

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 23 October 2012

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP			
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP			

¹ Resigned 21 December 2010

² Elected 24 March 2012

³ Resigned 27 January 2012

⁴ Elected 21 July 2012

⁵ Elected 19 February 2011

⁶ Resigned 7 May 2012

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Tuesday, 23 October 2012

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

CONDOLENCES

Peter Ross-Edwards, AM

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of Mr Peter Ross-Edwards, AM, and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Shepparton from 1967 to 1991 and Leader of the National Party from 1970 to 1988.

Peter Ross-Edwards was a much-loved man of family — and in Australian politics and in our state, a legend. He was a champion for Victoria and a champion for his electorate. He was also a remarkable survivor. He survived years of bullying as a child. He survived the war in the air force. He survived tuberculosis. He survived 24 years in the Victorian Parliament and he survived 18 years as leader of his party, and despite some early close scrapes, he was never defeated.

Peter Ross-Edwards was born in Corowa on 11 July 1922. He was the son of the Reverend Rupert and Mrs Una Ross-Edwards, and Peter was educated at Corowa state and high schools and then went to Geelong Grammar School. After finishing school he planned to go to university, but his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Peter enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1942 and saw active service in Britain, Italy and the Middle East, attaining the rank of flying officer.

On discharge in 1946, Peter embarked on his legal studies but was cruelly stricken with tuberculosis, which saw him hospitalised for more than a year. He resumed his studies as a resident of Trinity College at the University of Melbourne and graduated as bachelor of laws. In 1952 he joined the Shepparton firm of P. V. Feltham and became a partner in the following year, remaining a partner for the next 23 years before he became a consultant. His law partner, Percy Feltham, had served in the RAAF as well and subsequently was himself a Country Party member of the Legislative Council.

Peter married Joy Elizabeth Perry in 1953 and quickly involved himself in local community service. He was president of Shepparton Legacy; held office as president of the local Rotary, tennis and golf clubs; and

was a member of the local RSL. He was also vice-president of the Shepparton Agricultural Society and was involved in numerous other business and charitable groups. He became active in the organisational wing of what was then the Country Party from 1957. In 1967 Peter was elected as the member for Shepparton. At the subsequent election his party lost seats, and Peter found himself propelled into the parliamentary leadership after just three years in the house.

In his maiden speech on 20 September 1967, Peter referred to the advantages we have in this country. He reminded us that we do not face divisions of nationality, colour, religion and inequality of wealth that exist in the old world and that this very fact gave Australian parliamentarians an almost unique opportunity to pass constructive legislation. He said that he would endeavour to adopt this constructive attitude for the rest of his parliamentary career — and he certainly did that.

It is a testament to Peter's skills as a parliamentarian and the respect he quickly built across the Parliament that he remained parliamentary leader successfully of the Country Party, the National Country Party and the National Party for a breathtaking 18 years from 1970 to 1988. He also involved himself significantly in the committee work of this house, serving on the Statute Law Revision Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the Standing Orders Committee. His interest in business also saw him make major contributions to select committees on Ansett Transport Industries, company takeovers and trustees legislation.

Peter and Joy had four sons, David, Tim, Richard and John, and a daughter, Sarah. Sadly, John died from cancer aged only 6 years, and Tim died as a result of a tragic car accident aged 28. They were bitter blows for Peter and the family, felt very deeply but privately.

Peter was, as I said, a loving family man, and he particularly doted on his grandchildren. Joy was and remained an exceptional support to him in his public life and his parliamentary career — an excellent sounding-board and supporter of everything he did.

The parliamentary career of Peter Ross-Edwards was substantial, but as we all know, politics is as much about chance as it is about opportunity, and it is to the detriment of the state of Victoria that he did not serve as a minister. As Professor Brian Costar observed in an obituary last week, Peter had the intelligence and the acumen to have made a very, very good minister.

Peter Ross-Edwards had a forensic legal mind. He understood regional and rural Victoria, he liked people,

and his experience in defeating a serious and debilitating illness as a young adult gave him a special compassion in dealing with his fellow Victorians. He may never have been a minister, but he did exert influence. It was influence born of respect. Those of us engaged in politics and in the learning of politics in those days well remember the often asked question, 'And what will Ross-Edwards think?'

It has been said several times recently that a characteristic of Peter Ross-Edwards was that he never lost his temper. He was a gentleman in all his behaviour, whether inside this house, in his legal practice, in the many voluntary organisations which he led or in his post-parliamentary career. He had a difficult role in that he was the leader of a third party which was generally sympathetic to the policies of the government of the day but not part of it. It is testament to the way he conducted himself that he was friends with all the premiers he served with: Henry Bolte, Dick Hamer, Lindsay Thompson, John Cain, Joan Kirner and Jeff Kennett. His politics may have been conservative in nature, but he did not always side with his Liberal colleagues; indeed I can cite the expansion of the Parliament as a case in point and, as Brian Costar observed, a flirtation with Labor preferences.

Peter continued to contribute to the state after retiring from Parliament. He served as chairman of the Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority from 1994 to 2001 and as chief commissioner of the City of Greater Bendigo from 1994 to 1995. He was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and the Centenary Medal in 2003. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1989 for his service to the Parliament and the community of Victoria.

Peter was thoughtful, he was tenacious, and he thought problems and consequences through. This meant his contributions to debates in this house were always worth listening to. He regarded politics as a serious business and never made cheap political points.

Resting on the casket at the state funeral held at St Augustine's church in Shepparton last Thursday, along with his medals and his pilot's cap, were Peter's RAAF gloves. It was a fitting metaphor for the career of Peter Ross-Edwards: he had the strong hands of a leader but always the gloves of an officer and a gentleman.

In my own engagement with Peter he was always delightful, treating everyone around him with respect and with enthusiasm. To Joy and her family, on behalf of the government we offer our deepest sympathies. Today we are especially thinking of David, his wife,

Amanda, and their daughters, Amy and Emma; Richard, his wife, Sharan, and their children, Samantha, Timothy and Andrew; and Sarah. They will each have personal, everlasting and overwhelming memories of a wonderful husband, father, father-in-law and grandfather. We trust their sadness will be overcome with reflections of happiness and delight, and Victorians will have memories of a statesman of integrity, compassion and strong principles. He truly was a champion. The tears may be warm, but the smiles and his memory are likewise.

Mr ANDREWS (Leader of the Opposition) — On behalf of the Victorian parliamentary Labor Party I join with the Premier in offering our condolences to the Ross-Edwards family and in particular his wife, Joy. The Premier has detailed many of the achievements of someone who, I think it is fair to say, was a giant of Victorian politics, someone who exerted an influence, someone who commanded a fundamental respect and someone who practised his politics in a professional and purposeful way that in an almost old-fashioned sense earned him the respect of all he dealt with.

