

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Tuesday, 30 August 2011**

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**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP			

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 21 December 2010

<sup>2</sup> Elected 19 February 2011



# CONTENTS

## TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 2011

### CONDOLENCES

*Karen Marie Overington* ..... 2823

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS ..... 2850

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

*Victorian certificate of applied learning:*

*funding* ..... 2850, 2852, 2853, 2855, 2856

*Employment: growth* ..... 2851

*Employment: regional and rural Victoria* ..... 2853

*Employment: government initiatives* ..... 2854

*Economy: government initiatives* ..... 2855

*Dangerous dogs: control* ..... 2856, 2857

### SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

*Member for Lara* ..... 2857

### ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS (VICTORIA)

#### AMENDMENT BILL 2011

*Introduction and first reading* ..... 2857

### DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED

#### SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT (PROHIBITION OF DISPLAY AND SALE OF CANNABIS WATER PIPES) BILL 2011

*Introduction and first reading* ..... 2858

### EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES (LYSTERFIELD)

#### AMENDMENT BILL 2011

*Introduction and first reading* ..... 2858

### GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT

#### (LICENSING) BILL 2011

*Introduction and first reading* ..... 2858

### DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT (RESTRICTED

#### BREEDS) BILL 2011

*Introduction and first reading* ..... 2858

*Statement of compatibility* ..... 2858

*Second reading* ..... 2859, 2873

*Third reading* ..... 2877

### PETITIONS

*Schools: Kyneton* ..... 2860

*Plumbing industry: compliance certificates* ..... 2861

*Electricity: smart meters* ..... 2861

*Ovens College hall, Wangaratta: future* ..... 2861

*Schools: Coburg* ..... 2861

### SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS

#### COMMITTEE

*Alert Digest No. 9* ..... 2862

DOCUMENTS ..... 2862

ROYAL ASSENT ..... 2863

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES ..... 2863

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Program* ..... 2863

### MEMBERS STATEMENTS

*Caitlin Caruso* ..... 2866

*Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians of*

*Australia: forum* ..... 2866

*Manchester Primary School: bicycle parking* ..... 2866

*Victorian certificate of applied learning:*

*funding* ..... 2866

*St Edward's Anglican Church, Blackburn*

*South: art show* ..... 2867

*Parkmore Primary School: principal for a day* ..... 2867

*Biotechnology: government initiatives* ..... 2867

*Mike Morris* ..... 2867

*Youth: Frankston round table* ..... 2867

*Gippsland Business Awards* ..... 2867

*Cultural Association Violeta Parra:*

*24th anniversary* ..... 2868

*Melba Community Recovery Committee:*

*community hall* ..... 2868

*Strath Creek: hall renovation* ..... 2868

*Peter Dillon* ..... 2869

*Rock Eisteddfod Challenge: funding* ..... 2869, 2871

*Ballarat South Community Learning Precinct,*

*Redan campus: principal for a day* ..... 2869

*Mildura Masters Games* ..... 2870

*Geelong Road, Mount Helen: pedestrian*

*crossing* ..... 2870

*Ballarat Health Services: board appointments* ..... 2870

*Chelsea Heights Football Club: fundraising*

*events* ..... 2870

*Carrum Surf Life Saving Club: funding* ..... 2871

*Rail: Frankston line* ..... 2871

*Rock Eisteddfod Challenge: Eltham electorate* ..... 2871

*Bentleigh Bowling Club: 67th anniversary* ..... 2871

*Tarnagulla: speed limits* ..... 2872

*Mental health: patient details* ..... 2872

*Children: Take a Break program* ..... 2872

*Swifts Creek Football Club: premiership* ..... 2872

*Joseph Epstein Centre for Emergency Medicine*

*Research* ..... 2872

*Chadstone Synners: premiership* ..... 2873

*St Dominic's Primary School, Camberwell East:*

*member visit* ..... 2873

*Katalin Hadju* ..... 2873

*Burwood District Bowls Club: greens opening* ..... 2873

*David Woolcock* ..... 2873

### ADJOURNMENT

*Dartmouth pondage: access* ..... 2877

*Roads: Ballarat East electorate* ..... 2878

*Bushfires: fuel reduction* ..... 2878

*Victorian certificate of applied learning:*

*funding* ..... 2879

*East Gippsland: health forum* ..... 2880

*Plumbing industry: compliance certificates* ..... 2880

*Parkdale Secondary College: joint-use facility* ..... 2881

*Buses: route 562* ..... 2881

*Schools: Prahran electorate* ..... 2882

*Planning: Ivanhoe structure plan* ..... 2882

*Responses* ..... 2883



**Tuesday, 30 August 2011**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Ken Smith) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.**

**CONDOLENCES**

**Karen Marie Overington**

**Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — I move:**

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of Karen Marie Overington and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by her to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Ballarat West from 1999 to 2010.

Karen Overington was born in Ballarat on 16 November 1951 to Charlie and Maureen Brown. She was educated at Sacred Heart College in Ballarat and, as this house knows, she spent her adult life working for the Ballarat and wider local community.

In December 1970 Karen married Brian Overington and together they had two children, Brett and Shae. She contributed to the running of the family's successful trucking business. As well as taking part in the usual joys and responsibilities of bringing up a family, Karen became increasingly involved in the activities of the local community and charitable organisations. Karen's first steps into politics were taken in the late 1970s, when she joined a group to campaign for more resources for children's education. She was instrumental in setting up playgroups and kindergartens in Sebastopol. She volunteered in the campaign office of the then state member for Ballarat South, Frank Sheehan. As a young mum she worked as an electorate officer from 1984 to 1992 and was a welfare worker with Outreach between 1994 and 1999.

I understand she joined the Australian Labor Party in 1982 and held various positions in the organisation, including the office of branch president, and she was a delegate to the state conference. In 1982 at the age of 32 she successfully stood for election to the Sebastopol Borough Council, and she remained a councillor there for 12 years. Karen served as a well-regarded mayor of the borough from 1990 to 1991. In 1994 the borough was amalgamated with several other councils to create the new Ballarat City Council. Karen stood for election to the new Ballarat council in 1996 and was successful, serving until 1999.

For many years she was chair of the Ballarat Begonia Festival. She encouraged that popular event to spread its appeal not only by highlighting the wonderful

gardens of the city but also by expanding into other forms of entertainment and performing arts.

At the 1999 state election Karen was elected as the member for Ballarat West and was the first woman to represent that seat. She held the seat successfully at the next two elections, increasing her margin substantially — and of course that is the best measure of a well-regarded local member. During her time in this chamber Karen was in the fortunate situation of always serving on the government side of the house.

Karen Overington was a diligent local member and involved herself in a range of issues, especially those relating to equality and social justice. Indeed that was a theme in her first speech in this place in November 1999. Those of us who joined the Parliament in November 1999 remember each other's speeches well. At that time she said:

I grew up in a household where issues of equality and social justice were part of regular discussions.

The values she learnt at the kitchen table were values that Karen Overington held strongly in her subsequent local government and state parliamentary careers. In 2002 she was appointed chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women's Housing. She was also prominent in encouraging women to stand for elected office not just in the ALP but generally. Karen was a driving force behind the establishment of the Wendouree West community renewal program, which was designed to rebuild a disconnected community and improve the sense of community confidence and pride of local residents. She often remarked that this was a personal highlight of her public career. She was a strong advocate for the development of Ballarat base hospital and a tenacious champion of public transport in Ballarat, especially rail services.

It is one of the unfairnesses of life that someone who worked so hard putting others first should have faced such personal challenges. Firstly her husband, Brian, became ill, and sadly he passed away in 2009. Then Karen herself was diagnosed with cancer. She fought bravely and refused for a long time to let her illness impede her continuing work in the local community and, as we all know in this chamber, in this Legislative Assembly. However, that illness took its toll, and she decided to retire at the 2010 election. It was an emotional moment for all of us on 7 October last year when Karen was unable to give her valedictory speech in this place, and it was instead delivered by the then Premier, John Brumby.

The Ballarat *Courier* was filled with columns and columns of tribute notices for Karen Overington. They

were from organisations and private individuals whose lives she had touched. That newspaper succinctly described Karen as one of Ballarat's most adored community members and 'a political force for good'.

But most importantly today our thoughts are with Karen's children, who have lost both of their parents in such a short space of time. The words of her son, Brett, summed up the unpretentious, grassroots sort of person Karen Overington was when he said last week, as reported in the Ballarat *Courier*:

She was just your typical mum ... She may have been in the council or in politics, but she attended every school concert, every parent-teacher interview and every sporting event. She fitted it all in.

Karen Overington died on 11 August this year. Anyone who served in this house with Karen Overington knew one thing about her: she was passionate about her family, passionate about her party, passionate about her community, passionate about Ballarat and passionate about her state.

To Shae and Brett, to their partners, Dean and Lisa, and to Karen's four grandchildren, Sarah, Ebony, Rhys and Ellie, we offer our sincere sympathies at this time. We also express our sympathies to the family on the death of Karen's mother-in-law, Pearl Overington, who died recently at the age of 90. Her funeral was held in Ballarat this morning. Karen's children attended the funeral, and I understand Brett and his family have stayed in Ballarat. Shae and her children are here with us; Shae's husband has not been able to make it today. These are extraordinary circumstances. We express our deepest sympathies.

They can be very proud of their mother and grandmother. In her first speech in this place Karen Overington said:

As a community we are all diminished by ... significant disadvantage among us.

We are just as diminished by the loss of a compassionate servant of the people of Ballarat and the state of Victoria.

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — It is with great sadness that I follow the Premier in this reflection on the life and the good work of a good friend and colleague, Karen Overington.

I begin by quoting former Premier Steve Bracks, who said of Karen:

She would put her shoulder to the wheel, but would not ask for recognition in return. She was a battler and a fighter for people who needed support.

I think those words sum up Karen Overington. She was an extraordinary politician, somebody respected, revered and strongly supported at the ballot box by her local community. She did not seek high office. She did not seek the accolades and the acclaim of those around her, her neighbours, the community that she so well served or those where she lived. She simply sought to get on with it, to call it as it was. She sought to support those less fortunate, to fight against injustice and intolerance, to fight for a fair go and to battle for the battlers.

She was proud of who she was. On the day we learnt of Karen's passing I noted to my assembled colleagues at a caucus function that she was the rarest of things: a politician without pretence. She was hard working and proud of her community and all that she had achieved, but she had no pretence at all; she was as she was. She knew her strengths: a healthy appreciation of self-awareness — the rarest of gifts — a healthy appreciation of areas where she might improve and a great worth ethic. The combination of those things are what led her to be such an effective and passionate advocate for her local community. Steve Bracks's words ring true today.

As the Premier has noted, Karen was born in Ballarat in 1951, where she lived her whole life in the service of others. She was married to Brian and blessed with two children, Brett and Shae, and four grandchildren. As I have said, Karen was very proud of her working-class roots; she was a true Labor stalwart. In her first speech in this place, which the Premier has referred to, Karen noted that she grew up in a house where equality and social justice were topics of regular discussion. It was upon these foundations that she built a life working to support and help others, particularly those less fortunate.

In the late 1970s Karen started working for the then member for Ballarat South, Frank Sheehan, and it was here she took her first steps into a very accomplished political career and a life in the Labor movement. She enjoyed working as a local councillor and was very proud of her achievements in that tier of government, serving 16 years at the Borough of Sebastopol and at the amalgamated City of Ballarat. I know Karen was immensely proud — and so were her family and friends — to have served as mayor of the borough and, in terms of the elevation of women in local government, to have been someone to make history not just in Ballarat but in regional Victoria. Karen said that being a councillor was very important to her. She valued it because it allowed her to help ordinary people with ordinary problems; it was all about working hard in order to make their life better. Karen spent 16 years

in local government providing a strong service. I think it is as much for her great work in local government that Karen is fondly remembered as it is for her contribution here, which I will come to in a moment.

As Karen continued her passion in the community in many different roles we on this side of the house were very pleased that in 1999 she was chosen with strong support as our candidate for the seat of Ballarat West. As part of the class of 1999 that saw the parliamentary Labor Party return to office, Karen won a great victory that saw the beginning of a time of great prosperity in her city and her region and indeed across regional and rural Victoria. As a member of that class of 1999 she was very committed to making sure she repaid the great debt she owed her local community, and she worked hard every day to reward and repay all those locals who had supported her so strongly to give her the great honour of serving in this place. Karen valued her city: she was passionate about Ballarat, Ballarat West and all its different communities, and as a member of our country caucus she was passionate about regional Victoria. She wasted no time in getting right down to work in improving services and supports and advocating passionately on behalf of her electorate and the families and individuals who call that electorate home.

Karen has many proud achievements — too many to mention. At least two former housing ministers will follow me to speak about Wendouree West — indeed many of those who will follow me will speak about Wendouree West — and I want to make a few comments about that. Then I want to talk for a moment about other work that I had the great pleasure of doing with Karen in relation to the Grampians Integrated Cancer Centre, which was a project that was dear to both our hearts, but she had a real interest in it.

Many have said that the Wendouree West community renewal project was her crowning achievement. This is a fantastic project. It is all about what we would perhaps term community capacity building or social inclusion. I do not think Karen would have used those terms. What Karen would have said was that it was about a fair go for decent people and about making sure that you give people all the tools and support they need to be proud of themselves and their community, and to be safe and secure. The Wendouree West community renewal project is all about hope and real renewal.

I do not think former ministerial colleagues will mind my saying — and I know former Premier Bracks would not mind my saying it — that as inherently beneficial as it is to those families both now and into the future, I do not think that project would have been achieved

without the passionate advocacy, the ferocious and fearsome advocacy, of the then member for Ballarat West. She was a very strong advocate for that project, and she was, not in a showy or a flashy way, deadset proud of what they were all able to achieve together. As I said, she saw it not so much as being about social inclusion and all the other government-speak, as you might call it — she would not have used those terms — but as being about a fair go and about good Labor governments doing good work and providing a fair go for people who need that extra support and that extra help. It is a shining example of her commitment and her passion, and it will stand as an important legacy to her contribution in that part of her local community.

Karen was also passionate about women's rights and was very proud to be the first Labor member and the first woman to represent her electorate, and indeed the first woman to represent Ballarat in this Parliament. She was chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women's Housing, as I think the Premier noted, and she also had a strong set of values around other issues of empowerment for women, particularly those less fortunate, those who had struggled and those who had arrived in very difficult circumstances. Her views on women's jails were very strong, as they were on a number of issues around corrections, family violence and intimate partner violence. She was very passionate about many of those issues. In her valedictory speech — which, as the Premier noted, former Premier John Brumby read into the record on Karen's behalf — she said that the hardest thing about being in the Parliament was being away from her home and her family and that her family was always involved in what she did.

Family was so very important to her. All of us who had the privilege of serving with her had a really strong appreciation of that. Her kids and her grand-kids were very important to her. Brian was very important to her. She was blessed that her life partner, her husband, was also her best friend. I think all of us know that a little bit of Karen, perhaps a lot of Karen, passed away when Brian went, and it made those last couple of years incredibly difficult for her. As the Premier noted, it is a great blow to the Overington family to have lost both Brian and Karen in such a short period of time, and to have the tragedy of Pearl's passing as well. But family was very important to Karen — not just her own family. We have seen many media reports in recent weeks, including one under the heading 'Overington worked behind the scenes — Angel of Sebastopol'. Family was a broader concept for her. Her community and her electorate was her family in so many ways. Family was a real building block for her, and she was very proud of her kids and her grand-kids, very proud

of their trucking business and very proud of what she and Brian and her family had built. Perhaps that is what in some ways motivated her to support so many other families to enjoy similar opportunities.

I mentioned the Ballarat regional cancer centre. Many members will know that back in 2002, under the auspices of Austin Health, radiation oncology, or radiotherapy, was brought to the city of Ballarat so that patients could get their cancer care close to home and would not have to leave Ballarat. With both economic and population growth in the city of Ballarat and the broader region, together with an ageing population and really important improvements in radiation and medical and surgical oncology, there was a need for a new cancer centre which would go beyond the services at St John of God Health Care which had one radiotherapy machine and one linear accelerator. There needed to be a bigger, broader, purpose-built, true regional cancer centre. I can remember many occasions when Karen Overington would beat a path to my door as the then Minister for Health. She was a fearsome advocate. She never struggled to make herself understood — never. I was a backer of this project, and I almost needed to get out of the way to allow her to lobby many of my other colleagues.

This is a great legacy, a great project, and so many cancer patients and their families in Ballarat and the broader Grampians area will benefit from this centre once it is built. It is a partnership — that is also fitting when speaking of Karen — with \$13 million from the state government and \$42 million from the federal government. This purpose-built facility will provide oncology services and an expanded radiotherapy service. It will also be about wellness, with new, cutting-edge therapy and support — true, comprehensive cancer care. Given Karen's personal history and that of Brian, it is a great legacy from her. She was a passionate advocate for this project. Again I would say that my job in securing funds for that project was made much easier because of the strong support of Karen Overington. Geoff Howard, the member for Ballarat East, and others were also very strong supporters, but Karen had a real and personal passion for this project.

I raise this because it illustrates a series of experiences I had in dealing with Karen that are appropriate to relate; it is what I think of when I think of her very strong lobbying. But I also raise it because I know there has been some discussion in recent weeks about how best the Ballarat community can honour her legacy. I note that there have been some media reports about some open space being named in her honour, and that seems fitting, but if I might humbly submit: the people of

Ballarat and the region could do much worse than through their hospital board and their government seek to name that regional cancer centre after its true champion. For that centre to be known as the Karen Overington regional cancer centre would be a fantastic tribute to a fantastic person, a true Labor person. I said at Karen's funeral that Karen was Ballarat through and through and when asked questions by the media she was Labor through and through. She never forgot where she came from because she never left there. She was very proud of her community and its people and was honoured, pleased and proud to be their champion, to be the battlers' battler. There is perhaps no better way to sum her up and to sum up her contribution than in those terms.

There is much more I could say. I know many of my colleagues will speak about their own memories, their own experiences and the different ways in which they think of Karen and her fantastic contribution. I will just conclude by saying that Karen Overington's life was one lived in the service of others. Karen was a great servant of our party and a great servant of the people of Ballarat West. Her family can be proud of all that she achieved and of her inherent honesty, her integrity and her truthfulness to herself, those she grew up with and the community she was part of. She was as she was, and that is perhaps why she was so strongly supported by her neighbours and her community at the 1999, 2002 and 2006 polls.

Finally, to Shae and Brett and their families and to many others who were very close to Karen: you and we are immensely proud of all that Karen achieved. The great city of Ballarat is a much fairer and much stronger place for the mighty contribution that Karen Overington made. You have our deepest gratitude and our deepest sympathies. Her work will never be forgotten.

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I rise to support the motion of condolence moved by the Premier and supported by the Leader of the Opposition. Karen Overington was only 59 years of age when she passed away on 11 August, and her loss, quite rightly, is mourned by all of us. She was elected in 1999 to represent the electorate of Ballarat West. She was the first woman to be elected in that role. She stood aside at the election in 2010 after having served a total of 11 years in this Parliament.

Losing one of your own is always the worst form of loss, and for Karen's family that is just so true. To Brett and Shae, their respective partners and the four grandchildren whom she loved and adored, all of us convey our sincerest condolences.

As has been observed by both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, the definition of the word ‘family’ in these circumstances goes beyond the immediate family it might once have referred to. In Karen’s case the broader community was very much her family. The commentaries and notices I read through in the Ballarat *Courier*, which were posted by many different people from all walks of life, were an extraordinary tribute to a lady who contributed so much to the broader community that was her family.

I recognise and pay due accord to the decades of service she provided to her party, the Australian Labor Party. As the Leader of the Opposition has indicated, she made her way into the Labor Party from what were — and I think she would describe it as this — humble beginnings and a humble background. They were features of her life that she carried into this place and in her periods of public service throughout her time in the public arena. She was by nature a humble person, but by the same token I can say from my experience of her in this place, albeit on the other side of the house, there was nothing humble about the feisty and sometimes fiery ways in which she put her case on issues which she felt very passionate about. The background she referred to in her inaugural speech in November 1999 gave us an insight into the family life that imbued in Karen Overington the values which she brought to this place and which she protected and enhanced over her years of service.

Before coming to the Parliament, Karen served for some 16 years in local government. Again, I have read all of the material about Sebastopol and Wendouree West, the contributions she made to those respective communities and the great pride with which she represented those folk whose interests she brought to the council table.

As we know she bore more than perhaps her fair share of personal tragedy. The loss of her husband, Brian, was a terrible blow to her. As the Leader of the Opposition remarked, it made the struggles she endured over the last couple of years all the harder. There was a recent family death and a funeral today. One wonders just how much the load should have to be. She bore her own illness with enormous strength and great dignity. I am sure all of us who at different stages had the opportunity of having a conversation with her in those last difficult weeks, months and years were inspired, to greater and lesser degrees, by the way in which she dealt with the lot that had been handed to her.

As different speeches are made today by those who knew her well, we will undoubtedly hear more anecdotes of experiences of the type the Leader of the

Opposition referred to in passing today. One suspects they will have a common theme and will have due regard to her background and her ‘simple’ — and I use that expression in the true definition of the word — way of life. There was nothing complex about this lady. What you saw was what you got. I have no doubt we will hear much more this afternoon about the way in which she conveyed her very heartfelt views about a range of topics in the interests of those she represented.

I also remember well the occasion in the chamber on 7 October last year when the former Premier, John Brumby, read her valedictory speech to this chamber. Illness by then had well and truly claimed her, and she was simply unable to come to the chamber to do it. John Brumby read that speech, and I read it again this morning. I say, with the very greatest respect, that I think Karen would have observed that she finished her time in this place in the same way she started it — it was full of fire, it was very feisty and it made those same basic points which were so fundamental to what she brought to this place. As I said, she was a lady of great humility but enormous strength. We, as a Parliament, mourn her passing.

**Mr HULLS (Niddrie)** — As we have heard, Ballarat is certainly a better place, Victoria is a better place and all of us who worked with her are better people as a result of the life and work of Karen Overington. As she said in her first speech in this place, having been elected as one of the many Labor members of the class of 1999, it was her belief in the ability of government to transform our society that brought her to Parliament.

If a person needed help, she would certainly be the one to help them. If she saw a problem, she wanted to get that problem fixed. If she saw disadvantage, she would want to do something about it. And if she saw an opportunity for her community, she would grab that opportunity so her community could benefit. I think I can speak for all Labor MPs in the house when I say that Karen represented everything that Labor stands for and wants to achieve, and that is a fair go for all Victorians. That is certainly what Labor is about and what Labor governments do, and that is why Karen was a key part of the success of the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments. She was absolutely passionate about Labor; there is no doubt about that. I guess she would not mind my saying it — she was not a big rap for Tories either!

She was a proud Ballarat person to the end. She was born and educated in Ballarat and spent much of her adult life working in and for the broader Ballarat community. She saw and wanted to solve Ballarat’s

problems, and she wanted to praise its strengths and celebrate its many achievements. As we have heard, she was a true Labor battler; proud of her working-class background and with a keen eye for social justice. Whether she was working as a welfare officer, a local councillor or an MP, Karen's motivation was simple: she believed in social equity and fought hard to better the lives of every member of her local community.

This upbringing instilled in Karen a desire to, in her words, set things right; to stand up for vulnerable and disenfranchised members of our society. It was this commitment that triggered Karen's first foray into political activism. As the Premier has said, as a young mother Karen was outraged by the lack of resources available for her kids' education, and so with other members of the community she waged a campaign for additional resources and funding. She first became involved with the ALP after being inspired by the Whitlam Labor federal government and the many things it achieved for working women. Bitten by the political bug, as we have heard, she then volunteered in the campaign office of Ballarat South MLA Frank Sheehan in the late 1970s. Karen then combined her political interests with her commitment to the principles of government and reform and sought representation at a local government level firstly for the Borough of Sebastopol from 1982 to 1994 and then for the City of Ballarat between 1996 and 1999, resigning from the council in September 1999 upon her election as the member for Ballarat West.

As we all know, she was a hardworking and tireless crusader for the people of Ballarat West, and she understood, whether as a councillor or as a member of Parliament, that quality of life is not just about the bigger things like jobs, education and health but also about solving ordinary problems like, for instance, the garbage collection, home help and even skate rink maintenance. She was a real advocate and a strong voice for the local community. She was caring and generous. In a recent tribute by her children that appeared in the *Ballarat Courier* they described how their mum would sometimes anonymously leave groceries on the doorsteps of those most needy members of her electorate.

This story is typical of the Karen we all knew and worked alongside as part of the Bracks and Brumby governments. She did not seek the limelight or glory. As I mentioned, she was motivated to better the lives of those around her. The Wendouree West community renewal project, about which the Leader of the Opposition has spoken, was one of her proudest achievements. One of the greatest tributes to Karen and Karen's style came from Kevin Waugh, who worked

with her on that project. In the *Ballarat Courier* he said that he admired the respect that Karen showed people in the Wendouree West community before, during and after working on the program. He said:

Karen knew this wasn't about government programs. It was about building people up. She made the people of Wendouree West step out of their comfort zone and excel. She gave us affirmation and taught us to have ability in ourselves. We realised we're not no-hopers, we're not dole bludgers, we're not druggies, we're Wendouree West.

While Karen witnessed firsthand the effect disadvantage and insufficient community services had on the Wendouree West community, she also saw the potential for the community to renew itself and grow. People were struggling; they needed support and they needed access to opportunity, so she worked with the community, she listened, she held community meetings and she laboured alongside the local community. This project not only improved the Wendouree West community's sense of confidence and pride but also resulted in the establishment of employment and community services, school dental services and the creation of hundreds of jobs and also training positions.

As we have heard, she grew up in a great family. In her first speech she said:

It was not unusual for me to wake up and find at the kitchen table a homeless man, a conscientious objector discussing the obscenities of the Vietnam War or a patient from Lakeside Hospital brought home for Sunday lunch by my dad, who was a psychiatric nurse.

We know, of course, that her husband, Brian, who died a couple of years ago — also much too young — was a great bloke and a great supporter of Karen. We know that her two kids, Brett and Shae, and their partners, Lisa and Dean, were also very hard workers for the cause. Shae told the *Ballarat Courier* that they loved letterboxing for their mum's various campaigns at a local and a state level, not just because it was for Mum or for a good cause but because they were able to take time off school to do it. Like their mum, they were willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. Shae said that Karen became upset one day when they came back from one particular letterboxing exercise with a full sack of pamphlets rather than an empty one. Karen thought they had not done their job properly or were slacking off, until she was told that they were the pamphlets of her opponent which they had collected on the way. Whilst we all know Karen played it fair and was not happy about what they had done, it was not clear whether or not she actually told them to put them back — although I reckon I have got a fair idea.

Karen's passing is a great loss for the people of Ballarat, for the people of Victoria generally and indeed

for the Victorian Labor Party. I express my sincere condolences and my sincere thanks to Karen's children, extended family and friends who were on a great journey with her. She will certainly be sadly missed.

**Ms ASHER** (Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business) — I wish to contribute briefly to this condolence motion for Karen Overington, who was the member for Ballarat West from 1999 until 2010. She was, as many people have observed, the first woman to hold that seat. Given the difficulty of politics for so many women I think it is important for women on both sides of the chamber to applaud the achievements of those on the other side, and I do applaud her for being the first woman in many spheres of her life.

It appeared to me — and I had very many conversations with Karen Overington, Tory that I may be, I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition — that she entered Parliament for the right reasons. Karen entered the Parliament to serve her community, and that she did for the duration of her political career. She was passionate about her community, and she spoke in great detail about things she wished to achieve for Ballarat in both general and specific terms. Karen was Ballarat born and educated, and she was a councillor for 16 years, including a stint as mayor from 1990 to 1991. She was an electorate officer from 1984 to 1992, and many of us know that to be an electorate officer you may as well be the member of Parliament for that period. She worked a marginal seat very hard, had significant runs on the board and did the most important thing that marginal seat holders are meant to do — that is, hold the seat.

