Victorians.

The government wants to restore public confidence in Parliament and government by introducing a new era of openness and accountability. Labor believes Victorians are citizens of the state rather than merely consumers. As such they deserve the highest standards of accountability and the equitable provision of quality services. To work towards those ends Labor will restore the independence of the Office of the Auditor-General and enable it to conduct audits in its own right. Labor will enshrine the independence of the office within the Victorian constitution.

Labor will similarly restore the independence of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Labor intends to immediately introduce legislation designed to allow greater access to public documents by amending the Freedom of Information Act. Soon it will introduce legislation to reform the Legislative Council to have proportional representation. That will allow it to become an effective house of review.

Labor is committed to ensuring that all citizens are treated equally with honesty, dignity and respect. Last week the government spoke of its belief in the state growing together, not as a series of competing postcodes. Labor recognises the need to act immediately to rebuild Victoria's regional and rural communities and to forge new partnerships with local government. Labor wants to work in partnership with the private sector to create better transport links that will see for the first time provincial cities properly connected to Melbourne. It will allocate funds to facilitate a fast-rail upgrade to Bendigo, aiming at an 80-minute link to Melbourne, to upgrade the Traralgon line, to continue the fast-rail into Ballarat to cut travel time to under 60 minutes and to reduce the rail travel time from Melbourne to Geelong to 45 minutes. Labor wants to ensure that Victorian provincial cities thrive, attracting new residents and new industries.

By similarly working in partnership with the private sector the government will contribute to a rapid transit link from Melbourne to the airport. Labor recognises that building the whole of the state will require the specific targeting of services into struggling suburbs and towns, which will create opportunities for all Victorian communities to realise their full potential. The government will provide funds for community infrastructure projects in areas of high unemployment. Labor's objective is to generate 2600 jobs every year for three years. In partnership with the private sector the government will create jobs for 4700 new apprentices and trainees. During a four-year period it will subsidise 2500 disadvantaged and long-term unemployed young people into additional training places.

Labor has also developed a four-year comprehensive program to provide quality services and restore pride and public confidence in Victoria's school and hospital systems. Labor is opposed to the privatisation of Victoria's state schools and committed to a high standard of education for all Victorian children. It will reduce class sizes to a maximum of 21 children for all grade preps and years 1 and 2. Labor will provide extra support for small rural schools by introducing shared specialist teacher programs.

The government policy does not come at the expense of supporting the non-government sector. Labor will commit additional funds for needy non-government schools. The Bracks government believes Victorians deserve decent health services based on need rather than capacity to pay. Its first effort in restoring confidence in the Victorian health system saw Labor immediately cancelling the privatisation process of the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre. The government will now immediately review public hospital casemix funding and reopen 290 hospital beds across Victoria.

I am particularly proud to be part of a government that as a priority will be taking immediate steps to address the unacceptable levels of death and injury in Victorian workplaces. The government has made commitments to the working people in this state that it will introduce legislation to restore the right of seriously injured workers to sue at common law. The objective is to successfully support employers and workers to eliminate risks and accidents in the workplace but the government is prepared to put all employers on notice by introducing a new crime of industrial manslaughter in Victoria.

I view all working people across the state as an essential part of the constituency I represent in this place, as I do all the people of Melbourne Province, the electorate I represent on behalf of the Labor Party. Like all electorates in the Legislative Council Melbourne Province is a large electorate that comprises four state lower house seats. My electorate straddles three federal electorates and four amalgamated municipalities. The profile and boundaries that make up this house are often cumbersome and rarely describe a natural community of interest. This is one of the prime reasons that reform of the Legislative Council is warranted and I look forward to debating the relative merits of reform in this place in the next few months.

By raising such issues I do not intend to demean the people of Melbourne Province or the intrinsic value that it brings to Victoria. Indeed, Melbourne Province is a vibrant part of the Victorian fabric. I would like to quote one of my predecessors in this electorate, Evan Walker, who eloquently described his electorate 20 years ago in his inaugural speech to this house. He is reported at page 2137 of Vol. 344 of *Hansard* of 18 July 1979 as having said:

Melbourne Province is the heart of the state of Victoria; it encompasses the City of Melbourne and the complete ring of inner suburbs. It reflects the extremes of our society; great wealth and its associated commercial and cultural development, and abject poverty and its physical reflections.

This province houses the state's great institutions of justice, government and the public service; it is a Labor province and will always remain so. It incorporates two of the nation's largest and most prestigious tertiary education institutions; I refer to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the University of Melbourne ...

This province is the heart of the state's and the nation's commerce and industry and it houses the nation's great worker representative organisation, the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The province incorporates the state's great shipping and rail terminals, the headquarters of the state's large media outlets ... and its renowned cultural institutions — the National Gallery, the State Public Library and museum, to say nothing of its theatre, opera, ballet and musical heritage.

We bask in the well-deserved reputation as one of the world's most beautiful 19th century cities. We enjoy individual public buildings of great elegance such as the one we are in, and city street-scapes of the Victorian era unrivalled anywhere ...

Melbourne Province also encompasses some of the community's worst examples of social dislocation, of human degradation and economic injustice. Amidst the symbols of wealth and privilege which surround us are areas of grinding poverty, of real housing shortage, of derelict school facilities, of high levels of pollution and frightening levels of unemployment.

Twenty years later Evan's precise prose has stood the test of time and place. In the intervening period Evan himself went on to make a significant contribution to this house and to government. He made a lasting impression on the ongoing shape of the City of Melbourne, particularly in the opening for development of the precincts of Southbank and Docklands.

In 1999, while the electorate of Melbourne Province exists, I wish to give it some life and reason for living. I want to engage with the residents of Melbourne Province in exploring the potential to get a regional and community approach happening across the electorate. During the 1990s the forced amalgamation of local governments caused stress and anxiety within many communities. However, it also released the potential for councils to reach a critical mass and to achieve great things. The sophisticated community plans implemented by Labor councils within my electorate take account of the social, environmental and economic aspects of the communities. Those plans have helped to fill the social planning vacuum that has occurred during the past few years.

I will outline a few issues that may be advanced by using an urban regional planning approach across the province. I envisage a regional approach to employment that addresses existing pressures on manufacturing jobs and the looming threats of the goods and services tax to the hospital and retail sectors. The government must facilitate greater links between

educational institutions and businesses to stimulate job skills for the future. At the same time there are reasons to be excited by the opportunities Docklands presents in construction, entertainment, design and technology.

It will be necessary to militate against the environmental and planning costs of City Link — a somewhat over-engineered but yet-to-be-water-proofed project that links the north of Melbourne Province to the south. Traffic impact will be extreme across the province. Clearly the major environmental and social concerns of the residents of Melbourne Province will need to be monitored.

Labor has already flagged and will be happy to explore public transport solutions, including the facilitation of a rapid transit link to the airport.

As part of a comprehensive plan to address the tragic problem of drug abuse in our society, Labor will trial medically supervised injecting facilities in consultation with councils and communities. I hope to work closely with communities in my electorate to establish at least one of the facilities in the province. The work will be supplemented by the facilitation and ongoing overview of the expert committee announced by the government yesterday.

All of my working life of 20 years has been in Melbourne Province. During that time I have developed a solid, progressive framework that enables me to consider and consult on most political issues. Following a background of five years in youth and social work with the Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy, I worked in the Victorian health department before commencing my connection with the trade union movement. In the mid-1980s I worked for the Australian Railways Union on projects including Metplan, the last integrated growth plan for Melbourne's public transport network. At that time I became an active member of the Labor Party's social justice policy coordination and budget coordination committees.

During Labor's last term I worked as an adviser to Kay Setches, John Cain and Joan Kirner. My responsibilities were mainly in the areas of social policy and the environment. At that time many of Labor's achievements in those fields were second to none across the country. However, many lessons were to be learnt from the experience. I have dedicated the last decade of my life to moving the Labor Party forward and seeing it reclaim its political will and sense of purpose. To do that Labor had to confront its lack of confidence and the lack of courage of its convictions that bedevilled it for much of the 1990s.

I agree with the sentiments of the German politician Karl Heinze Hansen, who in 1978 said in the German Parliament:

A people not prepared to face its own history cannot manage its own future.

Labor entered the 1996 Victorian election campaign with an inability to carve out a coherent reform agenda, without clearly defining what it had learnt from its last term in office from 1988–1992. However, by the 1999 election many of the critical lessons had been learnt.

Now Labor has the wherewithal to say that it governed well for the best part of a decade, yet is honest enough to recognise that between 1988 and 1992 the people of Victoria lost confidence in us and we lost confidence in ourselves. Every month for over seven years during the Cain period Victoria recorded the lowest unemployment rate, but at the end of its term the government found itself floundering in the worldwide recession. That was compounded by the additional effects of Victoria's manufacturing base being exposed to the global economy. Labor — which treated the environment, kids, the aged, and people with disabilities and psychiatric illnesses better than they were treated anywhere else in the country — was pilloried because it spent more than the national average, yet it delivered much more to its citizens.

During that time when state revenues were falling through the floor it struggled in vain to maintain unsustainable promises to keep state taxes and charges down. It was overcommitted and carried levels of public sector debt that were viewed internationally as no longer acceptable. Today the government knows that proper financial management is fundamental to giving Victorians the good government they expect and deserve. It is committed to tough financial principles and a framework of fiscal responsibility that is centred on the restoration of the powers of the office of the Auditor-General. I am confident that during this term the government will demonstrate it can govern in a financially stable and secure fashion while still nurturing a caring and enriching life for all Victorians.

During, and certainly after, the election campaign both ends of the Victorian parliamentary political spectrum have insisted that things will be done differently in the future. The English playwright and screenwriter, Harold Pinter, once wrote that the past is a different country and they do things differently there. That will be the story of Victorian politics as Victoria moves into the next century. Harold Pinter has always written in a sparse manner with value placed on every syllable and nuance. That is a heavy burden for a writer to bear over time, and honourable members may be aware that for

many years until recently he suffered from writer's block. What a tragedy to be so laden by your method as to be unable to demonstrate your skill and insights for the world to see and hear.

In some ways Pinter's experience has been Labor's experience. In 1999 we in the Victorian Labor Party remembered how to use our craft. We developed a brief for our campaign that concentrated on defining leadership as properly addressing the issues that matter to ordinary people in their daily lives. Some might think that that was simple to deliver, yet it was probably the same sort of brief as that given to Alexander Downer a few years ago entitled 'The things that matter'. Politics is sometimes reduced to the capacity to crystallise the bleeding obvious, but the art is in doing it prospectively rather than retrospectively.

Today many people are trying to rewrite the sorry tale of the failed republican referendum at the weekend. Perhaps I am one of them. However, I thought it was pretty clear that the referendum would fail; its fate was sealed by the end of the Constitutional Convention, which had determined the scope of the question to be put to the Australian people.

Labor's success in the Victorian election was a victory for solidarity and clarity of purpose. Its campaign team, the parliamentary leadership and all members of the party and its affiliates deserve congratulations. I want to single out a few people: John Lenders, Andrew McKenzie, Bill Shannon and Matt Viney, and their respective teams. Thanks to those people who stood up and said that we had to get our house in order. Thanks to those people who led to the instigation and the implementation of the Dreyfus review, including Mark Dreyfus, QC, himself. Thanks to all those ALP members and supporters who go to meetings, letterbox and hand out in the good and bad times. Being a member of the Labor Party is not a fashion accessory, and sometimes over the past few years we have not looked that flash.

I congratulate Glenyys Romanes, Bronwyn Pike, Judy Maddigan, Richard Wynne and Carlo Carli and their teams of helpers who assisted in getting them elected and who helped get me elected. I thank Carlo, Lynne Kosky and Alex Andrianopoulos for their support in getting me here. I am particularly pleased that Alex has been elected Speaker in the other place.

Mr President, I want to put on record that I take pride and comfort from close personal and working relationships with decent unionists from many different unions throughout Victoria. In particular I would like to thank the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union;

the Australian Services Union, private sector branch; the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union; the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union; the Electrical Trades Union; the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union; the Textile, Clothing, and Footwear Union of Australia; the United Firefighters Union of Australia; and the plumbing division of the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union of Australia, for their ongoing support.

I sincerely thank my friend Peter Bourke, the Secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, for the support and encouragement I have received from him over many years.

I would like to pay tribute to three outgoing members of this house: Barry Pullen, Caroline Hogg and Pat Power. They represented the Australian Labor Party with distinction. Barry Pullen's strengths as a member of Parliament were his overriding commitment to social justice and an ability to consider key policy issues and process. His major contributions to Parliament and to his period in the Labor government were the development of longer term strategic policy directions in housing, the environment and transport. He also made a significant contribution to the establishment of the timber industry strategy in the mid-1980s.

Caroline Hogg demonstrated extraordinary patience and goodwill to all who came into contact with her. She was a member of great depth, understanding and compassion. I can only hope to emulate her ability to successfully negotiate outcomes and progress issues in Parliament.

Pat Power, who played a vital role in my introduction to the trade union movement, was one of the most passionate members of the house in his broad commitment to the Labor movement. It is a disappointment to many of us in the Labor movement that he is not part of the incoming Labor government. Pat, along with Jenny Beacham and Philip Moran, helped me take the leap from being an ALP member to being an ALP activist.

In making a speech that is in part to describe who you are and how you got here, how can you possibly do justice to your mum and dad and the brothers you grew up with and will love forever, even though time and distance may take your lives in different directions over the years?

All I want to mention today is the love and respect I have for my mother, Patricia Jennings, a woman whose heart is pure and true despite her body having been worn and bent for many years. She has always wanted

everything for me and had great aspirations for my future, but she never imposed any expectations on me. Her strength and commitment to fairness was complete and is deeply ingrained in me.

I would like to thank Tricia for co-parenting, sharing and nurturing our son, Huw, who has been and continues to be the greatest source of inspiration and encouragement to me. If it were left just to me, I would prefer to be with him all day, every day. However, I appreciate that over time being monopolised by his father may become somewhat boring or restrictive for him — even though that would surely take quite some time to eventuate! So, while he goes to school I will work to ensure that Huw can explore and grow and feel secure in the life that we carve out for him as part of the Victorian community. That is an opportunity that I want to help create for all kids: to grow, explore, be healthy, and find their joys and inspiration through living in the state of Victoria.

As Labor now focuses on what will mark it as a reforming Victorian government, I flag that I want to be part of highlighting a number of key elements of its program. To create lasting job opportunities Victoria must actively pursue industries of the future that are driven by efficient design, emerging clean technologies and sustainable resource use. The government's emphasis in education must be on early intervention and support to eliminate disadvantage, providing maximum opportunities for children in all neighbourhoods, and on lifelong learning to maintain a skilled work force and a civilised community.

Labor's adherence to tight financial management will not come at the expense of social infrastructure. It will restore integrity to Victoria's planning regime. The Victorian community has the right to expect that its government will protect heritage, amenity and social function while facilitating quality development in the state. Labor appreciates the urgent need to implement new guidelines that clearly define the scope and limits of ministerial intervention in planning matters and enable local government to operate within a more secure and predictable environment.

I look forward to being part of a government that is fully prepared to be accountable to the people of Victoria, and accountable to Parliament. I welcome the scrutiny of all opposition members and recognise my obligations to the house. I make a commitment to treat all members with consideration and courtesy. But that will not come at the expense of the passion I have for the issues I will pursue on behalf of the Labor Party and the labour movement.