To be central to the contest but always that little bit above it is the rarest of things. We take this opportunity to reflect that perhaps today we are, all of us, not as well served by those skills. Perhaps the contribution of Peter Ross-Edwards and the things that made him a giant of Victorian politics and a giant of Country Party and National Party politics, provide a lesson we could all do well to look upon very closely.

As the Premier indicated, Peter Ross-Edwards was born in Corowa. He attended Corowa High School and Geelong Grammar School. He later served his nation and the fight for freedom, liberty and democracy in the Royal Australian Air Force as a radio operator and gunner in Great Britain, Italy and later in the Middle East, rising to the rank of flying officer. He was, as the Premier indicated, discharged after his service in 1946 and hospitalised with what was at that stage, and indeed what continues to be right up until today, the very debilitating and challenging condition of tuberculosis.

I read that he once described himself as having had an easy war. In many respects that description is emblematic of his humility and his uncomplaining dedication to public service — qualities that he carried into his political life. As the Premier has also mentioned, upon returning to Australia he attended the University of Melbourne to study law. He sustained himself during that period with accumulated savings from his service years. At that time he met the future Labor Premier John Cain, and I think it is fair to say that they developed a bond and a friendship. It was in

neither man's nature to allow their political differences or rancour to interrupt or affect their working relationship, and perhaps it became more than that — one based on mutual respect.

Following his studies he moved to Shepparton and began his career as a solicitor at the firm P. V. Feltham, becoming a partner and laying down roots in that local community. He became one of the city's finest and most hardworking citizens. He married Mrs Ross-Edwards, who was then Joy Elizabeth Perry, and began his family.

The Premier has given a long list of different community organisations of which Peter Ross-Edwards was a central member, whether that be Shepparton Legacy, the RSL, the Rotary club, sports clubs, the local agricultural society or, from the latter part of the 1950s, his own Country Party. He was very involved in his local community; he was a proud contributor in so many different ways.

Mr Ross-Edwards was elected to the Parliament in 1967 as the member for Shepparton, becoming, as has been noted in media commentary and also today by the Premier, the leader of his party in 1970, just three years later; that was no mean feat. To then survive, endure and remain vertical as the leader of a political party for 18 long years is testament to his skill and perhaps to some of the challenges his party faced at that time. However, his skill, his endurance, his aptitude, his commitment and his passion could be questioned by nobody, and they were certainly as not questioned by his colleagues. Indeed they saw him for the leader that he was and they backed him in each and every time, and over 18 years that is no small thing.

The Premier has noted that Peter Ross-Edwards never had the opportunity to serve as a minister because of the vagaries of politics and what he saw as his duty to country Victoria and his fundamental role as the leader of the third party. But I think each of us knows, particularly those who come from that part of the state — I grew up a little bit away from Shepparton, but even for those in the area from left-of-centre households Peter Ross-Edwards was a giant — that he was well-known with a huge profile and was afforded respect right across the political divide. In spite of the fact that he never served as a minister, there could be few who have made a bigger and more profound contribution to the cause of regional and country Victoria.

To go right back to his first speech, where he made the point that regional and country Victorians should not be left behind their metropolitan cousins, that rang true

throughout his career and after his time in this place. Despite the fact that he never served as a minister, few have made a more important contribution to the cause of regional, rural and indeed country Victoria, something that I know he was proud of and something that those in his family can still be very proud of.

I want to conclude by simply making the point that Peter Ross-Edwards was in every respect a gentleman advocate, a champion of country Victoria and someone who was passionate, persuasive, principled and professional. He served his local community, his nation, his party and this Parliament with absolute distinction. His legacy is clear for all to see. Country Victoria and our democracy across Victoria are richer for his contribution, and we are all poorer for his passing. My condolences go to Mrs Ross-Edwards and all Peter's extended family.

Mr RYAN (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition on the occasion of this condolence motion and indeed the celebration of the life of the late Peter Ross-Edwards.

Peter Ross-Edwards was born in Corowa on 11 July 1922. He was the third child of Canon Rupert and Mrs Una Ross-Edwards, his other siblings being Selwyn, Joan and Meg. He spent his first 14 years in Corowa, being educated at the primary and high schools there. He was very fortunate subsequently to attend Geelong Grammar School for the last three years of his secondary schooling. That was possible because assistance was given for the education of the children of the clergy of the Church of England. As his son David remarked last week during the funeral service, Peter quipped about his time at Geelong Grammar School that he was 'undistinguished in everything'. Life at boarding school was often very unhappy for him because he was bullied as a result of the speech impediment he carried with him for the whole of his life. In context, bearing in mind the fact of his subsequent distinguished service here, it was an enormous achievement that he was able to do what he did.

After leaving school Peter worked in Melbourne with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company prior to being accepted by the Royal Australasian Air Force as part of its aircrew, where he was trained at Somers, Parkes and Port Pirie as a wireless operator and as an air gunner. He was officially enlisted on 25 April 1942. He was commissioned overseas and arrived in Britain to serve with the Royal Air Force in April 1943. There he undertook a radar course before serving in the United Kingdom, the Middle East and Sicily. When Peter was

posted to Oman and Yemen in the Middle East in May 1944, his squadron was flying Vickers Wellington medium bombers. He was promoted to flying officer in May 1945 before being discharged in April 1946.

In 1947 he started a law degree at Melbourne University, but soon after tests revealed that he was suffering from tuberculosis, so he spent the next year and a half at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. He then resumed his university studies in March 1949. He completed his law degree at the end of 1951; it was generally a four-year degree but he completed it in three years. He joined the Shepparton law firm P. V. Feltham in mid-1952. He completed his articles with the firm and worked for a short time as an employee before he became a partner. The senior partner at that stage, Percy Feltham, later went on to become a Country Party member for Northern Province in the Legislative Council.

Peter married the lady who was to be his bride of 59 years, Joy, on 27 April 1953. He became very involved in community life in Shepparton, and during his first three years served as president of the lawn tennis club, the golf club, Legacy and the Rotary club. He was also vice-president of the Shepparton Agricultural Society.

The Ross-Edwards family grew, and it grew very quickly. David was born in 1954, Timothy a year later, Richard in 1959 and John in 1960. Peter became senior partner at P. V. Feltham soon after Percy Feltham joined the upper house in 1955. Tragedy struck the family in 1966 when Peter and Joy's youngest son, John, unfortunately contracted leukaemia and was struck down after a long illness.

The Legislative Assembly seat of Shepparton was recreated in 1965, and Peter won the Country Party preselection. In a strong field of five he narrowly won with about 52 per cent of the vote after the distribution of preferences. At that stage, at age 45, Peter had never worked harder. He was a full-time member of Parliament and a part-time barrister and solicitor, and at that stage David and Tim were both away at Geelong Grammar. Three years went by very quickly. There was another election in 1970. With no directed preferences in a field of five, Peter beat the Independent candidate, Bill Hunter, by a mere 360 votes. It was a great win because he had increased his primary vote by almost 7 per cent. He subsequently became the parliamentary leader of the Victorian Country Party, as it was then. Life became busier again. The logistics of being the leader of the party, having a family to look after and being a resident of Shepparton all made it a challenging time. Despite all this, Peter did a great job

re-establishing The Nationals during the time of his leadership.