I am interested to hear more about the Wendouree West renewal project, and I have also read in my notes that she would regard that as her key achievement. In understanding a little of her values I can understand why she would think a project that gave opportunity to those who may not have had opportunities would be such an important achievement.

I too re-read Karen's first speech in preparing to speak on this condolence motion, and I remember listening to her first speech while sitting in this chamber. I remember her saying she was proud to describe herself as working class. She held that out as a badge of honour, and clearly she was true to that during her entire political career. I remember her first speech because she did not hold back. While there are protocols and conventions for first speeches in this chamber, as I got to know Karen it struck me that she neither knew nor cared about those protocols. She had a big shot at the Kennett government, and she had something to say about the dismissal of the Whitlam

government. I suspect that at the end of her speech she realised that we on the opposite side of the chamber had been very controlled, and she thanked the house for giving her the courtesy of listening to her in silence. It was very clear from day one that she had firm views, and she articulated those views in this chamber.

I also want to make a brief reference to the editorial published in the Ballarat *Courier* — and what an editorial it was! If our local press editorialised about any one of us in such glowing terms — or even half as glowingly — we would be flattered. I was amused to read the description of Karen, which said she was 'not stunt driven' and 'did not rely on pollie-speak or oratory skills. Publicly verbose she was not'. That description certainly accords with our own reflections, but the glowing tribute to her capacity to deliver for her own community is something I hope she would be very proud of — and it was printed in a newspaper in which I know it is very difficult to get positive editorials for anyone on either side of politics.

Karen was true to her Labor values. In every conversation I had with her she mentioned her family, her grandchildren, Ballarat and the Labor Party. She was true to those things during her entire political career. Ambition was not something that particularly crossed her mind; she wanted to deliver for Ballarat, and that is what she did. She was a decent woman who was true to her conscience, her values and the cause of the underprivileged and the disadvantaged. I pass on my condolences to her children and grandchildren.

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — I am honoured and privileged to add my voice to this condolence motion, but more importantly, I am honoured and privileged to add to it the voices of the people of Ballarat West, whom Karen represented so well. Given that so many of those people were very pleased to add to this contribution, I hope I reflect appropriately what they have said. I would also like to pass on my condolences to Karen's family and to my parliamentary colleagues who worked alongside Karen for over 10 years.

Karen had a long and illustrious career in the public service of her community, which was a community for which she cared deeply. This care for her community was only surpassed by her care for her family. This was very apparent as I looked around at her funeral service that Friday, when we had all gathered together to say goodbye. I saw family and friends, community leaders, community members, parliamentarians and former Premiers all gathered together for one common purpose, which was to acknowledge the work that Karen had done and the difference that she had made to her community.

As we have heard, Karen was a proud member of the working class, and she was raised in a household where politics happened at the kitchen table. Karen's inaugural speech reflected this, when she said:

I grew up in a household where issues of equality and social justice were part of regular discussions. It was not unusual for me to wake up and find at the kitchen table a homeless man, a conscientious objector discussing the obscenities of the Vietnam War or a patient from Lakeside Hospital brought home for Sunday lunch by my dad, who was a psychiatric nurse.

From an early age I was encouraged to recognise social injustice and empowered to go about setting things right.

This work began in her own neighbourhood at the former Borough of Sebastopol where she was the only female councillor, and was often referred to by her male council colleagues as 'girlie'.

Betty Borchers, a long time friend of Karen's and member of the Labor Party, said this:

When Karen first joined the council of the Borough of Sebastopol on 17 July 1982 she did sewing on an industrial machine at home. She worked very hard to learn the ways of a council and always put the ratepayers first. She always stood up for herself in council as the only woman there. She became mayor in 1990, and when the borough was amalgamated in 1994, she became a councillor of the City of Ballarat.

And these words came from Judith Coull:

Observing Karen's personal growth through her commitment to her family, her local community and the wider community was quite remarkable. Certainly a role model for young women in our community.

Her time as a councillor for the Borough of Sebastopol and later on as City of Ballarat councillor ensured her capacity to understand the 'local politics' of being a voice for the community that elected her, as well as being involved in the binding decisions of council that weren't always popular at a local level, nor necessarily in keeping with Karen's understanding of community issues.

Karen's personal qualities of honesty, humility, loyalty, compassion and strength of purpose to redress inequities for individuals and families in our community were unwavering and will have continuing benefits within our community.

This sentiment is shared among those in the community who worked alongside Karen.

Lynne McLennan had these words to say:

Karen Overington's record of achievement in public life is quite remarkable, reflecting the character of a woman of great integrity, who was passionate about helping others and ensuring that people from all sections of our community had a fair go. I had the great privilege of working with Karen when she was a Ballarat city councillor and then as a member of the initial steering committee for the Wendouree West renewal

project. Karen worked hard for Ballarat Health Services, often behind the scenes, and was instrumental in delivering funding for major capital projects. She was also an important advocate for Friendly Society pharmacy, which has operated in Ballarat for 130 years.

Along with many, many others in the Ballarat community, I am deeply saddened by the premature loss of Karen. The selfless way in which she conducted herself and her constant focus on doing the right thing for our community, rather than any egotistical concerns, should serve as an exemplary role model for politicians of all parties. This, as much as community projects such as the neighbourhood renewals in Ballarat, are her important legacy to us all.

Such is the respect for Karen that at a recent Ballarat City Council meeting a motion was passed unanimously when Cr Des Hudson called for an officer's report into a suitable open space to be named in memory of Karen Overington.

Before being elected as the first woman member for Ballarat West, Karen worked with Frank Sheehan, as we have heard, who represented South Ballarat for 10 years. She then went to UnitingCare Australia as a welfare worker, assisting some of the most disadvantaged people in our community. As Karen stated in her inaugural speech:

As a welfare worker at a Ballarat agency I witnessed on a daily basis the extraordinary efforts of volunteers and lowly paid agency staff who struggled to fill the void ...

Karen's move from local government to state government came after a lot of hard work, and she did not forget those people whom she had assisted in her role at UnitingCare and in her capacity as a councillor.

Her ability to fiercely defend those people who were often forgotten did not leave her when she became the member for Ballarat West. Kevin Waugh, who worked with Karen on the Wendouree West renewal project, stated his admiration for the respect that Karen showed the people of the Wendouree West community not only during the renewal process but also prior to it and afterwards. As we have heard before, but it is worth saying again, Kevin had this to say, as reported in the *Ballarat Courier*:

Karen knew this wasn't about government programs. It was about building people up. She made the people of Wendouree West step out of their comfort zone and excel. She gave us affirmation and taught us to have ability in ourselves. We realised we're not no-hopers, we're not dole bludgers, we're not druggies — we're Wendouree West.

Pam Lysaght, a resident of Delacombe and a volunteer, had this to say:

Karen Overington was always the battler's true friend and advocate. Through Karen's tireless endeavours Delacombe

now has a neighbourhood renewal, and she also supported the Delacombe neighbourhood house.

Karen, in her unique ways, mentored many people, young and old alike. Her personal gifts of food parcels and other selfless deeds showed Karen's true character.

This description of Karen as an advocate was one that she shared. Karen was quoted in a *Courier* interview on 12 August as saying:

I saw myself not as a politician, but as an advocate, as a voice for the people who sometimes only wanted help with the little things in life.

When Karen reluctantly retired from politics due to ill-health, I was overwhelmed by the number of people who approached me, and who still approach me, to talk about the work that Karen did and her respect and concern for everyone she assisted. This work was never seen on the front pages of the paper or heard on the radio news bulletins, but it was so important. It was work that made the people of Ballarat West feel valued and important. It was work that came from the core of Karen's being.

On 11 August Karen left us; however, what she has left behind will remain forever as a legacy of the life of civic duty that she chose to follow. Ballarat is a better place for that.

Catherine King, the federal member for Ballarat, recently said in federal Parliament:

Karen really was a remarkable person and was, I think, very much larger than life. She lived her life throughout very much helping others. She came from a fairly tough background and brought all of those experiences into her civic life. Ballarat is very, very much a richer place for her decision to participate in civic life.

I think that the last words should go to Pam Lysaght, who wrote:

Once in a lifetime a politician such as Karen Overington crosses our paths. She has left her communities stronger and richer in representing and working with us. May Karen rest in the peace she so richly deserves.

I think that we all wish that for Karen.

**Mrs POWELL** (Minister for Local Government) — I am proud to join the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and other members of Parliament in this condolence motion for Karen Marie Overington, who passed away on 11 August after a long illness. Karen was 59 years of age when her life was cut far too short.

Karen was the Labor member for Ballarat West from 1999 until her retirement due to ill-health in 2010. She

was proud to be the first woman to represent that electorate. While I did not know Karen that well, her path to this place was similar to my own and that of others who have gone from local government to Parliament. I watched her quiet dignity and commitment to her electorate as she attended this place during her last years here, in which she had difficulty because of her illness. I think we were all proud to see her conducting her duties in this place. I know it must have been difficult for her. It must also have been difficult for her to be in this place after she lost her beloved husband, Brian, in October 2009.

As did many of us, I researched information for this condolence motion, and I was surprised to see — although perhaps I should not have been — that over the years there have been many tributes to Karen in her local newspaper, the Ballarat *Courier*. These tributes talked about Karen as a passionate advocate for the Ballarat people, particularly the underdog. This epitomises the type of person that Karen was.

As the Minister for Local Government I pay particular tribute to Karen's fantastic contribution to local government. She was elected to the former Borough of Sebastopol in 1982 and served there until 1994 when there was a council amalgamation. She was mayor from 1990 to 1991. Karen spoke about councils being male dominated and the challenges of being a female councillor. I, along with other members of this place who have been female councillors, know that there would have been some specific challenges in being the only female councillor. Karen encouraged women to stand for council and supported them in their endeavours. After the council amalgamation Karen served on the Ballarat City Council from 1996 to 1999, when she became a member of Parliament.

Karen served 16 years in local government and 11 years in Parliament. That is a substantial contribution to public life — 27 years — along with all the other contributions she made in her life. She was known as a battler, a tireless worker, an advocate, humble, feisty, a quiet achiever, a respected person, a warm person, a true friend and a wonderful mother.

In a tribute to their mum in the *Courier* Brett and Shae said that their mother attended school committee meetings, school concerts and parent-teacher interviews and did all the things that a mum does. I know how difficult it is to be a councillor and a mother, raising children while you are also expected to be there for your community. It is a testament to Karen's commitment to her children, her love of her family and her love of her community that she did just that. Karen's children also talked about her generosity and

caring. They said she would often pay people's bills and buy groceries for them and that she did so anonymously. She did it in her quiet way because she knew that people needed help and she was in a position to give it.

In Karen's maiden speech on 9 November 1999 she spoke about her pride in being the first woman to represent her electorate. She talked about her pride in coming from a working-class family, and she paid tribute to her parents, whom she said instilled in her a strong sense of social justice and equality. As others have said, Karen said in her maiden speech that her parents often invited homeless people and others — for example, a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War or a patient from Lakeside Hospital where her dad was a psychiatric nurse — to their home for Sunday lunch. I can only imagine the types of conversations and debate that would go on around their kitchen table.

Karen spoke about her time in local government, her need to help people and her desire to give back to her community. As others have said, one of her legacies to the people of Ballarat will be the Wendouree West renewal project. She gave a helping hand to residents in those homes in trying to make their lives much better and ensured that she was there to help them if needed.

Karen's work with the Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre will also be part of her legacy, along with her work with the most vulnerable people in her electorate, where she wanted to help others just as she had been helped. She felt she had come from a loving family and wanted to pass on that love to others.

You get a sense of how much Karen was loved and respected when you read the tributes in the Ballarat *Courier*. There were tributes from her family and friends, from Labor members of Parliament, branch members, grateful constituents and local organisations acknowledging her contribution and years of hard work. Some examples of those are — and you will get a sense of the diversity of Karen's contribution from them — the Sebastopol Returned and Services League and women's auxiliary; the Ballarat *Courier* newspaper; the Sebastopol child-care centre; Sebastopol Primary School; the Filipino Australian Association of Ballarat; the board and staff of Centacare; the board, staff and clients of McCallum Disability Services; the board and management of Ballarat Health Service; the board, management and staff of Uniting Care Ballarat; and the Yuille Park Community College. This shows the extent and diversity of the work Karen was involved in and her many years of giving back to her community.

I am sure the community will miss Karen, as will her colleagues in the Labor Party and those of us on this side of Parliament. Karen passed away far too young. It is very sad that it takes an opportunity like this to put on record the wonderful contribution that people make to this place and to their communities. Karen will be sadly missed, mostly by her family and friends. I pass on my sincere condolences to Karen's children, Brett and Shae, to their partners, Lisa and Dean, and to her four beautiful grandchildren. I hope they take some comfort in the legacy that their mum and grandmother has left behind.

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — Like so many in this house, I was saddened to learn of the death of Karen Overington on 11 August. Karen and I had become very close colleagues and friends, having worked closely together in the Labor Party, in local government and then in our roles as state parliamentarians representing the seats of Ballarat West and Ballarat East.

I first came to know Karen when I joined the Labor Party in 1987. She was the electorate officer working for Frank Sheehan, who was then the Labor MLA for Ballarat South. Together they worked in an electorate office which I inherited when I became the member for Ballarat East. In those days electorate offices were run on a far more limited budget. At that time Karen was the only electorate officer and any volunteer support was welcome to assist with the tasks, both in terms of supporting some electorate office activities and also supporting Frank as election campaigns approached. During her time working for Frank, and while she enjoyed supporting people across all of the Ballarat South electorate, Karen was especially passionate about supporting the people and issues relating to her Sebastopol community where, as we have heard, she was first elected as a borough councillor in 1982 at the age of just 32. This community commitment had developed when Karen was a young mum who became involved in advocating for better facilities for children and young mothers in Sebastopol.

In 1989 I was encouraged to stand for local government at the former City of Ballarat, and after being elected I was able to compare notes with Karen in regard to many local government issues. I learnt that Sebastopol council was very different to the City of Ballarat council. At that time Sebastopol was dominated by one councillor, a Liberal councillor, Neville Donald. Among other things Neville basically decided each year who would be mayor. He chose himself for the mayoral role on many occasions but, to commend him, he did allow other councillors an opportunity to be mayor for a year here and there; usually they were of Liberal

persuasion. For many it was remarkable when Karen was given the nod by Neville to become mayor in 1990. It was clear that Neville had become impressed by Karen, as, of course, were her constituents, because she got in there and argued passionately for services which would benefit her community. She stood up to Neville on occasions in a way which won his respect, enough for him to see this young Labor woman become mayor.

In 1993 the municipalities in the Ballarat area were all dissolved by the Kennett government, which was not something applauded by the Sebastopol councillors. Oddly enough, as the outgoing mayor of the city, I campaigned in support of amalgamation, and when we had a local referendum on the issue, the result of which the Kennett government had no intention of taking any note of, I agreed to hand out voting papers in favour of amalgamation at the Sebastopol booth. Upon my affixing my 'Vote yes' placards at an appropriate distance from the door of the polling place, the then mayor of Sebastopol advised that he did not think I should put up my signs as, 'We don't do that sort of thing in Sebastopol'. I advised that it was perfectly legal, and we verified the point with the polling officer. The mayor then made a phone call; I think he made it to Neville Donald. Soon after some large wheelie bins were unloaded at the booth by Sebastopol staff and carefully placed in front of my banners. I learnt they did things differently in Sebastopol.

Following a period of 20 months when commissioners managed local government affairs in the new City of Ballarat, democracy returned, and Karen and I were elected to the new City of Ballarat council — she to represent Sebastopol and I to represent Ballarat East, the Canadian ward. The next three years saw us working even more closely together, often but not always voting together, as Karen always had her own views which did not always align with mine. However, what you always knew about Karen was where she stood. She made her views clear through passionate speeches in council meetings or through passionate private conversations. Periodically Karen became frustrated with council officers if they did not provide straight answers to questions. She could become particularly uncomplimentary about what some officers may have described as detailed reports.

While persisting in her attempts to gain clear answers in council meetings, her retorts to me afterwards were, 'When are they going to cut the crap, Geoff?'. Karen did not always appreciate councillor planning workshops either, which were designed to help councillors work well together and develop social links. None of that love-in kind of stuff for Karen; she just wanted to get on with the job. 'It's all bull', was her

view. She could use the vernacular in a very efficient but not offensive way. Clearly Karen was a straight shooter who always called a spade a spade.

Ahead of the 1999 state election we were both preselected by our Labor Party colleagues. Again we worked closely together with limited resources to highlight the failures of the Kennett government and to promote Labor as a very worthy alternative. We were, of course, well supported by Steve Bracks, John Brumby, John Thwaites and many other Labor shadow ministers who came up to Ballarat to lend their support at public forums and in many other ways. We were also well supported by many Labor supporters from Ballarat. We established a campaign office in Sturt Street, Ballarat, and worked together in a great spirit of cooperation to maximise our support across the Ballarat region. We were successful in being elected at the 1999 election, when all six lower and upper house seats in the Ballarat Legislative Council province changed from being Liberal-held seats to Labor-held seats.

As we have heard from other speakers, Karen contributed much to the people of the Ballarat West electorate as their representative. In the early part of her term, with the support of the then health minister, John Thwaites, she helped to ensure that for the first time it was possible to deliver radiotherapy services to Ballarat, saving many cancer sufferers in our region from having to travel to Melbourne in order to receive treatment. Then she saw the next step as being the integrated cancer centre, which she supported very strongly. The centre will be a great tribute to Karen's efforts.

She provided strong support to local kindergartens and child-care centres, to the schools across her electorate and to disability services. She advocated vigorously for road upgrades and upgrades to local sporting facilities. She was a great friend to the Sebastopol Returned and Services League, senior citizen groups and to many other groups across her community. Her support for disadvantaged families and individuals across the electorate was demonstrated in many ways, achieving both big projects and smaller projects. The big projects that were achieved include the Wendouree West community renewal project, which we have heard others talk about, and more recently there has been the Delacombe renewal project. She was always at the heart of these projects.

We have also heard about her personal interventions. Karen assisted individuals with special needs with anonymous funding or other practical assistance. Often she would visit constituents with special needs in their homes to save them from coming to her office. It

should also be noted that Karen was one of the few people in this house who did not complete a formal education past year 10. She came to this place via the factory floor with real experience of the world of the working family. She is one of the few remaining examples of people who did not come to this Parliament through a path of tertiary education and business experience. She came from within — someone who stood out because she saw what needed to be done and had a go at doing it. Clearly it would have been thought only a few years ago that Karen still had so much to do, both for her community and in her personal life.

For holidays she would love to drive, with husband Brian and children Brett and Shae in earlier years and then just with Brian after Brett and Shae had grown up. They drove over many parts of the state and further afield, with Karen enjoying exploring sites along the way — sometimes frustrating her children with her determination to see a lesser known site identified by a road marker.

Until a little over five years ago Karen had not even been in a plane, but she was persuaded to travel outside Australia to Egypt on a holiday that she and Brian enjoyed very much. As far as I am aware the only other time she flew was after Brian had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Together they travelled with the three generations of her family to the Gold Coast for a very special family holiday. As has been noted, Karen's husband of 39 years, Brian, died two years ago, and Karen's years of smoking also started to take their toll on her life at that time. So many of Karen's friends had tried to persuade her to give up smoking, but she was not always the person to accept the advice of others, and she was never able to take that advice.

It has been very difficult for those around Karen to see her deteriorate with the debilitating effects of emphysema. She recognised that she could not contest last year's election, and over recent months her illness meant she spent most of her time at home. However, this did not mean that she could not get on the phone after watching Parliament on the internet and offer advice about something that we as opposition members could take it up to the government on — not her words, though, 'take it up to the government' — or to offer encouragement after a question time when she thought we went well.

Karen's death came suddenly, but peacefully, as she died at home while sitting on her couch. At the age of 59, and with Karen's grit and determination, it all came too soon. She will be missed by so many; a special

Labor stalwart and a special friend. I send my condolences to Shae, Brett and their families.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I am happy to rise in support of this condolence motion moved by the Premier and supported by other members in this Parliament today. I came into this place as a member of the class of 1999, and I am one of the few on this side of the chamber who did. I met Karen for the first time at a new members induction. I can remember a few people from that day. One of them, the member for Macedon, was wearing jeans. But I remember Karen because that day she was one, like me, who came from western Victoria, and so I got to know Karen over many occasions through the 11 years that she represented Ballarat West in this Parliament.

It is a great opportunity today to reflect on her achievements but also pay my tributes to a lady who I respected greatly. I looked up, with the support of the parliamentary library, a bit of her history. As we know, she was christened Karen Marie Overington. Her history says her occupation was, proudly, welfare worker. She was educated at Sacred Heart College, Ballarat. She was an MLA for Ballarat West, elected on 18 September 1999. I remember that day vividly: Essendon lost by a point against Carlton. You cannot have everything, but I hope it does not happen in a couple of weeks time in the finals.

Her history also states that she was an electorate officer from 1984 to 1992. Her interests were social justice, reading and gardening. She was a councillor for the borough of Sebastopol from 1982 to 1994 and mayor from 1990 to 1991, and a councillor for the city of Ballarat from 1996 to 1999. So in a lot of ways our backgrounds are similar not only from the point of view that we went to Catholic schools but also importantly our involvement in local government. She went down a similar road to me. She talked in her maiden speech about being a councillor and mayor for the city of Sebastopol. She had some leave after that period of time and then was elected to the City of Ballarat as the only representative for the area of Sebastopol. Over 16 years the people of Sebastopol elected Karen Overington at every opportunity.

In her inaugural speech, which I read through like other members did, she acknowledged her time in local government. As she highlighted in her maiden speech — and those in this chamber who have had that experience would know — local government gives the opportunity to meet with the people closest to you. Local government is the closest to the people. She said of her experience in local government, 'It gave me

experience in helping ordinary people with ordinary problems'. That summarised the way Karen worked in this place. She was passionate about her time in local government, she was passionate about her community, but importantly she was also passionate about her family. Many times in my conversations with her, particularly in her later years, she expressed a concern for her husband, Brian, who was in ill health and as we know passed away in 2009.

Many times in this place she highlighted many good things around Ballarat, particularly the Ballarat Begonia Festival, Ballarat's premier community event, of which she was chair. We have all been to Ballarat to see that fantastic event. She highlighted many of the major events that happen in Ballarat. She also spoke about the Wendouree West community renewal precinct. I have had the fortunate experience as a member of VicHealth to go and visit that centre and see the bringing together of a lot of the services there. Men's sheds, kindergartens and a suite of other services are provided to the people of Wendouree West. She highlighted in her speeches in this place not only the education opportunities for her community of Ballarat but also the importance of Ballarat for higher education. I think of the many people in western Victoria who have had to go to Warrnambool, Geelong or Ballarat for their higher education opportunities. A lot of them have now come back into western Victoria.

Karen also spoke passionately about the health facilities, particularly the cancer centre that was established. That also provides enormous resources and services across western Victoria. As I said, I got information from the parliamentary library, which is a great support to us as MPs. But, like many of us here, I read the tributes that were paid to Karen in the local newspapers, particularly the Ballarat *Courier*. They summarised the support for her as a person, as a councillor and in Parliament, but they also highlighted the deep grassroots feelings and the respect from many community groups for Karen Overington, and the member for Shepparton spoke about the many community groups included in those tributes. Many were sporting groups, and Karen was obviously very passionate about volunteers.

As Minister for Sport and Recreation I know about the enormous amount of work done by volunteers right across Victoria. Governments load them up with a lot of things — they work with children, they provide the safe service of alcohol and they do all those types of things — and Karen was concerned for volunteers within her community. There were also tributes from the RSL clubs. As Minister for Veterans' Affairs I

again thank Karen for the work she did for those groups.

In summarising, I say to Karen's children, Brett and Shae, and to their families: be proud of your mother, because many people are proud of the work she did in their community, in their local government and in particular in this place, the state Parliament of Victoria. My sincere condolences go to Karen's family members who are here today and others who were not able to gather with us here.

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — It is with great personal sadness that I speak on the condolence motion for my esteemed parliamentary colleague and close friend Karen Marie Overington. I have to say from the outset that in the six years that Karen and I shared an office in the chookhouse we had many discussions, and one subject we did discuss more than once was Parliamentary condolence motions for former MPs. I admit that on occasions we both concluded that the best thing that can happen for one's reputation and record as an MP is to be the subject of a condolence motion in this house. So I know that if Karen were here she would not want me to speak about her through the tint of rose-coloured glasses; she would tell me in no uncertain terms to tell it as it was, and so I will.

For a start, Karen was no angel. Like all of us she had her blemishes; it was just that she did not bother hiding hers. She was a person with a tough exterior, and when it came to things close to her, including her politics, you were either with her or against her. There was not much room for compromise. As many in this house from both sides of politics can attest, she told it how it was. When you finished a conversation with the former member for Ballarat West you knew exactly what her point was and you knew exactly where you stood. In saying that, I cannot help but note that on the day that we are here speaking on this condolence motion for Karen it is pretty ironic that a 'No smoking' sign has appeared on the back balcony of Parliament House. I know exactly what she would have said, but I can assure you I will not repeat it.

Even given her tough exterior, I can also attest to the fact that Karen had a heart made of gold: what she would not do for her beloved family and her friends was not worth doing. An unexpected benefit of being elected to this house are the lifelong and close friends you make, and amongst them the class of '99 is special for many of us. Before the lead-up to the 1999 election I had never met Karen Overington, but she quickly became more than a colleague; she became a friend and, just as importantly in this game of politics, a trusted and close confidante. When my father died in

the lead-up to the 2006 election Karen quickly came to the fore and provided me with genuine caring and ongoing support. She was a loyal, understanding and good friend.

As a member of Parliament Karen never saw herself as anything more than an advocate for her community, especially for those in need. She never put herself up on a pedestal; there was never a hint of arrogance. Having cut her teeth in local government and in state politics as an electorate officer before coming into Parliament, Karen knew what needed to be done to be a good local member, and she got on with the job. There was no fuss and not much controversy. I was going to say no controversy, but it was not all plain sailing for Karen either.

I clearly remember when the Queen was in Australia in 2000 and she was going to Ballarat for lunch. Of course all the local MPs and community leaders were invited, and no doubt all of them jumped at the opportunity to have lunch with the Queen — all except the member for Ballarat West. As Karen was a staunch republican she saw it as sheer hypocrisy to go and have lunch with the Queen. This stance caused a major ruckus in Ballarat, and there was much pressure on Karen to attend. Even the then Premier, Steve Bracks, whom she greatly respected, told her she should be going along. But in typical style Karen stuck to her guns and her principles and did not go. Like I said, you knew where you stood with Karen, no matter who you were in this world, royalty included.

As much as she was a good friend and politician, Karen's real love was for her family. As I noted, for six years we shared an office in Parliament, and in that time we got to know each other pretty well. I can say of Karen that she genuinely loved her husband Brian, and I know that love was very much returned. Sadly, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned before, the day Brian died two years ago part of Karen died as well. Her other love was of course for her children, Shae and Brett, and their respective families. Karen would often phone me after she had finished in Parliament and ask how I was, but then she would quickly get on to her grandchildren and their achievements. Karen was extremely proud of her family and they were extremely proud of her — and rightly so, because over a lifetime of service to the Ballarat community Karen did herself and her family proud.

From a humble background, where she left school at an early age, Karen Overington, through her commitment to making life better for others, became a much-respected leader of the Ballarat community, and this world will be the poorer for her passing. My

condolences to Shae, Brett and their families. I will miss my friend dearly.