In conclusion, I make the following clear and unequivocal statement. I will not ask anything of honourable members that I will not voluntarily give myself. I will treat all honourable members with due regard to the legitimate aspirations of the constituency they bring to Parliament. I will demand that, when dealing with me, all honourable members recognise the legitimate aspirations of my constituency.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — At the outset I congratulate the incoming government and note its remarkable, though modest, victory. I say modest victory because a minority government has been formed in the other place and in this house the government does not command a majority of members, either. It was a victory that Mr Jennings highlighted was not expected by many people. Although he did not go on record so far as to say this, it was certainly not an outcome anticipated by the labour movement and the Labor Party. I believe they were as surprised as everybody else in Victoria about the election result.

It would be churlish for the Liberal and National parties not to acknowledge the fact that the Labor Party has formed government and that we suffered a significant setback at the election held on 18 September. By any measure, notwithstanding that Labor was unable to assume a majority in the lower house, the fact that we lost as many seats as we did — particularly considering the geography of some of those losses — suggests that we also have some thinking to do. The policies the former coalition government outlined and many outstanding programs it delivered were clearly not understood, were poorly sold, or perhaps even not soundly based in the electorates in terms of matching services and facilities with the perceived needs of electorates. The opposition acknowledges both the outcome of the election and the fact that it has some work to do.

In the context of recent events, I accept the decision of the Independents in the other place. They will be held accountable at some point in time by their electorates on their decision about the record of the previous government and the achievements of this government — right or wrong. But it would be improper not to also respect that they had the right to reach that decision.

In congratulating the government on assuming the Treasury benches, I also extend congratulations to the ministers, particularly in this house. The Honourable Monica Gould, who was previously the Leader of the Opposition in this house, is now the Leader of the Government in this place. I extend particular congratulations to her. She has obviously worked very

hard in the interests of her party and the advancement of the policies her party believed would be important for Victoria. She now has the opportunity to lead a team that will be on notice in regard to delivering Labor's policies and commitments.

I also congratulate the Honourables Candy Broad, Marsha Thomson and Justin Madden on their election. I have not had an opportunity to observe the two female ministers in other circumstances, but I have observed the Honourable Justin Madden in one of the ugliest incidents I have ever seen on a football field. It happened when what looked like a dinosaur leaned all over Jimmy Stynes and produced a dreadful outcome in a Melbourne versus Carlton match. He is absolutely unforgiven for that! If his football pedigree needs to be improved, I am sure the Honourable Justin Madden will be hoping for a lot of wet days in here because he seemed to perform his best in the wet. Whether that will be necessary in this place remains to be seen, and obviously those remarks are made in a context quite outside the spirit of congratulations that are genuinely offered to those incoming ministers.

I take this opportunity also, as a returned member for Koonung Province, to express my thanks to the people of Koonung for their confidence in me and re-electing me quite decisively to represent them once again. It is a privilege for me to represent the Liberal Party in this place and certainly to represent the people of Koonung Province. I assure them, as I did during the election campaign, that I will be a very vigorous and forthright advocate of their needs and will solidly represent their views in Parliament.

I have had an opportunity to meet many people in that province since 1992. One of the good things that has occurred over the past seven years is that we have not been burdened with redistributions. Redistributions create difficulties for honourable members who make commitments to a constituency, try to work solidly in the area, and meet and get to know as many people as possible so as to be able to represent the area well, only to have the electoral boundaries in the area redistributed, which leaves honourable members in limbo. Honourable members in that position must then go to the polls without the necessary connections to the new parts of the electorate and certainly without having managed to achieve all that they would have liked to achieve in the original constituency.

Fortunately, there have been no redistributions since 1992 and I have had the opportunity to work and meet with many people. I have been continually impressed, as I am sure other honourable members have been, with the number of champions in the community. I am

talking about people who get on and do little jobs, the unheralded things in the community that make up so much of what community strength is all about; those who achieve so much and deliver the services that governments and municipalities could never hope to deliver.

I am mindful that, no matter how much money governments throw at problems, often spending money achieves far less than somebody embracing and encouraging a person. Many people are doing tremendous work. I have had the good fortune to see many such people at work and in some cases to acknowledge the work they do through a variety of forums — awards and so forth — but clearly those people need much greater recognition of their work.

I have had the opportunity to work closely with three municipalities in my area — the municipalities of Whitehorse, Knox and Monash. In particular I have worked with Whitehorse and Knox councils, as the City of Monash is blessed — or burdened, as the case may be — with representation by a great many members of Parliament. Members have tended to focus on particular areas in their constituencies rather than allowing municipalities to be constantly bothered by a procession of parliamentarians coming to their doors. Nonetheless, I maintain considerable respect and enthusiasm for the work of local councils within my constituency.

Perhaps I have shown a greater interest in them than some other members have, as for a number of years I was a member of the council of the former City of Nunawading. Therefore I have a genuine regard for what local government, in partnership with its communities, is capable of achieving. The policies of the previous government, although in some areas they have drawn the criticism of the incoming government, nevertheless established a stronger local government sector that will be able to achieve a great deal on behalf of their constituents well into the future.

One of my concerns is that some municipalities have suggested that legislation has throttled some of the activities they might have undertaken. At times they have had to develop a stronger economic rather than social focus in their areas of responsibility. I have consistently asked them, 'Show me the part in the act that says you have to do that'.

Certainly the previous government expected municipalities to be prudent and accountable with their finances and to develop plans and policies that would provide their communities with facilities and services with a long-term view — that were not simply knee-jerk reactions to the loudest calls from special

interest groups within the community. Where municipalities had a genuine community agenda to pursue, the Kennett government encouraged — not discouraged — them. The legislation put in place was enabling rather than disabling legislation. Obviously that will be debated at different times as amending legislation comes to this place, but honourable members can be pleased with the opportunities available to local government. On both sides of the house there is an enthusiasm for what local government, on behalf of citizens, might be able to achieve in the future.

I am disappointed by the decision on the republic proposal reached by the people of Australia last Saturday. I heard the Honourable Gavin Jennings stating his pessimism on the republic from the outset. He told the house he was a proponent of the direct election model. It is a most unfortunate consequence that that republican model was misunderstood and did not gain the support of the Australian people that it deserved. I am in the happy position of being able to declare that the electorate of Koonung is now a republic because all of the federal constituencies that comprise it endorsed the proposal put to the Australian people last Saturday!

The proposal put to the people was a safe model and a great improvement on the current model. Australia is a nation with the maturity to become a republic and say, 'No, we no longer want to have those monarchy ties that have characterised our history'. That is not to say that the system of government stemming from a monarchical system has not been successful and has not delivered good government to Australia and to a number of democracies around the world over several centuries — in Australia's case, since 1901. But Australia has reached a point of maturity and is part of a different world from that of 1901 and certainly prior to that time. It would have been more than appropriate for Australians to take this step.

Nobody can take particular credit for the outcome of the referendum. There has been much acrimony in the headlines and commentary that have followed the vote. That is sad because at this time Australians need to come together and discuss the proposals more effectively and vigorously in a context of advancement rather than disunity and acrimony, as has been the case.

The Prime Minister might well have shown better leadership in the debate. I am disappointed about that. Obviously he comes from my party. I know there is a considerable range of views among members of my party in this house regarding what they believe ought to have been the outcome last Saturday. The proposal put

was effective. As honourable members would have heard in Queen's Hall last week, a republican model would have given us the opportunity to avoid some of the consequences of one of the less happy episodes of Australia's history — that is, the 1975 dismissal of the Whitlam government. Certainly Malcolm Fraser, the Prime Minister who benefited from that decision, said last week in Queen's Hall that it would have been a very different outcome, probably a much better outcome for Australia, had the model put to the people of Australia last Saturday been in place at that time.

Constitutional reform is not just a matter of academic debate but should be pursued vigorously in the interests of achieving a better Australia and a better government system across Australia. Many of those against the yes vote for either direct representation or, as put to the people last Saturday, a college putting forward nominations to the federal Parliament for the selection of a president, put the argument that the constitution is not broke so we don't need to fix it. I argue that if it is not broke, it is certainly leaking. Some areas of the constitution are not working in Australia's best interests.

When the constitution was written, the sort of world we live in, our system of government and the international impacts upon our federation were not anticipated. The force and effect of international treaties was not anticipated; the level of executive government was not anticipated; and the powers the executive government exerts compared with those powers in place when the first parliaments were formed at the beginning of the century were not anticipated. The constitution was written in the context of stronger states, particularly in the fiscal sense. The states had a different range of taxes. Since the wars there has been an erosion of the financial opportunities available to the states to raise revenues to enable them to deliver the wide range of people services they require in education, health, police and emergency services and urban transport. The responsibility for all the weighty people services that need to be delivered by governments falls to the states.

The financial capability of the states to deliver those services has diminished because their opportunities to raise revenue through taxes has been seriously and progressively eroded by changes in federal laws. The most significant change was the surrender of the states' income tax powers during wartime. Nonetheless, considerable erosion has taken place over an extended period. Government is structured differently today compared with 1901 when the state parliaments were established.

Greater accountability of governments at all levels should be pursued. However, the federal government should not, for example, blame the state government for the difficulties in health services and the state governments should not blame the federal government when it is convenient to do so. In effect, that is knocking one's big brother or sister. They should not then also have a slap at local government authorities for their failure to deliver in some sense. Clear guidelines should be established to ensure that the Australian political system has a consistency of accountability in policy and secure democratic systems and processes as well as delivering more effective government to the people of Australia. That is what they want at the end of the day. Parliamentarians should not shy away from constitutional reform in that sense.

I was disappointed by the Prime Minister's participation, and to some extent the jaundiced process that was put in place, in the referendum proposition. As an aside, I was amazed by the pick-up line, 'This is the politicians' republic'. The bitter irony of the direct-election model is that it is truly a politicians' republic. There is no doubt that the system that was put to the people last Saturday would ensure that an eminent Australian could have been a President representing Australia in world forums. However, there is no doubt that with a direct-election model the person elected would come from one of the two major parties and would be a politician.

That is a far less safe process because I can visualise a President one day saying on a particular issue, 'Excuse me, but I was elected by all the Australian people and you, Mr Prime Minister, were elected only by a party room of 45. I think I will call this one.' Unless there is a marked change to Australia's constitution to guarantee the sovereignty of Parliament as distinct from the Presidency in the direct-election model I can see the 1975 scenario being repeated. The debate has a long way to go.

I am encouraged rather than discouraged by the result in the context that it is the start of the debate rather than the end. That may disappoint the Prime Minister. Although I was disappointed by his public approach, the changes introduced by the federal coalition government, after making the gutsy call of taking tax reform to the electorate as an election policy, were a significant step forward for Australia in respect of the states, intergovernment relations and federal-state financial arrangements.

The goods and service tax package and financial reforms have been achieved but not without some difficulties in their introduction. However, the new tax

system will ensure a stronger future and provide a real opportunity for the states to define their roles with the federal government more effectively. Perhaps they will be able to re-establish some of the sovereignty that has been eroded for so long because of, in particular, taxation policy disputes and the High Court decisions that have tended to arbitrate them.

Like other honourable members, I shall briefly reflect on some of the members who have left this house but who have served it well. This is a unique environment. When I presided over the Youth Parliament recently I tried to convey to the students the importance of this chamber for debating ideas. My concern is that parliaments and Australia's adversarial system of government too often focus on shortcomings and personalities rather than ideas. Too often honourable members are extravagant about the ideas they bring into this place. I am not sure that this forum supports the effective debate on ideas that it should. Perhaps that will be one of the challenges that may be addressed in the future debates on the reform of this place. Politicians come in here and pick on each other and criticise the shortcomings and the mistakes of others.

Some of the best decisions people make are decisions steeped in the experience of their mistakes, not just their accomplishments. I am not sure that in some political forums that is necessarily recognised. If science had been as extravagant with ideas as politicians in this place are at times to squash people with new ideas, society would be back to inventing the wheel or discovering fire. We certainly would not have the advancements in medicine that we currently have. We would still be relying on luck and blaming poor housekeeping than discovering penicillin and conducting research and development into the innovations that have characterised scientific achievements in recent times.

Honourable members should embrace ideas and not jump to conclusions and instantly dismiss the contributions of others in this place. Although some suggestions may not be appropriate or able to work, they are ideas that people in the communities members represent expect them to raise and discuss vigorously in this place with a sense of respect for the value of the ideas themselves. That is the important point I tried to get across to the students who participated in the Youth Parliament. Honourable members must respect the sovereignty of ideas.

When honourable members debate the role and future of this place, it will be important to recognise the contribution others have made and draw on their experience. Firstly, I refer to three members of the

former opposition who were also mentioned by the Honourable Gavin Jennings. The three members concerned enjoy considerable respect from those on this side of the house. I refer to Barry Pullen, Caroline Hogg and Pat Power. When the Honourable Gavin Jennings mentioned Caroline Hogg's patience I had to swallow an interjection. I was about to say, 'Yes, she had her work cut out with Theo Theophanous'. There is no doubt that this place is much the poorer for her decision to shorten the term for which she had been elected. She brought immense dignity, patience, knowledge and experience to this place.

Barry Pullen and Caroline Hogg made significant contributions to Parliament. The honourable members who have replaced them have big shoes to fill, particularly Caroline Hogg's successor because she was highly respected by members of Parliament, and especially by me and the Honourable David Davis who worked with her on committees and had the opportunity to more thoroughly understand some of her goals, beliefs and commitments.

When Pat Power left this place I wrote him a letter, as I did to the other two members, expressing considerable sorrow at his leaving because he was one of the best contributors — —

Hon. Bill Forwood — He was shafted by his own side.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — Pat Power was shabbily treated. He was one of the best contributors for the Labor Party in opposition. He was the outstanding opposition performer in this house. Pat Power brought a sense of honesty and experience to his role. He had respect for all honourable members and for the traditions of the house. He was prepared to vigorously pursue his views and philosophies, but also appreciated that other people had important contributions and points to make. At the end of the day those contributions may well have resulted in a better outcome for Victorians than a purely partisan position. Pat Power is a loss to the house and I am sorry that he has not continued as a member. The government would be in better shape were Pat Power a government member in this house because he had skills and attributes that it will rue having lost.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — He would have been able to give us some answers.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — Absolutely! Although Pat Power was treated shabbily in preselections, so too was Tayfun Eren. His was one of the most shabby treatments of a member of this house that I have seen,

notwithstanding that his departure has brought to the house a person of some capability, we understand, who has assumed the position of a minister. Tayfun Eren had considerable difficulties that were known to members of this house. He had been preselected on the basis of furthering a Labor Party position of currying favour with ethnic groups, and that was unfortunate. Tayfun Eren and the Honourable Sang Nguyen were brought here and held on a leash. They were not able to make the full contributions that opposition members would expect from them, and the Parliament is the poorer. They have considerable experience, knowledge and a cultural diversity that would enrich Parliament and its decisions.

I hope the government will now encourage Mr Nguyen, who is still a member of this place, to make a full contribution because honourable members have a lot to learn from him. On seniority alone he should have been a minister. I am disappointed that Tayfun Eren was not given that opportunity to contribute. I understand some of the difficult circumstances he faced and I have tremendous empathy for him and his problems. Against that background, nevertheless the treatment he received from the Labor Party machine prior to the last election was nothing short of shabby.

The house is also the poorer for the loss of Rob Knowles, Dick de Fegely, Rosemary Varty and Ron Wells. Three of those former members sought to retire at the last election and the fourth member sought to win a seat in the other place. They represent a significant loss of experience and knowledge to the house. They were outstanding members, particularly Rob Knowles. He was one of the most outstanding health ministers that the Crown has had in recent times in Victoria and arguably one of the best ministers in Australia. At different times there may be discussions on health policy because it is a popular political battlefield. If truth be told, government members would agree with opposition members that the inability of Rob Knowles to win a lower house seat is a great loss. I do not diminish the success of the new member for Gisborne in the other place because she has properly won her seat. But the Victorian Parliament is poorer for not having Rob Knowles somewhere within its administration.