Life had always been busy at home for Joy, but with Sarah's birth in 1970 it went up a further notch. With Richard also away at Geelong, Sarah and Joy were often at home on their own. A lot happened during the 1970s. Life was frenetic for the Ross-Edwards family, very particularly for Peter. He took a keen interest in the sporting pursuits of the children. He was a pretty fair tennis player in his own right. He had a very strong community involvement around Shepparton, and of course he had his deep involvement in politics.

The long run of Liberal governments came to an end in 1982 with the election of the Labor Party under John Cain, with The Nationals holding the balance of power in the upper house. Although The Nationals generally sided with the Liberals, there was one important exception: when the party supported the construction of the National Tennis Centre. Peter then became a trustee of the centre, and he was involved from the beginning of this major project. From a small beginning Melbourne Park is now a thriving business and a showpiece for the game of tennis worldwide.

In 1984 tragedy struck the family again when Tim was killed in a car accident. He was 28 at the time. As David described him the other day, he was a gentle giant who was taken away from the family in a most untimely fashion. At the time he was engaged to be married and was in the prime of his life. Of course it was a dreadful blow for the family. Despite this tragedy, Peter carried on resolutely. In 1989 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours for services to politics, to the Victorian Parliament and to the community.

In March 1991 Peter became ill and subsequently underwent a quadruple bypass operation. Fortunately he made a very good recovery, and again showing his true colours he decided that he would not resign from the Parliament immediately; rather he went on to re-establish himself in the Parliament to ensure that the party was being strongly led and that it was in good working order.

On 19 August 1991 Peter resigned from the Parliament, and so ended 24 years of his service to the people of Shepparton and to this place. I might say that, somewhat astoundingly, the Parliament of Victoria passed a vote of thanks to Peter for his service. I cannot help but pause to note what an extraordinary thing that was. On 27 November the road between Shepparton and Mooroopna was named the Peter Ross-Edwards

Causeway. It was a fitting tribute from a local perspective to a man of his stature.

After a couple of years out of Parliament — you cannot keep a good man down — Peter was back at it again; he returned to full-time work. In 1994, at the ripe age of 72 years, Peter became the chief commissioner of the City of Greater Bendigo. He was also chairman of Goulburn-Murray Water. David tells me that basically Peter would drive to Bendigo late on a Sunday night and would return home on Wednesday to spend the second half of the week in Tatura with Goulburn-Murray Water. He spent two years as the chief commissioner of Greater Bendigo and seven years with the water authority, and he made substantial contributions to those respective entities. Accordingly it was not until his 80th birthday that Peter Ross-Edwards actually retired in the true sense of the word. He is testimony to the fact that they should strike the word 'retired' from the dictionary.

By any standard Peter Ross-Edwards was a remarkable man. He came from a humble background and the humility which was a product of that background remained with him to the last. He had enormous sympathy for every person. He overcame personal challenges and tragedies. He served his nation with distinction, despite his rather self-deprecating comments, as was reflected in the observations of the Leader of the Opposition. In fact he was a member of bomber command during World War II, and this being a day when we have again heard of the death of another of our soldiers in Afghanistan, it is a timely reminder of the dangers which were faced by the men and women who served us then and who continue to serve us now.

Peter was a practising solicitor who was renowned for his competence. He served this Parliament and the people of the electorate of Shepparton with absolute distinction for 24 years. Peter was a member and a strong representative of community organisations of many sorts over the course of his time. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1989 for his services to the community at large.

Peter was a man of great wisdom and much sage advice. He was very pithy in his delivery. He had an expression which he often used: 'Do you follow?'. When you were in the midst of a conversation with him, he would intersperse it with this comment, 'Do you follow?'. You would have him on the phone saying, 'My boy, I think you should do this or that. Do you follow?', and until such time as you said that you did he would persistently say, 'Do you follow?'. It was best, therefore, to say early on in the conversation that you did follow.

Bill Baxter, a former minister and member of the upper house, told various stories in the course of the service last week. As I said to Bill later, it is always interesting to hear them, but I cannot help but reflect that on occasions such as that, and indeed occasions such as this, it is the stories that remain untold which are probably the truest.

Peter was a man of great integrity and wonderful principles. The many articles that have been provided to me through the parliamentary library are replete with proof of that. Some of them have interesting headlines. The headline of an article published on 29 September 1988, just after the election when Peter was the Leader of The Nationals, reads, 'On coalitions, Jeffrey's just playing possum'. When Peter left the leadership an article headed 'Old guard departs with guns blazing' was published, complete with a great photograph of Peter in the vestibule here accompanied by Patrick McNamara and Bill McGrath, both looking much younger than is now the case. There are many other articles that have been made available to all of us through which this man's integrity and principles flow.

Peter was able to argue his case and did so remorselessly and very capably, but he never did so personally. I did not ever hear him utter inappropriate language; he was a man of great calm. He always put his view very succinctly, but he did it in a manner by which he made his argument very clear. By any standards he was a class act. Unfortunately, as politics would have it, he was not able to assume a ministerial role in this place, and we are the lesser for that. There was no coalition in Victoria between 1948 and 1992, although things did come very close in 1988.

I take the opportunity to put to rest one of the matters Bill Baxter raised during the service last week when he mused on comments made by Peter that had things transpired a little differently in 1988, he — Peter — would have been Deputy Premier. Bill further commented that Peter had said to him that had that been the case, he would have preferred to have been minister without portfolio, as it were, so that he could range across the whole of the government ranks to provide his services. I simply wish to tell the Parliament that that was a forlorn hope!

The Nationals are very grateful for the magnificent service given by Peter Ross-Edwards to the party, to the people of Shepparton and to the Parliament of Victoria. We offer our sincere commiserations to Joy; to David, his wife, Amanda, and their daughters, Amy and Emma; to Richard, his wife, Sharan, and their children, Samantha, Timothy and Andrew; and also to Sarah. The late Timothy and John are also in our thoughts.

Peter Ross-Edwards was a great Victorian and a great Australian. He was a gentleman and an absolute statesman. We mourn his passing. It was indeed a life well lived.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — We have already had three excellent tributes marking the service of Peter Ross-Edwards to this Parliament, to his nation during his service in World War II and to the affairs of rural and regional Victoria. It is in relation to this latter area, and more specifically central Victoria, that I would like to pay tribute to the late Mr Peter Ross-Edwards for his work and contribution.