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — I am pleased to rise to make a short contribution in memory of Karen Marie Overington, the former member for Ballarat West. Karen entered Parliament in 1999, the same year that I did. I remember meeting Karen on the first day as we came in; we were both excited and apprehensive of what lay ahead. Over the next three years we spoke together on several occasions on issues that concerned us, but mainly about our families and of course our husbands. Karen was extremely proud of her children — daughter Shae and son Brett — and her four beautiful grandchildren. Sadly her husband, Brian, her life partner and strong supporter, passed away two years ago.

Karen was a passionate advocate for her community. She was proud to live in Ballarat and was continually talking about its beauty, its activities and its people. She spoke in this house frequently about the Ballarat Begonia Festival and was always trying to encourage members to visit. I remember that in the first year she talked about the begonia festival she was seeking funding. As we walked out of the chamber together I said, 'Karen, it's a great festival, I went there once'. She stopped, gave me that Karen look and said, 'You've only been once?'. I did not like to admit that it really was only once because she was not very happy with me.

The story of the children stuffing the letterboxes and collecting the opponents' pamphlets is one that she shared with me when we were talking about our children, about using children in campaigns and about how difficult it was. There has been talk about Karen being tough. I have heard the stories of when she first went into council and it was three years before she was put on a committee. She took a while to find her way about and they called her 'girlie'. That is hard to compare to the Karen Overington I met in this place, who was tough and strong for her community and her family. She reminded me of someone who would show neither fear nor favour to any man. We had a joint sitting in this house where we were addressed by Dr David Penington, Neil Comrie, Dr Rob Moodie, Major David Brunt of the Salvation Army and Archbishop George Pell. After they had spoken, Karen was the 11th person to ask a question, and she asked George Pell about the breakdown of families and its effect on drugs. Again as we were walking out, I said, 'Karen, that was a good question', and she replied, 'Yes, and I had a lot more to ask, but we were not allowed to ask any more'. She was so passionate about

it. It did not matter who was there and what was happening in the place.

Karen spoke here about crisis accommodation for homeless men at Peplow House, which had fallen into disrepair and for which she was looking for funding. She had great concerns about housing. She was chair of the Central Highlands Regional Council for many years from 1984, and as a City of Ballarat councillor she was chair of Ballarat's 2020 housing strategy. That strategy looked at the important needs of homeless women with or without children, women released from prison, women who had suffered domestic violence and women who had suffered sexual abuse. The telling point for me that reaffirmed her commitment and passion was a closing sentence:

... we must consult, consult, consult with ... women ... to determine their needs ...

Karen raised her concerns about housing for people with disabilities, who often have special needs and who are the most vulnerable in our society. She spoke about how many of the people who had been deinstitutionalised did not make direct contact with welfare agencies and about the need for us to find a way to reach out and give support. Karen knew many of them, and they knew her. She spoke about the need for palliative care for children and about the need for residential respite care to give a break to elderly parents. She also spoke a lot about education. Like me, Karen had to go to work very early, and we had minimal education. Both of us knew how important it was for our children and their children and other children to succeed and to have the benefit of an education, and she fought for it for the children of Ballarat.

Public transport, rail and bus, were very important to Karen. As a strong Labor member Karen worked hard for the party, but she worked just as hard for women and women's rights, and this crossed over both sides. That was evidenced in a story in the Ballarat *Courier* of Saturday, 17 July, where she is photographed with Judy Verlin. She was her sparring partner in council, but both of them were working together to encourage more women to go into council.

The tributes to Karen Overington covered a wide scope and dealt with her whole life. Her family, her children and her grandchildren should be very proud of her and of the mum and the grandmother she was.

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — It is with a heavy heart that I rise like so many other members in this place to speak on the condolence motion for the former member for Ballarat West, Karen Overington.

Time passes quickly in politics, and it was only 12 months ago that Karen was a member of this chamber proudly representing Ballarat West, albeit, as we know, while struggling very much with her failing health. As we have heard already from so many speakers, Karen packed a lot into her adult life, with 16 years of service in local government and 11 years as the member for Ballarat West in this place. That is 27 years of what was a too short adult life in the public arena serving the communities of Sebastopol and Ballarat, the communities that she loved. It was her deep concern for the welfare of others and how people's lives could be improved through good government services and programs and also with a helping hand that drove her and provided her with her energy through those 27 years.

Karen and I came here as part of that club that has already been referred to many times — the class of 1999. Just before the member for Geelong did, I had the good fortune of sharing an office with Karen out in the chookhouse for the first three years of our time as members in this place, between 1999 and 2002. I say 'good fortune' because not only was I able to learn a lot from Karen — we came into this place through very different paths, and she had a wealth of experience that as a new member I could draw on — but also our particular habits, which the member for Geelong touched on, meant that we could cohabit in the office in the chookhouse quite happily for those three years, with Karen spending much of her time out on the front balcony of the chookhouse.

Those early years of the Bracks government were an exciting time. We were newly elected members in a newly elected government. We were both representing regional centres that were having new life pumped back into them by the Labor government, with new policies and programs. It was all about backing the future of regional Victoria. On face value you may expect there would have been some conflict and tension between two members who were vigorously and actively representing their regional centres but coming from very different regional cities. Karen would put up posters in our office promoting that blessed Ballarat Begonia Festival that we have heard so much about and so often in this place, and I would respond with putting up posters promoting Bendigo. But other than having a fierce battle for office wall space, we became good friends.

I mentioned earlier that I learnt a lot from Karen. It was the first time I met Karen that I recognised just what a practical, clear-thinking and straightforward woman she was. That was when I was an organiser for the 1998 Ballarat federal election campaign. We had arranged

for an afternoon tea to be held with senior citizens in the suburb of Buninyong, where the senior citizens could come along and meet the then Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley. Fortunately we had packed the room with lots of eager, older members of our community who were keen to meet Kim Beazley, but sadly no-one was touching the great big plates of scones piled high with jam and cream, because some bright spark in the campaign had thought it would be a good idea to charge people for the benefit of having the scones, jam and cream. I was struggling to convince others that obviously this was not going too well, that we were in opposition and that a well-fed voter is a happy voter, when in swept Karen, who took one look around the room, saw what was going on and in her own unique, straightforward style made sure that the room was well fed without anyone having to put their hand in their pocket.

I came to learn that the Karen I saw then — a practical, blunt, passionate Ballarat and Labor woman — was the Karen you always got. Many a government and ministerial adviser learnt this lesson the hard way, particularly during our early time in government. I would be in the office, and I would watch Karen send on their way many an adviser who would come along and try to tell her what to do. They learnt quickly that you tried to tell Karen what to do and tried to tell Karen how to manage the media in her area at your peril. She was firm in her beliefs and equally firm in how she should go about achieving good outcomes for her electorate of Ballarat West. Many people have and many should acknowledge the shining legacy that she has left the Wendouree West community through the neighbourhood renewal program. She fought hard for what she believed in, and she was one of those great people — a true Labor member with a true Labor heart.

I would like to share a quick story that I believe illustrates how Karen kept all of us well grounded and reminds us that she was old school Labor and came from a community that Labor proudly represents and works hard to support. I am sure some members here will recall Labor's first caucus get-together after the 2001 winter break. Many of us, including me, were sharing the experiences of the various overseas holidays we had had during the winter break. There were some shopping experiences being shared and the showing off of new shoes and handbags and clothing and the like. However, Karen grounded us all very quickly, declaring that her holiday consisted of jumping in the front of the truck with Brian, driving to Broken Hill and back again, with certainly no fancy handbags purchased along the way.

Karen's love for her family was palpable, and when we were in the office together she would proudly share stories of what Brett and Lisa and Shae and Dean were up to. Then of course there were the grandchildren who featured so prominently in her conversations. I heard many stories of Sarah's early years when she was the only grandchild; there were many stories about Sarah and her development. But many other grandchildren quickly followed, and I recalled with Shae how young Rhys decided to enter the world on a sitting day in 2002. Nothing could stop Karen from getting up that highway quick enough to see the latest addition to her beautiful family.

Then there was her deep bond with her husband, Brian. Brian spent many hours in the office with us and also around Parliament during sitting days just to be with Karen when he was off the road and not driving trucks. He came and sat with us and was the constant companion Karen was so fortunate to have throughout her life. When Brian was not in the office Karen would share other stories about how she and Brian first started courting and how attracted she was to this sexy young man in her life those many years ago. Brian's death less than two years ago shattered Karen. He was her world and she, as we know, struggled up until her own passing to manage life without her soul mate.

I also reinforce what was said earlier about Karen's deep interest in this place continuing after she left. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology and broadcasting of Parliament over the internet, Karen kept very close tabs on what was happening in this place. She rang me from time to time to share her opinions of people on both sides of the house, not just on one side, and to give advice on what the opposition should be doing, but it was practical, it was well meaning and it came from that good Labor heart. She continued to be very connected to Labor and to her community. The most recent of those discussions was when I was driving home on the last Thursday of the sitting period before the winter break, the last Thursday of June. It was just like old times as we talked for some time about what had been going on. She had great spark, great spunk and a very strong view.

I mourn deeply for the loss of a woman and a friend who was a proud fighter for her community, for her Labor beliefs and for her family. I also mourn for what her loss represents. Our friendship, like so many in this place, was forged from the shared experiences of the 1999 election and those early heady days of government. They were exciting times, and we were so proud to be part of a historic election result that started a decade of delivery for the regional centres we represented.

Losing Karen is losing an important link to that shared history. It should remind all of us that our time in this place is a precious privilege, one that we should enjoy and never take for granted. Goodbye to Karen. Thank you for your service, your friendship, your guidance and your passion, which has left its mark on me, on this place and, most importantly, on your community. My condolences to Brett and Shae, their partners and Karen's beloved grandchildren. Sebastopol and Ballarat thank you very much for supporting your mother and grandmother in her long period of service to their community.

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — I rise to contribute to the Premier's condolence motion for Karen Marie Overington, who passed away on 11 August after a long illness. Karen was born on 16 November 1951 in Ballarat and was educated at Sacred Heart College; and as the member for Ballarat East pointed out earlier, she did not finish year 12. This is an unusual way to come to this place as most of us have that standard of education. Ballarat was Karen's passion; this is where her interest and involvement in community affairs was sparked and subsequently flourished. She proudly called herself working class and grew up in a household where issues of equality and social justice were regular points of discussion around the dining table. She was married to her husband, Brian, for 39 years until he unfortunately passed away in 2009. They were blessed with two children in Brett and Shae and four grandchildren.

Karen began her foray into politics as a member of a community group that was seeking more resources for their children's education and became involved in the ALP after the dismissal of the Whitlam government. She believed in a government's ability to transform society. That is what brought her to Parliament. She began her political life as a councillor with the Sebastopol borough in 1982 and held that position until 1994, serving as mayor between 1990 and 1991. She then became a councillor at the City of Ballarat after amalgamations, representing Sebastopol ward between 1996 and 1999. Karen saw her role as a councillor as important because she could help everyday people with their ordinary problems at the level of government which was closest to the people. She had a great love for local government and in particular for seeing more women standing for council as well as state and federal parliament. Her advocacy for women to enter politics was not partisan; she was genuinely interested in seeing more women of any political persuasion stand for election. This was demonstrated in July 2004 by her teaming up with one of her former political combatants, Judy Verlin, to promote a program to encourage more women to stand at local council elections.

Karen also worked as an electorate officer for the member for Ballarat South, Frank Sheehan, between 1984 and 1992. She worked as a social worker between 1994 and 1999, and given her passion for social justice, that would have been the perfect vocation for her. Karen was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1999 as the first female member for Ballarat West. She was a champion for community renewal. This was demonstrated in an editorial in the Ballarat *Courier* which read:

The delivery of the Wendouree West renewal project, designed to rebuild the disconnected community which called the area home, will remain her major political achievement. It was a project championed by a battler for the battlers.

Karen believed in the community having grassroots involvement in the Wendouree West renewal. As she said in her farewell speech, which unfortunately had to be delivered by former Premier John Brumby due to her ill-health:

The Wendouree West community renewal has not just been a redevelopment of old housing stock. For the first time in their lives, people had a chance to make their own choices about how they could change their community.

Karen was a top state member of Parliament, the sort of person who all of us in this place should aim to be. She was hard working, passionate and always worked to make a contribution to public life for the betterment of the area she represented and the areas we represent. I extend my sincere condolences to Karen's children, Brett and Shae, and also to her four grandchildren, Ellie, Ebony, Rhys and Sarah.

**Ms DUNCAN** (Macedon) — It is with much sadness that I stand here in support of the condolence motion for Karen Overington. Although we all knew Karen was not well, and as it is in so many of our lives where we always think there will be more time than there ever is, I thought there would be more time for Karen. I did not think we would be condoling her less than a year after she had left Parliament.

I had the honour of being elected with Karen in 1999. We were all obviously very pleased with what then became known as the class of 1999. We developed a very special bond. Those of us who were elected from regional Victoria had an additional bond. Many of us stayed at the same apartment building just down the road in East Melbourne; I think initially there were about 11 of us all staying at that one place. Over the years all but Karen and me found alternative accommodation. Karen and I continued to stay there every sitting night over the last 11 years. It is not a great place to stay actually, but we both continued to stay because they allowed people to keep their dogs there.

Karen thought this was fantastic. She knew the dog, Poncho, who lived there with the owner. Poor old Poncho died a few years ago. But Karen thought this was great, so for many years Karen and I would go back to that accommodation, without our dogs, each evening during a sitting week. Inevitably we would discuss the events of Parliament that day.

Karen was extremely feisty and at times really scary! You definitely wanted her on your side; if you were in battle, you wanted Karen in the trenches with you. Karen was never factional — she was a true independent; she was too independent for the independents! She was a very individual person. But Karen knew everyone and everything and would take great delight in giving me, who was a novice and beginner, a run-down of who was who, who had done what to whom and when they had done it.

She was a keen observer of politics, and she had been part of it for so many years. She was always very straightforward about her politics. It certainly never went to her head that she had been elected to Parliament. Make no mistake — she was incredibly honoured to represent Ballarat West which, as she said in her inaugural speech, was the place of her birth and education, the place where she started work and the place she began her involvement in community affairs. She said, ‘I am proud to describe myself as working class’, and she was.

When the Queen came to visit Ballarat, as we have heard before, and people were to attend a lunch in the Queen’s honour, there was no way Karen was going to attend that lunch. She was very adamant about that. As the member for Geelong said, she copped a bit of stick for that, but she was never going to change her position. She said to me, ‘Why would I go and have lunch with a woman I don’t know, a woman whom I have nothing to do with and have nothing in common with? I am a republican. I have got better things to do with my time’. That was Karen. She would not be bothered with the pomp and ceremony of it all. God only knows how they got her to wear the mayoral robes when she was a mayor.

Karen believed in helping people who needed it. There would be a countless number of people in Ballarat who have benefited from Karen’s efforts; whether it was through her advocacy of them or by paying their bills, Karen would do it without fuss or recognition, in her own style, and no doubt in her own words. As her daughter, Shae said, any speech Karen had to deliver had to be rewritten to make it sound like her, and to sound like Karen, it had to be plain English, direct and written in a way that cut to the heart of the matter.

I had the great pleasure of travelling to Egypt with Karen and Brian. It was their first overseas trip. It was such a delight to watch these two people — these best friends — travel for the first time overseas, but they were the worst hagglers! Neither of them got it. Karen just could not get what haggling was about. Karen would say, ‘They’re cheap enough as it is. I should be giving them more, not less’.

In her valedictory address to Parliament in October last year, read by former Premier John Brumby, she said her parents had taught her that all people are equal and it is just circumstances that change them. This was evident in everything she did, even in her travels. Sadly Brian died in October 2009, and a lot of Karen died with him. I extend my condolences to Brett and Shae, Lisa and Dean, and Karen’s grandchildren, Sarah, Rhys, Ebony and Ellie. May Karen and Brian rest in peace.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — It was a former Labor senator in South Australia who made the remark that there were too few people in the 1980s in Canberra in the Labor Party who had ever had to wash their hands with Solvol. From the comments in the house this afternoon, it is quite evident that Karen Overington had a very clear understanding of the grassroots’ needs, aspirations and horizons of her electorate.

It is also interesting to note that when she made comments in this place in 2003 marking the 29th year of service of a fellow councillor who had served with her in Sebastopol, she noted he was a Liberal but she calmly said, ‘I owe a great deal of my political education to him’. He was a person by the name of Neville Donald.

I am not sure whether we have Neville Donald to thank for Karen’s contribution in this chamber or whether it was part of the wisdom acquired along the way. It is interesting also how Karen defined her life through the comments that she made in this chamber. She was a person of relatively few words at different times. There was an economy of language but a high resolve and high purpose in her thought.

Members have already presented to the house her family upbringing. Her parents had over 60 years of working experience as nurses. She noted that her father worked in psychiatric care and was also in the arena of aged care. In an aged care debate in this chamber on one occasion she said that we were not speaking about an aged care industry but rather about the lives of people who are parents and grandparents and have brothers and sisters and their own life stories to tell. She described how in her early years she enjoyed travelling

with her parents to the nursing homes where they worked to learn more about the life journeys.

There was also a special quality of care that came through the story she narrated about her father. When working in a psychiatric institution from time to time he would bring guests around for Sunday lunch. That rapport and empathy with people, that faces-in-the-street perspective, to steal a phrase from Henry Lawson, is a special quality, and we all have the opportunity to bring that quality to this chamber through an understanding of the lives of the people in the community: their travails and struggles and the matters that they need to work through.

In terms of her political work, she represented an electorate that had seen the Eureka uprising and the discovery of gold. She had the privilege of representing her constituency on the 150th anniversary of both those occasions. She took a keen interest in regional tourism, including the Ballarat Begonia Festival, which brought 100 000 people to Ballarat. She contributed to debates on regional infrastructure development, the University of Ballarat, vocational education and training and catchment management. She took a keen interest in other government-funded agencies, including the Ballarat base hospital, which saw significant investment, the Sebastopol Secondary College and the Country Fire Authority emergency response unit.

She also put forward in this place clearly expressed views on the issue of demand feeding when the Equal Opportunity Act was being amended and was able to place on the record her own family experience. At the time of the Longford tragedy over a decade ago she gave a narration in this place about the time she worked at the coalface as a welfare worker. Interestingly, she stated that she did not just understand the concerns of the people with whom she was working, but rather she felt the full brunt of their concerns. We may look at and understand the community concerns, but in our work in this chamber if we can feel and understand to a higher degree the concerns of those constituencies which we seek to represent, we can serve the community whose interests we are elected to advance to a greater degree.

In relation to another bill dealing with regional safety and the fire response, she was keen to advocate policy approaches that protected the interests of all Victorians; not some Victorians, but all Victorians. In her own constituency she noted that 43 per cent of the families who had kindergarten-age children qualified for the preschool subsidy, so it was a community that had a high level of need in terms of making ends meet and enabling the children to attend kindergarten.

In local government she made an interesting remark at the time of compulsory competitive tendering. During

her days at the Sebastopol council she understood the earnest approach of the multiskilled workers of her borough and noted that they often rose above and beyond the call of ordinary duty as they embarked upon their work. She referred to the extra clean-up tasks that were not part of a wider activity list or sheet, citing the example of the workers of the Sebastopol council taking the time to clear the ovals of broken glass and bottles before they put the lawnmowers over them. She had a good approach to and understanding of that sense of contribution through toil and the assumption of responsibility.

She expressed concern for the loss of jobs in the Ballarat area at a time when 450 people lost their work. She was keen to promote alcohol-free and drug-free programs through the FReeZA program, which was an initiative of the former government through the good work of the now Treasurer and also the member for South-West Coast. She also had an interest in making sure that people were well looked after in the different domains of her electorate. She spent a lot of time in this place not so much in the dining room but just outside the dining room where the air was a little bit crisper! On another occasion in this chamber she said — and this might be something to which we can all aspire:

Let us hope that all honourable members get better with age.

That is something we could all take some heart from as we serve our communities in this arena.

Her work was marked, as defined by others, with fairness, a sense of democratic process and a sense of justice. They are words she used to describe a member of her community who died and had served the Ballarat community in the capacity of a librarian and through the local council of churches. In my time in this chamber I have seen numbers of people whose lives have ended all too soon, not far from their 60th year or just over: people such as Michael John, Marie Tehan, John Ross and Peter McLellan. As we reflect upon the lives of people who have served alongside us, we can take heart from their contributions and note that this is not the only arena in which we serve: we have families above and beyond and outside this place. In that context I pass on the condolences of members on this side of the house to the family of Karen: Shae and Brett and their own extended families. One hundred and twenty years or so ago it was Henry Lawson, in his poem *Faces in the Street*, who examined the social conditions of the time and evaluated how people might feel when they saw:

The wrong things and the bad things  
And the sad things that we meet  
In the filthy lane and alley, and the cruel, heartless street.

Transposing that social context to 120 years or so later, Karen sought to advance the interests of the community. The area of Wendouree West has been in the press in recent times because of the high levels of unemployment and the higher levels of social need. She was an advocate who understood, identified with and sought to advance her community through this place.

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond) — I am honoured to rise along with other members to pay tribute to the life of Karen Overington, the former member for Ballarat West, who died far too early at the age of 59 on 11 August. Prior to entering Parliament I knew Karen through our respective local government roles. Indeed for a period of time we ran parallel careers, mine at the City of Melbourne and hers initially at the Borough of Sebastopol.

We were, as the member for Geelong said, part of the class of 1999, where a strong bond of friendship and comradeship developed within the caucus, with so many new members coming to this place at that time. Karen, the member for Bendigo East and I sat up the back and got up to a fair bit of mischief. They were exciting days in that first blush of the new Bracks government. One of my enduring memories is of Karen providing a running commentary on what was then the opposition and listening to her views about its various members. There was perhaps a character assessment of some of those — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — My colleague said — no, I will not go there!

Karen certainly had an assessment of a range of members of the opposition which she would keep us entertained with. She had a beautiful laugh. Do people remember that? She revelled in and loved being a member of Parliament. She loved being a member of the class of 1999. For so many of us it is wonderful to reflect back on those first few months of government.

In her inaugural speech Karen proudly described herself as a working-class woman. A Ballarat woman through and through, Karen's ideals were steeped in the rich tradition of our great party, particularly the principles of equality and social justice; principles Karen displayed throughout her entire working life. One of Karen's most enduring passions was for local government. She served with distinction in the Borough of Sebastopol from 1982 until amalgamation in 1992, including a stint as mayor of the borough at the same time that I was Lord Mayor of the great City of Melbourne. She resumed her local government career in 1996 in the

newly amalgamated City of Ballarat and served there until her election to this place in 1999.

In my many discussions with Karen over a cigarette, a habit I have managed to beat for nine years, which I am immensely pleased about, Karen would talk with great passion about the endless possibility for local government to do good things in the lives of ordinary citizens. She understood more than most just how crucial local government services are to our communities in providing maternal and child health services, libraries, sporting facilities and particularly in ensuring that the voices and aspirations of a community are reflected by their elected representative.

Karen never lost touch with her community. Her late husband, Brian, recounted to me a lovely story and a warning to never go shopping with Karen because a normal 10-minute visit to Coles to get the groceries and so forth would take Karen at least an hour as she dealt with constituent matters up and down the aisles of the supermarket. That is how popular Karen was. She was truly an authentic local government representative and, indeed, a state representative.

Needless to say nothing changed when Karen was elected to this place. She really ran the electorate as an extension of her council ward. She knew everyone, followed up every issue and was a consummate local member. Karen was feisty and fiercely independent. She eschewed the trappings and embellishments of public office and delighted in serving in government with so many talented young Labor women.

Karen was also fiercely proud of and loyal to Ballarat, the history of Eureka and its place in the formation of this state and country. She loved the Ballarat Begonia Festival. She made mention of it in her inaugural speech and took every opportunity during members statements and debate — often regardless of the subject of the bill before the Parliament — to promote the festival as one of the key events in the social calendar of Ballarat. As the member for Bendigo East would attest, we would often try to throw her off during debate by saying, 'Don't talk about the begonia festival again'. But she loved the begonia festival and understood how crucially important it was not only to tourism in the area but to the economic development of Ballarat.

Karen was devoted to the people of Ballarat, particularly the communities of Wendouree West and Delacombe. The investment by the Labor government in neighbourhood renewal is one of her great and enduring legacies. As former Minister for Housing I had the honour to attend many events in Karen's electorate, and the response that she received at these

functions was genuine and heartfelt. I well remember an event two years ago when we were transitioning from state government support of neighbourhood renewal at Wendouree West to a more local government and community focus. There was a big event held up there to celebrate what had been a remarkable turnaround of that community. Karen was not able to be there that day as she was nursing her husband, Brian, through the last few weeks of his life. I will never forget that day. A packed hall of hundreds of people wanted to thank the government for caring and particularly to thank Karen for always standing with them.

It would be remiss of me not to mention in this condolence the private part of Karen's life that I was honoured to have a small glimpse of, and that was the enduring love and companionship that she shared for nearly 40 years with her husband, Brian. As other members have said, Brian would often join us when Parliament was sitting, enjoying lunch in the upstairs dining room where he would offer me tips on fishing and outboard motors and tell me invaluable fishing tales. Sadly it did not translate to any success in my fishing endeavours, but he was always great company. Brian's visits became more frequent as specialist medical consultations became a part of his many trips to Melbourne.

Brian's death was a cruel blow to Karen and her family. It was a loss, I believe, Karen never recovered from. In mourning Karen's passing today we acknowledge that we have lost one of our best; a person of integrity and ideals steeped in the best traditions of the Australian Labor Party, always standing with working people, the poor and homeless. We extend our sympathies to her children, Brett and Shae, and their extended family.

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — I want to say goodbye to my friend Karen. You do not have many friends in politics, but in Karen I think I did have a friend. I saw her on the Sunday before she passed away, and our dogs got together and shared a carrot. It was the first carrot that Dolly, my dog, had had but one of many that Ruby had had. One of the things about Karen was that she loved her animals. That was said at the funeral, and as the honourable member for Macedon said, the way she was with Ruby and her previous dogs was lovely.

I first met Karen around 1985 when I was an organiser for the Australian Labor Party. At that time she was working for Frank Sheehan, and in that capacity she was also massively representing her community. Then in 1998–99 I had the honour of working with her and others in the district on their campaigns before the state

election. This included working with people like Matthew Jose and others to help her to win that seat, and she did win because she knew everyone. The people who went to her would know her and she would know them, and that was a very special thing about Karen as a member of Parliament, as a councillor at that time and as a candidate — that is, that people would actually go to her, talk to her and, more importantly, respect her. Karen had that quality. She became the quintessential local member of Parliament. Not only did she know the people, know their families, know their backgrounds and the things that they did and did not do but she also cared for them. She was there for them. That is a rare quality that in many instances is lacking in members representing communities at all levels.

She was very proud of the things she did as the local member of Parliament who was at the functions, was with her community, was with her people in celebrating and in working towards the things they needed. She was there especially for the battlers and for the people she knew and represented. We have heard about Wendouree West and about Sebastopol and the community centre, and in a very genuine sense her heart was poured into those communities to give their people the life opportunities, to give those families a shot, to give them the sort of chance that she believed they should all have.

She stood up for her community. We have all talked about how we had discussions with Karen and how some would say she was very strong-willed person. With the regional rail upgrade, the flagship service was one of which she was very proud. A range of timetable changes came into place, but the train service that went directly from Ballarat station into the city was one of which she was absolutely proud because it connected her communities directly with Melbourne. We had some problems a few years ago when people in Melton could not get on the train. I started to talk about how we could, maybe, get the train to stop at Melton. I was wrong, because she then went into overdrive to protect that flagship service and her community. She talked to the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport, and that was a very short-lived idea that I had.

We went to Egypt with Karen and Brian, and the honourable member for Macedon has talked about that trip. One of the things that came up at Karen's funeral was how she and Brian dressed up one night as part of the tour activities and the photo went up at the funeral. They really did make a nice couple, and they had a really good time. She paid her way on that trip, and she always paid her way.