Those former members made long and effective contributions to the house and they will be missed. I congratulate the honourable members who have replaced them, some have already spoken during the address-in-reply debate. They have big shoes to fill. The new members have some fine achievements and accomplishments to measure their performances against, and no doubt they will do that.

Don Nardella and Louise Asher have successfully moved to the other place. The opposition notes that a former member of this house is now the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the other place. Louise Asher will be a capable leader of our party and I am sure her contribution will be significant.

I welcome to this place all new members on both sides of the house. They will find this to be a unique experience compared with the Legislative Assembly. They will enjoy their time here and I am sure they will come, as I have, to recognise that it is a privilege to be a member of Parliament representing the community and undertaking the responsibilities with which we are charged.

I will refer to various points that were made by the Governor in his speech, some of which have been taken up by government members in their address-in-reply speeches. First I shall address the proposed upper house reform. As I said earlier, I am not averse to constitutional reform. I am not averse to considering changes that may make this place more effective in the future. I am concerned that the policy has come from left field and out of the Independents charter, notwithstanding that the Labor Party talked about it prior to the election but did not take it to the election.

The government appears to be talking about only one option for reform, but without full and proper debate that sort of constitutional reform is not in the best interests of overall effective reform. I am led to believe the government proposes that this house should have five members for each of seven new provinces according to lines drawn on a map, but I am unsure whether its proposal for proportional representation is the best model.

In response to the Independents charter the then caretaker Kennett government agreed to introduce debate on reforms to the Victorian constitution and the upper house. But the far better option would be for that debate to be part of an independent process during which it would be valid to consider not just whether proportional representation is appropriate for this place but also whether we need this house.

As we move to increasingly more uniform legislation around Australia and as ministerial councils agree to legislation that is passed by lower houses in six state houses of Parliament, the federal Parliament and the two territory houses of Parliament, it is rather presumptuous that Victoria should have a house of review; perhaps we should consider whether Victoria needs an upper house. Were that question to be

resolved in the affirmative, decisions should be made about the house's responsibilities and structure. Perhaps the cart is being placed before the horse because the question of restructuring this place has been put without examining its future role and responsibilities. We could consider not just what the house has achieved in the past or how effective it has been but also what we expect of it in the future. We should not be examining only one plan.

One of the most effective debates in this place occurred when Dr Penington addressed Parliament about Victoria's drug problems. Honourable members put their views on the issue and spoke on the pros and cons of the issue of legalisation of marijuana, which was part of the ongoing debate at the time.

A problem about Parliament generally is that much of our base agenda is far too structured. Honourable members have an opportunity to discuss only those matters contained in legislation; often legislation is fairly narrow in its characteristics, thereby restricting the width of debate. The house can also enter into debate on generally negative or attacking motions rather than on motions that explore broad issues in the community, which are what our constituents expect us to be discussing.

The drug debate was one opportunity for Parliament to inform itself not only on the collective experience that honourable members brought to the house from other places but also on important issues that could lead to the establishment and improvement of the state's drug policies. The house should be examining such opportunities more closely at the same time as it considers its own future.

As to matters affecting my electorate, I am dismayed about some of the incoming government's policies. I am horrified as, I dare say, are most of my constituents, that the Labor government intends to shelve the construction of the proposed Scoresby freeway. That significant project is crucial to the eastern suburbs generally, and specifically to my constituents and those of the adjoining Eumemmerring and Silvan provinces. Environmental and economic assessments have shown that the use of such a freeway would lead to substantial economic benefits for that part of Melbourne and would significantly improve traffic flows in the area.

Apparently the government intends, as an alternative, to upgrade Stud Road. That may appear to be a cheaper solution now, but it is the same sort of penny-wise and pound-foolish decision that a former government made which resulted in the traffic blight on the former South Eastern Freeway's intersections with major roads. Stud

Road will not have the capacity to continue to carry the traffic levels that are burgeoning in the south-eastern corridor.

The government has a fanciful notion that the Australian Football League will become benevolent and retain Waverley Park for Victorians. Victorians will need substantial input or solutions from the government about the way that property may be used, given the AFL's preferred position of scheduling matches for other places. I would welcome the maintenance of that facility. I have always thought it would be good to secure Waverley Park for the future. However, part of the problem at Waverley Park is the lack of traffic connections and major roads. The proposed Scoresby freeway could well be a project that becomes crucial to whether the Waverley Park debate can be won. The \$768 million project would deliver jobs in the short term.

The government will find difficulty in maintaining some of its employment commitments if it does not examine some of the public infrastructure projects that were very much part of the previous government's agenda. The government will pay heavily in electoral results in those areas if it abandons plans to build the Scoresby freeway, because the people out there are convinced it should be built as soon as possible. As a member of Parliament I am dedicated to continuing to advocate the freeway's construction.

The same constituents are just as outraged to note that the proposed Knox hospital does not feature as a project of the incoming government, which has made a lot of noise about its health policies and the need to upgrade health facilities. The Kennett government's track record in improving the infrastructure of our health system was unsurpassed in almost any other nation. When the Kennett government came to power in 1992 there was much talk about the \$32 billion deficit it inherited. Now the present government will benefit from the legacy of the Kennett government through a much sounder and more effective economy on which to base some of its promises.

The \$32 billion deficit with which the Kennett government was faced was a paper figure — that is, it represented the cost of the visibles. In 1992 the hospital system, the roads and the education infrastructure were run down, so many of the infrastructure facilities of the community were not working. The Kennett government's ability to deliver quality education and health services and to achieve the economic benefits of an efficient road system were lost to Victoria. During its seven years in office the Kennett government spent a great deal of money on those areas. The forward

program would have built more hospitals, including the Knox hospital, which would have provided considerably better health services to the residents of the eastern suburbs and Victorians in general since it was to have been a major teaching hospital.

The shelving of the project and a proposition that it may not be needed because the new government's philosophy that it can add extra beds at William Angliss and Maroondah hospitals and put a toolshed here or there does not lead to the provision of better health services. The people of the eastern suburbs need the proposed Knox hospital, and they expect me to lobby the government to recognise its importance.

The Labor government has also made commitments about the extension of the Eastern Freeway. I eagerly await the timetable for its construction so that my constituents may know which traffic problems, particularly within the Nunawading area, may be alleviated by the project's completion.

My electorate is entitled to know whether the government is as committed to the long tunnel option as it suggested it might be in the last days of its election campaign.

On the subject of infrastructure, I note with some dismay that in his speech the Governor mentioned a maintenance budget for schools of \$10 million a year. When the former coalition came to government in 1992 the backlog in maintenance was \$650 million. The former government reduced that through good management, and as part of its election commitments would have reduced it to tens of millions of dollars by the end of next year. The fact is that \$10 million will just not do. Last year I visited Camelot Rise Primary School, which requires immediate and urgent maintenance works totalling around \$300 000. The present government intends to fix 40 schools a year out of the thousands across Victoria requiring work on a budget of \$10 million!

I do not know whether the Labor Party has learnt all the lessons of its previous term of government, as suggested by the Honourable Gavin Jennings. I am not sure it appreciates the importance of infrastructure. I hope this government honours some of the commitments made to schools in my electorate. Many of the commitments made by the honourable member for Mitcham in another place mirror commitments made by the government. People in my area expect those commitments to be honoured, yet to this point there is little evidence of that. I hope it will occur.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with members of this house to provide legislation that will advance Victoria and continue to provide opportunities for Victorians today and well into the future. I acknowledge some of the genuine and welcome philosophies of the government about delivering services, and I note the sorts of commitments it has made to fiscal responsibility. We shall have to wait and see what happens with some of those things. Past experience of Labor governments shows that there has been many a slip between the cup and the lip. I certainly hope this government is as committed as it suggests it is to build on the legacy of the previous government to continue to provide the opportunities that were being realised.

I hope the government avoids the temptation to change legislation simply to exchange processes, services and facilities in order to put its imprimatur on them. In other words, I hope it does the work and ensures it fixes things which are not working properly or which could be improved. I hope it is not tempted to overturn everything the previous government did just because it was done by a government of a different colour. Certainly the people in my electorate would not appreciate that. They expect the government to use its remarkable but modest victory and its very narrow mandate to act with responsibility and govern in the interests of all Victorians and not just those who make up the sectional interests that have traditionally elected and supported the Labor Party in Parliament.

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — I thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr President. I acknowledge your special role as Chair of this house and the responsibilities you carry on behalf of us all. We look to you to continue the traditions of fairness and impartiality in your role as Chair of this chamber.

As a new member of Parliament I was pleased to witness a few weeks ago another of your important roles when you, Sir, and the former Speaker from another place welcomed the leader of the Timorese independence movement, Mr Xanana Gusmao, to the Victorian Parliament during his visit to Melbourne on 11 October 1999. The recollection of that visit reminds us all that the gestation of the 54th Parliament in Victoria has occurred during a unique period of political history in our region, a period involving tumultuous change and upheaval in neighbouring East Timor and Indonesia.

When the Victorian state election was called on 24 August few professional political pundits or armchair analysts could have predicted that by mid-October there would be a new Labor government

in Victoria, acceptance by Indonesia of an independent East Timor and the climax of fledgling democratic processes in Indonesia itself without resort to military rule.

The world watched the bravery of the East Timorese who came out of the bush and their homes, as I was told by one eye witness, to queue as early as 4.30 a.m. on 30 August to exercise their right to vote in the referendum for the then province of East Timor.

The world also watched and was repelled by the orchestrated carnage and brutality at the hands of the vengeful militia that subsequently cost many voters their lives, homes and livelihoods. It is my belief that East Timor provided a powerful message for Victorians who were at the time engaged in their own state election campaign. The situation facing the people of East Timor in their desperate final grasp for freedom from Indonesian rule threw our own democratic system and institutions into sharp relief. We were reminded daily in the media that the democracy we have, however flawed, is considered precious by others.

Victorians understand the connection between domestic and international politics because they see themselves as part of a world community. For many Victorians, East Timor reinforced the value of this country's peaceful processes; processes that enabled the voices of Victorians to be heard and heeded on a regular basis whether in particular electorates, regional areas or across the state as a whole. The privacy of the ballot box proved a powerful medium for change in Victoria as it did in East Timor.

While issues relating to health, education and community safety were key concerns in the minds of Victorians during the past election campaign, democracy and accountable government also featured as significant issues. Victorians have become increasingly interested in the way our democracy is functioning and how it can be improved. The election results on this occasion have highlighted the undemocratic nature of representation in this chamber, given that the Labor Party gained more than 50 per cent of the two-party preferred vote in the recent election but has only 32 per cent of the seats. I and other honourable members new to this chamber have entered Parliament at a unique period of Victorian political history with considerable attention focussed on the Legislative Council and a widespread expectation for change in the community.

I am proud to be part of a Labor government that takes office with a clear and visionary program for Victoria, which includes reform of the Legislative Council. The

key elements of that program are to introduce a fairer voting system of proportional representation with five 7-member electorates electing 35 members of the Legislative Council, removal of the right to block supply, four-year terms for each member synchronised with Legislative Assembly elections and the establishment of standing committees to review legislation and monitor executive government. There is no doubt that that reform will make the Legislative Council a harder working house of review and the public's watchdog and is a proposal that enjoys popular support in the community.

People want to see structural reform applied to this chamber; they consider it well overdue. When it gave its ready assent over the past seven years to the previous government's program of sweeping structural change in many sectors of Victorian society, the Legislative Council directly affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of Victorians. They were told those changes were for the better — namely, for the purpose of achieving greater effectiveness and efficiency with a focus on outcomes rather than inputs. The Victorian public will expect no less than those principles which applied to their organisations, agencies and workplaces and invariably led to downsizing of many work forces and community programs being applied to this place.

This building stands at the top of Bourke Street as a wonderful symbol of democracy in the state and a rallying point for many causes. As have many other honourable members I have stood on or before the steps of Parliament House on many occasions. Two particular occasions come to mind. Firstly, in 1994 as the Mayor of Brunswick I stood on the steps of Parliament House with other mayors and councillors and addressed a rally for local democracy. As did many others, I advocated the involvement of elected local government representatives in the pending amalgamations of councils as the best model for local government reform. Five years later, just a week before the 18 September state election, I again participated in a rally for democracy. On that occasion people had come to the steps of their Parliament to cry out for the restoration of democracy and for the revaluing of people's participation in their communities and in decision making.

In response to growing concerns about the erosion of good democratic processes in Victoria under the previous government many community organisations such as the Victorian Local Governance Association, Purple Sage, the People Together Project, Save our Suburbs and the Royal Park Protection Group formed and were active in Melbourne Province and far beyond.

Of particular interest to me as one of the founding members, was the development of the VLGA, which initially formed to campaign for the restoration of local democracy following the council sackings and amalgamations that were carried out in such an undemocratic manner in 1994. Since the return of democratically elected councils the association has continued as a champion of the principles and practice of good governance at the local level. It has grown in strength and is a good example of good community development processes.

I was a councillor of the Moreland City Council — named and publicised widely as The People's Republic of Moreland by the former Minister for Planning and Local Government in another place — when Moreland council became the first member council of the VLGA in 1996. Council membership of the VLGA grew gradually at first, and although its first few member councils came from this province or nearby it now has 29 member councils and shires across the state. Furthermore, around 400 individual and more than 90 community groups are members and are testimony to the voice that the association has provided to many local governments and their communities over the past five years.

It has been gratifying to me to see the growth of the organisation and the way its message of good governance has been so eagerly embraced across the state by people of many different political persuasions and backgrounds. Members of the association have one thing in common: their belief in the importance of local democratic processes in building community cohesion and harmony and in local government as the foundation stone of our three-tier democracy.

In 1998 the VLGA captured its philosophy in a document called the Code of Good Governance. The code was developed jointly by the Municipal Association of Victoria and the VLGA. A good governance panel was appointed to examine models of good local government practice and to recommend ways of advancing the performance of local government in relation to the essential features of good governance. I direct attention to the fact that one of the three members of the panel was the predecessor Mr President, the Honourable Alan Hunt, AM, who has continued his passionate advocacy of democracy in the community since his retirement from state politics.

The spirit of the Code of Good Governance developed by local governments in the state was echoed in the charter recently put forward by the Independents from another place in their demands for more open, consultative, inclusive and accountable government at

the state level which, to quote them, is 'able to work productively for the people of Victoria'. Their support for a Bracks Labor government demonstrated where they perceived such style and substance could be achieved.

A Bracks Labor government is the kind of government needed in the electorate of Melbourne Province and others across Victoria. Victoria needs good, open, democratic processes to help manage diversity, resolve conflict, allow a range of voices to be heard, and above all promote understanding and harmony. It also needs a government that will forge strong productive partnerships with local government. I am pleased to be part of the Bracks Labor government that will restore balance and a fair go for the large sections of the population who have been the losers over the past seven years.

I will work hard to ensure that all people in Victoria, no matter where they live or whatever their family backgrounds may be, have access to opportunities to participate fully in the community through work and other useful activities and are protected at times of vulnerability, such as when they are in ill health or suffer from a disability.

The so-called economic miracle of Victoria has not been shared equally and too many have suffered. In September there were 180 000 unemployed people and 65 000 fewer full-time jobs than in 1990, with many more struggling on low pay. Action to stimulate employment growth more equally across Victoria must be a key priority, along with a move away from contract employment, which has added to the insecurity and deteriorating working conditions of many workers, especially women.