I hope no-one thinks it impolite of me to say that Peter Ross-Edwards and I were of different political generations, although our paths did cross early on in my time as a member of Parliament when he was the chair of the Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority, on which he served for quite some time. Even though I was a bit younger, of course I knew well who Peter Ross-Edwards was. As the Leader of the Opposition said, even if you were on the other side of politics, if you came from country Victoria, you certainly knew of Peter Ross-Edwards and knew of his contribution to politics and to the life of our state. I knew of his long contribution to state politics but also more particularly of his contribution to local government in the Bendigo region. It is for his contribution to the City of Greater Bendigo that I would particularly like to honour his memory today on behalf of the Bendigo community.

Members who remember those early heady days of local government amalgamations under the former Kennett government will remember that Peter Ross-Edwards was appointed as the very first chief commissioner of the newly formed City of Greater Bendigo. Those were turbulent days across the state, but particularly in Bendigo, where Peter Ross-Edwards, along with his fellow commissioners, was given the perhaps unenviable task of bringing together five and then six municipalities to come under the umbrella of the newly named City of Greater Bendigo. Led by Peter Ross-Edwards, the commissioners were given a task that was absolutely critical to the future of Bendigo.

While I know that at the time of the amalgamations there was much angst across the state and that many, particularly on our side of politics, were concerned at the manner in which the amalgamations were brought about, the amalgamation of the municipalities around Bendigo was critical. It needed to happen, and it did happen under the leadership of Peter Ross-Edwards in a way that in many respects has led to the city being the success it is today.

For too long the divisions between the five municipalities that comprised Bendigo had held the city back from achieving what it needed to achieve and from delivering on the big projects it needed to enhance its prosperity for the future. When Peter Ross-Edwards was given the task of chief commissioner he understood that he had to make it work — he had no choice. He did, and by all accounts he absolutely relished the role.

As a source of advice on this I went to a former press secretary and adviser to Peter Ross-Edwards, Mr Peter Hargreaves, who is well known to us in Bendigo. Peter worked for some time as the press secretary to Peter Ross-Edwards when he was Leader of the Country Party and also worked with him during his time at the City of Greater Bendigo. Peter Hargreaves told me that Peter Ross-Edwards referred to his time as chief commissioner as one of the most satisfying roles of his political career. If we look at his achievements it is not hard to understand why. He drove the cultural change that needed to be driven in the city, but he also developed an impressive list of capital works to which he could point.

Some of the projects he was associated with were the relocation of the saleyards to Huntly, where there is now a fantastic facility; the construction of a heated indoor swimming pool at Eaglehawk; and the opening up of Rosalind Park. For those who remember, many, many years ago Rosalind Park was boxed in by all sorts of different buildings and Peter Ross-Edwards drove its being opened up, bringing it well and truly into the central area of Bendigo. He also started the transition of the former post office into what is now the Bendigo tourist information centre. Looking back now, these are all projects that have well and truly stood the test of time and are recognised today as great projects that have served and continue to serve our city well.

One of his fellow commissioners, Gordon McKern, told me that Peter Ross-Edwards was a decent bloke to work with, who respected people and who had that respect returned. We have heard this as a constant theme running through the contributions made today. An example of the way Peter Ross-Edwards built those relationships with people and his understanding of the need to have those strong bonds was when he recognised early on in his time as chief commissioner that the five former mayors of the municipalities that no longer existed were a force to be harnessed. He established them as an advisory group reporting directly to him — a role the former mayors readily agreed to play — and this proved to be a valuable forum for the commissioners in Bendigo.

Gordon McKern was quoted recently in the *Bendigo Advertiser* as having said, ‘The state government couldn’t have picked a greater chief commissioner for the City of Greater Bendigo’. It appears that Peter’s interest in Bendigo well pre-dates his role as chief commissioner. Peter Hargreaves remembers, but from a slightly different perspective as political reporter for the *Bendigo Advertiser* back in the 1980s, being in the newsroom where from time to time Peter Ross-Edwards would just turn up, having made a slight detour on his way home from the city to Shepparton via Bendigo. Those who know the geography of the area well know that that is quite a detour. But it was because Peter always had a strong interest in Bendigo as an important regional centre that he took the time out to drop in to see the journos at the *Bendigo Advertiser* on his way home.

I think it is this old-school approach, which it has been said repeatedly was taken by Peter Ross-Edwards, that we look back on and admire today. Much has been said about his style as the Leader of the Country Party and the fact that members on all sides of the Parliament held him in great esteem and called him a friend in return. That has come through from people on all sides of the house. I think it is a tremendous credit to the character of the man that phrases like ‘honourable’, ‘a decent bloke’, ‘a straight, upright man’ and ‘a gentleman’ were repeatedly used to describe Peter Ross-Edwards to me by those who worked with him, those who worked alongside him, those who worked opposite him and those who worked for him as I was preparing for this condolence motion today. This is a fine tribute to his character and to the way he treated people with respect.

Peter Ross-Edwards served this place and the community of Bendigo and regional Victoria with honour and distinction, and we pay him our respects and give him our greatest thanks. We also send our deepest sympathy to the family of Peter Ross-Edwards: his wife, Joy, their children and the extended family.

Mrs POWELL (Minister for Local Government) — I am honoured to join the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier and the member for Bendigo East in paying tribute to the life of an extraordinary man, Mr Peter Ross-Edwards, AM. I am sure his family would gain great comfort from the wonderful tributes from both sides of politics that we have heard today already and that I know we will hear from those who are yet to speak. It is the mark of a man who was respected and loved by those on both sides of politics and by Victoria as a whole, and it is a great testament to his legacy.

Peter made a wonderful contribution and left a lasting legacy both serving his country in the Royal Australian Air Force and serving his community as the member for Shepparton in the Parliament of Victoria for 24 years, and for 18 of those years being Leader of the Country Party, now The Nationals.

Peter was a great local member. He was a passionate advocate for Shepparton, and the local paper sometimes referred to him as the father of Shepparton. My husband and I first met Peter as constituents about 30 years ago when we were building our first home. We needed power for our house, and the SEC (State Electricity Commission) said we did not have enough power there — we lived out of town. Somebody said, ‘You need to go and speak to Peter Ross-Edwards’, so my husband, Ian, rang up Peter and got in to see him. He told Peter the story of how the SEC said we did not have enough power to connect our home and how they would not even come out with their testers. So Peter Ross-Edwards picked up the phone, rang somebody and said, ‘I have a young man here who says that he needs somebody to go out to the house, have a look and put the testers on his power’. Three days later they did. It was found that we had enough power, and we then got electricity to our home.

We hear many stories of the work that Peter did for the local communities. He was always interested in what was happening in Shepparton and was still giving advice days before his passing. We have all heard about the sorts of committees Peter was on, awards he has won and how he gave back to his community. I just want to mention some of them again. He was a former president of Shepparton Legacy, president of the Rotary Club of Shepparton, president of the Shepparton Golf Club, president of the Shepparton Lawn Tennis Club and vice-president of the Shepparton Agricultural Society. He was a well-respected solicitor, director of Shepparton Realty, chairman of the Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority and a chief commissioner of the City of Greater Bendigo. At a time when most people would be thinking about retiring Peter took on the position of chief commissioner in Bendigo with great zeal, and as a commissioner myself I often talked with him about the role and challenge of being a commissioner.