She would get on the phone. One of the last times she got on the phone was when the government lost a vote and there was some further debate about having that vote again. She got on the phone, and she was very animated. She kept on telling me how when she first got into government, members had to be here for every vote because if we lost a vote, we lost that legislation or we lost the Parliament. It was very important, and again she was very passionate about that.

The passing of her brother really knocked her around, and she was constantly up in Mildura when he was going through that. It was a precursor of what she then had to deal with with Brian, which greatly affected her and her family. As other people have said, I do not think she ever got over that.

She has left a legacy in her community and in Ballarat. That legacy includes the betterment of the people, the individuals, the families, the institutions, the schools, the train service, the Ballarat base hospital, the community and neighbourhood houses and the Ballarat Begonia Festival, but most importantly, she has left the legacy of her family and her grandchildren. I would like to thank Karen for being my friend.

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — I join my colleagues on both sides of the house to pay tribute to Karen in this condolence motion. As you would be aware, Speaker, I was elected to this place in 1999 like Karen and so many of our colleagues, and not surprisingly we all formed a very special bond — the class of 1999.

Those of us on both sides of the house who spent time with Karen — but particularly, if I may, on the Labor side — get emotional when talking about her because Karen was all heart. She stood up for the things Labor has stood up for for more than 100 years. Karen was that kind of person, whether in the caucus room or when having simple conversations. When we spoke — typically here at Parliament House on the balcony — she would remind me in very simple terms of what Labor is all about.

She did a lot of good in the community. It is good to have people like Karen in every group in society but certainly in the Labor Party, because she would get it right, naturally. There would be briefings by ministers, with papers and documentation everywhere, and I remember only too well as parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Housing that Karen would turn up with big folders and would want to get it right, succinctly. Keeping it short, sharp and simple, she would say, 'We're looking after ordinary people'. Or if you were talking with her about disabilities, she would get it right

very quickly, because it was instinctive in Karen to get it right.

As someone who comes from the other side of the world, talking with Karen was fantastic because she was a bit of a lecturer. She taught me Australianisms, some of which I cannot put on record. I will never forget a discussion we had when we were both having a drink on the balcony — she was having a ciggie and I was not — and it was during difficult times for me. She said to me something that struck me: 'You lie down with dogs and you wake up with fleas'. I had to think about this, because in my culture it is not something you hear every day. It absolutely struck me, and I worked through the meaning of it, which would make sense to most if not all members. It is one of those Australianisms that one reads from time to time in Don Watson's histories or in books about language; but I heard it from Karen, and to her it was natural.

The other interesting discussion I had with her, if I may divert for a moment from the exemplary contributions made by previous colleagues, was when she asked me about my surname. Not surprisingly I carried on for a couple of minutes explaining the history and the proper pronunciation of the name. She tried it, she did not get it right and then she said, 'You don't get mine right either, so let's agree that I call you Telmo and you call me Karen'. It was an amazing conversation, and she was absolutely that kind of person.

There is no question that the Karens of the world do a lot of good for this nation. They are a plain and simple reminder of what this nation is all about. If you had talked with Karen over her 11 years here, as we all did, you would have talked about the Eureka Stockade, what it meant to the Australian spirit and certainly what it meant to Australia. She would try to flog the Eureka Centre as a great tourist attraction and invite you over, and you would agree to go. She was promoting tourism but with a great sense of Australian history and indeed Ballarat and regional history. I thank her for that, and I think we all do.

When you talked with her she would also talk about local council and what it means to be a local councillor, and the more she talked about it the more I recognised the amount of work she did for council — and perhaps from time to time I thanked myself for not being elected a councillor — for that wonderful place Sebastopol and for the city of Ballarat. She did some fantastic work, as evidenced by the descriptions given in this chamber by her colleagues of her commitment and her passion, even when she was walking down aisles in shopping centres, walking along the street or stopping at a petrol station — you name it. She was

absolutely fair dinkum all the way through. She was Labor and she was working class.

I have been in this place for 11½ years — not long enough yet; and I will be back on the other side one day too — but I have not heard from either side of the house such recognition for someone who is working class in the true and respectful Australian meaning of that term. On behalf of the opposition I thank government members for showing understanding and respect for what it meant to Karen to be called working class.

Karen certainly understood the issues of women also. Everyone who has made a contribution has acknowledged that fact, both in the chamber and outside it. She knew about the plight of women, the importance of equal work and equal pay, and the meaning of family and children and how much tougher it is for women to do everything in life — professionally, work-wise and certainly family-wise — and she understood it naturally from her upbringing and from her community; it was all of those things.

I am grateful for the contributions that people have made, and I think we are all grateful because collectively everybody has said something good about Karen and highlighted her strength, her character and indeed her commitment to Labor values and what she did in her community. Karen would not say those things about herself, so it is incumbent on us to quite correctly and appropriately say them for her and put on record the contribution she made, because she would never do so.

I read a quote from Karen in the *Ballarat Courier* of 12 August:

I saw myself not as a politician but as an advocate, as a voice for the people.

She was fair dinkum about that. Through and through, Karen was truthful about that, and if that could be said about anyone in this place, it could be said about Karen. I have read lots of things about myself in the papers, but I look forward to the day when I can read something about myself akin to what was written by somebody about Karen:

... you will be sadly missed. I hope our civic and political leaders find an appropriate way of honouring your memory and acknowledge your service to the Ballarat community. It was outstanding and equal or better to any other in Ballarat's history.

**Ms GREEN (Yan Yean)** — It is a great privilege to join the condolence motion for a great friend, Karen Overington, and I think this is up there as the saddest

day that I have served in this place. It is up there with the condolence motion moved after Black Saturday, when I had to speak about the deep sadness of the Black Saturday fires and how they afflicted my community.

Karen was a stayer and a trailblazer for the Labor Party, for women, for the working class and for her beloved Ballarat, especially places like Sebastopol and Wendouree West. She was a stayer in that if she became involved in something, she stuck with it. This included being in local government for 16 years and in state Parliament for 12 years, being an electorate officer for 8 years, being a welfare worker for 5 years and being married to Brian for 39 years. For all of us here she did not stay long enough — 59 is too young to die — but in those 59 years she packed so much in.

It is a deeply sad time for her family, for the class of 1999, for all of us who served with her and for her successor in Ballarat West, Sharon Knight. When we think about people who die before their time, we always say one of the experiences of deepest sadness for a human being is to lose a child. In a sense for Karen's predecessor in representing the area, Frank Sheehan, and the premiers she loved and served with, Premier Bracks and Premier Brumby — for those three men — it must be like losing a daughter. For those of us who served with her, it feels like we have lost a sister.

As I said, Karen was a trailblazer. She paved the way for women across the state — for women in local government, for Labor women and in particular for Labor women in Ballarat. Her election in 1999 paved the way for the 2001 election of Catherine King to the federal seat of Ballarat, for the 2006 election of Jaala Pulford and Gayle Tierney in Western Victoria Region in the other place and for the 2010 election of her successor as member for Ballarat West, Sharon Knight.

During the celebrations of the centenary of women's suffrage in Victoria we learnt that many fewer women than men have served in this place. Of the 97 Labor women to have served here, Karen is only the fifth to die — Fanny Brownbill, Beth Gleeson, Pauline Toner and Jan Wilson are the others. It just shows that it is only relatively recently that women, and indeed Labor women, have served in this place. Sadly, two others I have served with are currently very ill. I say to them and those sitting behind me — do not even think about it!

Others have talked about getting phone calls from Karen giving advice or a dressing down. I remember a supportive phone call she made to me. Despite the

terrible time she was going through with the illness of her husband, Brian, who had been her soul mate since she was 15 — few people could say they have the connection that she and Brian had — she took the time to phone me after Black Saturday, that dreadful event that afflicted my electorate. She was very concerned about how I and my community were travelling. I know the same went for Ben Hardman, who was then the member for Seymour. I express my thanks to Karen for the time she took for me then, and I know there were so many others in Karen's life whom she took time for.

Part of Karen's legacy in Ballarat will be health services and the Wendouree West neighbourhood renewal project. The member for Bendigo East spoke about being an organiser for a Ballarat campaign in 1998. I was an organiser for the federal Ballarat campaign in 2001, organising a visit for then opposition leader Kim Beazley to the Wendouree West neighbourhood house. Whenever you organise an event, there is a time before it starts when you wonder whether it will be a success, but because of who Karen Overington was all these people poured in on her invitation to meet the then opposition leader. Karen stood up for jobs in Ballarat, for the regional rail link and for the building of Wendouree railway station. She supported people with disabilities and the provision of more leadership opportunities for women and girls.

It was a privilege to attend Karen's funeral, which was a reflection of how she was in her life. It was not lengthy or fussy but was filled with warmth and humour. That great Patsy Cline song, *Walkin' After Midnight*, was played. Patsy Cline was a sassy woman who was a great singer, and Karen was a sassy woman who made a great contribution to this place and Ballarat. The attendance at the funeral was huge. There were two former Premiers, former ministers, members of Parliament, councillors and Karen's beloved family — but the ordinary battlers were the ones who were there in huge numbers. They were there at Karen's passing. Her departure from public life and from life was as she entered it. As she said in her inaugural speech:

I am proud to describe myself as working class. I grew up in a household where issues of equality and social justice were part of regular discussions. It was not unusual for me to wake up and find at the kitchen table a homeless man, a conscientious objector discussing the obscenities of the Vietnam War or a patient from Lakeside Hospital brought home for Sunday lunch by my dad, who was a psychiatric nurse.

From an early age I was encouraged to recognise social injustice and empowered to go about setting things right.

She certainly did that, and the disempowered were there at the end to say goodbye to her and thank her. She also said in that inaugural speech:

I deeply regret that my parents, Charlie and Maureen Brown, passed away too soon to see me in this place, but I know they walk with me.

She now walks with them and with her beloved Brian.

Vale, Karen Overington.

**Ms BARKER** (Oakleigh) — It is with much sadness that I express my condolences on the passing of a great Labor woman, Karen Overington. Karen was first and foremost a loving wife, mother and mother-in-law, and she was an absolutely devoted and adored grandmother. I extend my deepest sympathies to Brett, Shae, Lisa and Dean and to her adored grandchildren Sarah, Ebony, Rhys and Ellie.

Karen was a strong and dedicated Labor woman who had many great achievements in her political life — not that she would ever boast about them, because that was not in her nature and was not the way she went about life. She was a councillor for 16 years with the former Borough of Sebastopol, including serving as mayor, and then with the Ballarat City Council. If it were Karen in here today, she would not say 'Sebastopol', she would say 'Sebas'. I remember the first time we were talking about that region and she used the term 'Sebas'. I had to ask her at the end, 'Where is Sebas?'. She said, 'Sebastopol'. Karen loved the area and knew it so well that it was 'Sebas' to her.

Karen was the first woman elected to represent the Ballarat West electorate as well as being the first Labor member for that seat. As I said, she had many great achievements, and she just got on with it. She will be most remembered and honoured for her activism in the community of Ballarat. I did not know Karen until she was elected. I knew of her, but I did not know her, and I had not had the opportunity to get to know her well. I am so glad and honoured that I had that opportunity.

We found we shared many similar paths in our lives. We were the same age, although I reminded her constantly that she was older than me. We both grew up in working-class Labor families where it was simply a normal part of life to be involved in and supportive of the communities in which we lived. We both married young, we had children young, we doted on our grandchildren and we began our political involvement around the issue of education involving our children and other children in our communities. What made us determined to join the Labor Party was the dismissal of

the Whitlam government. There were very many similarities and similar paths in our lives.

However, there were a couple of differences; one being football, of course. Karen was a passionate Bulldogs supporter — —

**Mr Noonan** — Finally!

**Ms BARKER** — Yes, finally. Finally someone has said it. I could not agree with her on that; I will remain with Essendon forever.

**Mr Wynne** — We all have our cross to bear!

**Ms BARKER** — We all have our cross to bear, yes. We were quite happy to share a difference in football. In music I like Patsy Cline but perhaps I have a different taste in music to Karen. She loved country and western music.

A great difference between us was that I grew up in Tasmania and I left my childhood community and I started my involvement in my community here in Melbourne. Karen did not leave Ballarat. It was her place of birth, childhood and adulthood and her place of community involvement and action. It was the place she wanted to make better for all its residents. She knew so much about her place. She knew the residents, the streets, the schools, the senior citizens and the Returned and Services League. She knew the war veterans and the pony club and all of the things you needed to know to be able to speak volumes about your place and how you want to make it better. She knew all the people and services which made up her community. Importantly, she knew there were many in her community who needed help and she simply set about doing whatever she could to make their community a better place. There was no fuss, just plain, honest hard work.

Many have spoken about her leadership of the Wendouree West renewal project, which says much about Karen. She worked hard to ensure the physical surroundings and services were funded, but it was her work with the people which will remain an enduring legacy of just who Karen Overington was. She mentored, supported and encouraged the people of her community to recognise their own worth, and she gave them an enduring power and ability to continue to grow as people and as a community. That will be her legacy.

I also wish to quote from an editorial in the Ballarat *Courier*; it says a lot. It states:

The delivery of the Wendouree West renewal project, designed to rebuild the disconnected community which called the area home, will remain her major political achievement. It

was a project championed by a battler for the battlers. It is this type of project that continues to improve the lives of people who are involved, even with Ms Overington's passing. Her ability to connect and understand the plight of the less fortunate in our community seems so often lost in the modern political atmosphere of revolving media opportunities and election spending splurges.

The editorial concludes:

For those who have benefited from her work, she will not be forgotten.

There are so many people who have benefited from Karen's work that she will definitely not be forgotten. The one headline, which again was in the Ballarat *Courier*, which I think says it all ran following Karen's service, which was well attended. It was 'Champion of the people laid to rest'. I think that says everything about Karen Overington. I am greatly honoured that I had an opportunity to know her more. I think the people of Ballarat were very fortunate to have her born, grow up, live and work in Ballarat, and advocate and deliver for that community. Too soon, my friend. She has left us too soon. Rest in peace, Karen Overington.

**Ms PIKE** (Melbourne) — I am very honoured to be able to say a few words about the life, the passions and the commitments of Karen Overington. It really has been very moving to be here in the house this afternoon to hear the kinds of sentiments that have been expressed by people from both sides of the house about a very remarkable woman.

We have heard that there is always a very special bond shared by those who come into this place at the same time, and we have heard a lot about the class of 1999 who were elected alongside Karen Overington, and I was a member of that class too. Like all of us she was absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to come to Parliament. She was delighted to have won her seat because she knew what that represented. She knew it would provide her with a unique opportunity to continue to advocate for her community, a community that she had worked for and worked within and grown up in and loved and cared for all her life. She was full of optimism at that time because she saw it as a wonderful opportunity to support the aspirations of her community for a better future. She had high expectations for her community, and she knew that by being a member of Parliament she could work for more jobs for people in her community. She could work towards renewed public housing, for cleaner and safer streets and for better health care. Fundamentally she wanted to get more kids going to school and she wanted those kids to stay there a lot longer. She wanted them to have a great public education in great facilities, because she knew what a high-quality education could provide.

That is why she was so delighted when Wendouree West was chosen as the very first site for neighbourhood renewal. She could see all the promise, the possibilities and the potential for her community. She got it; intuitively she knew what the program was about. She did not have to read the reams of documentation. She did not really have to sit through the briefings. She understood what joined-up government could mean, and she understood the promise for her community in that program.

She grabbed the opportunity to chair the community reference group. Time and again, over and over, she wanted to make sure that the initiatives emerged from the community were driven by the community and were not the smart ideas of people a long way away in Melbourne — of bureaucrats as she described them — or of other people who did not live there. She did not want the decisions made by those people. She wanted the decisions to emanate genuinely from the community.

It is interesting that Kevin Waugh has been quoted here this afternoon. Kevin was one of the initial members of the community reference group. He is a person who grew enormously through that project. He is a really tough guy with lots of tattoos, lots of earrings and lots of hard life experience. When he was first appointed to that committee, having been nominated by Karen, he said to me, 'Do you know, this is the first time in my life anyone has ever asked me what I think'. That was what Karen wanted to promote.

I drove up one day to meet her and her group at the community house where they met. She insisted that we plant a tree in the garden of the neighbourhood house, which really was the focal point for the neighbourhood renewal program. It became a great symbol of new life and hope for that community. I know the member for Richmond in his role as Minister for Housing went back many times. We saw the tree grow and we saw that community grow and become stronger. Karen drove that project with tireless effort and enthusiasm. I remember the day I went up there with former Premier Brumby, Minister Wynne and others to open the new primary school, which of course was not just a primary school but had an integrated library and community facility, a men's shed and was the place where services were all connected.

We were celebrating much more than just a new building; we were doing much more than just unveiling a plaque. We were celebrating the growth of so many people's lives; we were celebrating the opportunities that people would inevitably be given. It was a very moving day for all, and it was certainly an incredibly

moving day for Karen. She was front and centre and was acknowledged by the members of her community. Many of those community members attended Karen's funeral. It was not just her family and her work colleagues; it was ordinary people from her community, people whom she had served and worked with. Kevin was there — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms PIKE** — Yes, Kevin was there with his T-shirt on. Members of the Wendouree West Community Renewal Committee attended the funeral as well as members of her community — people who loved and respected Karen so very much.

It is interesting that just last week the *Sunday Age* had a feature article on life in one of the 'most socially disadvantaged suburbs in Victoria'. There is a picture with the title 'Postcard 3555: Wendouree' and the article is headed:

Nothing comes easy in Wendouree West. But beyond the hardship is a community with a strong and beating heart

Karen herself had that strong and beating heart — a profoundly strong and deep love for her people, for the community, for her colleagues and for her family. That woman with that strong and beating heart will be very deeply missed.

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — I wish to pay tribute to Karen. I would like to give my own perspective regarding some of the things that have already been mentioned by other members: Karen's husband, Brian; her views on local government; the election campaign of 1999; her inaugural speech in 1999; and two occasions that I remember and hold dear.

Karen often sat in the parliamentary dining room, because she did not really want to go out. She enjoyed sitting there; there was no fuss and she did not have to go out and decide which restaurant to attend. She almost always chose the parliamentary dining room. When you had the pleasure of enjoying dinner with Karen, the subject of family would come up over and over again. When you heard her speak as a new member, it was obviously about her electorate. But what struck me was that, other than Keith Hamilton, a former member and minister in this place, she was one of the few people who sat in the parliamentary dining room and actually talked about her husband lovingly.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms CAMPBELL** — There might be a lot of people who do, but Karen proudly talked about Brian being the

love of her life. I think it was an absolute tribute, as so many others have said, to the lifelong romance that they had. I too marvelled at her enjoyment of trucking holidays. I could not see myself spending time in the front seat of a truck — it is hard enough in the front seat of a car driving anywhere with our loving family, let alone in a truck — heading off to a week or fortnight holiday, but Karen always talked about that. I think many of us forget the worries that a wife or a husband feels when their spouse works in a dangerous job. Karen always thought it was very special to know that Brian got home safely. She worried about those long-haul trips because she knew the dangers of the trucking business and being on the road.

People have mentioned her contribution in local government. One of the things which has not been said but which we need to acknowledge is that these days local government is recognised financially. Local councillors now receive some kind of stipend for the work they do. At the time when Karen took up the cudgels it was all done voluntarily, and she was often the champion of volunteers in this house.

In the 1999 election campaign Karen had zero regard for the Kennett government — perhaps zero is too high a rating. Her inaugural speech had virtually no positive comment to make about the Kennett government in any shape or form. When you are out on the campaign trail as a shadow minister it is really good to know that someone is 110 per cent with you. Karen was there as an outreach worker in the community services sector.

I think the inaugural speech she delivered in this house was fantastic, particularly her comments on compulsory competitive tendering. She had no time for that. She also had no time for the freeze on local government rates because she knew that meant less services. She always thought that in their hearts people were good and would be prepared to pay taxes for the common good. She also talked about the savage cuts to community services made by the Kennett government and, as was mentioned by the Minister for Sport and Recreation, it is rare that people get away with the kinds of things that Karen said in her inaugural speech. However, we understood where Karen was coming from. From our perspective we thought, ‘Yes, Karen, go! Go!’ — it was just what we wanted to hear.

There are two occasions from Karen’s time here that I would like to refer to. They both hold a special place for me for different reasons. The first occasion was in relation to a screaming front-page lie in a daily newspaper. After that front-page lie became the topic of ongoing media commentary Karen was there for me. She said, ‘No-one takes any note of the *Herald Sun*

anyway, so why should you?’. I thought, ‘Well, Karen, that is one take on it’. But it was somewhat different if you were in Melbourne; we did not have the *Ballarat Courier*.

The other occasion was the abortion debate. For those members who were here it was a very long debate. Karen had not participated until an amendment on optional counselling was put before the house at 11.00 p.m. or 11.30 p.m. Karen, who was not well at the time and had been out on the balcony, stormed in and let fly with exactly what she thought about this amendment. Her comments were not quite on the mark in relation to the amendment before the house and Karen was in here saying absolutely the opposite to me, but I admired the fact that she was not going to put up with what she considered to be bull. She was going to come in and make her contribution and, short though it was, it was well remembered.

If I could now speak primarily to my Labor colleagues here today, our memorial to Karen has to be that she placed high demands on herself and on the Labor Party. The key to her, for me, is that on the occasions when she disagreed with a Labor decision she would stand tall and proud and say, ‘If Labor does not stand up for people, who will?’. As members of the Labor parliamentary caucus our memorial to Karen should be recommitting to stand up for the people of Victoria.

To Brett and Shae, I extend my condolences. May Karen rest in peace.

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — I rise to add some personal reflections on the condolence motion for the former member for Ballarat West, Karen Overington. It is humbling to follow so many members who clearly have so many great memories of their time working with Karen. I did not have the opportunity to serve in this place with Karen; however, I was able to work with her during her three terms in Parliament in some of the portfolio areas that she was very passionate about. Whether it was public housing, health, aged care or education, they were all areas where Karen sought improvements and advancements in her electorate.

I saw that passion firsthand many times during my time as an adviser in those portfolios. I soon learnt that if I had to see Karen about funding issues or a problem relating to a constituent, preparation was the key. Karen would know what she wanted: she could sniff out bureaucratic nonsense or spin in a moment. I would often get a look from her, like that of a disapproving aunt, if she thought my answers were perhaps falling short of her expectations. I can remember many times looking back at her as she weighed up whether the

needs of her electorate were being met on one issue or another.

Honourable members have talked about Karen never forgetting where she came from or what she stood for. She also had the effect of providing timely reminders to Labor members and staffers in government of the limited time we have to advocate and deliver lasting results to Labor people who rely on progressive governments to improve their opportunities in life. Karen did not waste a moment. She always took a keen interest in my local government career. She had a lot of success and experience in local government, and I place on record my thanks for her support and advice, particularly as we worked to establish the West Heidelberg neighbourhood renewal project. As has been touched on by the member for Melbourne and others, Karen's Wendouree West community renewal project was the gold standard, and my residents drew inspiration from Ballarat's success, in large part her work.

Karen and I used to also trade pot shots about the respective weather in Ballarat and Melbourne. I can remember being in Ballarat for one of Labor's campaign launches. I was frozen solid waiting to get into some community hall, and I saw Karen and thought she must be cold too. When she saw me, she smiled and waved and said, 'A great day in Ballarat!' — and I reckon she meant it too. She had the last laugh of course when the sun and blue skies of Ballarat greeted mourners the other week. Karen, more than many others, knew her town, her electorate and her constituents.

Finally, a strong Labor Party and a strong Labor caucus, indeed a strong Parliament, needs people like Karen Overington and, although poorer for her loss, I for one will be a better community advocate for having known her. My condolences to Karen's family.

**Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**Mr McINTOSH** (Minister for Corrections) — I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Karen Marie Overington, the house now adjourns until 8.00 p.m today.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 4.59 p.m.**

**The SPEAKER took the chair at 8.03 p.m.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! On a temporary basis, because of her injured knee, I have taken the liberty of moving the member for Footscray to the front bench, so she has been elevated. But unfortunately the member for Mill Park has been demoted to the middle benches. Those arrangements have been made.

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I would like to welcome Mr Steve Georganas, who is the federal member for the seat of Hindmarsh. It is a pleasure to have you here, Sir.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is directed to the Premier. I refer the Premier to a letter from Narre Warren South P-12 College year 12 school captain Ashlee Leitch, which states:

The VCAL coordinators have been instrumental in my success. Since joining VCAL I have not been suspended once and have maintained excellent attendance.

I ask: will the Premier step in and overturn the decision to cut \$50 million from the VCAL (Victorian certificate of applied learning) program?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I say up-front that there has been no cut to VCAL programs — the delivery of VCAL programs remains.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BAILLIEU** — Overall the budget for the delivery of the VCAL program increased by 9.5 per cent from 2010-11 to 2011-12. When the Victorian certificate of applied learning was introduced for year 12 in 2003 an additional payment for coordination was made over and above the funding for the delivery of services. The coordination payment was made to assist with the introduction of VCAL, and in our assessments — —

**Ms Green** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Yan Yean!

**Mr BAILLIEU** — We appreciate that VCAL has served a need for year 12 students across the community. That is why the funding for VCAL is remaining. However, the funding for coordination was designed to develop the VCAL program, and it is a fee for services — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Members will desist from interjecting.

**Mr Hulls** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Niddrie!

**Mr BAILLIEU** — It is a fee for the service of delivering the coordination. The argument now for such a payment is not as strong. VCAL is now embedded in the school system and has been successful. There is no special coordination payment for VET (vocational education and training) or for VCE (Victorian certificate of education) in schools. VCAL is now an embedded part of the school system. It varies in its patronage from school to school, and we have made the judgement that VCAL needs to be supported. There is no cut in the VCAL program. The coordination fee is now — —

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr BAILLIEU** — As I said, there is no coordination fee for VET in schools or for VCE, and we believe that VCAL can continue to flourish without the coordination fee.

### **Employment: growth**

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — My question is to the Premier. Is the Premier aware of recent positive developments in the economy which will deliver more jobs for Victorians?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I thank the member for his question and for his interest in productivity and jobs in this state. I am sure that all members of Parliament are concerned at any job losses anywhere in Victoria, and this government is committed to working with businesses to bolster growth, economic development and productivity. Victoria does not enjoy the resources of some states. Nevertheless, we believe that this state, in the face of substantial pressures, has continued to maintain a sound position. Victorian

industry faces substantial pressure from economic and investment uncertainty, the future of the carbon tax, the strong dollar, failing consumer confidence, economic volatility under the current federal government, the budget constraints we have inherited substantially from the previous government and indeed a reduction in GST from the current commonwealth government.

Nevertheless, in the last few weeks alone there have been more than 1400 jobs generated in this state, and I just want to mention a few. The Jam Factory is set to undergo its largest renovation, including the first Australian store of British-based retailer Topshop. Challenger Diversified Property Group plans to redevelop the historic Chapel Street centre through a \$16 million renovation. The Topshop store alone will employ over 110 new staff.

There is a new \$12 million state-of-the-art pharmaceutical distribution facility in Dandenong South that involves Ascent Pharmahealth, Eris Pharmaceuticals and Central Healthcare Services. Last week the Minister for Planning approved the consolidation of the global headquarters of Australian retail chain Cotton On in Geelong. The expansion of its head office building will enable Cotton On to grow in Geelong, with a \$6 million investment and the creation of up to 200 extra jobs.

**Mr Eren** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lara is on a warning.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — The initial results from the Victorian government's trade mission to India in April have also been very positive and successful. This was Australia's largest ever trade mission to India. The Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business led that delegation. There were over 60 businesses represented; we have talked about that before. Already in excess of \$60 million of additional exports, \$19 million in capital investment and over 570 jobs over the next two years have been generated from that visit. It is our view and the view of those who participated in that trade mission that there is more to come.

Last week the minister for small business announced almost \$3 million in grants through the Competitive Business Fund. That fund will help 17 companies improve their global competitiveness, enhance productivity, save money on production costs and create more local employment.