Education is another major government responsibility. Everything possible must be done to ensure Victoria has a well-planned and coherent public education system that can be accessed by every child, regardless of income, location or ethnicity.

I am honoured to have been elected by the people of Melbourne Province and to represent them across such a diverse and vital electorate. It includes the central activities district, the inner urban areas of Melbourne, some middle-ring suburbs and the Docklands area. I am pleased that under this government control of Docklands will be returned to Melbourne City Council so that it can be properly integrated into the strategic planning and decision-making processes of this great city.

As honourable members would have witnessed, over the past two decades the electorate of Melbourne Province has seen significant change, and over the past few years an accelerating building boom. I find it often useful to reflect on the past and to recall how our history has unfolded over time. I remind honourable members — the Honourable Gavin Jennings also reminded us — of the special role played by the Honourable Evan Walker, a previous Labor member for Melbourne Province from 1979 to 1992, whose Southbank and major projects initiatives while planning minister in a former government contributed significantly to the impetus for further imaginative development of the City of Melbourne and its surrounds.

In the early 1990s councillors of the City of Melbourne had the foresight to begin another kind of revival of inner Melbourne — by establishing the Postcode 3000 program, which encouraged readaptation of redundant commercial buildings for residential development. At the same time the city has seen the effects of changing demographics and attitudes as medium and high-density residential developments have helped reverse the population loss in the inner suburbs of the past 20 years or so. In the land of the quarter-acre block and spreadeagling bungalows many people remain uncomfortable with the changes. However, they make good environmental sense, stop the Melbourne sprawl and capitalise on the excellent infrastructure available in inner Melbourne. Furthermore, the movement helps take the pressure off the grab for land in green belts around the city.

As a former councillor with responsibility for planning at Moreland City Council I have long been a strong advocate of urban consolidation. However, I will continue also to be a strong advocate for planning and building systems that ensure governments at the local and state levels play a strong role in balancing the respective needs of developers, neighbours and the wider community, including the need to find ways to provide affordable housing options for low-income families.

It is the people and their governments who must shape our cities and protect our heritage and productive agricultural land. Planning decisions cannot be left primarily in the hands of developers.

Today it is fitting that I also pay tribute to the contributions of the former Council members for Melbourne Province, and especially my predecessor Doug Walpole, who showed a particular interest in the East Timor situation and industrial relations issues.

I am proud to be the first woman elected as a member for Melbourne Province and thank the Australian Labor Party and local branch members for their ongoing support and commitment to preselecting more women to safe Labor seats. It is even more gratifying to see the achievement of majority representation by women among the Labor members of this chamber.

I am reminded of the journey through Parliament by previous female politicians. The late Pauline Toner was the first Labor woman to become a minister in the Victorian Parliament. She left a number of important legacies, including improved facilities at Pentridge prison and a new remand centre in Melbourne. Pauline Toner felt keenly the need to provide a more humane environment for those incarcerated inside prison walls. She saw to it that her ideals were implemented. I congratulate our new ministers in this house and hope their achievements are visionary and many.

The Honourable Caroline Hogg is another Labor woman who has had a distinguished political career in this Parliament, including many years as a minister in the Cain–Kirner governments. She also enjoyed a reputation as an active, hardworking and caring local member of Parliament. I am proud to succeed Caroline Hogg as whip for the Labor Party in the Legislative Council and will make every effort to contribute to the smooth running of this chamber through that role. I also look forward to sharing the responsibilities and highlights of representing Melbourne Province with my newly elected colleague the Honourable Gavin Jennings.

On an occasion like this one is reminded that achievement of public office is not a solitary process but one to which a number of people make commitments of support and encouragement and often contribute considerable time and effort. I sincerely appreciate the role of my parents, Flo and Jack Howlett, whose working-class values have influenced me throughout my life. I appreciate the loving assistance and unstinting support given to me by my husband, Graham, and three sons, Jeremy, Finn and Oliver. I thank my campaign team and many loyal friends for their generous support and invaluable encouragement over a long period. I thank Emily's List for being there with critical assistance for Labor women candidates and anticipating when that extra encouragement was needed.

I come to this role with a range of experiences, including many years of teaching, working for the commonwealth Ombudsman and for Community Aid Abroad. My Community Aid Abroad work involved contact with many communities around the world. I

have met many people who have risked their lives for freedom. Some I have known have lost their lives in the struggle for the kind of democratic system we enjoy. But we in Australia who have been fortunate enough to inherit a democratic system of government have our own struggle — to be true to our democratic beliefs and to integrate democratic principles and practice into the daily grind of political, administrative and community activities while maintaining a clear sense of purpose and vision.

I intend to use public office to try to achieve positive outcomes for the community; to use my knowledge, experience and skills to diligently serve the people of my electorate and Victoria to the best of my ability; and to never forget that the original custodians of this land are the Wurundjeri people.

In the corridor outside the chamber is a cabinet containing the record of Victorian voters — 163 783 males who were enrolled to vote in the referendum on Federation just over 100 years ago. Such documents of history seem arrestingly poignant following last Saturday's referendum on the republic. Last Saturday the people of the federal electorate of Melbourne recorded the highest yes vote of more than 70 per cent — higher than all other electorates in Australia. That vote was an expression of confidence in themselves and the future of the Melbourne community within the proposed republic. I look forward to working with and representing these positive people for many, many years to come.

Hon. R. A. BEST (North Western) — It gives me great pleasure to respond to the Governor's address to the house on the occasion of the opening of the 54th Parliament. Both the Labor Party and the then coalition went to the election on 18 September giving a number of commitments and promises. It is now history that the coalition won 43 seats, the Labor Party 42 and the Independents 3, and with the support of the Independents the Labor Party in Victoria was asked to form a minority government, which it has done.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Hey, Besty, your own side has walked out on you!

Hon. R. A. BEST — I do not blame them, Mr Theophanous — they knew that you would interject. Honourable members on this side of the house often congratulate those who have made very good speeches, like the one that was just delivered. It is important that this house continues to demonstrate such manners, and I congratulate my colleague Mr Lucas on expressing his appreciation of the speech that has just been made.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. R. A. BEST — This is not my first speech, but there are other members who have made first speeches today, Mr Theophanous. One thing they can be assured of is that you will never be silent!

Following the Frankston East supplementary election the three Independents confirmed their support for the Labor Party. It is now history that many of the promises previously made in response to the charter the Independents circulated to both parties have been somewhat watered down or reversed in their application, particularly — as I will outline shortly — on the issue of sessional orders, and especially those for the operation of the Legislative Assembly.

I am disappointed that the Independents, all of whom come from country electorates, have seen fit to support Labor. However, coming from a sporting background, I accept that there are winners and losers, and although I begrudgingly accept the Independents' decision I have to congratulate the Bracks Labor government. I support the decision of the Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr Denis Napthine, to work to a three-year agenda, because it is important to governments of whatever party that there is political stability and certainty. Although the opposition parties will be keeping the Labor Party totally accountable for its actions, it is imperative that it be given the opportunity to govern and that we have the opportunity to scrutinise its every decision. I would be less than truthful if I did not say that I am looking forward to observing the Labor government's performance, particularly given some of the ways in which its ministers are currently treating the house in their answers to questions without notice.

As you would appreciate, Mr Acting President — you also represent North Western Province — I had the opportunity of discussing many issues contained in the charter with our colleague the Independent member for Mildura, Russell Savage, between the 18 September election and the result of the Frankston East supplementary election. Unquestionably, the principle by which our colleague Mr Savage operates is that he wants accountability of government, open and honest government and an improvement in the role of Parliament.

I have no difficulty with that. I cannot question his principles or his attitude. However, I am concerned that many people in the lower house do not appreciate the opportunity for scrutiny in this chamber. This chamber has an excellent system. Every Wednesday the opposition has the opportunity to question the role of government, to raise issues of concern and to make the

government accountable. This chamber works particularly well. I look forward to seeing how the government performs.

Unquestionably, members on this side of the house have a fair amount of experience and will utilise the opportunities to scrutinise the policies of the government of the day, opportunities that have existed since I was elected to Parliament in 1988. I am disappointed that that situation is not mirrored in the other house. As suggested, each question time 10 questions are asked. That practice has been adopted in the lower house, but it should be put on record that other proposals have been watered down.

One of the overriding examples put forward in response to the charter was the effective way in which this house has operated. Most members would agree that over the past 8 to 10 years members of the Labor Party have not utilised to their fullest extent the opportunities in this chamber for the scrutiny of government. I go back to the time I first came to the chamber, when the National and Liberal parties were in opposition. On the other side of the house were people of the calibre of Evan Walker and Caroline Hogg, who had the respect of all members of the chamber. They have been referred to today and last week by members in their maiden speeches.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. R. A. BEST — I am sorry, Theo; you won't get a guernsey! Barry Pullen had a social conscience. I may not have agreed with everything he said, but the manner in which he presented himself and the way he put his arguments earned him the respect of the house. In 1988, when I came to this house, it was difficult being in opposition as I confronted a range of talented ministers who were committed to the policies of their government and were good, effective, cooperative ministers. Unfortunately, towards the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s as those people retired — I am not referring to the current crop; I will leave them to be judged in future — the Labor Party used this place as a dumping ground for party hacks and union mates. A seat in the upper house was seen as a reward for the support they had given in other circles. That diminished the role of this house, affecting the quality of the people elected to the chamber.

I offer my total support to members making their maiden speeches over the next few days. They will be judged by their performance, just as members on this side of the house will be judged by ours. Of the other people who have operated in this house, using it to

scrutinise government, David White was a particularly fierce political animal.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — He's a nice bloke.

Hon. R. A. BEST — He is a nice fellow. I have no axe to grind with David White. He used this forum to extract every political opportunity he could. I have seen people on our side such as the Honourables Roger Hallam and Mark Birrell use this forum properly to scrutinise government and exact accountability for policy decisions from it. That is excellent; that is the way parliamentary systems should operate. I was therefore particularly disappointed when I examined the changes to the sessional orders that now apply because of the sessional orders introduced in the Legislative Assembly. Although some reforms are introduced, the new sessional orders will not go far enough.

I advocate that in future governments of either political persuasion seek to introduce to the lower house the same opportunity for scrutiny as exists in this house. In this chamber each week 2 hours are set aside for opposition business, allowing opposition members to raise issues of concern. I am disappointed that the Independents, while advocating accountability and openness of government, have allowed the Labor Party to water down those reforms in the Legislative Assembly. That is particularly disappointing given that, when Leader of the Opposition, the now Minister for State and Regional Development put together a document called *Restoring democracy*. I shall quote some passages from pages 20 and 21:

The Victorian Parliament needs to be returned to the people and their democratic representatives. The number of sitting days for the Parliament needs to be increased.

That is a fair point. I concede that. The document continues:

As well as increasing the number of sitting days, we need to improve Parliament's processes. Too few members of Parliament have the opportunity to participate in debates, often because the maximum speaking time of 30 minutes is too long and encourages members to use up all of the available time.

The only point I make is that in this chamber some people not only speak for longer than 30 minutes but also on occasion are unnecessarily repetitious. I will not mention anybody directly, but put on record —

Hon. W. R. Baxter — Haven't they cut back speech times in the lower house?

Hon. R. A. BEST — Speech times have been cut back to 20 minutes. In this house people can speak as long as they want, regardless of content — the lack of

which is the hallmark of the speeches of Mr Theophanous — and repetition. The document continues:

We need to improve the question time as a matter of urgency. This can be done quite easily by changing the standing orders to:

allow questions without notice for a minimum of 45 minutes each sitting day, to allow at least 10 questions, not including supplementary questions;

allow supplementary questions;

give the Speaker the authority to extend question time if not enough questions have been asked; and

make ministers answer questions directly, factually and succinctly.

Each MP is not only a member of a party, they need to represent their constituents. In the Victorian Parliament there are very few occasions for members to debate issues of immediate concern to their constituents or to initiate legislation not initially supported by the government.

Mr Brumby makes one final point:

We also need more opportunities for our MPs to debate issues of concern to their constituents.

I encourage all government members to look at that document. Clearly what Mr Brumby was advocating in opposition does not apply when in government. I am not saying that is inconsistent but that, in an effort to be accountable and to provide an open Parliament that provides a forum for all members to raise issues of concern to their electorates, a lower house model based on the practices of the upper house would be far better and provide a far more accountable form of government.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Is this your new policy? Are you going to pinch it from John Brumby?

Hon. R. A. BEST — Once again Mr Theophanous has distorted the facts. It is no wonder he is on the backbench, because he does not listen. He should listen to what other people say and then form an opinion, rather than sitting there gabbling away.

The watering down of the sessional orders in the Legislative Assembly is only one of a number of 'Bracks flips' that the government has performed. The government is returning the favour to some of its mates for their support during the last election campaign. Two of the issues I will comment on are, firstly, the issue raised by Mr Atkinson regarding proportional representation, and, secondly, the attitude of the Minister for Education to the Schools of the Third Millennium program.

On proportional representation, history is repeating itself. In the mid-1980s, when the numbers in the Legislative Council were very close, the then Labor Premier, John Cain, said he wanted to abolish this house. However, in an effort to ensure that the Labor candidate was re-elected in the Nunawading Province re-election John Cain did a deal with the Democrats not to abolish the upper house but to introduce legislation to install a form of proportional representation for the election of its members.

It is worth putting on the record the main features of the 1988 Constitution (Proportional Representation) Bill to highlight the similarities between it and the current government's proposal. The then Premier, John Cain, said the bill comprised a number of provisions relating to a system of proportional representation to elect the Legislative Council. He said the system would follow the commonwealth Senate system of multimember electorates, with quota preferential voting and proportional representation. He also said the state would be divided into five provinces, three with a metropolitan focus and two with a rural focus, and that each province would have nine members — but that has since been adjusted to seven.

The then Premier also said upper house members would be elected for four-year terms concurrently and simultaneously with the Legislative Assembly, so there is nothing new in the current proposal. He said the method of calculation of the quota would be identical to that used to elect the commonwealth Senate. In other words, to be elected a candidate would require a quota of 10 per cent plus one.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — What is your point?

Hon. R. A. BEST — The point is that the current proposal reflects another grubby deal by the Labor Party to ensure Democrat preferences. To understand what that means one has only to consider what happens in country Victoria. Many of the members of Parliament who represent country Victoria have already started to canvass the issue. Two questions I ask people in country Victoria are, 'When was the last time you saw a Senator?', and, 'When was the last time you could name three of your Senators?'. Country Victorians say, 'I don't know'.

The reason is that, as is the case in New South Wales, where the upper house is elected by proportional representation, not one member of the Senate has an electorate office registered outside the major capital cities. Not one member of the New South Wales upper house has an electorate office outside Sydney.

As my colleague the Deputy President and I know — and the local media have noticed it — people in Mildura do not know the name of one member of the New South Wales upper house. It is easy for us to show that single-member electorates are a more effective and accountable form of representation — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — How many people out there know you?

Hon. R. A. BEST — One thing people know, Mr Theophanous, is that you are a faction of one and that you have very few friends on your side, let alone on this side. I look forward to the opportunity of debating proportional representation when the issue comes before the house. As I said, that is the first grubby deal Labor has done with the Democrats.

The Minister for Education is doing something similar. I am concerned that she is dispensing with the Schools of the Third Millennium program to return the favour to the teacher unions for their support during the election campaign. One of the concerns of the schools involved in the program is that the Minister for Education is dragging Victoria back to the early 1980s, when control was centralised in the Department of Education and all the decisions, including those of school councils, had to be ratified by a regional office or centralised body. The schools that wanted to advertise for teachers in August have been poorly treated. Only in the past two weeks has authority been given to advertise those positions.