Peter was involved in the Shepparton United Football Netball Club. His sons David and Tim played at Shepparton United, and the Ross-Edwards family held family days for the football club. The family now donates a memorial trophy each year for the best clubman in the reserves. This is in honour of Tim, who was tragically killed in a car accident. Tim was a recipient of this award when he was playing. Peter and

Joy sadly also lost another son, John, to cancer at a very young age.

Peter was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1989 for services to politics, the Victorian Parliament and the community. He was awarded the Silver Jubilee Medal, and in 2003 he was also awarded the Centenary Medal. As has been said by the Deputy Premier, the Peter Ross-Edwards Causeway, which is a main road from Shepparton to Mooropna, was named after Peter. I was there at the naming, and there was a big crowd present, which was well and truly a reflection of the great service Peter had given to the community. Peter was devoted to the Country Party, now The Nationals, and was a member of the Shepparton branch of The Nationals. He and Joy came to all the meetings of those branches, although he missed the last one due to ill health.

On a personal note Peter — or ‘PRE’, as he was most affectionately known — was a great mentor, role model, friend and adviser to me, and he was absolutely a true gentleman. When I was asked to stand for the National Party I was to be the first woman in the party in Victoria, so I phoned Peter Ross-Edwards and asked him whether he thought I would be able to win a seat for the National Party and whether I would be given a good reception. He asked me whether I had filled out my nomination form. I said that I had not. He said, ‘You come to my place, and Joy and I will be the first people on your nomination form’. At every election after that Peter was the first name on my nomination form and Joy was the second, and then I would get eight others.

Peter, Joy and Sarah always handed out how-to-vote cards for me at elections and always came to the afterparties. Peter Ross-Edwards was a great strategist. He used to sit in front of the TV while everybody else was enjoying the food and having a few drinks. Joy and former members of Parliament Bruce Lloyd and Don Kilgour would sit in front of the television watching what was happening around the state, particularly in my electorate, and Peter would do the strategies, work out the preferences and say, ‘Yes, you’ll get in’. Then he would enjoy himself. But he would watch what happened right across the rest of the state; he had a very strong interest. Peter was 90 years old when he passed away. At his 90th birthday party he was still inquiring about how everything was and how we were all going.

Many wonderful tributes were given at the state funeral on Wednesday, 17 October, at St Augustine’s Anglican Church in Shepparton, which was Peter and Joy’s church. David Ross-Edwards gave a great eulogy. He spoke proudly about Peter the father, who got involved

in his children’s and grandchildren’s interests; the great team his dad and mum, Joy, were; and what a great local member he was. The Deputy Premier put on record Peter’s political career and legacy. Bill Baxter, a former member of Parliament and colleague, spoke about Peter’s contribution to the Victorian Parliament. Sarah and Richard Ross-Edwards gave readings, which Peter had asked for and which summed up his philosophy of life. He had those readings on his fridge for quite a number of years waiting for the time when they would need to be used. When Joy asked when she could take them down from the fridge he would say, ‘No, they’ll stay there till they’re needed’, so they stayed there till they were needed. Lance Woodhouse, a business partner and long-time friend, also gave a reading.

I will quote the reading given by Sarah, his daughter. It is the philosophy of Peter Ross-Edwards, and it is one he lived by. She read:

I shall pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do, let me do it now: let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

I would like to pay tribute to the life of Peter Ross-Edwards and pass on my sincere condolences to Joy, his wife of 59 years, to his children David, Richard and Sarah and their partners, and to his grandchildren. We will all miss Peter Ross-Edwards.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — It is an honour to acknowledge the life and times of Peter Ross-Edwards, a man acclaimed as a notable Australian, Victorian political leader, father, husband, lawyer and Royal Australian Air Force officer, whose tours of duty took him to the United Kingdom, Italy, North America and the Middle East during World War II. That is an impressive list of achievements for anyone, but Peter Ross-Edwards was more than the sum of such parts.

We met in 1980 in this building. He was the Leader of the National Party, and I was starting out as a political journalist, a watcher from the hardwood balcony, absorbing the debates, mulling over the lead to the next news story and carving my name into the desk in the time-honoured reporters tradition. The relationship was symbiotic and, by necessity, sceptical on both sides until trust had been tested, and then Peter Ross-Edwards became avuncular.

The *Herald’s* first edition was the paper version of the bush telegraph. Such prominence elicited regular invitations to the leader’s parliamentary office, where he artfully pitched the wants and needs of regional and

rural Victoria. These discussions evolved into fireside insights into power, influence and the turn of the town.

Thirty years ago I wrote a feature article on Peter Ross-Edwards titled 'The third man'. It explained how one of his main aims was to make his party credible and therefore electable by broadening its identity beyond the metropolitan media perpetuating the country cousins syndrome. He bemoaned that cartoonists continually lampooned country politicians by depicting them with a straw stuck in the corner of their mouths. Peter said:

I would like to think that I've defused that to a fair extent ...

I'm well known in business circles. There are very few business people in Melbourne who haven't met me.

This was delivered with his classic deadpan understatement. He made his knowledge and connections a point of difference for his party and his leadership. Harking back to the time when Sir Henry Bolte was Premier and Sir Arthur Rylah his chief secretary, Peter Ross-Edwards detailed their modus operandi so the listener could almost smell the smoke from the cork-tipped cigarettes, taste the whisky and picture Bolte mumbling out of the corner of his mouth to his co-conspirator. Peter Ross-Edwards said:

While you had Bolte and Rylah there they knew everybody ... every businessman in the city.

He recounted that they were in every dog fight in town.

Peter Ross-Edwards punctuated each anecdote with his catchcry 'Do you follow?', ensuring that no point was lost, as the Leader of The Nationals has also recounted today. His hope during the interview was that Labor would fall short in the 1982 Victorian election and that The Nationals would hold the balance of power. He said:

I think people who know me would believe that I would not be abusing any power that might be coming my party's way.

I've had the opportunity to use that power in the past three years and it hasn't been misused, it has been used responsibly.

We have had, on many occasions in the house, the balance of power.

John Cain's election victory dashed these hopes, delivering Labor to power, but it did not end Peter Ross-Edwards's influence, nor diminish his sense of duty. On emblematic initiatives such as the national tennis centre and major reforms such as the Transport Accident Commission his support was vital. They fell within Peter Ross-Edwards's credo of being objective and considering each piece of legislation on its merits

and on how it affected Victoria as a whole, not just rural areas.