In addition, last week the Minister for Technology opened the new Melbourne head office of DB Results,

which will generate 100 new jobs and deliver IT projects for clients locally. Victorian industries are fighting hard in difficult times with more than 1400 jobs announced in the last three weeks alone. We stress again that this government is focused on the essentials; it is focused on productivity.

It is notable that some people are not even prepared to talk about productivity. Despite the fact that the Reserve Bank of Australia believes it is essential and major businesses across Australia believe it is essential, the one group that will not even touch it is over on the other side of the chamber — that is, the opposition.

### **Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Mr HERBERT** (Eltham) — My question is to the Minister for Education. The president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, Mr Frank Sal, has said the \$50 million cut to VCAL (Victorian certificate of applied learning) ‘reflects a very poor understanding of this important pathway for 12 000 students’, and I ask: does the minister agree with Mr Frank Sal?

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order, Speaker, I suggest you ask the honourable member to rephrase his question, because the question currently seeks an opinion, and that is not in line with standing orders.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I uphold that point of order. The member for Eltham is to rephrase his question.

**Mr HERBERT** — My question is to the Minister for Education. The president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, Mr Frank Sal, has said that the \$50 million cut to VCAL ‘reflects a very poor understanding of this important pathway for 12 000 students’. Is Mr Frank Sal right?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am allowing the question.

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for Eltham for his question. This government, as has been pointed out, has had to make some tough financial decisions. The reason we have had to make these tough financial decisions is because of the financial mess we inherited from the previous government. We have been ripped off — —

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has been debating the question. The question does not relate to the opposition; the question relates to

VCAL. The minister should answer the question in accordance with the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order because VCAL and cuts to VCAL were part of the question that was asked. The minister is explaining the cuts.

**Mr Hulls** — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek clarification. Just so we are clear, you agree that the minister said they are cuts — the Premier said they were not cuts?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am not making any decision on who is right or wrong. What I am saying is that the answer that was being given by the minister was relevant to the question that was asked.

**Mr DIXON** — As I was saying, one of the things we inherited were cuts by the previous government. We found that one of the lapsing programs we inherited was the vocational education and training (VET) in schools program. Under the previous government there was absolutely no money for vocational education and training programs in Victorian government schools; that was going to run out at the end of this year. In our budget we have resurrected that money because we value that program.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the house to come to order. This is question time. The member has asked a question, and the minister is answering the question. I expect some silence.

**Mr DIXON** — Mr Frank Sal is not correct. The only changes to the VCAL program are about the coordination. As far as the vocational education and training and Victorian certificate of education programs are concerned, which have been running in Victorian schools for a long time, there is no extra money for coordination. The VCAL program is now mature. The reason the coordination was set up in the first place was to bed that program down. The VCAL program has been running for eight years now, and 70 per cent of schools have been offering the program for about three years. The program has matured, and there are many other ways in which schools will be able to work on coordination, and with outside agencies as well, to provide coordination services. The government and the department are more than happy to work with any schools that may be having difficulty with the transition program.

**Employment: regional and rural Victoria**

**Dr SYKES** (Benalla) — My question is to the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. Can the Deputy Premier advise the house of any recent developments which will encourage jobs in regional and rural Victoria?

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — I thank the member for Benalla for his question and for the great work he is doing in his electorate on behalf of the people who have sent him here to represent their interests. Driving economic growth and creating jobs in the regions is of course a priority for the coalition government.

As the house knows, the centrepiece of the government's approach to regional development is the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. Some \$100 million from the fund has been allocated to the Energy for the Regions program. As we all know in this chamber, energy is a major cost for regional businesses. For example, as part of the Energy for the Regions program the government is looking at the best way to overcome the natural gas supply constraints in Mildura. We anticipate a solution to that problem and being able to enhance delivery of the gas supply to Mildura.

Extending that gas network into Sunraysia will reduce the cost of business, improve productivity and, in the longer term, create further jobs in that magnificent part of the state. Similarly the government's country roads and bridges program, which is investing \$40 million every year, will improve local transport links, reduce the cost of doing business and, of course, will also assist in the creation of regional jobs.

The government also facilitates direct investment through companies that are expanding and providing job opportunities through regional Victoria. I am pleased to say that since December last year the government has leveraged investment of more than \$600 million throughout regional Victoria, creating more than 600 jobs. Examples include, as the Premier has said, 200 jobs at Cotton On Clothing, a label in Geelong, and 160 jobs through the establishment of True Foods in Maryborough. I know the member for Ripon was delighted to be present recently when I made the announcement about the \$500 000 we are contributing to enable that important investment to go ahead in Maryborough.

Another 50 jobs are being created in the Kiewa Valley up at Tangambalanga — and I am sure everybody in the chamber has been there. I had the great pleasure of going there the day that announcement was made, and

what a great announcement it was — another 50 jobs being created. Another 50 jobs have been created at Bendigo in the making of the new tiered body armour system for the Australian Army, which I know has thrilled the member for Bendigo East; 30 jobs have been created for V/Line's new maintenance facility at Ballarat, and I am sure the Ballarat members are thrilled about that; and 29 jobs have been created at Dulhunty Poles Pty Ltd in Geelong for the manufacture of power poles.

An additional 25 jobs have been created in the Bendigo region at Moira Mac's Poultry and Fine Foods through a \$1.2 million investment in high-pressure processing technology. I had the great pleasure of being there recently at the company to make that announcement in conjunction with Mr Drum, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the Legislative Council. What a great announcement it was, and it was welcomed by everybody in that area. Another 14 jobs have been created at the Bright Brewery as part of a \$720 000 expansion of the company's boutique brewery announced last week by the member for Benalla. It was a great announcement, and it was announced with flourish too, I might say.

The government recognises that there are challenges facing companies throughout regional Victoria, not the least of those being from the carbon tax which the federal government wants to impose on our businesses, a tax which is supported by the Labor opposition here in Victoria. What we intend to do though is make sure we continue with the creation of jobs in regional Victoria.

**Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer the minister to a letter by Mitchell Dunne from year 12 at Narre Warren South P-12 College, which states:

... if we didn't have VCAL, I wouldn't be where I am today and wouldn't have the qualification that I have now ...

If it wasn't for the coordinators of the VCAL program at Narre Warren South P-12 College, I probably would have dropped out in year 10.

I ask: will the minister overturn the decision to cut \$50 million that will result in Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) teachers being axed?

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for her question. There are absolutely no cuts to the delivery of VCAL in Victorian government schools. The only change will be in the coordination of

those programs. There will be no cuts to the actual delivery to our students in the schools. Just as I said in my previous answer, vocational education and training (VET) coordinators and Victorian certificate of education coordinators that have been in our schools for years do not receive extra funding for the coordination programs they run and the duties that they carry out.

VCAL has actually matured and, as the Premier said, the funding in VCAL has improved by 9 per cent under very serious financial conditions. This government is absolutely committed to vocational education and training. We had to resurrect the VET program that the previous government was going to cut, and we were the ones that that restored that funding.

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now clearly debating the question in an attempt to flounder his way through his misunderstanding of the fundamental elements of the VCAL program, which is that the coordinators support the students.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Allan** — The point of order is that rather than addressing the question of cuts to the program, the minister is choosing to attack the opposition and debate the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The minister has concluded his answer.

### **Employment: government initiatives**

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business. Can the minister update the house on recent government initiatives to create more jobs across Victoria?

**Mr Eren** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lara is on his second warning. One more warning and he is out.

**Ms ASHER** (Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business) — I thank the member for South Barwon for his question and for his interest in employment and in jobs in Victoria.

I was pleased last week to be in Castlemaine to announce a coalition government grant of almost \$3 million to 17 companies across Victoria, which will result in the creation of 340 new jobs. As the Premier

said earlier, the 17 companies that were funded under this program have been funded to improve their global competitiveness, enhance productivity, save money on production costs and create more local employment. These projects represent \$20 million worth of investment.

**Ms Allan** interjected.

**Ms ASHER** — By way of responding to an interjection, which I know I should ignore — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Yes, the minister should ignore it.

**Ms ASHER** — The member for Bendigo East made a point of asking who instigated this particular program. I wish to advise the house of an improvement that the coalition government has made to this program, because under the previous government small businesses were ineligible to get grants under it. The previous government allowed these grants to go only to large businesses. I initially said to the department that this was an absurd program; I said that these grants must be allowed to go to small businesses.

**Ms Allan** — Seventeen businesses got them!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Bendigo East!

**Ms ASHER** — Let me advise the house of one small business that got a grant to help it grow — that is, Billman's Foundry in Castlemaine, which is where I made this announcement. This is a company with a strong track record of a range of achievements — for example, it is responsible for the Peter Brock memorial at Bathurst and for the gates at the president's palace in Singapore. This company would not have achieved a grant under the Labor government's criteria. This applies also to Bright Brewery, which the Deputy Premier mentioned.

I would like to pull out the newspaper clips — and I have waited 11 years to do this. I refer to the *Kiewa Valley Observer* of Wednesday, 24 August 2011, in which the Bright Brewery proprietor, Fiona Reddaway, is quoted as having said:

We really appreciate the government backing our plans ...  
They're helping us take that leap of faith.

Again I make the point — if my voice will hold out — that this business would not have received a grant under the previous government, because it is a small business.

An article in the *Border Mail* of Wednesday, 24 August, had a further quotation from the Bright Brewery owner:

‘We are a family business having a red-hot go’, she said.

That is what the coalition government is supporting; it is supporting the creation in Victoria of 340 new jobs under a very valuable program to enhance global competitiveness. Most importantly, small businesses are now eligible to receive these grants. I am delighted that three small businesses out of the 17 received a grant that would not otherwise have been available to these businesses. I look forward to seeing the 340 jobs, and I look forward to announcing further grants in this place in the future.

### **Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his government’s decision to cut \$50 million from the VCAL (Victorian certificate of applied learning) program, and I ask: will the Premier guarantee that no student wanting to do VCAL will have to pay additional fees and that no teacher or coordinator will lose their job as a result of these cuts?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of Opposition for his question — and I do not think the opposition leader wants to hear the answer. He has had this answer on multiple occasions. The delivery of VCAL programs is being boosted. The coordination fee that has been available in the past is not continuing, just as there is no vocational education and training (VET) coordination fee or — —

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, with respect, the question related to fees for students and to job cuts — that is, of coordinators or teachers. The answer is not relevant to the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The answer was relevant.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — The fee to which the opposition leader refers is a coordination fee which was made available to schools in the growth and development of VCAL. As has been indicated on a number of occasions, VCAL is now a mature program, it is an embedded program, it is a successful program, and just as with VET and the Victorian certificate of education (VCE) the coordination component of it is, we believe, no longer necessary as such, and it can be done — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BAILLIEU** — The fee is used by schools as they see fit in the delivery of the service. That has been the case — —

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition has had his chance to ask his question.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — And I make the point again: it is up to schools as to how they coordinate those VCAL services, in the same way as they do for VET and VCE.

**Mr Foley** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Albert Park is on a warning.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — The fee has not itself necessarily been attached to any particular individual at a school; it will vary from school to school. But we are putting VCAL on the same status as VCE and VET.

### **Economy: government initiatives**

**Mr WATT** (Burwood) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise the Parliament how the Victorian coalition government is cutting red tape and creating new commercial retail opportunities to boost the Victorian economy?

**Mr WELLS** (Treasurer) — The Baillieu government is focused on cutting red tape and creating a solid environment for investment and economic growth. Today the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its building approval figures, and they show that Victoria is once again leading the way in construction activity. In July there were 787 new homes approved in Sydney, whereas in Melbourne it was 2000 new homes, and in Melbourne had twice the number of total dwelling approvals as did Sydney.

But we cannot just rely on housing. That is why it is pleasing to note that we also lead the way in wholesale and retail construction approvals. In July there was \$132 million worth of wholesale and retail construction work in Victoria, compared to \$81 million in New South Wales and \$74 million in Queensland. This is good news and is an investment in jobs despite the challenging times that the retail sector has ahead of it.

Last week the Minister for Planning announced a potential broadening of the definition of restricted retail zoning, and that has been very well received. In fact the managing director of Costco said the announcement sent a message to retailers that Victoria was a

streamlined location to set up new businesses here. He went on to say:

... it means Victoria wants to do business.

Philippa Kelly of the Bulky Goods Retailers Association is quoted as saying:

These changes will free the market up tremendously. There will be millions of dollars and thousands of jobs that will come into Victoria, there's no doubt.

Planning consultant Susan Robinson is quoted as saying:

We're hoping that the new government in NSW will look at Victoria's lead and emulate it.

This initiative is part of the Baillieu government's broader strategy to cut red tape, stimulate investment and boost economic growth. We made an election promise that we would cut red tape by 25 per cent, and we are well and truly on the way. As the Premier said in his response to an earlier question, one of the big issues in this state is productivity. Over the last 10 years under the Labor government we fell further and further behind. It was so embarrassing — we actually fell below the national average. We have this as a priority. We will make sure we focus on cutting red tape, boosting productivity and ensuring good, solid job growth in this state.

### **Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Mr HULLS** (Niddrie) — My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer the minister to comments by Mr Andrew Simmons, executive officer of the South East Local Learning and Employment Network, who is reported as saying that the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) cuts would have a negative impact on staffing and service delivery and is quoted as also saying:

The biggest issue is that there was no consultation ... It was a decision based on money saving without realising what impact it would have on everyone.

I ask: will the minister explain to the house why consultation with stakeholders was not undertaken before he slashed \$50 million from VCAL?

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — I thank the Minister for Education — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr DIXON** — That is, the shadow Minister for Education. I am not used to him asking questions — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Niddrie — that is enough!

**Mr DIXON** — It is actually his second question, and I welcome him back — it is great.

There are no cuts to the VCAL program; in fact there is a 9 per cent increase in funding for the VCAL program. The only difference there will be is in the coordination of the program. As the Premier has said, and as I have said — —

**Mr HULLS** — On a point of order, Speaker, with due respect to the minister, maybe he misheard the question. I thought I could speak loudly enough, but — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! What is the point of order?

**Mr HULLS** — The point of order is that the minister is debating the question. The question was clearly about consultation and why there was no consultation in relation to these cruel and callous cuts.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

**Mr DIXON** — The premise of the member's question is totally incorrect. As I said, this is only about the coordination of the program; because of its maturity bringing it to equal footing with both vocational education and training and the Victorian certificate of education. I have asked my department to work with any school regarding the transition to this new arrangement. We are more than happy to work with and talk to any single school — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Bendigo East!

**Mr DIXON** — I have already spoken to a couple of schools and said we will do that. I have instructed my department to talk to schools that may have any difficulties in the transitional arrangements, as I said.

### **Dangerous dogs: control**

**Ms RYALL** (Mitcham) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Can the minister inform the house of the measures taken by the coalition government to facilitate the reporting of unregistered dangerous dogs to authorities?

**Mr WALSH** (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — I thank the member for Mitcham for her question. I know everyone in this house was appalled by the events of two weeks ago, when Ayen Chol was killed by a dangerous dog in the western suburbs in an unfortunate, tragic accident.

The Baillieu government has acted very quickly to put in place a number of measures over time to make sure we do not have a repeat of the events we saw two weeks ago. We have set up the dangerous dog hotline that we promised we would. That dob-in-a-dangerous-dog hotline became operational at 8 o'clock this morning. For those people who do not know the number, it is 1300 101 080. People should remember that number. If people want to dob in a dangerous dog, they can ring the hotline.

As I said, that number was up and operational this morning, and as at 5.00 p.m. today there had been 122 calls to that number. That has resulted in a number of reports to local government about potentially dangerous dogs in the community. Some of the calls required no further action after discussion with the call operators. I know that this morning at about 9 o'clock the member for Benalla tried the number to make sure it was working. He said he had a very satisfactory discussion with the operator. The operators are obviously very well trained so they can take calls and assist people with their issues with restricted breeds and dangerous dogs in the community.

**Mr Eren** interjected.

**Questions interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Lara

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lara has had his final warning. Under standing order 124 I ask the member to vacate the chamber for half an hour.

**Honourable member for Lara withdrew from chamber.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Dangerous dogs: control

**Questions resumed.**

**Mr WALSH** (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — We have also had meetings with the

Municipal Association of Victoria as to how the Baillieu government can work with local government to make sure there is better enforcement of the standards that are currently in place around restricted breeds and dangerous dogs. I thank the Minister for Local Government for her cooperation with the MAV in having those particular discussions as to how we can assist those councils in Melbourne that have an issue with restricted breeds and dangerous dogs in their communities. Over the next few days we will have further discussions with those councils that have been identified as needing extra assistance to make sure that these new standards are enforced in the community so that people will feel safer in their particular communities.

**Mr Andrews** — What new standards?

**Mr WALSH** — The Leader of the Opposition asks, 'What new standards?'. We will be gazetting new standards for restricted breeds. Development of those standards had been started by the previous government when the legislation was last amended. There will be new standards that are more prescriptive so that councils can have faith in the decisions they make about enforcing the issues around restricted breeds and dangerous dogs. They will have the resources to do that because those of us on this side of the house, with support from the other side of the house, do not want to see a repeat of what we happened two weeks ago. There is a commitment from both the government and, as I understand it, the opposition to work together to make sure that does not happen again.

## ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS (VICTORIA) AMENDMENT BILL 2011

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Mr CLARK** (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Act 2000 and for other purposes.

**Ms HENNESSY** (Altona) — I ask the Attorney-General for a brief explanation of the bill.

**Mr CLARK** (Attorney-General) — This bill makes a series of amendments to the Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Act 2000 to update that law in line with decisions that were made by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General last year.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

**DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED  
SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT  
(PROHIBITION OF DISPLAY AND SALE  
OF CANNABIS WATER PIPES) BILL 2011**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Minister for Mental Health) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to provide for the prohibition of display, sale and supply of cannabis water pipes and components and the restriction of display for sale of hookahs and for other purposes.**

**Read first time.**

**EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES  
(LYSTERFIELD) AMENDMENT BILL 2011**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Mr O'BRIEN (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:**

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Extractive Industries (Lysterfield) Act 1986 and for other purposes.

**Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — I seek a brief explanation from the minister as to the purposes of the bill.**

**Mr O'BRIEN (Minister for Energy and Resources) —** This bill amends the operations of the Extractive Industries (Lysterfield) Act 1986 to improve the regulation of the Boral quarry in Lysterfield in the beautiful electorate of Ferntree Gully and to improve the environmental outcomes and working operations of that quarry.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

**GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT  
(LICENSING) BILL 2011**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Mr O'BRIEN (Minister for Gaming) — I move:**

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, the Gambling Regulation Further Amendment Act 2009, the Gambling Regulation

Amendment (Licensing) Act 2009 and the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and for other purposes.

**Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) —** I seek from the minister a brief explanation as to the purposes of the bill.

**Mr O'BRIEN (Minister for Gaming) —** This bill does a number of things, including ensuring that the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation has the power to apply a public interest test for certain raffle permits in relation to community charitable organisations, improving licensing arrangements in relation to managing the transition to the new 2012 gaming machine licensing model and other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

**DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT  
(RESTRICTED BREEDS) BILL 2011**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to make further provision with respect to the keeping of restricted breed dogs and for other purposes.**

**Read first time; by leave, ordered to be read second time immediately.**

*Statement of compatibility*

**Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:**

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (charter act), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011. In my opinion, the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011 (the bill), as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of bill**

The bill makes amendments to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in relation to the registration and keeping of restricted breeds of dogs in Victoria. The bill ends the keeping and registration amnesty for restricted breed dogs that has been running since 1 September 2010 following the passing of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Dangerous Dogs) Act 2010.

**Human rights issues****1. Ending the two-year amnesty period for registering restricted breed dogs**

Clause 4 amends section 17(1A) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to remove, from 30 September 2011, the grace period of two years that allowed a council to register a dog as a restricted breed dog if the dog was in Victoria before commencement of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Dangerous Dogs) Act 2010. It also removes the two-year amnesty period which excused an owner of a restricted dog from being liable for the offence of keeping a restricted dog pursuant to section 41EA(1) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

The end of the amnesty period means that from 30 September 2011, only restricted breed dogs that were in Victoria immediately before the commencement of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Dangerous Dogs) Act 2010 and which were registered before 30 September 2011 can be registered as restricted breed dogs.

After this date, any owner of an unregistered restricted breed dog will be liable for the offence of keeping a restricted breed dog, for which 10 penalty units apply. Furthermore, the restricted breed dog will also be able to be seized under section 79 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and ultimately destroyed. However, in certain circumstances an owner will be able to recover a seized dog pursuant to section 84N as well as seek review by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) of the decision of an authorised officer to declare a dog as a restricted breed pursuant to section 98 or a refusal of a council to register a restricted breed dog pursuant to section 17.

This amendment engages the right to property in section 20 and the protection against retrospective criminal laws in section 27(1) of the charter act.

*Right to property (section 20)*

Section 20 of the charter act provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law. A deprivation of property is permitted if the powers which authorise the deprivation are conferred by legislation or common law, are confined and structured rather than arbitrary or unclear, and are accessible to the public and formulated precisely.

The effect of removing the amnesty means that an owner who has failed to register their restricted breed dog before the commencement of this bill may have their dog seized by an authorised officer of the council and ultimately destroyed. In my opinion, this provision does not limit section 20 due to a number of reasons. The current prohibition relating to restricted breeds has been in place since 11 December 2007, is confined to five distinct breeds of dogs, clearly sets out the responsibilities of owners and the seizure powers of authorised officers and has been widely publicised to the community. Also the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires all dogs to be registered from three months of age so there is an existing requirement for registration under section 10 of that act.

The amnesty was enacted in 2010 with the purpose of encouraging the registration of existing unregistered restricted breeds or restricted breeds incorrectly registered as another breed. Owners of unregistered restricted breeds have been well aware that the possession of such dogs is illegal and could not have had a reasonable expectation of the lasting

nature of the amnesty. The proposed ending of the amnesty has also been clearly communicated in the media, and will only come into effect on 30 September 2011, giving owners who have failed to take note of the amnesty time to comply with the requirement to register. Any resulting deprivation of property that will result following the ending of the amnesty will in my opinion not be arbitrary, given the significant public safety issues at stake, the limited number of breeds subject and the ability of owners to still comply with their obligations prior to commencement. Furthermore, there are safeguards present in the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to allow an owner to seek return of the seized dog if it is able to be registered and to seek review to VCAT of a refusal of a council to register a restricted breed that is able to be registered or a declaration of an authorised officer that a certain dog is a restricted breed.

Accordingly, I conclude that this amendment is compatible with the right to property in section 20 of the charter act.

*Retrospective criminal laws (section 27(1))*

Section 27(1) provides that a person must not be found guilty of a criminal offence because of conduct that was not a criminal offence when it was engaged in.

Clause 5 removes an excuse which allows an owner of an unregistered restricted breed dog to escape liability for the offence of keeping a restricted breed dog, for a period of two years following the commencement of the Domestic Animal Amendment (Dangerous Dogs) Act 2010, provided the dog was in Victoria prior to the commencement of this act.

In my view the ending of the amnesty does not limit the protection against retrospectivity as the bill will only criminalise conduct that occurs after 30 September 2011. Any affected owner will have up until 29 September 2011 to have their restricted breed registered or to surrender the dog to the council. Due to the real and pressing danger that such unregistered restricted breed dogs pose to the community, I consider this termination of the amnesty period to be appropriate in the circumstances.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons given in this statement, I consider that the bill is compatible with the charter act.

Peter Walsh, MLA  
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

*Second reading*

**Mr WALSH** (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011 amends the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Currently, there are five restricted breeds of dogs in Victoria:

American pit bull terrier (commonly known as the 'pit bull');

dogo Argentino;

fila Brasileiro;  
 Japanese tosa; and  
 perro de presa Canario.

Of these, apart from one old desexed dogo Argentino, only the 'pit bull' is known to exist in Victoria. The bill provides for the approval of a standard that will assist councils to identify whether a dog is a restricted breed dog. The standard has been under development since September 2010 and will be approved and gazetted on commencement of this bill.

Council authorised officers have been frustrated with the lack of clear standards for identifying 'pit bull' type dogs. Identification has proven difficult due to the breeding of these dogs not being in the more traditional purebred or pedigree style, thus ruling out DNA testing to confirm breed identification. Councils have found their decisions frequently challenged thereby draining resources. This has also created uncertainty in the community on what constitutes a restricted breed dog.

The bill will provide that a dog that falls within the 'approved standard' that relates to restricted breed dogs in Victoria is to be taken to be a restricted breed dog. The bill will allow the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to approve the standard and will require publication of the approved standard in the *Victoria Government Gazette*. The approved standard will also be available on the Department of Primary Industries website.

The published standard will provide clear guidance to council's authorised officers and the general public on what type of dog constitutes a restricted breed. This will make enforcement easier for council officers and remove doubt on the identification of these dogs so as to allow them to be declared a restricted breed in a speedy manner.

This is important because councils are seeking certainty that a dog can be declared a restricted breed and that the declaration will be endorsed by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal when challenged. Without this certainty council authorised officers may be reluctant to declare restricted breed dogs and enforce the act.

The bill will remove the existing two-year amnesty that was introduced on 1 September 2010 on the keeping and registration of restricted breed dogs. The current amnesty provisions allow registration of a restricted breed dog until September 2012, provided the dog was in Victoria before 30 September 2010. The amnesty also lifted the prohibition on keeping a restricted breed dog during the amnesty period and then following that

period if the dog was registered during the amnesty period.

The bill will cut short the amnesty period. This means that from 30 September 2011 the possession and keeping of a restricted breed dog will be illegal unless the dog was in Victoria before the start of the amnesty period on 1 September 2010 and the dog is registered before 30 September 2011. A council will only be able to register or renew the registration of a restricted breed dog if it was registered before 30 September 2011.

The public of Victoria has made it clear that they do not want these animals in Victoria any longer than necessary. So from 30 September 2011 if a dog of this type is found to be unregistered, it will not be able to be registered and will therefore be able to be seized and destroyed by councils.

A registered restricted breed dog that can be kept is required to be desexed, microchipped and housed with specific containment requirements and only allowed to be walked off property while on a leash and only if it is wearing a muzzle.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## PETITIONS

### Following petitions presented to house:

#### Schools: Kyneton

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Kyneton and surrounds draws to the attention of the house that over the last six years representatives from Kyneton Secondary College, Kyneton Primary School and Lady Brooks Kindergarten and the broader community have, in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, undertaken a review of education provision in Kyneton. This has culminated in a master plan proposing construction of a new modern K-12 facility on and adjacent to the Kyneton Secondary College site.

During this period the schools, on advice from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, have forgone the opportunity of applying for \$4 million federal government stimulus funding.

The petitioners are strongly of the view that, in order to maintain a strong state education sector to meet the needs of our community, construction of the Kyneton K-12 facility should commence at the earliest possible opportunity and therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

calls on the Baillieu government to urgently fund the construction of this important project.

**By Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) (1292 signatures).**

**Plumbing industry: compliance certificates**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that as a matter of urgency the current Building Act 1993 — section 221ZH be changed immediately

The current act states that all plumbers must attend to a ‘compliance certificate’ within five days of completion of termination of works. Unfortunately this means that a ‘compliance certificate’ must be attended to even if the plumber has not been duly paid for the works completed within the five days.

Your petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria gives consideration to the change of the Building Act 1993 accordingly.

**By Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (270 signatures).**

**Electricity: smart meters**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the infringement on our right to live freely and securely and to choose what we are subjected to in our homes and businesses by the continued compulsory installation of smart meters (AMI) without an ‘opt-out’ provision for customers or full disclosure of future costs and possible health and environmental risks that smart meters may impose.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria immediately:

1. issues a halt to the mandated installation of smart meters (AMI);
2. directs all power companies to offer a permanent ‘opt-out’ for all customers;
3. requires letters to be sent to all customers informing them that radiofrequency radiation (RF) is classified by the World Health Organisation as a 2B carcinogen, and smart meters emit RF;
4. makes provisions to customers who have had smart meters installed and would like them removed, to reinstall dial or non-wireless interval meters at the option of the customer and at no cost.