As you know, Mr Deputy President, a number of schools in our province are part of the Schools of the Third Millennium program. I refer to Mildura South Primary School, Irymple South Primary School, Mildura Secondary College, Swan Hill Secondary College, Kerang High Tech, Bendigo Senior Secondary College, Kennington Primary School, Spring Gully Primary School, and Comet Hill Primary School. The interesting thing is that those schools are concerned about devolving decision-making to the community, allowing operational matters to be dealt with at an operational level and policy to come from the centre and then be implemented by schools.

The removal of governance powers is of major concern to schools in Bendigo. Comet Hill Primary School, Flora Hill Secondary College, Bendigo Senior Secondary College, Kennington Primary School and Spring Gully Primary School are worried about issues affecting staffing, funding, student services and governance matters. In the past week or so representatives of the schools have been reported in the media as expressing concern about their inability to

attract and enter into contracts with the best possible teachers. That is also a major concern to me.

I have referred to the government doing backflips on policy issues that in most cases were originated by members of the previous Labor government. Again I take the opportunity of quoting from a proposal formulated in June 1986 by the ministry structures project team when Ian Cathie was the Labor Minister for Education.

It lays the foundation for the Schools of the Future program. While members of Parliament had the opportunity to make political points on policy processes and development, in reality it is the educationalists and education institutions that examine ways in which much of the education policy is developed over the years. Many of the green and white papers are developed over many years. The then minister, Mr Cathie, was totally supportive of the program. It is worth putting some of the comments made on the record because it highlights that the minister is making a decision based on the fact that because this was a coalition policy it should be scrapped. The minister is scrapping it for all the wrong reasons. Over the years people of both political persuasions have developed policies that allow schools to develop teaching staffs that are responsive to the needs of local communities. It allows schools flexibility in the way they spend their budgets.

It also replaces the resources and the decision-making process at the local level and removes the necessity to keep referring to a central structure. It is an unfortunate set of circumstances because centralising the system will not reward effort. Teachers are not being rewarded financially for their commitment to improving the education programs delivered through schools. Instead of being instructed by the union movement, the minister will be better off listening to many of the principals involved in the program. Reshape it if necessary but do not scrap it. Many school councillors who give their time voluntarily have a valuable contribution to make. If their enthusiasm is dampened and their ideas are suppressed the government is walking away from a resource that has provided an enormous advancement in the way education is delivered. It also provides professional development, which should be encouraged.

I have a sister who was a senior secondary college teacher and many friends I played sport with were involved in teaching. I am aware of some of the policy impacts of the former government over the past seven years. They have not always been embraced by school communities.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — What about the cuts over the past seven years?

Hon. R. A. BEST — I know that where programs have been embraced they have been embraced enthusiastically. It is timely that while the Labor Party is talking about accountability to electorates, in particular country and regional centres, members have not been listening to their electorates. The election results indicate that the coalition did not listen to the electorate. I remind the honourable member for Bendigo East that Kennington Primary School, Spring Gully Primary School, Comet Hill Primary School, Bendigo Senior Secondary College and Flora Hill Secondary College are all Schools of the Third Millennium in her electorate, and they want the program retained.

It will be an interesting time for the honourable member for Bendigo East. When she is asked to be accountable she will be imposing her view on her electorate, and that may not accord to the desires of the schools. The 2000 to 2500 families involved in the schools will be the ones that decide whether they are being represented in the manner they wish. The honourable member should be mindful of the wishes of her electorate because it is early days.

One of her fine achievements in the election campaign and during the six to eight months leading up to the election on 18 September was that she created a work ethic that encouraged people to vote for her. I congratulate her on the excellent job of doorknocking and getting out to the small communities in the Bendigo East electorate to convince them she had a work ethic that was appropriate for a member of Parliament. She was voted in handsomely. I do not resile from the fact that if she is prepared to work and be accountable she deserves the rewards the electorate is prepared to bestow on her. The honourable member went to school with my children and I know her and her family well but I say, 'Be mindful.' The Labor Party has announced the scrapping of the catchment management levy.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. R. A. BEST — No, it was David Kennedy. Do you know what David White said about the two Kennedys, Cyril and David? He said that if they fell off the Rialto tower, people would say, 'Who cares?'

The scrapping of the catchment management levy is interesting. While I was actively trying to seek a concession for pensioners I acknowledged the need for a reversal of the policies of the past that saw much of

the land degradation and salinity problems that are being confronted in northern Victoria. There is a need to continue to create Victoria's clean, green image overseas and to guarantee the source of supply.

As members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Mr Theophanous and I had the opportunity last year to travel throughout Europe to seek evidence on environmental accounting, reporting and taxes applicable not only in a legislative sense but from accounting firms and different groups associated with the environment.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — It was very informative.

Hon. R. A. BEST — I am pleased to acknowledge the interjection of Mr Theophanous. In particular, the north-central catchment system is badly degraded. The rivers produce about 200 000 tonnes of salt a year and dump it into the Murray River. Something should be done, and done quickly. It was not the former government that introduced the notion of a catchment management levy. When he was Premier John Cain introduced a catchment-wide levy into the Gippsland area in the mid-1980s. Again the Labor Party is reversing a policy through political convenience and popularity. It was introduced for a good reason. The government had to tackle the issues associated with the environment, waterways and river systems.

It is important that funding is provided because unless the problems confronting many of our landowners are attacked, we are abrogating our responsibilities and jeopardising future exports which are vital for Victoria's income.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Do you support more water for the Snowy?

Hon. R. A. BEST — Mr Theophanous, if your government is prepared to provide around \$500 million for the infrastructure that is needed throughout the Goulburn Valley, the required water savings can be achieved. The honourable member will acknowledge that many irrigation areas are still earthen channels and the amount of waste is enormous. Victoria needs to be smarter in the way it uses its irrigation systems and addresses the infrastructure required for those systems. A range of savings could be achieved but it will require capital investment. It is up to the government of the day to provide the level of income needed to achieve those savings.

Another interesting component is that it is not only our decision. My colleague Mr Baxter may cover this issue in the next day or so because he is well aware of the

problem. Mr Baxter was involved in the provision of a report into the water industry, appropriately entitled the Baxter report, which addressed — —

Hon. W. R. Baxter — I did not call it that.

Hon. R. A. BEST — You did not call it that, Mr Baxter. I acknowledge that although you did not have a vote, you were the chairman of the committee. It was a committee of irrigators from lower and upper catchment areas.

Today, at the start of the second week of Parliament, it is disappointing that the Premier has not seen fit to table the report complying with section 27 of the Financial Management Act 1994, of which Mr Theophanous would be aware. Section 27 states:

The Minister must cause a copy of the annual financial statement for a financial year, together with a copy of the Auditor-General's report on that statement, to be laid before each House of the Parliament on or before the first sitting day of the House after 20 October next following that year.

The conservative and Labor sides of politics went to the election basing their promises and commitments to the electorate on a budget surplus of \$66 million. I acknowledge that the Labor Party had its budget promises costed by Access Economics.

Hon. W. R. Baxter — It depends on what Labor told it, though.

Hon. R. A. BEST — Yes, it does. Day by day we see Labor adjusting its policies and decisions, particularly the latest concerning the number of public servants with which it intends to dispense. Both sides of politics projected their promises on the notion that the budget surplus would be around \$66 million. There has been speculation from many areas that that budget surplus will be closer to \$300 or \$400 million, which will provide the Labor government with a pot of gold and an opportunity — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Don't you talk to Louise? She said \$700 million.

Hon. R. A. BEST — Mr Theophanous, who is Louise by the way? The opposition does not know the state of Victoria's finances. The Financial Management Act requires the Premier of the day to table the financial statements. The Premier has already broken the law — it as simple as that. By abrogating the responsibility outlined in section 27 of the Financial Management Act, Mr Bracks has broken the law. In the not-too-distant future I hope the Premier is prepared to tell all Victorians just how flushed with money we are. My colleague the Honourable Barry Bishop, a member

for North Western Province, and I have a number of projects, particularly at Mr Bishop's end of the electorate, which we wish to see financed. We have worked with the municipal council and the former coalition government to ensure those projects do get up — such as an extension to Mildura airport; an upgrade to the Mildura Arts Centre; the creation of a new courthouse, which my colleague, Mr Bishop ran in the media again this week; and the extension and creation of the Deakin irrigation areas — important projects for country Victoria.

Another issue I raise is the upgrade of the lighting of the Queen Elizabeth Oval in Bendigo. Last week in this house the Minister for Sport and Recreation — and I intend to raise this on the adjournment tonight — said the local members had consulted with the community about the establishment of those lights at the QEO. I inform the minister that as late as today sporting bodies are still waiting for a phone call from the local members to find out what is happening. I would be pleased to discuss the issue. I acknowledge and thank the minister for his offer last week to bring a deputation to Melbourne. The reason I have not pursued that is because I rang the minister's office last week and could not get a response on a suitable date, so I have written to the minister again. The QEO caters for eight user groups so it would be preferable if the minister could come to Bendigo to meet them.

I will not argue about the promise because I believe it is an appropriate one. I have been working with the council for years on an upgrade to the QEO precinct, from View Street to the tennis courts opposite the sports centre. The community has been active in holding international and state cricket games at the venue. It has also been trying to attract an Ansett Cup game, and has staged Tynan-Eyre football games. The facility is good but it is tired and needs an upgrade.

As new members of Parliament will learn, honourable members get the opportunity to serve on all-party committees of Parliament. That gives honourable members an opportunity to know each other and to work together on issues that may not always hold the same philosophical direction. I have served on the Road Safety Committee, which has been a good committee. Previous members include Burwyn Davidson and Doug Walpole, who have been good contributors to the committee. The committee has worked through a range of issues, including problems associated with drugs other than alcohol in driving. That is an important topic and one of which we should be aware. Unfortunately, drugs and driving is a concern, particularly among the trucking fraternity, but also among young kids who rather than going out and having a couple of drinks

prefer to have a puff or a joint of marijuana and then drive — a lethal combination.

I refer the house to some alarming decisions made by the Bendigo Magistrates Court over the past month. In the first decision a magistrate did not remove a truck driver's licence, even though he blew .103.

As honourable members will be aware, truck drivers are not supposed to drive with more than .00 blood alcohol levels. However, in this case the magistrate decided not to remove the driver's licence. That was only one of two bad decisions made that day. The second involved a recidivist offender. A driver was appearing on a drink-driving charge after having been convicted four times previously for similar offences. I have suggested to the Attorney-General that magistrates should be given more options.

The government should consider legislating to restore alcohol-ignition interlocks for repeat drink-driver offenders. Although about 25 per cent of road accidents are caused through the consumption of alcohol by drivers, we should take a practical view and address the problem of repeat offender drivers who cannot help themselves; they continue to drive, endangering others. The Road Safety Committee of the previous Parliament did preliminary work on the issue, but perhaps an imperative should be provided to magistrates to add flexibility to the sentences they deliver.

The Labor Party's policy is to study the impact of poker machines. It has said its study will be particularly relevant for regional centres. I confess that I enjoy playing poker machines, as do many members of the community. The advertising associated with the dangers of the gaming industry — that is, 'If it is no longer fun, walk away' — has been a responsible step, but my concern is for the many sporting clubs in Bendigo that have poker machines. I am concerned that the people conducting any study should remember that the point of the gaming industry will be missed if the ability of sporting clubs to generate income through poker machines is removed. Sporting clubs need machines so that, as in New South Wales, facilities can be developed and player participation increased. Clubs can then gain revenue, removing the need for them to receive funding from local or state government. The study may be well intentioned, but it needs to be approached with caution so the baby is not thrown out with the bathwater.

Any government study should not impact on the ability of sporting clubs and organisations such as the Returned and Services League to develop sporting facilities and programs that encourage the involvement

of juniors. Those conducting any study should be aware that income derived by clubs from gaming often leads to their relinquishing the need for state, federal and local government funding.

The house knows about the boom-and-bust levels of activity in north-western Victoria. Many farmers in dry-farming areas are going through difficult times. Responsible water practices have encouraged growth in agricultural and horticultural areas. Honourable members may not be aware that Swan Hill has an employment problem: primary producers there cannot get enough people gainfully employed in the area's horticultural and agricultural industries. A recent KPMG study identified Mildura and Bendigo as both the first and third-fastest growing areas in the state, and those areas will enjoy a growth rate of approximately 6 per cent through to 2006. People often say that things are going badly in country areas, but only pockets of regional areas face enormous difficulties in producing agricultural products associated with dryland farming.

Most honourable members will be aware of the difficulties faced by the wool industry in the past 10 or 15 years, and particularly of the problems that cereal growers have faced in the past three or four years. The comment that country Victoria is doing it tough cannot be applied to all areas, because from Kerang through to Mildura Victoria is enjoying unprecedented growth.

Hon. W. R. Baxter — And record levels of employment.

Hon. R. A. BEST — Yes, and we cannot get workers in Swan Hill.

One of the most enjoyable tasks I undertook during my 11 years in Parliament was the charring of a committee that examined the redevelopment of the Long Gully housing estate. The coalition government of the time examined the redevelopment of former housing ministry areas. When examining issues associated with Long Gully, officials from the ministry and I convened a committee that included representatives of tenants, tenant workers, police, housing ministry staff and the churches in Bendigo to look at ways of attacking the physical problems associated with the estate.

During its deliberations the committee visited the site of the former Olympic Village in West Heidelberg. I know the area well because I was born and lived for the first 18 years of my life in West Heidelberg. My mother still lives in the housing ministry house we moved to in 1947. Now she owns that property, but she will not move from there no matter what persuasive argument our family presents to try to convince her to move to

another area. It is an example of a woman and her castle. When the family broaches the subject with mum I am reminded of the film *The Castle*, in which a family refuses to move from its house located close to the extension of a Sydney airport runway.

In Bendigo the committee examined not only the physical nature of the housing stock but also the social issues within that estate. About 300 three-bedroom houses there no longer meet the waiting list criteria in Bendigo, which has an overrepresentation of one-bedroom and two-bedroom accommodation; many of the three-bedroom houses are occupied by single-member or single-unit families. That causes problems. The committee proposed, and the then Minister for Housing agreed to, funding of \$6 million for the estate; the funding was made available just before the election.

Many other reforms were proposed for the Long Gully area. A major commitment was made to the employment of a full-time project worker. St Luke's church and other local churches have done a fantastic job in establishing programs to improve the social fabric of the area. I look forward to the Labor government's continuing its work on the Long Gully project and on the report submitted to the former housing ministry because it has addressed many issues facing people in the lower socioeconomic sector. I hope the government will take up many of the recommendations of the committee. My colleague the Honourable Jeanette Powell is chairing a committee in the Shepparton area to examine many similar issues.

Country Victoria faces a number of problems. The messages of the election have been heard and the Liberal Party is aware of them. But there is no single fix for all the problems confronting communities.

Examples of real vitality and growth in many of Victoria's country areas are not always reflected in the regional centres. I am disappointed that the opportunities to provide employment in regional towns and centres that come along in the form of major industry are not always favourable to the owners of the enterprises concerned. That disappoints me because I am only too aware that industry will stay in a location for so long as the subsidy lasts. As soon as the subsidy runs out they will relocate to another area and look for other government funding, thus shifting the problem from one area to another. Communities need the infrastructure to work on areas of natural advantage and reform the water industry to provide not only world-health quality water but also empower communities to treat their effluent — a basic requirement for small communities wishing to attract

industry. I have pleasure in supporting the Governor's address.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN (Ballarat) — One of the reasons I am here is that there were many long speeches and no action. I would like to start by thanking the voters of Ballarat Province who supported the Labor Party. I would also like to thank all the candidates who stood in the election. I have run for Parliament twice before and lost on two occasions. You work hard, try hard, have lots of dreams and ambitions and it is not easy to lose. I would like to thank my opponents at the last election, because I have been there. I would also like to thank all the party workers at the last election — those from the Labor Party, the Liberal Party and all the others. They always turn up and do the job for us. In particular I wish to thank my party. I love my party. I have been in the party since I was a young man in 1967. It is not always right but it is at the moment, and it is always heading in the right direction. Because of that, I am a member.