Decentralisation and a fairer go for regional Victoria were his passions. He mounted repeated campaigns for better education, health and sports opportunities for the thousands of people that he argued preferred country life but were forced to live in cities for economic and educational reasons. He led his party when some feared it may not survive, nurtured its transition and, although he was denied his ultimate goal of government, helped pave the way for the then National Party to later form coalition governments under his successors Pat McNamara and the current Leader of The Nationals.

I was lucky enough to enjoy the hospitality of Peter and his wife Joy at their home on that seductive curve in the Murray River, amid pristine bushland at Shepparton. When he retired from Parliament, hard-bitten journalists went out of their way to wish him well, which was an acknowledgement of his standing and credibility and of a hard job well done, despite the vagaries of political life. It was a mark of respect for his integrity — that he had remained true to himself and to the people and the causes he cherished. It was a mark that the MP who represented Shepparton for 24 years and led his Country-National Party for 18 years had emerged as a statesman. Do you follow?

Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — It is my pleasure to join with the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and other members of Parliament in the condolence motion on Peter Ross-Edwards, a life well celebrated in representing the community here in Victoria.

As has already been said, Peter Ross-Edwards was born in October 1912 in Corowa, New South Wales. Peter was educated at Corowa state and high schools, and went on to Geelong Grammar School, having been the beneficiary of a scholarship to do so because of his father's service to the Church of England. He served with distinction in the Royal Australian Air Force from 1942 to 1946, serving in the United Kingdom, Italy and the Middle East. On returning from service he went on to Trinity College at the University of Melbourne, where he studied law, and after a short period working for the Colonial Sugar Refining company in Melbourne he moved to Shepparton to take up a career with P. V. Feltham.

As has also already been said, Percy Feltham, the principal of that business, was a member of the Legislative Council in this place. Not long after moving to Shepparton, Peter married Joy Perry. They had five children — four sons and a daughter. Peter started a

long community involvement with Shepparton, serving as president of Legacy, the Rotary Club of Shepparton and the tennis and golf clubs, and as vice-president of the Shepparton Agricultural Society. The after-service reception was at the Shepparton Golf Club, something of which Peter was very proud.

In 1965 an electoral redistribution re-created the Legislative Assembly seat of Shepparton, and Peter went on to win that seat in 1967. In his contribution to the address-in-reply, which was his inaugural speech in this place, he talked about the responsibility of representing the region of Shepparton. He spoke with passion about the value of irrigation for that region and of fruit growing and the businesses of SPC and Ardmona, which were built on the fruit growing in the region. He spoke about the importance to the area of dairying and of health and education services. He made some comments about the fact that at that time the Tatura school was the third worst school in the state, which is something he no doubt corrected once he became the member. He also talked about the discovery of oil and gas in Bass Strait, which happened at about that time. He spoke about the need to make sure that country Victoria, not just Melbourne and Geelong, was also the beneficiary of natural gas, so that country businesses were not disadvantaged by the cost of energy for them.

It is interesting to note that at the end of that address-in-reply speech Peter said:

Whether my term of service in this house is long or short, I shall endeavour to make a constructive contribution to the legislation in this house.

As we know, his service was long, and he went on to serve with distinction in this place for 24 years. He was re-elected in 1970 by a mere 360 votes in what was a very tough election, but he won with a comfortable majority in every election after that. At the same time, also in 1970, Peter was elected as the leader of the then Country Party. There had been a poor election result for the party in that year. In his article following Peter's passing, Brian Costar wrote that most of the issues for the Country Party around that election were about a foolish preference flirtation with the Labor Party — never ever foolish, but never ever again!

In 1982 the election of the John Cain Labor Party government saw the National Party retain the balance of power in the upper house. At that time the National Party usually voted with the Liberal Party, but on one particular issue — which I think is a great legacy of Peter's — the National Party members actually voted with the Labor Party. It was to have the Melbourne tennis centre started. We know what a great legacy and

opportunity that has proved for Melbourne and for tennis in Melbourne and Victoria. At the 1988 election Peter voluntarily relinquished the leadership and went to the back bench. Peter was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1989 for services to politics, the Victorian Parliament and the community. Following a quadruple bypass Peter returned to Parliament but resigned in 1991.

A couple of sayings have been handed down as part of the folklore of The Nationals here in Victoria. One of Peter's was, 'If you can't say it in 10 minutes, it isn't worth saying', which I think a lot of people could still take note of today. Peter was always impeccably dressed, and one of the pieces of advice he gave every new incoming member of the National Party was, 'Always dress like you are going to meet the Governor, and you will never be caught short in your attire'. Even though he retired from Parliament, he had not finished his time in public life.

Following the McDonald review of the water sector in Victoria, Peter was appointed the inaugural chairman of Goulburn-Murray Water, and that is a position in which he served with distinction from 1994 to 2001. Those were the good days of Goulburn-Murray Water. It has had some challenges since, and someone like Peter is needed today to rebuild it; I think we have Llew Vale doing that with distinction at the moment. This goes back to the fact that in his inaugural speech Peter spoke with passion about water, his commitment to the water sector across northern Victoria and its importance to our economic activity.

As the member for Bendigo East has already touched on, Peter served as the chief commissioner for the City of Greater Bendigo from 1994 to 1995. As the member for Bendigo East articulated very well, six councils were merged into one at that time. For the people who remember something about the history of Bendigo, with that large number of local government areas being represented in effect as one city it was always very difficult to get development. The way Greater Bendigo is structured today is a great legacy of Peter's role over that time.

Following his retirement from both those roles, Peter maintained an active interest in politics and quite often made comments. As has already been said a number of times, he was not afraid to ring someone up and give them his advice, which was always very well received. Looking through his comments, it is interesting to read a letter he wrote to the *Weekly Times* in February 2008 in which he commended the decision of the Victorian Liberal Party and the National Party to form a coalition and criticised the decision of the then Premier, John

Brumby, to pipe to metropolitan Melbourne water already committed to northern Victoria. He wrote:

I have confidence that Ted Baillieu and Peter Ryan will show the leadership qualities and the ability that will give the opposition parties the opportunity to make a serious challenge of taking government from the socialists —

which is something they actually did.

The passing of Peter Ross-Edwards is that of someone with a lifetime of service to his community, his state and his country, and our thoughts and prayers go out to Joy, David, Richard and Sarah and their extended families.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I rise to support the condolence motion for Peter Ross-Edwards, AM, moved by the Premier and supported by many others in this Parliament. I speak today as Minister for Sport and Recreation, as Minister for Veterans' Affairs and also as a member of The Nationals. As was said earlier, Peter was born in the New South Wales town of Corowa. He was a country boy who was educated locally and then attended Geelong Grammar School.

In 1940, after he left school, Peter enrolled in a diploma of commerce course at Trinity College at the University of Melbourne. However, World War II interrupted his studies, and in April 1942, at 19 years of age, he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). He gave his occupation at that stage as clerk. He served from 1942 to 1946 and distinguished himself as a flying officer. Peter was trained as a wireless operator and an air gunner at Parkes, Somers and Port Pirie and was subsequently commissioned overseas. He arrived in Britain in 1943 and served with the 8th squadron of the RAAF. In May 1944, he was posted to Oman and Yemen in the Middle East, where his squadron flew the Vickers Wellington, a medium bomber. He was promoted to flying officer in 1945 before being discharged in April 1946.