**By Mr MADDEN (Essendon) (14 signatures).**

**Electricity: smart meters**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the infringement on our right to live freely and securely and to choose what we are subjected to in our homes and businesses by the continued compulsory installation of

smart meters (AMI) without an ‘opt-out’ provision for customers or full disclosure of future costs and possible health and environmental risks, including fire risk, that smart meters may and do impose.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria immediately:

1. issues a halt to the mandated installation of smart meters (AMI);
2. mandates all power companies offer a permanent ‘opt-out’ for all customers;
3. amends the Australian Energy Regulator’s decision so that only customers who want smart meters will pay for them;
4. requires all power distributors and retailers to post on their websites that the World Health Organisation has classified non-ionising radiation, the kind smart meters emit, a 2B carcinogen;
5. mandates all power companies bear full burden of cost to remove smart meters from customers who do not want them and to reinstall safe, mechanical dial meters as they pose no fire risk.

**By Ms McLEISH (Seymour) (282 signatures).**

**Ovens College hall, Wangaratta: future**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of citizens concerned about the future of the Ovens College hall, Greta Road, Wangaratta draws to the attention of the house the views of local residents of Wangaratta.

The Ovens College hall is a community facility used by a range of private groups. Some of these users include gymnastics (operated by the WISAC), martial arts, local quilters and textile groups, roller derby, toddler gym, private parties, debutante balls and the orchid club.

The closure of the hall will leave no alternative venue to run many of these interest groups. Yarrunga families will lose a facility close to home where transport to other venues is not possible.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria consider reopening the facility of the Ovens College hall, up to and including the period following the drafting of the master plan, to allow the continued use by the abovementioned groups.

**By Mr McCURDY (Murray Valley) (691 signatures).**

**Schools: Coburg**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Coburg and surrounding suburbs in Victoria draws to the attention of the house the need to provide a high school in Coburg to cater for all secondary students including year 7 to year 9.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

acknowledge the findings of the August 2010 Spatial Vision report for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Secondary School Provision Plan for the Coburg Schools Network — Demographic Analyses*, which determined that the projected population data supported the need to provide places for year 7 to year 9 students residing in and around Coburg and the urgent need to commence the process for a year 7 intake;

call on the government to honour the previous Minister for Education's commitment to the residents of Coburg and surrounding suburbs to establish a Coburg education implementation task force (CEIT) to examine all options to meet Coburg's education needs;

call on the government to honour the previous Minister for Education's commitment to the residents of Coburg and surrounding suburbs to comprise the CEIT of representatives from local school principals and councillors, Moreland council, senior representation from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, local members of Parliament and members of the broader community; and

call on the government to immediately announce the date of the first meeting of the CEIT committee, the time frame for nominations to the committee and the date the committee will report their recommendations.

**By Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) (133 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Pascoe Vale be considered next day on motion of Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale).**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Ballarat East be considered next day on motion of Ms KNIGHT (Ballarat West).**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Cranbourne be considered next day on motion of Mr PERERA (Cranbourne).**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Murray Valley be considered next day on motion of Mr McCURDY (Murray Valley).**

## SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

### *Alert Digest No. 9*

**Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert Digest No. 9* of 2011 on:**

**Commercial Arbitration Bill 2011  
Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation  
Further Amendment Bill 2011**

**Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2011  
together with appendices.**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered to be printed.**

## DOCUMENTS

**Tabled by Clerk:**

Auditor-General — Report 2010–11

*Education and Training Reform Act 2006* — Notice under s 4.3.32 (*Gazette S279, 29 August 2011*)

*Financial Management Act 1994* — Reports from the Minister for Public Transport that he had received the Reports 2010–11 of:

Rolling Stock (VL-1) Pty Ltd

Rolling Stock (VL-2) Pty Ltd

Rolling Stock (VL-3) Pty Ltd

Linking Melbourne Authority — Report 2010–11

Ombudsman — Investigation into prisoner access to health care — Ordered to be printed

*Planning and Environment Act 1987* — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Casey — C125

Melbourne — C163

Mornington Peninsula — C74 Part 2, C157

Moyne — C25

Nillumbik — C65

Port Phillip — C105

Southern Grampians — C20

Whittlesea — C99

Rolling Stock Holdings (Victoria) Pty Ltd — Report 2010–11

Rolling Stock (Victoria-VL) Pty Ltd — Report 2010–11

Statutory rules under the following Acts:

*County Court Act 1958* — SRs 81, 82

*Estate Agents Act 1980* — SR 84

*Residential Tenancies Act 1997* — SR 83

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 69, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 84

Legislative instruments and related documents under s 16B

Victorian Rail Track — Report 2010–11

Victorian Regional Channels Authority — Report 2010–11.

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 8 February 2011:

*Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2010* — Remaining provisions of Part 5 — 17 August 2011 (*Gazette S265, 16 August 2011*)

*Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Act 2011* — Whole Act — 5 September 2011 (*Gazette S271, 23 August 2011*)

*Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* — Whole Act — 1 September 2011 (*Gazette S271, 23 August 2011*)

*Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010* — Remaining provisions — 5 September 2011 (*Gazette S271, 23 August 2011*)

*Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2010* — Whole Act (except s 76 and Part 6) — 1 September 2011 (*Gazette S265, 16 August 2011*).

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Message read advising royal assent on 23 August to:**

**Consumer Acts Amendment Bill 2011  
Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation  
Amendment Bill 2011  
Transport Legislation Amendment (Port of  
Hastings Development Authority) Bill 2011.**

## APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

**Messages read recommending appropriations for:**

**Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation  
Further Amendment Bill 2011  
Resources Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Program

**Mr McINTOSH** (Minister for Corrections) — I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, 1 September 2011:

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria) Amendment Bill 2011

Road Safety Camera Commissioner Bill 2011

Sentencing Legislation Amendment (Abolition of Home Detention) Bill 2011

Transport Legislation Amendment (Public Transport Safety) Bill 2011.

In moving this motion, given that we have had to deal with an urgent bill that has just been introduced and second read by the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, the idea was that we would take the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Further Amendment Bill 2011 off the government business program. There are a number of government members who wish to speak on each of the four bills listed, and our experience of the government business program over the last few sitting weeks indicates that one should not be too ambitious in trying to stick to the normal timetable.

I also inform the house that, following my discussions with the manager of opposition business, it has been agreed that to facilitate the passage of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011 there may be an extension of business past the normal adjournment time of 10.00 p.m. The intention is to get that bill through and to the upper house as expeditiously as possible and then to go on the adjournment. With those few remarks I commend the motion to the house.

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — I will make a brief contribution to the debate on the government business program and indicate to the house that the opposition will not be opposing the program but that I would like to make a couple of points on the way through. The first is that the program presented to the house is a rather skinny one. I guess those of us on this side of the house are getting rather used to the fact that not much of an agenda has been put forward by the government in this place or outside of this place, and it is fair to say that we do not hold ambitious expectations at all in relation to the government's business program.

I would also like to make a couple of very brief comments on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011 that has just been second read. The opposition has previously indicated that it would support this bill, and we also support its expeditious passage through both houses of Parliament tonight subject to its passage through the upper house, which is obviously out of our hands. That support was given on the basis of comments the Premier made in this place on Thursday, 18 August. The bill reflects a couple of aspects of what the Premier indicated to the house the government would be doing — that is, bringing forward the restricted breed dogs amnesty period and looking at how to provide more information to local government enforcement officers. The Premier

went on to indicate to the house that the government wanted to increase the penalties for non-registration of a dangerous dog and would also be prepared to look at the Crimes Act 1958 with a view to making non-registration a crime.

The bill that has been presented to the house contains none of these features. There is no indication that the government is doing any of these things in this legislation or that it will be doing so in the future. This is really a clear sign that it is a dithering government that cannot move quickly even on matters it has declared important. The Premier stood in this place and said this was a matter of urgency that should be prioritised, and we supported him in that — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms ALLAN** — You do not want to make this one up, mate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! Interjections are disorderly, and the member should ignore them.

**Ms ALLAN** — The Premier indicated a number of elements that would be contained in the bill. Important parts of what the Premier said are absent from the bill that has been presented to the house. This indicates quite a significant let-down of the Victorian community, which took the Premier and his government at their word. The government indicated clearly to the Victorian community that it would be looking at increasing penalties and at amendments to the Crime Act 1958. Those things are not contained in this legislation. As the teachers and the police have already discovered, you cannot take this Premier at his word. Unfortunately with this legislation the Victorian community has been let down once again.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member to be careful about speaking on the actual motion before the house; this motion is about the business program.

**Ms ALLAN** — I have completed the substance of my remarks, which is that the bill does not reflect the entirety of what the Premier committed to this house or to the Victorian community. That is a let-down. But having said that, the opposition will be supporting the passage of this legislation because something is better than nothing from this government.

**Mr HODGETT** (Kilsyth) — I rise to make a few brief comments in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the House regarding the government business program. There are four bills which will be guillotined at 4.00 p.m. this Thursday — the Health Practitioner

Regulation National Law (Victoria) Amendment Bill 2011, the Road Safety Camera Commissioner Bill 2011, the Sentencing Legislation Amendment (Abolition of Home Detention) Bill 2011 and the Transport Legislation Amendment (Public Transport Safety) Bill 2011. We have a number of members who wish to make a contribution to the debates on those bills. As has been seen in the past sitting weeks, this kind of program is good. It allows plenty of time for those bills to be scrutinised in debates.

There is the urgent matter the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security introduced — the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011. The Baillieu government has moved very quickly to prepare legislation and introduce it to this house to deal with restricted dog breeds. On that note I support the government business program.

**Mr PALLAS** (Tarneit) — I also rise to briefly talk about the government business program and to indicate as others have previously indicated that the opposition will not be opposing the government business program. But it is important that we recognise the context in which we have come to this chamber — that is, there is a matter of quite significant legislative import that has come before this Parliament, so much so that the parties have agreed that the issues are of such weight that we shall waive the normal processes of consideration in this place. But at the same time, in terms of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011, we do not have a complete package of legislative reform before us.

It must be a matter of concern that the public has heard what the government's intentions are but members of Parliament have not yet got a full picture of the government's legislative intentions. Why is that? It is because the government does not know what its legislative intentions are. We can be assured it does not know, because it has not been able to pull out the crayon and put it into black and white for us so this Parliament can debate the issues.

I agree with the Leader of the House, who is the minister at the table, that one should not be too ambitious in terms of the government business program. Those on my side of the chamber do not suffer from that illusion; we do not get too ambitious in terms of the government business program, because one could not imagine a less ambitious or more pedestrian program or a program more lacking in broad substance or less worthy of consideration by this chamber than what is before us today.

When there is an issue that is as substantial and urgent as the dangerous dogs bill, one must be concerned that essentially all we have before us is the first part of a substantive package of change that should be before this Parliament for its consideration. It is so important to the Premier and all those members who have been prepared to speak and give drops to the *Herald Sun* — because this is not the spin government; it never does that sort of thing! — that they can elaborate on it for the purposes of discussing the legislation with the community, but they will not debate it in this Parliament. We want to debate it, because we recognise that it is important. The legislative changes required would give the community certainty and assure it of the safeguards that the times dictate. This government has not had the intestinal fortitude or the vision to be able to do that.

On a day when Melbourne has been identified as the world's most livable city, it has also been dramatically demonstrated to us that we have the world's most unworkable government. It is a government that does not even have a program that it can effectively enunciate in anything other than tabloid terms. The people of Victoria deserve something more than just one-liners and front-page stories. They deserve the legislation that will give them the protection they need. Yes, we have said we will support this legislation, but what about the government getting on with the job and delivering it to this Parliament for debate?

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — I rise to support the government business program, and I welcome the opposition's position of not opposing the government business program, although having just heard the dissertation from the member for Tarnet one can but wonder. I also welcome the opposition's support of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011.

In addressing some of those issues I say yes, there will be more legislation introduced about this matter, particularly in terms of the Crimes Act 1958. But tonight in this chamber we will deal with getting the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011 sorted out. I think we need to make this bill law as soon as we can, particularly because it is legislation that will define breeds. Breeding certain dogs will not be a crime until those breeds are defined and are the subject of the Crimes Act 1958. I support the program.

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — I rise to make a comment on the government business program. As per normal, this program is very manageable. There is very little legislation. We do not need to get stressed about

the workload we are going to be expected to deal with this week. I was expecting that the Premier's commitment to ensure that there were stronger provisions to protect the community against dangerous dogs would be delivered this week. Unfortunately that has not happened. This is yet another example of where the current government has used the work of the previous government and just brought forward a date. That is not adequate for an important matter that requires the urgent attention of members of this Parliament.

We are looking forward to having the opportunity in a minuscule way to comment on this legislation, because we want to get the legislation through Parliament. But given we are discussing the government business program, I would have hoped that any legislation that was introduced to ensure that the Premier's commitment was delivered would cover such things as definitions of what constitutes a dangerous dog, because crossbred — —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! This is not an opportunity to debate the content of the bill; we are debating the government business program.

**Ms CAMPBELL** — I am looking forward to a government business program that will put legislation that covers crossbreeds before the house. The dogs that are dangerous are not just the breeds that the minister mentioned. We also have a dangerous dogs hotline. What we do not have is any additional money for the councils that are going to be implementing this program. There have been an inordinate number of expenditure increases for councils in relation to dangerous dogs as a result of actions that have occurred sadly and tragically in this state.

In relation to the government business program, it would be great to this week be able to discuss legislation that covers such things as strict penalties for illegal breeding or crossbreeding of restricted dogs and their progeny. It would be great to be able to debate that issue this week, but I doubt that we will have that opportunity. In relation to the government business program, it is important that councils have a voice in this chamber, and I will make sure that in any debate in relation to dogs I will be highlighting the importance of the government getting it right. In my view the legislation is too important to not deal with it accurately and get it right quickly.

**Motion agreed to.**

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Caitlin Caruso

**Ms BEATTIE** (Yuroke) — I rise today to raise awareness of a rare inherited neurodegenerative disease called ataxia telangiectasia, also known as A-T. Caitlin Caruso, who is 14 years old and a resident of Craigieburn, was first diagnosed with A-T at age 7. A-T affects a person's body coordination, weakens the immune system, causing respiratory disorders and increases the risk of cancer.

The first signs of A-T appear in the toddler stage, but due to a lack of understanding, diagnosis may not occur until the later stages of life. Many children who suffer A-T develop a slurring of speech in their first decade, making them difficult to understand. By the second decade most A-T children are confined to a wheelchair due to involuntary movements, such as small jerks of the hands and feet, uncontrolled jerks and shaking of limbs. Sadly people with A-T have a high mortality rate, with most dying in their teens or early 20s. Mortality is due to a compromised immune system, causing respiratory infections and a predisposition to cancer.

Caitlin Caruso is a beautiful young girl with a sharp wit and a great sense of humour. Most children with A-T seem to have the same sunny disposition and attitude to life, never letting their hardships break their spirit. I would like all members to become aware of A-T and wish Caitlin all the best in this tough battle.

### Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians of Australia: forum

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — Despite the fact that we now have several females in senior political positions across the country, our parliaments are still made up of only about 30 per cent women. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians of Australia, of which I am a member, feels passionately about doing more to increase that number. To do this the CWP of Australia recently hosted a two-day forum in Canberra, to which we invited 10 women aged between 18 and 25. These remarkable young women came from every state and territory and were keen to learn about what it takes to become an MP.

We were also keen to learn from them about how parliaments can better relate to young people and be more relevant and accessible. Discussions were bipartisan and wide ranging, including debates on affirmative action, the treatment of female politicians by the media and how to break down barriers which

prevent more women from taking up politics. The young women were inspired by the firsthand knowledge of everyone they spoke to about why being in Parliament can be a fulfilling career and one where you can make a difference. We in turn were inspired by their enthusiasm, intelligence and points of view.

### Manchester Primary School: bicycle parking

**Mrs FYFFE** — I would like to congratulate Manchester Primary School, which was chosen to receive new bike parking facilities from Bicycle Victoria valued at \$2500. The new bike parking facilities will be provided and installed by Bicycle Victoria, with works set to begin later this year. Riding, walking and skating to school are great ways to get fit and healthy. I congratulate the staff, students and parents of this wonderful school, Manchester Primary School.

### Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding

**Ms HENNESSY** (Altona) — I rise tonight to condemn the Baillieu coalition government's cuts to the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) totalling \$12 million a year and \$50 million across the forward estimates. Today during question time we saw a pathetic explanation from the Premier, and conflicting evidence was given by the Minister for Education about what the downstream impacts will be.

In the western suburbs which I represent not just local representatives but schools, parents and all of those who work around the area are passionately committed to improving education retention, and the establishment of the VCAL program has been a critical part of improving education retention. Many of us have worked incredibly hard with the federal government to get trade training centres established. Employers have worked incredibly hard with local learning and employment networks, VCAL students and trade training centres to build a pathway that not only improves the education retention of students in the western suburbs but also keeps them entrenched in vocational education and training and provides a quality, high-paying job for them at the end.

If this government is genuinely committed to employment and education retention, it is absolutely critical that it reverse its callous cuts to the VCAL education program and genuinely support all students in the public education system.

### **St Edward's Anglican Church, Blackburn South: art show**

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — Last Friday evening I had the great pleasure of opening the 31st annual art show at St Edward's Anglican Church at Blackburn South. This art show not only provides the opportunity for a wide range of artists to exhibit their works but also raises money for the church to support a range of charities and mission organisations. The quality of works exhibited was outstanding, and I congratulate the artists who received awards for their works. I also congratulate all those who were involved in organising this excellent local event, particularly the committee and volunteers, together with the vicar of the church, Reverend Michael Goodluck.

### **Parkmore Primary School: principal for a day**

**Mr ANGUS** — Last Tuesday I had the pleasure of being the principal for a day at Parkmore Primary School, Forest Hill. It was a wonderful opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the roles of all those responsible in the daily operations of a school. It was an enjoyable day meeting many of the staff and students. My thanks go to both the principal, Glenda Prior, the acting principal, Peter Hough, and the many teachers and students who allowed me to participate in their daily activities.

### **Biotechnology: government initiatives**

**Mr ANGUS** — The recently tabled Auditor-General's report *Biotechnology in Victoria — The Public Sector's Investment* gave another example of the incompetence of the former Labor government. This report identifies that there have been three biotechnology strategic plans: in 2001, 2004 and 2007. However, the Auditor-General concluded that, despite delivering some successful facilities over more than 10 years, the Department of Business and Innovation was unable to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship between its investments and the results achieved. After 11 long years of financial waste and mismanagement, it is great for all Victorians to have a government that understands financial matters, is financially competent and responsible and will ensure that there are real outcomes in accountability for the investment of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

### **Mike Morris**

**Mr PERERA** (Cranbourne) — It was with great sadness that I attended the funeral of a respected local journalist, Mike Morris, over the winter break. Mike was a senior journalist with Fairfax Media's suburban

newspaper division, writing for the *Frankston Weekly*, a paper distributed in Frankston and along the peninsula. Mike was born and educated in Melbourne, served with the Australian Army and worked on the groundbreaking *Nation Review* in the 1970s. I was joined by representatives from both sides of this house in farewelling Mike. He was well respected by all sides of politics. Mike was survived by his brother, Peter, his sister, Marita, his nephews and nieces and his stepdaughter, Aislinn, and her daughters, Keeley and Kara. Mike will be sadly missed.

### **Youth: Frankston round table**

**Mr PERERA** — It was also a great pleasure to host a youth round table at the Frankston end of my electorate recently. Joining me on the day was a member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place, Lee Tarlamis; Cr Brad Hill; local residents; local business owners; representatives from the mental health field, Victoria Police, the William Angliss Institute of TAFE, the Frankston Youth Resource Centre, the Frankston council, local community groups and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; and a William Angliss Institute of TAFE graduate. Some impressive initiatives came out of this round table event, and we will all be rolling up our sleeves and doing the hard work to help out our young people at risk.

### **Gippsland Business Awards**

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — I had the pleasure last Friday evening of attending the Gippsland Business Awards, which recognise the diverse range of businesses operating throughout the Gippsland region. The current economic climate is a challenging one for Gippsland business, and it is therefore pleasing to understand that despite these challenges many local businesses are operating successfully in the local, national and international markets. I commend Graeme Sennett, the chairperson of the awards committee, and his team for their fantastic organisation of this event, along with the Bendigo Bank and other support sponsors for their ongoing contributions.

Many businesses within the Morwell electorate were nominated for various awards during the course of the evening. Hi Tek Kitchens and Neilson Builders were nominated for the building services and construction category with Kirway Constructions deemed the overall winner in that section. Other nominees were Claudia's Cafe of Morwell and Traralgon Charcoal Chicken in the best hospitality section; Aerium Pty Ltd for best new business; Cool Aqua Springs and Cobaarz Eco

Salon in the personal and other services section; and Wolf phones for best retail.

Froggies Eco Wash won the best environment and sustainable business practice award, whilst GippsAero Pty Ltd took out the manufacturing and fabrication award. The big winner of the evening was CreditCollect of Traralgon, which took out the property finance and business services award along with the Gippsland business of the year title. I say a big 'well done' to Mark and Annie Answerth and the CreditCollect team on their deserved success. This is relevant, as August is Small Business Month. Many events hosted right across Victoria have been well attended.

### **Cultural Association Violeta Parra: 24th anniversary**

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — I recently had the pleasure of attending the 24th anniversary celebration of the Cultural Association Violeta Parra. The association was established in 1988 to pass on the diverse cultural traditions of Chile through the art of dance. The group is named in honour of Violeta Parra, a famous Chilean artist who spread her message of peace and social justice through music, poetry and painting. I have been fortunate enough to witness a number of the association's performances in my electorate, and they have been simply stunning. They enchant audiences with the colour and movement of their beautifully choreographed dancing and, without exception, bring smiles to all those in attendance. My electorate was especially fortunate to have members of the association perform at a fundraising event I hosted following the tragic Chilean earthquakes in 2010. At this function more money was donated to earthquake victims.

Members of the Cultural Association Violeta Parra include people of all ages and skill levels. I know audiences love watching young dancers take their first dancing steps, while mature dancers display their years of experience and hard work. I have seen how young people benefit from being involved in this group.

The mesmerising performers on the night included: Estelle Villalobos, Jonathon Villalobos, Krystal Godoy-Villalobos, Kirsten Godo-Villalobos, Kassandra Pozo, Benjamin Castro, Andre Villalobos, Stephanie Villalobos, Denisse Nunex, Jessica Villalobos, Celeste Villalobos, Daniel Castro, Steven Cabrerias, Sebastian Cabrerias, Sebastian Escobar and Jose Tronsco. Thank you all for your beautiful performances. As usual the charismatic Consul General of Chile, Diego Velasco,

joined in with the local Chilean community and danced his heart and soul out.

### **Melba Community Recovery Committee: community hall**

**Ms McLEISH** (Seymour) — I want to recognise the fantastic and uplifting community spirit that exists within the communities of Murrindindi and Woodbourne. One of the Black Saturday fires began in Murrindindi at the abandoned timber mill. Following the fire the Melba Community Recovery Committee was formed to represent the community. Early on the members, Sue Devereaux, Mike Guerin and Stan Banbury, consulted with community members to determine their needs. It became apparent that they lacked a meeting place.

The committee members sprang into action almost immediately, enlisted the help of a number of professionals on a pro bono basis, developed a project plan and secured a Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (VBAF) grant for the Murrindindi-Woodbourne Community Hub Inc. Roger and Denise Kirkham, Stan, Sue and 12 other founding members formed the MWCHI and became the only group able to manage their own project — and manage it they did, coming in on time and on budget. The effort of the volunteers was amazing as they worked together and got their hands dirty painting and gardening to produce an outstanding community hub in the most tranquil setting. They should be proud of their effort, and I was delighted to open the hall on the weekend.

### **Strath Creek: hall renovation**

**Ms McLEISH** — Strath Creek is a small community of 300-odd people in the Murrindindi shire that also suffered on Black Saturday. Securing a VBAF grant, the community members went about a modern renovation of their historic hall. The renovation effort was led by Rosemary Simon-Ralph and, utilising local builder Glen Shearer, the hall was transformed. The effort of community members here was inspiring, especially following the fires, and then again when they found themselves behind the eight ball with the theft of electrical and plumbing items which took place several days before the dinner to celebrate the end of the recovery committee. I want to congratulate Liam Sheehan, Rosemary and the many volunteers who saw the project to completion, and I thank the community for extending me an invitation to attend the celebratory dinner.

### Peter Dillon

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — I take this opportunity to mark the life and untimely death of Peter Dillon. Peter was born on 24 May 1945 to Michael and Elaine Dillon and brought up in Surrey Hills. He became a Franciscan monk in 1963 at the age of 17 and was ordained as a priest in 1970. As part of his work he went to New Zealand in 1975, where he met his future wife, Gabriella, and moved on to New York in 1982. Gabriella followed him to New York, and they married in 1984, returning to Geelong in 1985. Peter and Gabriella had five children: Francis, William, Oliver, Gabriel and Martha. Peter adored his children and was involved in every aspect of their lives, particularly the boys' footy.

Peter's working life was very much about helping and caring for others, especially young people. He and Gabriella joined Glastonbury as the founders of the early adolescent program, and then moved on to City Limits Youth Refuge. Peter did a postgraduate degree in education and taught at local schools. He also worked at Time for Youth, Barwon Youth, Bethany Housing and Deakin University. Peter worked at City Limits Youth Refuge for more than 20 years, supporting young homeless people.

In 2001 sadly Peter was diagnosed with prostate cancer, against which he courageously fought for 10 years. He was forced to step down from his work at City Limits when his health deteriorated. I attended Peter's funeral on 12 August 2011, as did hundreds of others who had the pleasure of having known such an extraordinary man. Peter Dillon will be greatly missed by his family, friends and the community. He will be sadly missed, and this world will be the poorer for his passing.

### Rock Eisteddfod Challenge: funding

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — The Rock Eisteddfod began in 1980 as the New South Wales Rock 'n' Roll Eisteddfod. It is an opportunity for students to take part in a dance, drama and design event starring secondary college students. The school community works together for months to produce an 8-minute performance that showcases students' talents. In 1988 it was rebranded as the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge. Now nearly 300 Australian schools and 25 000 students across Australia compete in the Rock Eisteddfod. Over the last 30 years more than 1 million students have participated in the event. The program gives young people experience in the performing arts and helps them develop confidence, leadership and organisational skills.

Labor did not see the importance of the Rock Eisteddfod. In 2004 the event was funded with \$136 000 from the then government. By 2010 the Brumby government's contribution had dropped to \$102 000, and Labor had also raised the fees for the use of Hisense Arena. In 2009 the organisers requested a funding increase to \$200 000 from then youth affairs minister, the member for Monbulk, but were refused. In February 2010 schools were notified that the event would not take place that year due to lack of funding. On 9 February the coalition announced that, if elected, funding would be increased to \$800 000 over four years. This ongoing commitment saw the Rock Eisteddfod return to Victoria this year.

On 19 August I attended the 2011 Victorian Rock Eisteddfod finals and was impressed by the performances. I am pleased to see this important event continue under the coalition government. It was with disbelief that I observed members of the ALP attending this event to hand out awards to schools. After discontinuing funding for a great program for Victoria's school students, the Labor Party had no right to represent the government at this year's eisteddfod. That its members thought they had that right shows the party's hypocrisy —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member's time has expired.

### Ballarat South Community Learning Precinct, Redan campus: principal for a day

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — I had a fabulous day last week as principal for a day at the Ballarat South Community Learning Precinct, Redan campus. It was a terrific experience, and I learnt a lot that day.

I started with a tour of the school, and I heard about the importance of starting the day with a breakfast program, which was run by Robyn and Jenny and many other volunteers. I also spent time in each of the classrooms watching the teachers and students interact.