The ALP is 100 years old now and it has a breadth of opinion that I find stimulating. It is great for our democracy. I would also like to thank my family. I am not easy to live with. My wife has said on numerous occasions that I am many things but I am never boring. I thank Rosa for always being there. I have been campaigning since 1983. It is a long time to be a spouse of somebody like me.

My passion is regional development. I started in 1983–84 as a candidate for Ripon when Allen's was proposing to establish a factory in Maryborough. I worked very hard on the project and learnt a lot. I learnt that you had to be incredibly dedicated and focused, that you had to work with your local community and that they, too, had to be focused. I lobbied every minister in the government of the day and eventually we won. We nearly lost it to Orange in New South Wales but eventually we won. It was really tough but we got there. That factory now provides 220 jobs.

I then moved into another role connected with regional development. I worked with David White, as many on the opposition side know. As a result of my next project — it was called the Australian Securities Commission — the Latrobe Valley now employs 400 people. I was given a 10 per cent chance of winning that. I met with the Prime Minister of the day. We took out the politics and that project is now in the Latrobe Valley. Again, it took strong will, determination and a great team.

The Australian Defence Industries in Benalla was another project. It was worth \$150 million and 200 to

300 jobs. Once again, it was nearly lost to New South Wales, which was often a competitor, as honourable members on the other side would know. We had to work very hard. We had a great team, but we achieved a result. It is now up and running. Another project was the Ballarat Data Centre, which was not quite as successful. It was in its formation stage in 1991–92. I worked on the concept with Steve Bracks. It did not go forward as I believe it should have, and it is one of the jobs on which I will spend my time. Again, it will require all the same ingredients. However, there is an enormous potential for a data centre in Ballarat.

I was declared the member for Ballarat Province on a Monday. Two days later I began to meet with companies. There are many great investment leads in my region. One is a possible \$50 million to \$100 million investment with 300-plus jobs. Another is a \$10 million investment with 200 to 300 jobs. As opposition members will appreciate, when dealing with regional development there is a tendency to put a percentage figure on the chance of success. I think I have a 30 to 50 per cent chance with those projects, but I will try my hardest to get them because they are what country Victoria wants. It wants us, as a government and as a Parliament, to deliver.

More projects are under consideration but they have a less than 30 per cent chance of success. In my new job I will concentrate on finding jobs because that is the most important role I can play in serving my electorate. The cancer of unemployment is incredibly devastating in country Victoria. Handouts are one thing, but there must be employment.

The other topic I will discuss — because honourable members would probably like to know who I am — is my history, about which there is a little bit to tell. I have always been in business, and I now have a vineyard. My great-grandfather arrived from Scotland in 1851 and went goldmining. He married a lady called Mary Kelly — that will be a good story for the future — around the area of Greta, where the Kelly gang lived. I would love to claim a relationship but at this point I cannot. It is a possibility; my cousin, who is a doctor of history, could not quite prove it. My grandfather went on to mine in the Woods Point, Jamieson and Mansfield areas. My father also mined, and was in charge of the Morning Star battery on Black Friday in 1939. He was lucky to survive. My family has a lot of history in mining. It is an interesting turn of events that I am now a member for Ballarat Province, where a lot of mining has occurred and where gold was discovered.

My father became president of the Victorian Soft Drink Association, the executive of which I was later a

member. As I have mentioned, I am involved in the wine industry. My commitment and great passion is for country Victoria, jobs and economic development. They are not my only passions, but are my great passions. I have experience in working with trade unions, and in negotiating with companies and trade unions in trying to find common ground. I believe I have the potential to help create more employment and more economic activity in the region. That is what I will try my hardest to do over the next four years on behalf of all the people in my electorate.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — I also wish to respond to the speech of His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, Sir James Gobbo, AC. In doing so I firstly welcome all new members to the chamber. I am sure that in time they will find this an extremely unique place in which to do business. While honourable members have different political views, which at times they espouse with heartfelt passion, on many more social occasions — perhaps joint parliamentary committee meetings — members from each side of the house meet and develop good friendships. I think that will continue in the same way it has occurred in the past.

I also acknowledge the work of honourable members who served in the 52nd and 53rd Parliaments. Unfortunately the last Parliament was halted abruptly and there was no time to say farewell or put on record our appreciation of the work of many honourable members. I know other speakers have already commented on that but it would be remiss of me not to do so.

The Honourable Rob Knowles came to Parliament in 1976 and served the people of Victoria with great distinction for some 23 years. It is sad to see him depart politics in Victoria — and he will be sorely missed in this place. The Honourable Bruce Atkinson said Rob was perhaps one of the best ministers the state has had. I concur with that view.

I would also place on record the work of the Honourable Dick de Fegely, another member for Ballarat Province. Dick came to Parliament in 1985. He served his constituents of Ballarat with great distinction. As most members know, Dick was a farmer whose feet were firmly planted on the ground. There were many occasions on which his down-to-earth philosophies really kept this ship on an even keel. The Honourable Rosemary Varty, initially a member for Nunawading Province, came to Parliament in 1985 and served with great distinction for 14 years. On departure Rosemary was cabinet secretary. She worked hard for her people and served this chamber with great honour

and distinction. Parliament has also lost Bill Hartigan and Sue Wilding, who were unfortunately defeated. In their own ways they were great contributors to the democratic institution of this chamber.

Louise Asher has decided to take the plunge and is now the honourable member for Brighton in the Legislative Assembly. I am sure Louise will perform extremely well in her new role as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. I wish her all the best in her position. Ron Wells, also a member from this side, decided to retire after 14 years in Parliament. Ron was a unique person who was probably underrated in many ways. He was really quite an intellectual guru, if I can use that terminology. Ron had some deep thoughts on most issues. In his unique way he brought a passion to and added greatly to the intellectual rigour of the chamber.

One of the good things about being a member of this house is that members acknowledge members of the other side. I would like to put on record the work of former ministers the Honourable Barry Pullen and the Honourable Caroline Hogg. Much has already been said of the two former ministers, and I can only concur. Caroline, in particular, gave a lot to this state in the area of education and will go down in history as a great contributor to the education system.

How could I forget Don Nardella? He has also taken the plunge and is now the honourable member for Melton in the other place. We on this side all wish him well. Our gain is the loss of the other house! We also miss Pat Power. I join with others in saying that we are sorry Pat failed to be re-endorsed by his party. Pat was a great philosopher who added much to the debates in this house.

There was also Dougie Walpole. He did not actually retire from this chamber but contested East Yarra Province against the seat of the Leader of the Opposition, who had a comfortable victory. I wish Doug well in his retirement.

One other member of this chamber who retired at the last election has to date not been mentioned by anyone — Jean McLean. I wish to put on record Jeannie's work. I got to know her well when she was a member of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, of which I was chairman. She and I did a lot of travelling and had lots of coffees, and so on, together. We really got to know each other very well. She wore her heart on her sleeve. She was passionate about many issues that many of us did not take up and was great for all the causes she represented. I wish her well on her retirement. I do not think I have forgotten anybody. If I have, I beg their forgiveness.

I turn to some of the aspects of the Governor's address. Generally his speech was tedious with rhetoric and exceptionally scanty on detail. As I heard the Governor reading the speech I kept asking myself, 'How are all these things going to be implemented?'. I am still asking 'How?' The more one reads the Governor's speech the more one realises that it is just a political statement based on socialist ideology. There is no way known that the majority of matters in that document can be implemented.

The Governor's speech sets out the plans for the next four years of the minority government. I use the term 'minority' based on fact. I place on record why the Labor Party is a minority government. The final election results for the Legislative Assembly, where government is formed, show that the then coalition gained 47.07 per cent of the vote; the ALP gained 45.51 per cent; and others gained 7.42 per cent. If one considers it another way, that means 54.49 per cent of Victorians did not vote for the Labor Party, so it is a minority government. In the two most marginal seats, Geelong was won by 16 votes and Carrum was won by 123 votes. In other words, if 70 people had changed their votes the opposition would have been the government. In both those seats more Liberal votes were recorded on first preferences.

The reason we have a Bracks minority government, as has been said by other speakers, is that it has the support of the Independents. The Australian Labor Party supported in its entirety the charter proposed by the Independents. In fact, one could be forgiven for thinking that the so-called Independents charter was probably written in collaboration with the ALP, given that the five points listed in the charter formed the basis of the ALP's policy document. I have been told today — I do not know how true and accurate it is, but it came from an ALP source — that my opponent in the recent election, Stuart Morris, QC, was the author of that document, but I guess time will tell.

We need to examine the results in the Independent seats to realise how much of a minority government the Bracks government is. In the seat of Mildura the Liberal-National party candidates polled 45.9 per cent on first preference votes; Independents and others polled 54.1 per cent; and the ALP, only 8.43 per cent.

Hon. K. M. Smith — How much?

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON — Only 8.43 per cent of the electors of Mildura voted for the Labor Party. In other words, 91.5 per cent were anti-Labor.

In Gippsland East 35.91 per cent of first preference votes went to the then coalition; 36.84 per cent went to Independents and others; and 27.25 per cent went to the Labor Party. Another way of looking at it is that 72.75 per cent of people did not vote for the Labor Party.

Gippsland West is represented by a so-called Independent who was a former Labor Party member — and examination of the members register of interests reveals she is also a member of Emily's List, which is a list of women supported by the Labor Party, including many female government members in this chamber. In Gippsland West 44.48 per cent of voters voted for the coalition candidates; 37.4 per cent — less than the coalition — voted for the Independents and others; and only 18.11 per cent voted for the Labor Party.

Therefore, based on statistics alone it is clear that the Bracks Labor government is indeed a minority government and it is governing on a razor's edge. The former coalition clearly and convincingly outperformed all the Independents on the first preference votes.

Another issue mentioned in the Governor's speech is upper house reform. No doubt honourable members will hear a lot more about upper house reform as the next year rolls by. The government cannot claim a mandate for those reforms. As I have just outlined, no party won the majority of seats. It is my understanding that a party should have a fairly substantial majority before it can claim such a mandate. The Bracks minority government certainly cannot claim a mandate for this sort of reform.

Many newspaper and media commentators, including television news and so on, have agreed that constitutional reform is not a major issue. In fact, during the election campaign there were probably very few candidates in this chamber who mentioned that they were concerned with upper house reform.

Hon. W. R. Baxter — My opponent never mentioned it.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON — I am sure your opponent did not mention it, Mr Baxter; nor did mine, and nor did opponents in other electorates.

The options put forward by the ALP are fundamentally flawed. I certainly cannot see how the Independents could agree to such propositions. There are three major reasons why I believe the proposals are fundamentally flawed. Mr Best alluded to at least one, which is that it would reduce the number of members of Parliament representing rural electorates. A study of the history of reform of the upper house reveals that in the early days

of this Parliament rural Victoria probably had a substantial share of the representation in this chamber; it would be a shame to see representation of rural Victoria decreased, especially in the manner that has been suggested.

Another reason why the proposed upper house reforms are fundamentally flawed is that if the system of voting is changed to proportional representation it is an invitation to small renegade groups of people to come together — I can only cite the example of One Nation — that may well find representation in this chamber through that system of voting. Honourable members on both sides of the house would agree that, even though we live in a democratic state and country, it would be abhorrent to us all to have members of the One Nation party in this chamber.

In the Senate and in the upper house in New South Wales, where members are elected proportionally, the chambers can be described only as unstable electoral environments. One of the good things about Victoria is that it has a very stable political system, and I do not think the community will buy any reasons why it ought to be changed. The change is being promoted by only one side of politics, and I think it is for the same reason that change was sought back in the early 1980s — in a grubby attempt to secure the preference votes from particularly the Democrats and the Greens.

I notice that in the Governor's speech it is stated that if this chamber blocks those reforms, the Bracks minority government will establish a constitutional commission, which would be asked to conduct a plebiscite of Victorians on electoral reform. I do not know what the cost would be — it may well be \$10 million or \$20 million — but whatever it is, it would be a gross misuse and waste of taxpayers' money. At the end of the day any plebiscite of the people of Victoria would not be binding on the chamber. By virtue of the fact that it is a plebiscite, it will be just a collection of the views of the electorate, and it can already be ascertained what those views might be.

It is also pertinent to remind members of the chamber that for three weeks in 1985 the Labor Party controlled this house. Untold damage resulted from the reforms passed in those three weeks. If my memory serves me correctly, a bill that changed workers compensation provisions and another that changed occupational health and safety provisions were introduced, bringing on the start of the downward economic spiral in Victoria. I acknowledge that those two bills had some good features, but their economic impact sent Victoria down a path of economic destruction, leaving it with a \$32 billion debt in 1992.

Since 1992 the Kennett government has worked hard, relentlessly and with compassion to improve the lot of Victorian citizens. My dread is that the Bracks government will not be able to deliver the reforms it has proposed but will take Victoria down the road to economic ruin.

I will comment on a couple of other key areas of the Governor's speech. I note that of the \$170 million to be used to establish the regional infrastructure development fund, \$40 million has already been used for the standardisation of the rural freight network, leaving only \$130 million to implement other proposals. This document does not explain how the proposals will be fully implemented or where the money is coming from.

One transport matter that affects the constituents of Waverley Province is the unilateral decision by the government to scrap the Scoresby freeway project. That will have untold impact on the residents of the City of Monash, which I represent. It was an extremely hasty decision and there was no consultation. The eastern ring-road steering committee, of which all local councillors were members, was not involved in the process of abandoning the project. It makes a mockery of the charter between the Independents and the ALP, promising open and accountable government, consultative processes, et cetera.

The government's decision to improve Stud Road does not look far enough into the future. The Honourable Bruce Atkinson mentioned that we will have another South-Eastern Car Park — a highway with a succession of traffic lights. In 5 to 10 years the volume of traffic flowing down Springvale and Blackburn roads will be unsustainable. There will be gridlocks all day, every day. The main idea of the eastern ring-road was to remove heavy transport vehicles from Springvale, Blackburn and other north-south roads running through the City of Monash.

One other issue raised by the government is the proposed extension of the railway line from Glen Waverley to Rowville. That has been the pipedream of various transport ministers over time.

Hon. M. T. Luckins — Not our transport ministers!

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON — Not ours, and certainly not the Honourable Bill Baxter. It makes me wonder what the government is on about when it puts forward such pipedreams. In the current economic climate it is not possible even to contemplate building a railway line that extends from Glen Waverley railway station to Rowville. The area is heavily built up with

expensive houses. There is no way known any government could purchase the land. Maybe the Labor government could compulsorily acquire those properties, as has been alluded to as a way of keeping games at Waverley Park. However, that distance could never be tunnelled. It is just another pipedream, one that my constituents are certainly looking at in a sceptical manner.

One of the more important issues raised in the Governor's address was drugs. I would like to spend a little time on the drugs issue, a topic I am vitally interested in, having chaired the former Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee for the past three and a half years. At the outset I mention the work of all members of the committee, four being former opposition members and five former government members. Three of the former opposition members are no longer in Parliament. I put on record my appreciation of the noble work of Eddie Micallef, the former member for Springvale.