After the war Peter was a member of the RSL and was very active in the Shepparton community. He became president of both Shepparton Legacy and the Rotary Club of Shepparton. Last week, along with the current member for Shepparton, the Minister for Local Government, I visited the Shepparton RSL and met with the president, Peter McPhee, the senior vice-president, John Fella, and the treasurer, Bob Wilkie. At the start of our meeting we observed a minute's silence to honour Peter Ross-Edwards for his service and reflect on his work for the RSL and Legacy. As Minister for Veterans' Affairs I commend Peter and

his family on the duties he performed for the veterans community and for Australia.

Peter was a valued and devoted member of his community. With a growing family he also considered sport and recreation an important part of family life. As Minister for Sport and Recreation I understand his passion. He became very involved in community and sporting life in Shepparton. He served as president of the Shepparton Lawn Tennis Club and president of the Shepparton Golf Club. He was vice-president of the Shepparton Agricultural Society and was also involved in the Shepparton United Football Club, where I believe his sons played football. According to his son David, during this period Peter spent much of his free time at the golf club. As a golfer he was a leftie, and he was a reasonably handy player. David said his father's service of nine years on the golf club committee gave him his greatest pleasure. During this period of time land was bought, a public road was closed — I am not sure you would be able to do that these days — a new clubhouse was built, a course was redesigned and water was pumped to the new greens and tees. And finance was arranged in a variety of ways — wouldn't we like to know those stories!

Peter Ross-Edwards always acknowledged the overall leadership of his great friend and committee colleague Lloyd Wright in the success of this massive golf course project. During the 1980s, as the member for Shepparton and during his leadership of the Country Party, as it then was, and with the support of the then Minister for Sport and Recreation, Bill McGrath, who was also a pretty fair tennis player, he was prominent in supporting the construction of the National Tennis Centre. He then became a trustee and was involved from the beginning with this major project. From a small beginning this tennis centre is now part of a thriving Melbourne Park and a tennis showpiece worldwide. I have to say it is one of the key components in why Melbourne is considered the sporting capital of the world.

Peter Ross-Edwards also had a love of cricket and became a trustee of the Melbourne Cricket Ground. During his time as trustee a major development of the MCG took place with the redevelopment of the Great Southern Stand, which was completed just in time for the one-day Cricket World Cup final.

From 1967 to 1991 Peter was a valued member of the Legislative Assembly and was a dominant figure in the Country Party, subsequently the National Party, becoming parliamentary leader of that party from 1970 to 1988.

On a personal note, Speaker, I was appointed as chairman of commissioners at the Rural City of Mildura in the 1990s. I spoke to the then Minister for Local Government and the architect of the municipal restructure in Victoria, Roger Hallam. I asked Roger if there was someone I could talk to about the process of doing things. He told me to make time to ring Peter Ross-Edwards. I will never forget that telephone call. Peter told me to grab a notepad and a pencil, and then he gave me some words of advice. As other members have mentioned, particularly the Deputy Premier, after each point he asked, 'Do you follow?', so I made sure I wrote it all down. It was very helpful advice for me at the time, and I am really indebted to him for the support he gave me.

It was in June 1989 that Peter was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to politics, the Victorian Parliament, the community of Victoria and the armed services. My condolences go to the Ross-Edwards family, and particularly to Peter's wife, Joy. Vale Peter Ross-Edwards.

Mr CLARK (Attorney-General) — I am pleased to be able to add a few words of personal tribute to what has been said in memory of Peter Ross-Edwards. Along with the Minister for Ports I had the privilege of serving in this house with Peter in the term between 1988 and 1992, when he had recently stepped down as Leader of the National Party and we were newly elected backbenchers. Peter had taken on the role of legal affairs spokesman for The Nationals after stepping down as leader, and this was at a time when the Liberal Party and The Nationals had not yet entered into coalition, so there were often three different views on bills being expressed in this chamber.

As a member of the shadow Attorney-General's backbench committee, I had what was usually the pleasure of joining with Peter Ross-Edwards in debate on Attorney-General's bills. I had the advantage of usually speaking after Peter in the debate, and there were occasions on which our views differed. Peter took the views of a young upstart Liberal backbencher with good grace, and I can remember only one occasion on which he expressed a degree of indignation about what I had had to say in disagreement with his views.

At that stage he was one of the elder statesmen not only of The Nationals but of the Parliament as a whole. When Peter stood up to speak people would stop and listen because he brought years of wisdom and experience to what he had to say in the chamber. He was a man who always focused on the issues and the merits and on looking for a positive solution, so when

he spoke he gave sincere and well-considered opinions to the house.

Peter was a member of great distinction, and he was someone young backbenchers could look up to in that period from 1988 to 1991. He was a great role model for all members of Parliament as to what it truly means to be a servant of the community and a member of this house. He will be remembered with great fondness and with great respect by all who knew him.

Dr NAPHTHINE (Minister for Ports) — I join with the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to the life and service of the late Peter Ross-Edwards. Peter entered Parliament in April 1967, serving 24 years as the member for Shepparton until his retirement in August 1991. He had an extraordinary career as Leader of the Country Party, then Leader of the National Party, for a record 18 years. Anybody who has served as leader of any party in this place knows it is a very challenging and difficult role. To have done it for 18 years is a true testament to Peter's endurance and his ability to manage his troops — much better than some of us!

Mr Andrews — Eighteen months to 18 years.

Dr NAPHTHINE — Three years.

Mr Andrews — I was talking about myself.

Dr NAPHTHINE — I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is managing them well. Serving in the Legislative Assembly with Peter from 1988 until his retirement in 1991 was an honour I shared with the Attorney-General, who spoke about it earlier. Peter had stepped down as Leader of the National Party at the time, but made a continuing and enormous contribution as the local member for Shepparton and The Nationals spokesman on legal affairs.

Peter was among a very special group of people — some of whom were in the Parliament with me — who served their country at war. He served in the Middle East, Italy and England. He also served his community with an absolute passion and commitment at the local government level and in Parliament for decades upon his return from service in the RAAF. He served on so many levels. He was part of that group of people I knew of who came back from World War II — and I understand it was similar after World War I — and continued to serve their community, their country and their state with such distinction, and Peter Ross-Edwards was a giant among them.

Peter, as other people have said, had a serious speech impediment. It is to his enormous credit and a testament

to both his intellect and his character that despite being teased, as we would have called it in those days — probably today we would call it being bullied — at school and at university, not only did he overcome his impediment but he actually chose careers in law and politics, where oratorical skills are to the forefront. He pursued both those careers with absolute distinction.