I have to give a special thanks to Bailey, who provided me with a tour of the playground during morning recess and who very politely introduced me to other students. I will always remember how polite and well mannered Bailey was on that day and how he tried very hard to make sure I felt welcome. I think if Bailey puts his mind to it, he will really be something one day.

I thank also Elke Gunn, the real principal, who is so good at what she does. Her passion is obvious, and this extends throughout the school. The teachers and staff also share this passion and love for the school, and they

share a commitment to providing the students with as many opportunities as possible and to being the best that they can be. Teachers like Wendi Beckers and all the other wonderful teachers put a great deal of time, energy and effort into their profession, and they often do so on their own time and at their own expense.

Principal for a Day is a fantastic program, and I know many members in this place participated in it. I will certainly be looking forward to having another go next year.

### **Mildura Masters Games**

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — The Mildura Masters Games competition is held every second year over eight days, and this year it attracted more than 650 entrants. Entrants came from all over Australia and the event, which was first held in 2006, has grown to become one of the largest events on the local sporting calendar.

Competitors this year were involved in 19 different sports. The event was supported by the coalition government, with marketing funding presented by the Minister for Sport and Recreation as part of the Significant Sporting Events program.

Those who come to Mildura to compete do more than just pursue their sporting passion; they also take advantage of Mildura's many tourist attractions, beautiful weather and wonderful accommodation venues. This provides considerable economic stimulus for Mildura. Visitors also take back to the many places they have come from their word-of-mouth experiences of our venues.

There would not be a masters games without all the volunteers who are necessary in helping out with registrations, marshalling, scoring and timekeeping, as well as assisting at the Mildura visitor information centre. I, like many others, participated in medal presentation ceremonies. I would also like to pay tribute to the competitors who participated in the competition in good spirit and showed great sportsmanship. I spent time at the swimming competition and was impressed by the athleticism of competitors whose age ranged from 25 to 90 years.

I would also like to pay tribute to each and every one of those people who gave their time to make the event an outstanding success, and I look forward to the next Mildura Masters Games and hopefully to reacquainting myself with some of the competitors.

### **Geelong Road, Mount Helen: pedestrian crossing**

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — I have been working with many residents and school communities in Mount Helen who are pleased that VicRoads has agreed to provide a pedestrian refuge on Geelong Road near Greenhill Road in Mount Helen. However, they are concerned that their common-sense request to move the 60-kilometre-an-hour speed zone a small distance in order to take in this pedestrian crossing area has not been agreed to. Having written to the Minister for Roads on this matter, I urge him to intervene to support this sensible request.

### **Ballarat Health Services: board appointments**

**Mr HOWARD** — The coalition came to office on a pretext of providing open and accountable government; however, the announcement of the new appointees to the Ballarat Health Services board leaves many questions open about the appointment process.

With four positions vacant, existing board member Dr Rob McDonald and board vice-president Jim Elvey renominated. They were not reappointed, and instead three local Liberal Party stalwarts were appointed to these positions. They included the Liberal candidate for Ballarat West at the last election, Craig Coltman, Liberal Party member Andrew Faull and Noel Coxall, who, despite denying he was a current Liberal Party member, is known to be an active Liberal Party supporter and financial donor.

While it may be that these three individuals can become useful members of the board, the process of appointment clearly is not transparent. It was a slap in the face to Dr McDonald and Mr Elvey to be effectively advised that they were not good enough to be kept on the board. This leaves no doctors on the board, and leaves the fourth position vacant.

### **Chelsea Heights Football Club: fundraising events**

**Mrs BAUER** (Carrum) — I commend Chelsea Heights Football Club for the Daffodil Day initiative it held over the weekend. Over 70 footballers wearing daffodil yellow football jumpers played three matches in front of a crowd of close to 800 community members, and all took part in raising over \$1000 for the Cancer Council.

I also thank and acknowledge the contribution of the Chelsea Heights Football Club for its role in organising the Matheson family fundraiser. This was a fun day

held recently for a local family in need, in which 150 club members, local community organisations, businesses, the Rotary Club of Chelsea and the Lions Club of Chelsea District collectively raised over \$38 000.

### **Carrum Surf Life Saving Club: funding**

**Mrs BAUER** — Last week I was delighted to throw a lifeline to Carrum Surf Life Saving Club with a \$500 000 funding contribution from the coalition government to be added to the \$660 000 from Kingston council to rebuild a wonderful new clubhouse after the club sustained storm damage.

This funding is recognition of the invaluable service that club volunteers provide to our community and the thousands of visitors to Carrum beach.

### **Rail: Frankston line**

**Mrs BAUER** — I recently had the pleasure of experiencing the much improved service of the Frankston line when I caught a train from Chelsea to the city.

From the abysmally low 65.5 per cent punctuality that was achieved in June 2010 under the former Labor government, I am delighted to advise that the latest figures for July 2011 report that punctuality of trains on the Frankston line has now improved to 92.6 per cent.

### **Rock Eisteddfod Challenge: Eltham electorate**

**Mr HERBERT** (Eltham) — I rise to pay tribute to three terrific local schools that have achieved great success yet again in the 2011 Rock Eisteddfod Challenge.

Montmorency Secondary College in particular had a terrific result in taking home second place in its division at this year's grand final. Monty secondary not only took second place in the open division for its terrific and topical performance piece on the palm oil issue and the deforestation in Borneo, but it also won an incredible 10 awards for excellence in categories such as concept, drama and soundtrack. This is a fantastic achievement for the school and is a testament to the hard work, dedication and commitment of students, parents, teachers, staff and the entire school community.

I congratulate Eltham High School, which won excellence awards for choreography, stage use, stage crew and environmental and social awareness. I would also like to congratulate St Helena Secondary College,

which won excellence awards for choreography, performance skill and stage use.

All three schools have continued their fantastic records of success in the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge. The continued successes of these schools in the challenge confirm that the arts in our local area are alive and thriving in new generations of talented young people who are building upon the Eltham electorate's strong contribution to Victoria's artistic legacy.

### **Rock Eisteddfod Challenge: funding**

**Ms MILLER** (Bentleigh) — I rise today to congratulate the Victorian government for delivering on its election commitment to reinstate funding for the Victorian Rock Eisteddfod of \$800 000 over four years. This government while in opposition made a commitment to the Victorian people that, if elected, it would provide funds for this event to continue, and it has most certainly delivered on this commitment.

Talented school students from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in Bentleigh won numerous categories this year and came second overall. This is an outstanding achievement for the girls, and I was honoured to present them with their certificates and award.

The previous government ceased funding for this program because it did not understand what our youth of today wants. Its level of interest in the youth of today was questionable. To deny these students the opportunity to express themselves, gain confidence and learn the benefits of teamwork was an absolute disgrace. The youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. The participants commented on the night that they were glad the program is back and loved the opportunity of making new friends and putting themselves outside their comfort zone, building their confidence. It also helps develop relationships between students at different school year levels, which is great. They also learn the benefits of communication and problem solving, with the opportunity to act as role models for the younger students.

It took a responsible government to fix the problems by understanding our youth, getting on with the job and delivering its election commitments. I am delighted for the students in Bentleigh that the Rock Eisteddfod continues to rock on.

### **Bentleigh Bowling Club: 67th anniversary**

**Ms MILLER** — I congratulate the Bentleigh Bowling Club, which is celebrating its 67th year this

weekend. The season is now officially open for 2011–12.

### **Tarnagulla: speed limits**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — Today I lodged a petition with the Clerk of this house on behalf of the residents and the community of the township of Tarnagulla in my electorate. This petition calls upon VicRoads and the Minister for Transport to change the speed zone in Commercial Road and the Wimmera Highway, Tarnagulla, from 60 kilometres an hour to 50 kilometres an hour. The Tarnagulla community, via the very active Neighbourhood Watch group, has been pushing this matter for some time, because there are serious concerns about community safety on the main highway running through the town.

This is the second petition members of the community have signed with regard to this matter. The first, containing 210 signatures, was presented to the Shire of Loddon. The second petition, lodged today, contains 168 signatures. These petitions are evidence that the community of Tarnagulla is very serious about pursuing a reduction in the speed limit through its main street, and I support it in that push. After visiting the township and meeting with local Neighbourhood Watch members, including the local policeman, it was evident there is a lot of through traffic, particularly during holiday periods. Every house in the main street is inhabited, and there are several businesses in the main street.

Many B-double trucks use the route through Tarnagulla, and the narrowness of the road means it is very dangerous for all pedestrians but especially for schoolchildren who use this route on their way to and from school on their bikes. Many other small towns in my electorate, such as Chewton, have successfully campaigned for a speed reduction from 60 kilometres an hour to 50 kilometres an hour, and Tarnagulla should be no exception, given its location on a main highway.

### **Mental health: patient details**

**Mr BULL** (Gippsland East) — I wish to raise an issue brought to my attention by Mrs Geraldine Carey-Pallot, of Stratford. Mrs Carey-Pallot's son Barry suffered from a psychiatric illness and, after an accident, became wheelchair bound. He then resided in nursing homes before sadly passing away in 2009 of pneumonia. Despite Barry stating he had no family, his family had advised authorities of their existence. Several investigations failed to resolve how Barry could have died without anyone noticing his illness, but

Mrs Carey-Pallot was equally disturbed that it took 13 days before the family was advised of her son's death. While there remain unanswered questions, Mrs Carey-Pallot has expressed concerns that carers of psychiatric patients may not know of the wider family's existence. She encourages all families in this situation to ensure relevant statutory bodies and carers have the family's up-to-date details so similar situations do not occur in the future.

### **Children: Take a Break program**

**Mr BULL** — I wish once again to draw the attention of the house to Take a Break child-care funding and the potential impact it will have on my region. Guidelines for this program clearly state it is jointly funded by the state and federal governments — and Victoria's money is on the table. This government has taken on responsibility for funding it in full until the end of this year, allowing the federal government ample time to reassess its priorities. I call on the opposition to lobby its federal counterparts to fulfil their obligations, and the federal government to accept its responsibility of funding child-care services.

### **Swifts Creek Football Club: premiership**

**Mr BULL** — My congratulations also to the Swifts Creek Football Club on winning back-to-back premierships in the Omeo and District Football League on the weekend, defeating Lindenow South.

### **Joseph Epstein Centre for Emergency Medicine Research**

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — I wish to commend the work of the Joseph Epstein Centre for Emergency Medicine Research, located at the Sunshine Hospital in St Albans, Melbourne. The aim of the centre is to translate evidence into better health care by performing high quality clinical research in the areas of emergency medicine and pre-hospital care; developing partnerships for research, across both national and international regions and across disciplines — ambulance, medical, nursing and community; providing education and support to workers in pre-hospital care and emergency medicine in order to develop research that will improve outcomes for patients; and demonstrating the translation of evidence into improved practice.

The Joseph Epstein Centre for Emergency Medicine Research was established by Western Health in 2001 and was opened by the then health minister, the Honourable John Thwaites, on 13 February 2001. The centre focuses on clinical research directly related to

improving clinical practice in emergency departments. Its approaches are multidisciplinary and collaborative, and its projects address questions in pre-hospital, nursing, emergency medical and critical care domains. The centre works closely with the department of emergency medicine at Western Health, which has three emergency department campuses located in the western suburbs of Melbourne and which treats in excess of 125 000 patients annually.

### **Chadstone Synners: premiership**

**Mr WATT** (Burwood) — Congratulations to the Chadstone Synners senior Football Integration Development Association team on its division 2 premiership win on 21 August this year. The Football Integration Development Association provides a regular competitive game of Australian rules football for players with an intellectual disability. There are currently around 400 players in the association, with Chadstone having two teams in the competition — a seniors team and a reserves team. They have performed extremely well this year. Not only did the seniors team beat Williamstown comprehensively for the division 2 premiership, but Chadstone was also runner up in the division 2 reserves competition. Congratulations to all players and to the coach, Bill Garland, on such a great performance, not only in the grand final but throughout the year.

### **St Dominic's Primary School, Camberwell East: member visit**

**Mr WATT** — On 3 August I visited St Dominic's parish school to speak to the grade 5 and 6 students about democracy. It was great to see such a keen interest in democracy and our system of government. I thank the teacher, Tom Gorman, for his invitation. I can only hope the students got as much out of the experience as I did. After listening to the students, I know our future is in good hands.

### **Katalin Hadju**

**Mr WATT** — Congratulations to Katalin Hadju on her 80th birthday on 15 August — and I thank her for the birthday cake, which was shared in my office to celebrate both her birthday and mine.

### **Burwood District Bowls Club: greens opening**

**Mr WATT** — I would also like to thank the Burwood District Bowls Club for its invitation to open the greens on Saturday. I can only apologise for the poor performance I put in, even though we lost by only one bowl.

### **David Woolcock**

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — Congratulations to David Woolcock on his dedicated work as Victorian certificate of applied learning coordinator at Glenroy College.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member's time has expired.

## **DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT (RESTRICTED BREEDS) BILL 2011**

### *Second reading*

### **Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security).**

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — I rise to speak on the bill. I do not think anyone in this house would be able to feel anything but sadness as the government introduces the legislation this week. We commend the government and indicate from the outset that the opposition, as was indicated by the Leader of the Opposition and various speakers during the course of today, will be supporting the bill.

A couple of days after a pit bull tragically killed young Ayen Chol in St Albans, I was accompanied by my colleague the member for Kororoit and Dut Athian, who is a young Sudanese man who from time to time volunteers time in my office, to the house of the family where this tragedy occurred, where we met with family members and their friends.

We expressed our deep sorrow on behalf of the opposition. We told them of how every member in this house felt so deeply affected by this tragedy. We told them of the Premier's words and the Leader of the Opposition's words in Parliament. We told them of our determination, as a Parliament, to do whatever it takes to ensure that this would not occur again. We knew this would not bring back their loved one, but we knew of their compassion and generosity, and we hoped to have their understanding of our sincere condolences on everyone's behalf.

The parish priest, Fr Noel Brady, was there with them all the way through. He was there with the community, and I will not forget — as I am sure the member for Kororoit will not forget — seeing him when we arrived, as he simply cried and cried. He told us that in his mind that tragic event was not an act of God. He kept crying and mourning.

I have met with the family a few times, sometimes in my office, with the member for Kororoit. We spoke to government officials from the minister's office. They are working through a range of challenges that this family faces, including housing. We are confident that these issues will be worked through collaboratively and successfully.

I know none of that will bring back this family's loved one, but it is a humble and simple way of saying how much the Parliament, the government and the opposition understand what they are going through. I know the family appreciates what the government is doing and what the opposition has done in immediately extending our support to the government's efforts to toughen the laws and make sure that this does not happen again. As the family have indicated to me in my office, they appreciate the government and the opposition working together and getting behind them in assisting with some of the important practical challenges they face. We appreciate that too.

Last Friday, together with my colleagues — including the Deputy Premier, the member for Kororoit and the federal member for Maribyrnong, Bill Shorten — and hundreds of other people, including community leaders, media representatives and friends of the family, I attended the funeral of Ayen Chol at Resurrection Catholic Church in St Albans. The celebrant was parish priest Fr Noel Brady, whose work, spiritual support and love for the family came through all the way.

Bright handprints covered a card made by four-year-old Ayen Chol's kindergarten friends, with big words reading, 'We miss you'. Ayen's mother, Jackline Anchito, and father, Mawien Chol Monjang, sat in the front row with their sons Marko, 11, and Chol, 8. Ayen's uncle Mayen Jere is quoted by the *Herald Sun* as having said:

A little bit of heaven's been taken from us ...

Even in your parting ... you have brought us this powerful legacy.

You have brought the entire community together like nothing else has, people from all walks of life, people from all nationalities and religions, politicians, members of the media, the church, community leaders, family and friends.

More than 600 people attended the funeral.

In response to the government's proposals, which as we have indicated are being supported by the opposition, Ayen's father, Mawien Chol Monjang, is quoted as having said:

I don't want any other child to be attacked by a dog again ... it gives me some peace of mind. I have another two boys and I need them to be safe ...

As we all recognise, this is a tragic event. There are no words to describe it. Having gone there with the member for Kororoit, it is difficult to imagine what the family went through. I do not think we can, but we can do something to ensure that it does not happen again.

As we have indicated before, we support the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011. The bill makes two changes to the existing legislation. Firstly, the bill provides for a standard for restricted breed dogs in Victoria, which we previously lacked. The standard approved by the minister will be published in the *Victoria Government Gazette*. A restricted breed is one of the following five breeds: the Japanese tosa, the fila Brasileiro, the dogo Argentino, the perro de presa Canario, or the American pit bull terrier. The standard pays particular attention to the American pit bull terrier because it is common in Victoria while the other breeds are virtually unknown. It is intended that the standard will be published in the *Government Gazette* on Thursday.

**Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

**Sitting continued on motion of Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections).**

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — Secondly, the bill will remove the two-year amnesty that was introduced on 1 September 2010 on the keeping and registration of restricted breed dogs. The current amnesty provisions allow registration of a restricted breed dog until September 2012; the bill will cut back the amnesty period to 29 September 2011. We commend that — it is a good move. This means that from 30 September 2011 the possession and keeping of a restricted breed dog will be illegal unless the dog was in Victoria before the start of the amnesty period on 1 September 2010 and the dog was registered before 30 September 2011. In short and very plainly, the measures that have been brought forward are good ones.

A dangerous dog hotline commenced operation today. It will operate during business hours seven days a week. The minister indicated that the telephone line has already been busy — and that is not surprising. We encourage members of the community across the state to cooperate, to help and to do what is right.

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) supports the provision of greater clarity for council officers, particularly regarding disputes heard by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The 48-hour holding period has not changed. MAV is satisfied with this.

It is incumbent on us and important to place on the record what the Labor government did in relation to these matters. When in government Labor made a range

of reforms to laws around dangerous dogs. We allowed councils to fine owners of dogs that are menacing and dogs that are not on a lead and which give people a fright even if they do not attack or bite. We declared pit bull terriers a restricted breed in 2001 and introduced legislation for that breed to be compulsorily desexed. We outlawed the attending of animal fights and introduced a system that ensures that if owners of dangerous dogs move municipalities, the record of the dog being dangerous remains rather than slipping under the radar because it is in a different municipality. We introduced laws requiring all dangerous dogs and restricted breed dogs to be desexed and doubled the penalty for failing to register a restricted breed dog or for providing false information.

Last year we conducted a survey to ensure that the government approach to dangerous dogs reflected community expectations on this important safety reform. Subsequent legislation ensured that council officers are able to seize and destroy any unregistered and unidentifiable dangerous dog found unsupervised in a public place or any such dog that is deemed to be a risk to a person or other animal. We also introduced new penalties for pet owners if they infringe any regulations.

My remarks will be brief. I am cognisant of the need to fast-track the legislation — to debate it briefly in this chamber and to send it on to the upper house. Another colleague will make a further contribution but, in the most respectful way, I direct my remarks to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, who is at the table, and to the Premier. The community understands there is a time when further measures need to be introduced, and we understand that will happen. We had hoped, and I say this in the most respectful way, that amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 might have been introduced this week, and I think the community will wholeheartedly support those amendments. Equally, we had hoped that perhaps tougher measures and tougher penalties would be introduced. We submit to the government that there will be an enormous amount of community support for that, as the government well understands.

It is only a matter of reading the newspapers, local and otherwise, to understand that there is enormous support from the community and an expectation that the words the Premier put on record at the time of the event, which were endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition, will be brought into effect by way of public policy and legislation. We look forward to that discussion in this chamber when the government introduces tough measures, because, and let me put it quite plainly, the opposition, and indeed every member in this house, is

sick and tired of reading tragic stories in the local papers — and it does not matter in which community it happens.

Tragically, it can happen anywhere. It happened in my electorate and it happened in the electorate of the member for Kororoit. As local members we are doing what we can. Incidentally, I take this opportunity to record my appreciation for the work the government and the Minister for Housing are doing in relation to sorting out personal and private matters which are important and which should be sorted out. I am cognisant of the work of the department, and I thank it and I commend it for its work. We look forward to hearing that very soon, hopefully this week, these issues will be resolved. The family, and every member of this house, understands that none of this will bring back their loved one. It is just a small measure of support and perhaps an indication of how sorry we all are that this happened.

In conclusion, we look forward to the government meeting the standards that were set by the Premier; we look forward to that discussion. We look forward to placing on record our wholehearted support for those measures. In my office the family has indicated how much it understands and appreciates the work that both the government and the opposition, indeed the Parliament, have undertaken on their behalf and how much support has been provided to them to date. I wish this legislation a very speedy passage.

**Mr HODGETT** (Kilsyth) — I rise to make a contribution on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011. It is a very important bill that the Baillieu government has moved quickly to draft and introduce to the Parliament. I commend the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security for his solid work on the bill. The main purpose of the bill is to make further provision with respect to the keeping of restricted breed dogs. It provides for the commencement date of the bill to be 30 September.

The Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Bill 2011 amends the Domestic Animals Act 1994. As the previous member stated, currently there are five restricted breeds of dogs in Victoria. They are the American pit bull terrier, commonly known as the pit bull; the dogo Argentino; the fila Brasileiro; the Japanese tosa; and the perro de presa Canario. I am sure Hansard will make the names read in exactly the same way as the way the member for Derrimut read them. He pronounced the names so accurately and so well.

**Mr Wakeling** — Eloquently.

**Mr HODGETT** — Eloquently, absolutely. As the minister said in his second-reading speech, the bill provides for the approval of a standard that will assist councils to identify whether a dog is a restricted breed dog. The standard has been under development since September 2010, and it will be approved and gazetted on the commencement of the bill. I work very closely with my local government areas, and I am well aware of the frustration of council officers with the lack of clear standards for identifying pit bull-type dogs. This bill will support local government in this respect. As the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security stated, the published standard will provide clear guidance to councils, authorised officers and the general public on what type of dog constitutes a restricted breed. This will make enforcement easier for council officers and remove doubt about the identification of these dogs, thus allowing them to be declared a restricted breed in a speedy manner.

There are a number of points I could go on to make tonight, but in the interests of moving this legislation through both houses this week, I will keep my contribution short and just sum up. In summary, the key thing the bill does is to bring forward the amnesty and the gazetting of the new standard that will follow on after its passing. It will give councils certainty in how to identify restricted-type dogs. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms BEATTIE** (Yuroke) — I will also confine myself to a few remarks with the intention of getting this bill through to the upper house. As has been said before, this bill is supported by both sides of the house. I just want to touch on a couple of points. I bred dogs for some 20 years before I came into this Parliament, and anybody who knows anything about dogs — and I see the member for Benalla in the house; I am sure he would agree with me — will know that dogs have an imprint in their DNA. If they are a hunting dog, they are bred to hunt. If they are a lapdog, they are bred to sit on the couch. These pit bulls and the other four breeds that are mentioned are killing machines. They are nothing more and nothing less. Their whole body structure gives them the power to kill. They are heavy around the neck, their fronts are muscled up, they are heavy around the jaw and their jaws lock in a scissor-like grip. They are bred to fight, and they are dangerous dogs.

Any dog has the capacity to bite but these dogs have the capacity to kill, and that is what they have done. Our hearts go out to the family of little Ayen Chol, who was tragically killed by one of these monsters. Not only was she killed but other members of her family were

mauled by this dog which could not be pulled away from her.

Members on this side of the house would like to see the Premier's words enforced. The Premier talked about taking this offence out of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and putting it into the Crimes Act 1958. We would support that on the floor of the house. The Leader of the Opposition has said we support this. We support harsher penalties, and I would like to see those harsher penalties increased, not at some later stage but as soon as possible.

We would like to see councils being better resourced. I do not think it is enough to send a council by-laws officer out with a picture of these dogs; by-laws officers have to be trained to recognise these dogs for what they are. I call on the government to allocate more money in the budget to allow council officers to be trained.

Dr Graeme Smith of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital says there are some 5000 pit bulls out there. If there are 5000 pit bulls out there in the community, we need to ensure that each and every one of those 5000 dogs is properly contained according to the law. It will be up to the councils to enforce that law, and I want to see more resources for council by-laws officers to make sure these 5000 dogs are contained as they should be. When they are out in the street, they should be muzzled. Personally I would like to see these dogs completely bred out of existence, and this will happen in time.

We need to tighten the laws around the internet because people will buy these dogs over the internet and there may be some opportunity for them to import them. That is another area that needs to be looked at.

In supporting this bill and offering my condolences to the families affected, I urge the government to do as it said it would do and take these killing machines out of existence, to put this in the Crimes Act 1958 and bring harsher penalties in. The government needs to give the local municipalities more money for enforcement, more money to train their council officers and more money to go around and make sure that these 5000 killing machines that are out there are taken out of existence.

I wish this bill a speedy passage; each and every member on this side of the house wishes this bill a speedy passage. The government can be assured that we on this side of the house will do everything within our power to support its harsher penalties and putting this into the Crimes Act 1958, but we urge the government to do it now.

**Mr WALSH** (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — I will sum up the debate on the bill. I thank

the members for Derrimut, Kilsyth and Yuroke for their contributions. I know a lot of other members in the chamber would have liked to have made a comment on this particular piece of legislation but did not, and I thank them for their restraint so we can get this bill to the upper house and get it passed tonight. It can then be signed off by the Governor tomorrow and we can gazette the new standard that is part of this bill.

In their contributions the other speakers each talked about the issue of these particular dogs in the community, and the government is very aware of the issue. Some of the issues that were raised are already covered by existing legislation. It is illegal to import these dogs into Victoria, and it is illegal to sell and breed these particular dogs.

We have to make sure that the community is involved in the implementation of these sorts of issues. The best way the resources can be used is to have the community involved in identifying these dogs so that the council by-law officers can go about their jobs. That is why the government has set up the 'dob in a dangerous dog' hotline. The community can report to the hotline and the information will go to their local council's by-law officers so they can go and do their job. That is the most efficient way of doing that to get the best result in the shortest time.

The new standard will be gazetted on passage of this bill. The standard is quite prescriptive, so council officers will now have backup to determine what type of dog is restricted breed dog. That will give them the faith to do that. Hopefully that will be backed up by Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, so we do not have the issue we have had in the past where VCAT has overruled council officers.

I can only endorse what other members have already said about these particular types of dogs being lethal weapons on legs. As the member for Yuroke said, we need to make sure that they are bred out of existence.

For those people who have done the right thing or who will do the right thing over the next 30 days and register their restricted breed dogs, those dogs will need to be desexed, they will need to be microchipped and they will need to be enclosed in a secure area in their owner's home or yard. If they are taken out in public, the law requires them to be on a lead and to be muzzled. There are very strict rules there. The issue is making sure that as a community, as a government and as councils we can do something about the large number of illegal restricted breed dogs that are at large. The phone line and the support we will give to councils will enable council officers to hunt these dogs down

and to seize them and have them put down if they are not registered by 30 September.

I thank those members who made contributions and those members who showed restraint in not making contributions. I wish this bill a speedy passage so we can get it to the upper house.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

**Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections).**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**Ms Edwards** — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional orders adopted by this chamber under this current government requiring ministers to provide responses to adjournment debate matters within 30 days. On 1 July 2011 I raised an important matter in this place for the Minister for Health. I asked him to give an assurance to the people of Bendigo and to the staff who work in the pathology sector in Bendigo that the Bendigo Health pathology service will not be privatised, as was mooted by hospital management following the release of the Redback review. I ask that you, Speaker, direct the minister to provide this house with an immediate explanation as to why I am still yet to receive an answer from the minister.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will ensure the minister is written to.

### **Dartmouth pondage: access**

**Mr TILLEY** (Benambra) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water. The action I seek is for the minister to assure recreational anglers that they will have access to the Dartmouth pondage. Dartmouth pondage, or Lake Banimboola as it is known to residents, is a catchment pondage below Dartmouth Dam and the power station — and the minister is well aware of the area, having recently

travelled up there for the 30th anniversary celebration of the completion of construction of the Dartmouth Dam. Local residents are committed to seeing the area opened up for community access to recreational fishing. In the lead-up to the 2010 election the coalition made a commitment that when in government it would provide funding of \$130 000 to ensure reliable access and safe fishing on the Dartmouth pondage with a floating pontoon, good access, safe parking and improved standing areas.