Hon. M. T. Luckins — Knocked off in preselection.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON — The Honourable Maree Luckins reminds me he was beaten by factional branch stacking. Eddie was a great contributor to the work of the committee. Janet Wilson, former member for Dandenong North, also was committed to the work of the committee. Jean McLean I have already mentioned. One of the most important aspects of the way the committee operated was its bipartisan approach to the drugs issue, something I would like to see continue under the new government.

The drugs issue is the most important social issue facing the community today. The only way the problem can be resolved is by taking a bipartisan approach. I plead with all members of Parliament: let us not try to politicise the issue but work together as one to get over the problems. It will not be an easy task. No country in the world has yet been able to come up with a series of solutions to the problems. I notice at the moment the government is making a lot of noise about setting up medically supervised injecting facilities. All I can say is that I hope the government moves slowly on this proposal. It is exceptionally important to take the community with you. At the moment the government is proceeding with a little too much haste. Much work needs to be done before introducing such facilities.

My committee was cut short in its prime. The committee was at the stage of adopting the recommendations. It may well have been that the committee would have recommended such facilities;

much work had already gone into the process. The committee distributed a paper to all members of Parliament, setting out the cases for and against such facilities. Any member who would like a copy of that paper should contact the executive officer of the former Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Rob McDonald. Honourable members should make sure they read that paper.

One must understand the pros and cons of safe injecting facilities. I had the privilege of visiting facilities in Switzerland and Frankfurt last year. I have also visited the proposed Wesley facility in Lonsdale Street. I note in today's newspaper that Wesley will comply with the government's request. I know Dr Ross made a special visit last year to examine facilities in Germany, Holland and Switzerland. Holland is opening a further 42 safe injecting facilities this year and if members of Parliament get the opportunity to travel they should examine those facilities before decisions are made.

I turn to transport. The Governor's speech refers to implementing rapid transport links to Melbourne Airport and Geelong, upgrading the Traralgon railway line and building a rapid transport link to Ballarat. The money allocated will not go far and the government will have to reassess the proposals. There are not enough kilometres per \$1 million. Presumably the money will come out of the regional infrastructure fund. The government should indicate how the money will be raised and spent and how the community will receive the best value for its dollar.

In conclusion, I wish the government well. It has inherited a financially healthy and stable state, but I warn it that if it does not govern responsibly for all Victorians it will not be in government for long. Some 65 per cent of government members in both houses come from a narrow sectional interest base. They are either union officials or served as electorate officers for federal or state politicians. If the government does not govern responsibly it will be dumped at the next election

**Debate adjourned on motion of
Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West).**

Debate adjourned until next day.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Workcover: common-law rights

Hon. R. M. HALLAM (Western) — I direct to the attention of the Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover the government's commitment to reintroducing access to common law for seriously injured workers. I asked her earlier today if she could report to the house how 'seriously injured' is to be defined. I was surprised that the minister felt the need to refer the matter to her colleague in another place. Given that she has had a chance to do so, is she in a position to report what definition will be used for the term 'seriously injured'?

Planning: Albert Street, Brunswick

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — I ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation to direct to the Minister for Planning in another place a matter that arose recently in Melbourne Province and the ongoing problem of inconsistency between building and planning permits. The matter relates to a development in Albert Street, Brunswick of 100 town houses on a former primary school site that was sold by the former government. It has been proceeding over the past few years until recently local residents noticed that it was not proceeding according to the plans presented to and passed by the council. For example, there were windows where there should not be windows and no windows where there should be windows.

It has been an ongoing problem that the building permits issued by a private surveyor have not been consistent with planning permits. Local residents raised the problem with the council and negotiations have taken place with the builder who has agreed to rectify the problem at the builder's expense, which will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The mistake of the private building surveyor is having repercussions for the building of the development. It is symptomatic of the widespread problem and one that individuals, municipal peak bodies and local government have raised repeatedly over the past years with the former Minister for Planning and Local Government.

The problem could be remedied by a simple amendment of the Planning and Environment Act but that was ignored by the previous government. I ask that the matter be given urgent legislative priority by the government.

The PRESIDENT — Order! If honourable members read the memorandum handed out about adjournment speeches, they will see that one of the don'ts on the list is that:

Members shall not request the introduction of legislation.

I ask honourable members to reacquaint themselves with the limitations on that part of the proceedings. I rule the question out of order.

Casey: leisure centre

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation to the proposed indoor leisure facility in the City of Casey. On 21 June this year the Premier and his then shadow cabinet visited the City of Casey to learn what was going on. During discussions council indicated that it was hoping to borrow an additional \$2.5 million to construct the centre. The Premier indicated that the City of Casey should not have to borrow the money and said, ‘We will give it to you when we get into government’.

At page 3 of the *Dandenong Journal* of 28 June Alice Archer reports:

The state opposition has pledged \$2.5 million for the Casey aquatic and leisure centre if it is elected.

Page 6 of the *Gazette* of 23 June reports:

State opposition leader, Steve Bracks, said the shadow cabinet would support the City of Casey on several issues.

He is quoted as saying:

We will see the City of Casey leisure centre built with the \$2.5 million loan being asked for by the council provided by the government from the Community Support Fund.

Lastly, the *Cranbourne News* of 24 June states:

Opposition leader Steve Bracks said his government, if elected, would give Casey council \$2.5 million up front ...

He said his government would encourage the council to apply to the Community Support Fund to cover the shortfall rather than take out a loan.

Following that meeting the Casey City Council confirmed those discussions in writing. I ask the minister whether he is aware of that pledge, can he confirm that the pledge was made, and can he advise the house when the funds will be made available?

Australian Clay Target Shooting Association

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Jika Jika) — I refer the Minister for Sport and Recreation to a problem experienced by one of my constituents, Nidal Asmar, concerning the Australian Clay Target Shooting Association and its newsletter. Mr Asmar competed in the — —

Hon. Bill Forwood — What relation is he to Nazih — his brother?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — It is a serious issue so the honourable member should just listen. Mr Asmar came second in the Australian clay target shooting championships and would be eligible to represent Australia in the Olympics. He is up there with the top people. I quote from the September issue of the *Australian Clay Target Shooting News* which outlines its selection criteria:

The top three scorers in the individual ranking at the Oceania championships (including finals), but who are not already selected into the shadow Olympic team, will form the commonwealth championship team.

The commonwealth team is then the basis for selection into the Olympic team. Mr Asmar came second and one would expect on that basis, given it is fairly prescriptive criteria, that he should have been selected. He was overlooked by the selectors. A late bulletin from the association has changed the rules for selection. The bulletin was issued on 6 November. Incidentally, the people competing in the Oceanic Games were not told of the change of rules. Nevertheless the bulletin says:

Final decisions on the team to New Zealand will be made after — —

Hon. B. C. Boardman — On a point of order, Mr President, although I appreciate the honourable member’s concern about his constituent, I question the relevance of the matter. On the surface it seems it has nothing to do with government administration at all.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is appropriate for the honourable member to address the matter to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The Chair can surmise what the request will be, but it is not unusual to ask a minister in that capacity to intervene on behalf of a constituent. There were many precedents for that when the roles were reversed.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The changes to the rules are as follows:

Final decisions on the team to New Zealand will be made after the individual competition is finished — the final does not count. Other factors can be considered in the selection for this team.

The change in the rules has been the basis for excluding somebody who came second and who under the previous rules would have been selected for the — —

Hon. Bill Forwood — Ask the minister to overturn the selection.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I will not ask the minister to do that. I ask the minister to investigate the issue with the association to see whether there is

something that can be done. This young man is committed to his sport. He is an Australian citizen, and he is competent and capable of representing Australia. He was asked to represent —

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

Eastern Freeway: extension

Hon. W. I. SMITH (Silvan) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources as the representative in this house of the Minister for Transport to an article in the Maroondah *Mail* of 26 October about the extension to the Eastern Freeway. The article quotes the honourable member for Mitcham in another place as saying:

And the long-awaited costing report on the Eastern Freeway extension to Ringwood could be released in a matter of days.

He is quoted as saying the report will be released to the public soon and the government is committed to extending the freeway to Ringwood. However, the honourable member would not make an announcement about when that would be. Is the option under review at the moment the short-tunnel option, and when will the costings be announced?

Eltham–Yarra Glen Road: logging trucks

Hon. E. G. STONEY (Central Highlands) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources, as the representative in this house of the Minister for Transport, to the ongoing issue of heavy trucks on Eltham–Yarra Glen Road. About 100 heavy trucks a day use the road, each carrying about 42 tonnes of logs. The trucks make about two round trips a day to Geelong from Seymour and the central highlands. There is no doubt the road is in need of an upgrade.

Before the last election, to his credit the former Minister for Roads and Ports, the Honourable Geoff Craige, announced a \$1.2 million safety upgrade to the road. I am concerned that during the election campaign the honourable member for Yan Yean in another place, Mr Haermeyer, opportunistically announced that if he were elected he would ban those trucks on this road. Such a ban will have an enormous impact on the economic viability of the industry in the area.

Given that it is a \$1 billion industry, that timber is an important industry to the central highlands and Seymour and that banning trucks on this road will have an enormous economic impact on the region, how much notice will the minister give to the industry before the trucks are banned from Eltham–Yarra Glen Road?

Possums

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — I raise an issue with the Minister for Energy and Resources, who is the representative in this house of the Minister for Environment and Conservation. Constituents have drawn to my attention — I am sure many other honourable members would concur — their major problem with *Trichosurus vulpecula* — the brush-tailed possum. Those animals are protected by the Wildlife Act, with breaches carrying fines of up to \$5000. It is illegal to interfere with possums unless they are in a building. Constituents have approached me about the problem of what to do with possums. These people are keen gardeners and rose and camellia growers.

The possum plague throughout Melbourne presents a difficult problem. What does the Minister for Environment and Conservation propose to do to alleviate it?

Drugs: government strategy

Hon. J. W. G. ROSS (Higinbotham) — I refer the Leader of the Government, as the representative here of the Minister for Health in the other place, to the announcement by the government, reported in today's *Herald Sun*, of the appointment of Dr David Penington to lead a seven-member committee to advise the government on drugs. The initial press release was about safe injecting rooms, but it is clear that Dr Penington will advise on overall drug policies and focus on the way drug policies will be implemented by the government in the long term.

I am aware that the ALP came to government with a policy relating to the so-called decriminalisation of cannabis. The community expectation was that the decriminalisation would be very much along the lines followed in South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Dr Penington was chairman of the former Premier's Drug Advisory Council, which recommended that the possession of up to 25 grams of marijuana be legalised, smoking of marijuana in public places be allowed and each household be allowed to grow five cannabis plants. Dr Penington is reported in the *Age* of 16 May 1998 as having told a medical conference in Melbourne that Australia must move to legalise all illicit drugs and regulate their supply to protect the community from the terrible scourge of drug abuse.

Given that background and the fact that there is a real disparity between decriminalisation and legalisation, and since the government clearly has such faith in

Dr Penington, will it implement the recommendations of his earlier report? If not, does that have implications for any future recommendations he may make?

Young Rural Ambassadors

Hon. E. J. POWELL (North Eastern) — I refer the Minister for Youth Affairs to the fact that the former government ran a successful program for young rural Victorians called Young Rural Ambassadors. Hundreds of Victorians applied to become ambassadors, from which 48 young people were chosen. Twelve of the 48 showed real leadership potential and in August 1999 had the opportunity of visiting Charlottetown in Canada, where they participated in the Agricultural Institute of Canada's Knowledge and Creativity — Keys to Agriculture's Future conference and later undertook a study tour. They met with scientists and leaders in agriculture, inspected many agricultural areas and spoke to a number of agriculturalists. The young people returned home with wonderful knowledge with which to advance Victorian agriculture.

Each of the 36 who did not go on the study tour received a \$1000 study bursary. The bursaries enabled the young ambassadors to undertake programs to learn the importance and sustainability of agriculture and resources and to improve their leadership qualities. I am sure the minister, in his former role, would have understood the importance of those attitudes in young people.

They learnt about developing skills in farming practices, resource management, the sustainability of agriculture, the importance of learning new skills and new markets. It is important that we continue to invest in our youth, particularly in rural Victoria, where we need to retain the best and brightest of them. I seek the assurance of the minister that, given the Labor Party's policies in rural and regional Victoria announced during the recent election, he will continue to fund this vital program to benefit the young people of country Victoria.

Mildura skate park

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place. In recent years Mildura, like many other cities in Victoria, has experienced a resurgence in the popularity of skateboarding. The Mildura Rural City Council showed substantial leadership when it called a public meeting to gauge support for the sport of skateboarding. Civil leaders, parents, skateboarders and people who had

been associated with the establishment of a skate park in the city attended the meeting.

The skate park was identified as a need in the area in the youth needs analysis and recreation planning study forums conducted by the council last year. However, the council announced it could not fund the project from its budget. A skate park would serve two purposes: it would take the skaters off the streets, where they make life difficult and rather exciting for shopkeepers and pedestrians, and it would provide the skaters with a safer, controlled environment away from the city centre, where alcohol is freely available, and from cars and other forms of traffic.

It was agreed by everyone, as it would probably be agreed worldwide, that a huge undercover skate park would be a wonderful asset and would be well utilised. However, the next best and most cost-effective solution was to fill in a wading pool at Jaycee Park on the Mildura riverfront. That park has an excellent collection of safe play equipment for children, barbecues and good shade during the hot summer months. Some years ago the wading pool was emptied and fenced off.

The establishment of a skate park at Jaycee Park is desirable for a number of reasons: it is out of the shopping and business areas of the town but is close enough to all the facilities; it is patrolled by police at night; it is in an alcohol-free zone; and it is near a public telephone and toilets.

The former Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Honourable Bill McGrath, visited the proposed site with local skaters — incidentally, the skaters represented their group well on that occasion. The council recreation officer, Ray Lyons, and the mayor, Howard Crothers, who are both strong supporters of the skate park, also were part of the inspection party. Bill McGrath undertook to provide foundation funding under the Start program, of which the minister would be well aware, to the tune of \$5000. The city council was prepared to contribute another \$5000, with local fundraising to provide the balance.

Will the minister contact the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other house to gain an assurance that the funding for the project is secure? Given the minister's responsibilities for sport and recreation and youth affairs, will he also consider providing some assistance from his department for that worthwhile program?

Rural Victoria: gas supply

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources

to the issue raised twice previously in this session by the Honourable Ian Cover. I refer to the desirability of the extension of the natural gas supply to regional Victoria. I place on record the tremendous achievement of the former government in those extensions, particularly to Wimmera towns such as Stawell and Horsham, and to Gippsland, but more particularly to northern Victoria, where the supply has been extended to Rutherglen, Yarrawonga, Cobram and other towns.

It was anticipated that Nathalia, a small country town that is holding its own, would be materially assisted through the attraction of small industries that could use the natural gas supply, thereby providing employment in that area.

A document issued on 10 July 1998 listing the Murray Valley towns to be connected to natural gas indicates that the expected date for turning on natural gas in Nathalia is July 2000. I regret to advise the house that since the change of government the word around the town is that natural gas will no longer be connected to Nathalia. Such a situation would be directly contrary to the strong undertakings given by the Labor Party to country Victoria prior to the election.

I ask the minister to examine the issue with a view to giving me an assurance when the house next meets that Nathalia will be included on the list for natural gas connection, as it was in the first place.

Planning: Ivanhoe

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning in the other place, through the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning, who may be able to answer my concern. I share representation of Templestowe Province with the Honourable Bill Forwood. Our electorate is blessed with the benefit of the Yarra River flowing through it and being one of its dominant features. Consequently there are large natural areas of significance extending from the northern to the southern boundaries of the electorate.