The local Dartmouth community has shown great dedication over a long period to attract tourists and to foster growth of their community, and I commend it for this commitment. In particular I would like to mention members of the Dartmouth Alpine Anglers Club, the Dartmouth Community Progress Association, the Mitta Valley Tourism Association and the Mitta Valley Advancement Forum. Attendance at a recent meeting of key stakeholders highlighted the wider vision of the community for a heritage nature walk linking the Dartmouth township and the pondage, barbecue and picnic areas and wetlands was discussed.

Access to the pondage will formalise what locals already know — that is, that it is a great spot to wet a line. Formal access will be an addition to assets available to the community to sell the area as a prime destination for anglers across Victoria and indeed around the country. The area is currently underutilised, and lack of access to the pondage is holding the town back. An application made by Dartmouth to hold the world fly fishing championships was rejected because there was no formal access to the pondage, which led to the loss of something like 2000 anglers visiting the area. Generally Goulburn-Murray Water supports the improvement of safe public access to all its storage facilities; however, there is a reticence to allow anglers near the pondage without provision for public liability insurance. I ask the minister to ensure that discussions are held, liability is established and access is granted for community use to enable works to be carried out to honour the coalition's election commitment.

### **Roads: Ballarat East electorate**

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — I have a matter to raise with the Minister for Roads. I am very concerned that funding allocated to road projects within my electorate under the former Brumby government is yet to be spent, and I ask the minister to take action to ensure that these projects get under way as soon as possible. In the former Brumby government's budget brought down in May last year I was pleased that funding of \$2 million, which I had advocated for, was allocated to upgrade the Whitehorse–Geelong roads

intersection in Mount Clear. Drivers who use this intersection, especially at morning and evening peak hour times, find the traffic banks up heavily around this intersection. Although I was successful in gaining funding for an earlier upgrade of the intersection in 2000, increased traffic flow along this route has seen the need for further works. As I have indicated, a further \$2 million was allocated in last year's budget brought down by the Brumby government, and these works were expected to commence either late last year or early this year.

I have followed up this project on a number of occasions with VicRoads. It initially advised that plans for the project would perhaps be available last September. That time passed and I was advised they might be available in November, but with no plans forthcoming it now appears that since the Baillieu government was elected this project has fallen off the 'To action' list. Although I wrote to the Minister for Roads last December asking that he ensure that this project progressed as a priority, the budget year has ended with no expenditure of the \$2 million and no further plan surfacing.

At the same time \$600 000 was allocated from the safer roads infrastructure program to further improve flows on the Ballarat-Buninyong Road by using line marking and some widening of the road, but these works are yet to be undertaken. On 14 June this year I raised the matter of the \$530 000 allocated, again under Labor, to construct a roundabout on the Midland Highway in Creswick at the busy Clunes Road intersection. Not only am I still awaiting a response from the minister but more importantly I notice that there is no sign of any works happening at this intersection. These works funded under Labor are important to my constituents, and I again urge the minister to ensure that these works are undertaken as a priority. I also look forward to the response from the minister in regard to other works, including the moving of the speed zone to encompass the proposed pedestrian refuge that was also going to be built on Geelong Road.

### **Bushfires: fuel reduction**

**Mr BURGESS** (Hastings) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is for the minister to ensure that the coastal villages fuel reduction plan, a plan authored by local communities in consultation with their CFA (Country Fire Authority) brigades, is implemented in full before the coming fire season.

On Monday, 22 August, I held an information night in Blind Bight to discuss fire prevention with local residents of the coastal villages, Casey council fire officers, Department of Sustainability and Environment officers and Parks Victoria officers. The views expressed by the members of the local community on the night were unanimous: over recent years there have been nowhere near enough fuel reduction burns and slashing carried out throughout the coastal villages. The aspect of the coastal villages that leaves them particularly exposed to bushfires and therefore almost entirely reliant on authorities carrying out effective fuel reduction is the fact that they are one-road-in and one-road-out communities.

The local community, in conjunction with the CFA captain, Hans DeKraker, has set out a fuel reduction plan — a plan that is also endorsed by the Warneet Association — and is seeking to have it fully implemented as soon as possible. This plan details the areas needing risk mitigation action most urgently, including the clearing of the tennis court walking tracks in Warneet to a width of 3 metres; the maintenance of all walking tracks, including the tennis court walking tracks; the clearing of vegetation on the western side of Gilgandra Street for a distance of 20 metres from the edge of the roadway; the clearing of the vegetation on the eastern side of Aruma Street for a distance of 20 metres from the edge of the roadway; the clearing of vegetation around the recreation reserve clubhouse by 10 metres on all sides; the clearing of vegetation on the southern side of Balaka Street between Kallara Road and Culgoa Street by 10 metres from the edge of the roadway; the clearing of vegetation on the eastern side of Culgoa Street between Rutherford Parade and Balaka Street for a distance of 10 metres from the edge of the roadway; and clearing and fuel reduction burning near the CFA fire station. The area bounded by Iluka Street on the south, Kallara Road on the east, Rutherford Parade on the west and Warneet Road on the north should be partially cleared and a fuel reduction burn undertaken.

The action I seek will not protect the coastal villages from fire; however, I am assured that full implementation of this community-authored fuel reduction plan will provide the best opportunity for firefighters to protect the towns and people if a fire should break out.

There is also a serious problem with vegetation overgrowing walking tracks and CFA access tracks as well as encroaching on the only existing road in and out. Community members also raised the need for fuel reduction burns along the Cannons Creek foreshore and in Bonnie Watson Reserve. The areas of most concern

are: behind the Cannons Creek playground, the community centre and CFA building off Cannons Creek Road in the Bonnie Watson Reserve; the Bonnie Watson Reserve, located between Glenalva Parade and Reserve Way; and the Cannons Creek foreshore near the corner of Irene Parade and Reserve Way.

I seek the assistance of the minister with the full implementation of this plan before the coming fire season.

### **Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Mr SCOTT** (Preston) — The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Education. It relates to the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) senior extension program. The action I seek is that the minister fund the coordination of the VCAL senior extension program at Northland Secondary College.

As members may be aware, the government has cut the VCAL program by \$12 million, which is the money provided for coordination. These cuts will have a significant impact on Northland Secondary College, which has a very strong emphasis on vocational training. It is my understanding that the VCAL senior extension program at Northland requires coordination to be successfully undertaken. It is a year 13 program which combines a VCAL program with a certificate IV course. The VCAL senior extension program at the Northland Secondary College for the design studies course is based on individually tailored courses, which will produce a portfolio valuable to a student's progress into university. It is my fear that without appropriate coordination this valuable course will cease to be available to the community that I serve.

The benefits of the VCAL senior extension program at Northland are significant. It helps develop a skilled workforce, linking the dreams of young people with the needs of the community for more skilled workers and giving young people real careers where their passions and dreams are channelled into employment through practical education. It does this by providing an important pathway into university for many who would otherwise be less likely to undertake university study. That is why these cuts are so worrying. It would be tragic that in a government budget of over \$40 billion, \$12 million could not be found for VCAL coordination. But it is unsurprising, considering the \$480 million of cuts to education over four years being planned by the coalition government. Further, within the VCAL program itself it is my understanding that only three schools run a VCAL senior extension program. Since

the VCAL senior extension program needs intensive coordination, it is threatened with extinction by these cuts.

I urge the minister to fund the coordination of the VCAL senior extension program at Northland Secondary College. The children of Preston and Reservoir deserve the opportunities provided by the VCAL senior extension program at Northland Secondary College.

### **East Gippsland: health forum**

**Mr BULL** (Gippsland East) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health in another place. The action I seek is for him to visit Bairnsdale in my electorate of Gippsland East to take part in a health forum which has been organised by our local media outlet in the region, East Gippsland Newspapers. This has been tentatively scheduled for 20 September, and I have been requested to extend an invitation to the health minister to attend.

The forum was organised after the community raised a number of concerns over recent years with the provision of health services within the wider region of Gippsland East, including the rural doctor shortage, an issue that has not been confined to my electorate. A number of the issues have been raised in the correspondence sections of the local newspapers; hence the newspaper group has seen fit to convene the forum. It is anticipated that representatives of the local health services will be invited to attend. The focus of the forum is on allowing an opportunity for the provision of local health service delivery to be outlined to the general community.

People in Bairnsdale and district are rightly very proud of their local hospital and the service it provides, but there are aspects of the health system that have concerned some residents. Over the course of the election campaign it became quite apparent that the provision of health services in rural areas was at the forefront of the minds of East Gippslanders, and I believe this was also an issue right around the state.

The minister visited my electorate earlier this year to officially open the new oncology and dialysis facilities at the Bairnsdale regional hospital. The passion with which our local community supports its health service has been highlighted by the amazing fundraising capacity of the Pelicans, a local fundraising group very well known in my electorate, which has raised a significant amount of funds for the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service, including the new oncology and dialysis unit I referred to.

Organisers of the forum hope the minister can also provide some details in relation to the future direction of Ambulance Victoria. As I said, the health minister has already shown a very strong propensity to get out into rural regions and discuss issues around the health sector, and he is to be applauded for this approach. As I also stated, the health minister has already visited my electorate and had discussions with local health service providers and constituents within the electorate. I again call on him to visit Gippsland East to take part in the upcoming health forum.

### **Plumbing industry: compliance certificates**

**Mr PERERA** (Cranbourne) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is for the minister to start the process of amending the Building Act 1993 to provide justice to plumbers.

I have met with local plumbers in my electorate who are seeking an amendment to the current act, especially section 221ZH. I have been advised that under section 221ZH of the act a compliance certificate must be given by a licensed plumber within five days of the completion of any plumbing work to which this section applies that he or she has carried out or supervised. Subsection 221ZH(2) of the act states that a licensed plumber must:

- (a) give the person for whom the work was carried out a signed compliance certificate in respect of the work; and
- (b) notify the Commission, in the manner specified by the Commission, that the compliance certificate has been given.

This is all well and good. However, many sole traders and small business plumbers are simply attending to this as per the act before they are actually being paid for the work completed. Unfortunately this is resulting in a certificate being issued and the plumber simply not being paid for the work completed, with many companies taking advantage of these hardworking small business self-employed plumbers under the act.

I expressed the concerns of the represented plumbers directly to the Premier, as per their request, in a formal letter dated 31 May this year. To date I have yet to receive a response or even an acknowledgement letter. It has now been nearly three months since my letter and, again, there has not even been an acknowledgement letter from the Premier or his office.

I urge the Minister for Planning to commence this process of amending the act introduced into the Parliament by the Kennett government so sole traders and small business plumbers get a fair go under the act.

### **Parkdale Secondary College: joint-use facility**

**Ms WREFORD** (Mordialloc) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Parkdale Secondary College to discuss plans for a joint-use facility. Parkdale Secondary College is a school on the go. Under the leadership of its principal, Greg McMahon, the school is flourishing and looking towards a very bright future. Of course it helps that the coalition government's first budget has already delivered \$5.5 million for the school. This money was committed to honour the coalition's promise to complete stage 2 of the college.

One of the important aims of the college is to establish a centre for excellence in sport. Its development plans include an AFL oval, soccer pitches and an indoor basketball centre. These additions are required to deliver the college's elite sports program. The program being offered in 2012 includes opportunities in Australian Rules football, soccer for girls, golf and triathlon. Coaches include Paul McCormack, a former AFL player; Sarah Hughes, a triathlete; and the professional team from Woodlands Golf Club.

Elements of the program include conditioning, camp and skills development. It runs from years 7 to 12. The college articulates well that sporting and academic performance can occur in parallel. The elite sports pathway involves students in four key elements which are, firstly, conditioning; secondly, skill development; thirdly, competition; and fourthly, community links. The college wants to make sure it has the facilities to enable its students to excel. Its current sport facilities need some work, and the broader community would certainly benefit if we can provide the right ones which are accessible beyond school hours. The college is looking to establish new joint-use facilities, and this would be a real win-win for the community.

The school is very heavily integrated into the local community, and the design of the elite sports program builds on that. Where possible it uses local networks. The students will feed back into local clubs; they will use local facilities and local coaches, and the new facilities will be joint use to strengthen the connections between the college and the surrounding community.

This is an exciting program from a forward-thinking school. It is beneficial for the school, for the students and for the surrounding community. It integrates learning with sports and the community and provides a great pathway to education and leadership. I request that the minister come and look at Parkdale Secondary College and the opportunities to use this 7.6-hectare site

as a joint-use facility for the benefit of the wider community.

### **Buses: route 562**

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Public Transport. I seek the minister's support to extend bus route 562 so it can deviate into Gordons Road from its current southbound route along Plenty Road in South Morang. The purpose of this requested deviation is to provide easier and safer public transport access for residents of the Arilla Village retirement village situated on Gordons Road near the corner of Plenty Road.

The Arilla Village retirement village is a new residential precinct in my electorate, and I was pleased to attend the official opening of the village's new community centre on 13 August. Judging by the hundreds of visitors to this open day, Arilla will soon be a bustling neighbourhood with a sizeable population, many of whom will depend on public transport to travel around the community. At its opening the management of the village explained its concern for the safety of some of the residents who must wait for a break in the traffic before they are able to cross Plenty Road to take the south-travelling 562 bus to visit the local shopping centre, hospital and the like.

Because the Minister for Public Transport is also the Minister for Roads, he will be aware that Plenty Road is a very busy arterial road carrying a great deal of traffic. Indeed the previous Labor government recognised the need to upgrade this road with the multistage widening of Plenty Road beginning with the section from Centenary Drive, Mill Park, to Gorge Road, South Morang. The latest stage of the widening is the \$21.8 million section between Gordons Road and Riverdale Boulevard. The minister will also be aware that the previous Labor government provided many new bus services for the growing neighbourhoods in and near my electorate. It is vital therefore that the preceding significant and necessary level of investment in bus services continue under this government, although I am somewhat concerned that in the recent state budget no additional funds were provided for new or extended bus services.

Nevertheless, I hope the minister will consider seriously this request to extend the 562 bus service to residents of Arilla Village. I look forward to his reply so that hopefully we can deliver some good news to these residents of Mill Park who will soon number in their hundreds.

### Schools: Prahran electorate

**Mr NEWTON-BROWN** (Prahran) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister visit Prahran to review the requirements for a state secondary school in this electorate. The Baillieu coalition has committed to a \$200 000 study into the feasibility of a new secondary school during this term of government, and preliminary works are well under way to identify potential sites.

The Prahran electorate is unique in that it is the smallest electorate in the state. We have an abundance of private schools but ours is the only electorate which does not have a state high school. We have Melbourne High, but that by no means operates as a state high school; it is a highly selective school that takes students from around the state. There is a perception that Prahran is well serviced, but in fact it is not well serviced by secondary schools. There are some great local primary schools in Stonnington, Toorak and South Yarra but when the kids get to year 6 their options are very limited. They can travel to Hawthorn, Elwood or Albert Park. Albert Park College has been very successful — I understand its enrolments are oversubscribed — and Hawthorn and Elwood are very difficult places for students to get to by public transport.

There are various possible sites for a great secondary school in Prahran. The challenge is that because Prahran is so heavily built up it does not have the greenfield sites that may exist in outer suburban areas and emerging suburbs to set aside for a school.

We have had to think a bit creatively to come up with solutions. A number of the options I have been looking at, which I would like to show the minister when he comes to Prahran, involve sites where it would be possible to build schools of different models to what people normally expect in high schools. Perhaps a school could be located in a high-density area. It would ideally be located near public open space, so rather than the land required for school playgrounds being purchased, there could be a shared arrangement involving adjoining public parks. This arrangement works quite well at Toorak Primary School, which adjoins a park. The students play there at lunchtime and the locals use the park for walking their dogs. It seems to work quite well.

Among the potential sites I could show the minister would be the South Yarra siding, the Windsor siding and the Cota Street car park. There are also more creative options, such as building over rail lines, which has happened in places like Amsterdam. I ask the

minister to visit Prahran to review these options with me.

### Planning: Ivanhoe structure plan

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is that the minister meet with the Save Ivanhoe group and attend a neighbourhood walk through the streets of Ivanhoe. A number of residents have raised concerns about the Ivanhoe structure plan. A draft of the plan was recently released by Banyule City Council. It would be instructive for the minister to meet with the Save Ivanhoe group not only in his role as the Minister for Planning but also in his role as an upper house member for Northern Metropolitan Region, an electorate that includes the area of Ivanhoe.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend a neighbourhood walk with Ivanhoe residents who are concerned about the draft Ivanhoe structure plan released by the council. We spent 2 hours over the weekend walking around the East Ivanhoe Village Shopping Centre, Ivanhoe shops and local residential areas to see how this draft plan would affect the heights of a range of buildings, which could be as high as eight storeys, and how overshadowing and its effect on amenity would affect local residents.

Prior to that we attended a hastily arranged public meeting of 300 local residents of the Ivanhoe community who voiced their concerns about the consultation process regarding the Ivanhoe structure plan put in place by Banyule City Council. Their concern is that they are being asked now to make public comments, a process which is being extended for the second time by Banyule City Council, on a structure plan. Quite frankly the draft plan is an ambit claim by the council. Had there been adequate representation of residents on the structure plan consultative committee, this plan would have never seen the light of day.

Residents are being asked to comment on a plan that involves height limits of up to eight storeys in their residential areas. There is no way known that a draft plan of this nature would have ever seen the light of day had there been adequate representation of local residents on the consultative committee that dealt with the structure plan in the first instance.

I have written to the mayor of the City of Banyule and have asked for the draft structure plan to be withdrawn. I have asked for a new residents committee to be established, that the committee work with the council to develop a draft Ivanhoe structure plan that best represents the views and aspirations of the Ivanhoe

people and that that plan be the one that is subject to community consultation. Local residents should not have to make submissions in haste regarding a draft Ivanhoe structure plan that does not represent their starting point or aspirations for the future in our local community. These points will be instructive for the Minister for Planning to hear more about.

I commend the Save Ivanhoe group, which has got our community members working hard together. I encourage the Minister for Planning to meet with them and tour the Ivanhoe electorate.

### Responses

**Mr MULDER** (Minister for Public Transport) — The member for Ballarat East raised an issue with me in relation to a number of road projects in his electorate. He claimed that the projects were fully budgeted or simply announced — I am not sure whether they were announcements or fully budgeted commitments — and committed to by the former Labor government. One of those projects involved \$2 million to upgrade Whitehorse Road and Geelong Road in Mount Clear. The member indicated to me that the last time that road section was upgraded was in 2000. I would imagine it was a project of the former Kennett government if the works were carried out in 2000. The member has now indicated to me that more works are needed.

The member also indicated that he followed up these particular projects last September and November. That would have been done with the former Minister for Roads and Ports, a Labor minister for roads, and nothing was done. I will follow up on this particular project for the member.

The member also raised with me an issue in relation to Ballarat-Buninyong Road in terms of \$600 000 from the safer roads infrastructure program that had been allocated for upgrades and line marking. As the member would be well aware, that project has been well and truly trumped by the coalition government, which has committed \$4.5 million to the upgrade of Ballarat-Buninyong Road — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr MULDER** — Not \$600 000, but a \$4.5 million upgrade. A significant amount of planning work has been undertaken for that particular project which we are committed to delivering. I have viewed that road firsthand; it is a very dangerous section of road. I will find out whether that \$600 000 is additional or whether it has been picked up by the particular project that has been announced by the new coalition government.

The other project the member mentioned was \$530 000 for a roundabout at a Midland Highway intersection. I will follow that matter up. Also mentioned were some traffic lights and speed zone work on Geelong Road. The member has indicated that a number of these projects have been delayed. I am sure the member will understand that significant flooding earlier this year set the VicRoads works program back somewhat. The onset of winter weather has caused a delay in the rollout of some of the projects, but I will certainly follow that up.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Transport has paid a number of visits to the Ballarat area in recent times. One of those included discussions about the \$38 million Ballarat western link road project — another commitment made by the coalition government to the Ballarat community. I say to the member for Ballarat East that when he looks at the commitments of the coalition government, he will see \$38 million for the link road project and \$4.5 million for the Ballarat-Buninyong Road project. I will follow up those minor projects that were committed to by the former Labor government to see where they are and check their status before I get back to the member. I thank him for raising that issue with me.

The member for Mill Park raised an issue with me in relation to bus route 562 to Gordons Road and the fact that the residents of Arilla Village, which is a new residential precinct, would like to have that bus re-routed so that it services their facility. The member indicated that it is a bus-linked neighbourhood and that the operators of the village have concerns about the safety of the residents in that particular area in that they have to cross Plenty Road. I understand Plenty Road is a busy road, that there has been a large amount of work done on upgrades to it and that that will continue to be carried out. The member has indicated that there were no funds available for bus services in the last budget put forward by the coalition government.

Firstly, I will follow up this issue to see if I can resolve it for the member. The member will also be aware that the major problem the coalition faced when it came to power was in relation to the problems the former government had with heavy rail. Now \$225 million a year is going into maintenance and asset renewal of the metropolitan rail network. The government has committed to 40 new trains, of which 7 have already been ordered. Recently I was at the mock-up of the 50 new trams that will also start to be rolled out from the end of 2012. We will get to the issue of the buses and additional bus routes, but we had to put our money where the Victorian public wanted us to put it — into heavy rail. We will also establish a public transport

development authority that will be better able to deal with the coordination of train, tram and bus services and will make sure we have a one-stop shop for issues such as the one raised by the member for Mill Park in relation to a bus service on Gordons Road.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank the member for Mordialloc and acknowledge her hard work for the people of her electorate, particularly the sporting clubs and the wider community groups she represents here today. She spoke about the Parkdale Secondary College elite sports program, which, I am informed, is one of a kind in Victoria, with the range of activities being offered including football, soccer, golf and even triathlon. The member highlighted that skills development and conditioning are the key elements of this program, which runs for students studying in years 7 to 12. I understand that the college is dedicated to ensuring that sporting performance and academic performance go hand in hand. I could not agree with her more.

It is interesting to note that we took to the election the promise that we would maintain sport in schools programs. Labor had tried to remove physical education as a core discipline in schools. We are keen to work with schools to give them more opportunity to participate in sport and recreation. As the member for Mordialloc has highlighted, the partnerships between schools, local government and local sport and recreation groups is paramount in achieving the best outcomes. We want to see partnerships with the community in the use of not only community facilities but also school facilities. I congratulate the member for Mordialloc. She took to the election campaign a promise that we would deliver \$5.5 million if elected. Not only was she elected but the government was also elected. The Minister for Education is sitting behind me. We have delivered in the budget \$5.5 million for the Parkdale Secondary College.

As we know, Victorians value highly sporting achievement and the opportunity to participate in a variety of sporting activities. Sport builds strong and healthy communities. It is therefore a priority of the Victorian coalition government to increase the number of opportunities for all Victorians to participate in sport and recreation. We want to encourage physical activity, which also helps address the lifestyle-related conditions and diseases that Victorians are developing, including obesity and type 2 diabetes. Importantly, physical education is a great way of getting people more active. We want to encourage physical activity to address lifestyle-related diseases and that is why increasing participation in sport is a key theme of the Victorian coalition government.

I thank the member for Mordialloc for this invitation and for raising this matter with me tonight. I would be pleased to visit her electorate to see firsthand the great work of the Parkdale Secondary College elite sports program and to meet with the principal, Greg McMahon. She tells me he is a sporting fanatic. I would like him and others to outline the program and the opportunities for the future. I accept that invitation.

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — The member for Preston raised with me issues regarding the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) funding at Northland Secondary College. I am well aware of the college; it does a great job and complements the other educational facilities in the area. I would say to him what I and the Premier said during question time today: we are not making cuts to VCAL; it will still be operating in our schools. There will be no cuts to the funding for the program, and schools will still be delivering that program. The only difference will be in its coordination. As I said, the program has reached a level of maturity where its coordination aspect is no longer necessary. In fact other agencies already work with schools and some of our VCAL providers, because VCAL is provided not only in government schools but also in Catholic schools, TAFE institutions and some adult education facilities. Other agencies can do a lot of the work coordinators used to do.

The Premier and I compared VCAL to both the vocational education and training and Victorian certificate of education programs, under which the staff take on the responsibility of coordinating those programs. VCAL is now at that stage, and the number of government schools offering it has levelled out to about 70 per cent. The number is not increasing; some schools might move in and some might move out. We are more than happy to work with schools that have particular issues regarding the changes to the funding and will certainly be supporting those schools in that regard, including Northland Secondary College. The school has only to raise the matter with us and we will follow it up.

The member for Prahran has requested that I come to his electorate to talk to members of his community and look at some sites. An issue he raised with me before he was elected and one that has been well and truly in the news is the need for the further provision of government secondary college education, and Prahran is one area where there is that need. There is also a need in areas of the inner suburbs of Richmond, Coburg and Yarraville, and there is a need for primary school education in the area between North Melbourne and

South Melbourne. We are working on a number of fronts with some community groups.

Our department is looking at the whole issue. It is no good just looking at needs in isolation; we are looking at the overall provision in the inner suburbs. There have been great population changes in a lot of the inner suburbs, and we are committed to giving parents a choice of education by offering them diversity. That choice is not between government and non-government schools; that choice is about a range of schools that can fulfil the needs of students and parents. School values, the curriculum, the size of the school and where the school is located are all important considerations that parents take into account.

We firmly believe in the need for diversity, and that is why we want to build up our government school system — so that there are choice and diversity in the system. We are looking at a range of needs for government school education, especially in inner suburban areas. We will be making a number of announcements as we complete the various studies that we have undertaken. We are certainly listening to the member for Prahran and have allocated money for a study in his area. I look forward to being on the ground with him to look at sites and to talk to community groups about their need for government secondary education.

**Mr WALSH** (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — I rise to respond to the adjournment matter raised by the member for Benambra about access to Dartmouth pondage for recreational fishing. The member for Benambra is a great supporter of recreational fishing in his electorate and, as I said, wants to see recreational fishermen have access to the Dartmouth pondage.

During the election campaign we made a commitment of \$130 000 to that particular infrastructure so that recreational fishers would have access to Dartmouth pondage, and we will be honouring that commitment. I had the pleasure of visiting that area for the 30th anniversary of the building of the Dartmouth Dam with the member for Benambra when we were in opposition. The then Minister for Water refused an invitation to go to that 30-year celebration, but as the shadow minister I had the pleasure of going along and saying a few words about what a great project the Dartmouth Dam was and how water would be provided for Victoria into the future.

The only downside to that particular day was that there was one little boggy patch of water in the car park at the boat ramp and that the member for Benambra, who

swore he had never been bogged in his life, found this one patch of water and actually got bogged. We had to get someone to pull us out. He assures me that since then he has bought a snatch strap to put in his boot, so if we ever have that issue again when we visit Dartmouth, he will be right to be pulled out.

With my Minister for Water hat on I will be working with the member for Benambra and Goulburn-Murray Water, and with my Minister for Agriculture and Food Security hat on and my recreational fishing responsibilities I will be working with the member for Benambra to make sure we honour that commitment to get recreational fishers back fishing at the Dartmouth pondage.

**Mr R. SMITH** (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — The member for Hastings asked me to ensure that the fuel reduction plan for coastal villages was fully implemented. I can tell the member that I will check the status of that particular plan with my department and get back to him to make sure that he can convey to members of his community that they will be reasonably safe coming into the fire season.

The member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Health asking him to take part in a health forum in Bairnsdale, and I will make sure the Minister for Health receives that request.

The members for Cranbourne and Ivanhoe raised matters for the Minister for Planning. I will ensure that those matters are passed on.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The house is now adjourned until tomorrow.

**House adjourned 11.04 p.m**