The electorate also has some man-made areas of significance. One example is the Burley Griffin subdivisions in Eaglemont. The Eaglemont Neighbourhood Conservation Association has a great deal of interest and concern about the medium-density development that is now occurring there.

Recently representations have been made to me by the president of the Yarra Precinct Protection Association and numerous other constituents. The local newspaper, the *Heidelberg*, has published a large amount of editorial comment about the proposed subdivision and

the overdevelopment of a unique scenic, secluded and semirural part of Victoria on The Boulevard east of Burke Road North overlooking the Yarra flatlands. I understand the association has obtained more than 500 signatures on a petition objecting to the application now before the City of Banyule.

Given the confusion arising from Labor Party policy on planning, are some guidelines about to be issued; if not, why not? Does the Minister for Planning intend to intervene personally and will he give assurances to do so in respect of development in areas that are regarded as extremely significant?

Drugs: safe injecting facilities

Hon. M. T. LUCKINS (Waverley) — The matter of concern I raise through the Leader of the Government is for the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place. I refer to the Australian Labor Party policy of establishing five safe injecting facilities in metropolitan Melbourne. During the election campaign now Premier Bracks announced on 3AW that one such facility was to be located in Springvale.

The ALP policy refers to co-location with needle exchanges and having medically trained staff on hand in case of emergency. The only site in Springvale that meets the criteria in the ALP policy is the Springvale Community Health Centre. During the election campaign more than 1000 local residents and traders signed a petition urging the City of Greater Dandenong to reject any proposal to establish a safe injecting facility in Springvale.

In 1997 I called upon the then Minister for Health, the Honourable Rob Knowles, to close down or relocate the needle exchange program operating through the Springvale Community Health Centre, which is opposite my old primary school, St Joseph's. Father Tony Fox, the teachers and staff and the whole parish community were most concerned about syringes and drugs being found on the school grounds. Their church poor box was raided on numerous occasions by people looking for money with which to make their next drug purchases.

On 27 October this year the mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong, Cr Naim Melhem, was quoted in the Springvale Dandenong *Times* as having said:

I think the health centre is not a good choice. It is opposite a primary school and they had to stop a needle exchange program there because of the school.

Will the Bracks minority Labor government respect the wishes of local traders and residents and undertake not

to establish a safe injecting heroin facility at that site in the Springvale Community Health Centre? Will it not only consult with the municipalities and communities but give local government the power of veto over the siting of such facilities in their municipalities?

Planning: Bendigo vaccine laboratory

Hon. R. A. BEST (North Western) — I ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation to refer to the Minister for Planning in another place a request from the City of Greater Bendigo for an amendment to L82 of its planning scheme. Under the proposal the land is to be rezoned from special use to business zone 4. The request is from Ausvac, a company producing vaccines in the Bendigo East area. The request for rezoning was made because the company proposes to extend its existing vaccine laboratory development on the corner of Strickland Road and Hartland Street.

A ministerial panel rejected the proposal because it gave rise to a number of concerns, particularly from the Environment Protection Authority regarding the lack of an environmental impact statement. The EPA was also concerned about how the matters before the panel had been handled and the types of products that would be produced in the facility, particularly given that Ausvac had previously increased its range of animal vaccines beyond the initial approval given by the former Shire of Strathfieldsaye, from a product range of some 3 or 4 to more than 30 different vaccines. The residents of Bendigo East are not opposed to the expansion of Ausvac—Intervet in Bendigo but would prefer to see it located at a more suitable site, perhaps north of Strickland Road.

Will the minister ask the Minister for Planning to give attention to the considerations of the panel and the local residents before he makes any decision?

Swifts Creek timber mill

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I ask the Minister for Energy and Resources to direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation in another place. It concerns the timber mill owned by Neville Smith Timber Industries at Swifts Creek in East Gippsland. The mill was closed earlier this year following a fire in one of its kilns. The resource that was formerly processed at the Swifts Creek timber mill is now being processed at the Heyfield timber mill, which is also owned by Neville Smith.

On 13 October Minister Garbutt and I shared the stage at a public meeting in Swifts Creek to discuss the issue.

The strong view of the local people of Swifts Creek is that they would like to see the resource that was formerly processed at the Swifts Creek mill retendered with the covenant that the resource be required to be processed at the Swifts Creek mill.

Has the minister explored that possibility? Even if that were possible it would merely result in a relocation of jobs from Heyfield to Swifts Creek and vice versa at a time when other alternatives need to be explored so that jobs are not lost. I am sure it is the aim of both the government and the opposition to create more jobs.

I also ask whether the minister has looked into a suggestion raised at that meeting of a possible resource swap between the Central Highlands and Tambo regions to attach resources to the sale of the Swifts Creek mill. I offer a further suggestion to the minister: with the regional forest agreement process for the Gippsland region being completed right at this very moment there may be a possibility that extra resources could be found and processed at the Swifts Creek timber mill.

Each of those three alternatives would achieve the desired outcome of reopening the timber mill at Swifts Creek. I ask the minister to raise it with Minister Garbutt in the hope that employment opportunities can be created with the reopening of the Swifts Creek timber mill.

Bellarine Peninsula: gas supply

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — My question to the Minister for Energy and Resources follows the minister's admission earlier today that she was wrong about the commitment to connect natural gas to Portarlington, Clifton Springs and Indented Head.

I refer her to reported comments by the Australian Labor Party candidate for Bellarine at the recent election that following the pledge announced by the Minister for State and Regional Development gas would be turned on within the first year — note, the first year — of a Labor government. Given that the minister has now had a chance to check the facts about the commitments given by others, without reference to her as the incoming minister, can she now advise whether the candidate got it wrong, too?

Victorian Institute of Sport

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN (Chelsea) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is also the Minister for Youth Affairs, to the lack of recognition given to low-profile sports by the Victorian Institute of Sport.

Sports such as swimming and athletics receive considerable developmental funding from the government via the VIS to ensure up-and-coming athletes are adequately funded and resourced to enable them to compete internationally. Furthermore, some of the top-class and better-known athletes in specialist sports receive substantial funding from the corporate sector for endorsements. Those factors result in inequity in funding. When athletes in lower profile sports such as fencing and the modern pentathlon seek assistance from either the VIS or the private sector they are met with reluctance and refusals.

I have learnt that a Victorian modern pentathlete, Mr David Nathan, has to finance himself in training and competition in Europe to gain the recognition necessary to be considered for Olympic selection. I understand Olympic selection is based on a points system. Athletes must compete in a quota of internationally recognised events to be considered for Olympic selection, irrespective of which country they represent. I understand David Nathan is a potential Olympic medallist.

I ask the minister to honour the Labor Party's policy commitment to develop all sports across the state by ensuring the VIS is adequately funded so that athletes such as David Nathan and sports such as the modern pentathlon and fencing receive adequate resources to enable them to compete internationally.

Gippsland: gas supply

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to recent representations to me by the Shire of South Gippsland on reticulated natural gas for the South Gippsland region, which are coincidental to revelations by the honourable member for Gippsland West in the other place, Susan Davies, in an exclusive interview in the *Leongatha Star* that natural gas for South Gippsland is 'firmly on the agenda'. Has this element of the side agreement for support by the Independent honourable member for Gippsland West now been costed, along with the other gas infrastructure proposals committed to before or since the election of 18 September, which were not costed in the ALP policy documents reviewed by Access Economics?

Electricity industry: Basslink

Hon. K. M. SMITH (South Eastern) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Energy and Resources. I take it that as the minister responsible for power in Victoria she is aware of the Basslink proposal?

An Honourable Member — No, don't take it!

Hon. K. M. SMITH — The minister is not aware of the Basslink project. If she were aware of it she would be aware of its importance to Victoria and Australia. She would also probably be aware of the concern of the people in south-west Gippsland and in the south-eastern suburbs around Cranbourne and Pearcedale about the powerlines being strung across the countryside. What action is the Bracks minority Labor government considering to facilitate such an important project to the country and alleviate the concerns of the citizens who may be affected by the powerlines?

Planning: foreshore development

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, representing the Minister for Planning in the other place, development along Melbourne's foreshore, particularly in my own electorate of Monash Province. Along the bay, from Port Melbourne through to Albert Park, Middle Park, St Kilda and Elwood, there has been significant development in what has become a widely sought-after area.

As honourable members would know, a number of concerns have been raised about the height, size and bulk of the developments along the foreshore. Earlier this year the Kennett coalition government, in partnership with the Port Phillip City Council, the responsible local government authority in the area, worked on a proposal which they ultimately sponsored jointly. The proposal was put to an independent panel, which looked at the nature, type, size and height of development along the foreshore in the City of Port Phillip area. The proposal was fully embraced by all sections of the community. It provided for that part of the bay between Pickles Street and Fitzroy Street, known as the Victorian precinct, to be preserved forever and a day from inappropriate development. It also allowed for nodes of development around Port Melbourne and St Kilda. As I have said, the proposal met with significant local support.

The proposal did not set any absolute height limit for development, but set out several factors to be considered in determining the appropriate height and size of any development. The new planning minister, Mr Thwaites, was quoted in the *Emerald Hill Times* of 27 October as saying he would not make any decisions about height controls:

... for a couple of months, and certainly not until the government talks to Port Phillip council.

However, I noted that the Governor's speech made it clear that the government intends to announce interim height controls for the foreshore, notwithstanding the local community, in partnership with its council and the former government, having determined a set of outcomes for the community. That is funny given that two weeks ago the Minister for Planning in the other place, who is also the local member for the area, said he would not make any decisions about height controls in the area for a few months, and certainly not without consulting the council. I assume and hope I can read into that statement that given the progress of the previous government he would also consult with the local community and residents.

However, it appears the government has other ideas and wants to introduce height controls. Either the minister was right when he talked to the Emerald Hill *Times* on 27 October or the government was right in the Governor's speech. I cannot see how there can be height controls and not be height controls — how the Premier and the minister can both be right.

I seek the assistance of the minister in clarifying the matter and determining whether the Minister for Planning is right and there will not be any height controls along the City of Port Phillip foreshore area or Mr Bracks is right and there will be height controls, contradicting the established and well-supported planning scheme amendment made in the past few months.

Responses

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Industrial Relations) — The Honourable Roger Hallam raised a matter regarding Labor's policy on the introduction of common-law rights for seriously injured workers. As I indicated in response to a similar query at question time, I will refer the matter to the Minister for Workcover, who will respond to the honourable member in the usual manner.

The Honourable John Ross raised the announcement yesterday by the Bracks Labor government of the appointment of Dr Penington to head a committee of several members and raised a number of issues. I will refer the matter to the Minister for Health, who will respond to the honourable member in the usual manner.

The Honourable Maree Luckins raised issues to be referred to the Minister for Health regarding the Labor government's policy on harm minimisation for safe injecting houses, especially in the City of Greater Dandenong area. I shall raise that matter with the

Minister for Health, who will respond to her in the usual manner.

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — Ms Smith raised for the attention of the Minister for Transport statements by the honourable member for Mitcham in another place, as reported in the *Maroondah Mail*, on the extension of the Eastern Freeway to Ringwood. I will be pleased to refer the matter to the Minister for Transport, who will respond directly to Ms Smith.

Mr Stoney also raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport concerning the continued use by the timber industry of the Eltham–Yarra Glen Road. I shall certainly raise that matter with the minister, and he will respond to the honourable member.

Mr Brideson raised for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation the serious matter of a possum plague in gardens in Melbourne and asked what the minister intends to do about it. I will be pleased to raise that matter with the minister, who I am sure will respond to the honourable member about it.

Mr Baxter raised the issue of the extension of gas to regional Victoria, particularly to Nathalia. He referred to a document, presumably from the previous Kennett government, dated 10 July that lists Nathalia as being due for connection and for the gas to be turned on by the middle of next year. He requested that I examine the matter and respond to him when the house meets tomorrow. I shall certainly do that.

Mr Hall raised for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation, who is also the minister responsible for water issues, the closure of the Swifts Creek timber mill following a fire and asked whether the minister has explored the various options raised at a public meeting for reopening the mill and the related employment issues. I will be pleased to raise that matter with the minister, and she will respond to the honourable member.

Mr Cover raised the timing of the commitment on the connection of the gas supply to the Bellarine Peninsula. I am interested to note that the honourable member is so concerned to pursue this matter, because, as I understand it, given the privatisation of the gas supply, it was not a matter the previous government seemed very keen to pursue. This government will certainly pursue the matter and my colleague the Minister for State and Regional Development, who is providing the funds through the infrastructure fund for that project, will be indicating the timing of that connection.

Mr Philip Davis raised the matter of the reticulation of gas to South Gippsland and Susan Davies's comments in an exclusive interview in the *Leongatha Star*. I am afraid that the *Leongatha Star* is not high on my reading list at present, but obviously it should be. I will be pleased to read that interview and respond to the honourable member.

Mr Ken Smith raised the Basslink issue and he seemed particularly concerned that I may not be aware of that very important project, which is the proposal to connect Tasmania to the national energy grid via an undersea cable across Bass Strait. Because Basslink involves not only the Victorian government but also the Tasmanian and commonwealth governments, there is an agreement between the three governments that a joint assessment panel should examine the environmental concerns raised by the honourable member. The panel is due to be convened in February next year and will take about a year to undertake its studies. The government will encourage people to participate in that process and will do everything it can to support it.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — In relation to the question from the Honourable Glenyys Romanes, I thank her very much for raising the matter.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — Do you want to hear the answer or not?

The PRESIDENT — Order! The matter raised by the Honourable Glenyys Romanes was ruled out of order.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — The Honourable Neil Lucas referred to the Casey indoor recreation centre and the \$2.5 million funding from the Community Support Fund. I shall seek clarification from the relevant ministers in another place.

Hon. N. B. Lucas — On a point of order, Mr President, I asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation about a grant for a sport and recreation facility and he is trying to offload it to the other house. The minister is here to answer questions. That is why I asked him the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I shall seek to clarify within my department the situation regarding the funding for the Casey centre.

I thank the Honourable Theo Theophanous for the matter he raised concerning clay target shooting. I will investigate that matter through the department and also request some information about it from the association.

The Honourable Jeanette Powell raised a matter relating to youth affairs and the Young Rural Ambassadors program, which is a significant program to establish role models for rural Victorian youth. I shall review that program within the department, including its current and ongoing status, and report back to the honourable member.

The Honourable Barry Bishop raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in another place, but vaguely directed it to me as Minister for Sport and Recreation.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The reason the question was directed to you is that you represent the minister in this house.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I shall refer it to that minister.

I refer to the question of the Honourable Carlo Furletti.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — In case honourable members cannot tell from my smile, I have a substantial overbite and on occasion I have trouble getting my p's, th's and f's right. If honourable members opposite learn to appreciate that, I am sure the house will get through its business much more quickly and maybe we can get home for tea! Some members may have had plenty to eat and so might not need to rush home for dinner. Thank you for the question. I will refer it to the Minister for Planning in the other place.

I thank the Honourable Ron Best for his question and again will refer it to the Minister for Planning in the other place.

The next question was from the Honourable Candy Boardman.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I apologise. I have a fairly substantial overbite!

Regarding Victorian Institute of Sport funding for low-profile sports, honourable members would appreciate that the policy of the Bracks Labor government is to increase and improve access to sports throughout the community. Low-profile sports are of concern. I will be seeking to review the situation with

the department and report back to the member accordingly.

I will refer the question from the Honourable Peter Katsambanis regarding foreshore developments to the Minister for Planning in another place.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 6.42 p.m.