I well recall in this house when I was on the back bench in opposition that Peter sat over there in a corner, and he was a very big man. When he stood in the house he commanded the attention of the house, not because of his size and not because he had a distinctive voice but because of what he had to say. People stopped and listened because Peter always had a degree of intellect, a degree of analysis and always made a contribution that was well thought through, positive and always added value to the debate. That is what I remember mostly about his contributions to Parliament.

Peter Ross-Edwards certainly made a great contribution to the state and to rural Victoria, especially to Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley. The member for Bendigo East acknowledged and I as Minister for Regional Cities also acknowledge his contribution to the city of Greater Bendigo as commissioner in 1994, 1995 and 1996. An article in the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 13 October headed 'Funeral to honour local hero' — and in Bendigo when someone is called a local hero it is a well-earned title — says that Peter Ross-Edwards was:

... Bendigo's chief commissioner during the period of council amalgamations from 1994 to 1996.

The article continues:

Former City of Greater Bendigo commissioner Maurie Sharkey said Mr Ross-Edwards was a man of great wisdom.

...

Mr Sharkey listed the Bendigo athletics track, Huntly livestock exchange, Bendigo Art Gallery and reclaiming Rosalind Park as some of the great things Mr Ross-Edwards had helped achieve for Bendigo.

As the member for Bendigo East said, and I agree with her, he also really helped to make Bendigo a successful, thriving regional city by helping to bring those municipalities together to make a greater Bendigo in every sense of the word.

Peter Ross-Edwards was also a man of great wit. There is a great quote that I refer to in which he was able to make his point in a humorous way but without hurting people, and it is a classic example. An article in the *Age* of 28 April 1979 refers to Mr Ross-Edwards and says:

He has a neat put-down ability which stings the Liberals, who may shortly be his cabinet colleagues.

Agriculture minister Mr Smith, for example — an obvious target for The Nationals — is the complete opposite of the Premier, Mr Hamer, he said.

Mr Ross-Edwards is then quoted as saying:

Dick tries to please everyone, but Ian Smith doesn't try to please anyone.

Not only did he make his point in that pithy remark but it was a remark that both Dick Hamer and Ian Smith would be proud of.

Another famous Peter Ross-Edwards quote appeared in the *Age*. When he was asked whether he had any advice for his colleagues, he stated:

The best advice I can give any politician is never be subjected to blackmail. Do what you think is right. And if you get cranky with someone, as you do from time to time in this place, and you are still cranky 48 hours later, have a good look at yourself. Maybe you are the stupid one.

I think that is a very good point.

I refer to Peter Hargreaves, to whom the member for Bendigo East also referred. Peter Hargreaves knew Peter Ross-Edwards through his work as a journalist, and he worked with him. In the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 12 October there is a simple, succinct quote from Peter Hargreaves which sums up Peter Ross-Edwards. It states:

He had a PhD in common sense.

Finally, Peter's son David is quoted in the *Shepparton News* of 18 October as saying that his father was:

... caring, very generous, fair and a great supporter and mentor.

My condolences to Joy, David and Amanda, Richard and Sharan, Sarah, and the grandchildren. Peter Ross-Edwards will be a loss to us all, but he was an enormous contributor to Victoria, to Shepparton and to this Parliament.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — By leave, I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Peter Ross-Edwards, AM, the house now adjourns until 5.00 p.m. today.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 3.21 p.m.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 5.03 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Member for Frankston: conduct

Mr ANDREWS (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the reporting by the member for Frankston and to the member for Frankston's public assurances that he would repay all moneys owed to the Victorian taxpayer, and I ask: can the Premier confirm whether the member for Frankston has repaid these funds?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I can only conclude that the Leader of the Opposition has absolutely no regard whatsoever for the Ombudsman in this state. The Ombudsman investigated these matters, as you would know, Speaker, after you referred these matters to him, as you were required to do. The Ombudsman examined these matters for nearly five months with all the powers available to him, and he made two recommendations, both of which we accept.

I note that one of those recommendations is, in the first instance, to review the Parliament's motor vehicle plan, and we accept that recommendation and have asked the Department of Parliamentary Services, through you, Speaker — —

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question; he should listen to the answer.

Mr BAILLIEU — We have asked Parliamentary Services, through you, Speaker, and the President, to undertake that review. Secondly, the Ombudsman recommended the referral of these matters to the Privileges Committee, and we have accepted that recommendation as well. I note that in his report the Ombudsman quite clearly said that the Privileges Committee might consider the offer made by the member for Frankston, and that is what we would expect the Privileges Committee to do and the Parliament to do, because that is the recommendation of the Ombudsman. We respect the Ombudsman.

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will not be warned again.

Mr BAILLIEU — We respect the Ombudsman, and we respect this process. We will see this process

through, unlike some, who have no regard for the Ombudsman or for the process.

Federal government: funding cuts

Mr NEWTON-BROWN (Pahran) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier advise the house as to the impact on Victoria of yesterday's federal budget cuts?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — The commonwealth government's statement released yesterday entitled *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2012–13* contains a significant impact for the delivery of services in Victoria and represents a significant reduction in funding from the commonwealth. It includes a significant withdrawal of funds previously committed, including to hospitals, schools, universities and training.

Mr Holding interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — I note the shadow Treasurer thinks it is a joke. He thinks it is a joke, and that is part of the problem.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BAILLIEU — In health, the commonwealth government has confirmed the reduction of more than \$65 million in 2012–13 to Victoria's public health system under the health reform payments. This reduction to Victoria over four years will be more than \$430 million and will come straight out of our public hospitals and from other health service providers. That is a fact, and it is a decision of the commonwealth. That is on top of the federal Labor government's further assault on the private health insurance rebate, which will reduce again the incentive for Victorians to take out insurance and in the process relieve pressure on the public health system.

In education, the announcement yesterday projects a reduction of more than \$50 million to Victorian schools in the current year due to a reduced indexation factor. Over four years the total reduction will be more than \$250 million, which will be spread across both government and private schools. These are very significant cuts in their own right, and they come on top of a reduction in regard to an adjustment of Australian Bureau of Statistics statistics from five or six years ago, so that the commonwealth government could find itself reducing grants to the state by a further \$50 million.

In both health and education the commonwealth's reductions are directed right at the front line — at hospitals and schools, the sick, families and, of course, at young people.

Mr Holding — What about TAFE?

Mr BAILLIEU — The shadow Treasurer says, ‘What about TAFE?’. What irony that is coming from the shadow Treasurer. It is perhaps the area of skills and vocational training which demonstrates Labor’s hypocrisy more than anything. After inheriting a vocational training system which was unsustainable — a completely unsustainable training system — with massive blow-outs and poor targeting, we have as a government invested more than \$1 billion more than Labor provided over four years.

We have seen the Labor opposition here campaign, saying that that is not enough and that we should just continue the unsustainable funding. But what did we get yesterday from the commonwealth? Substantial reductions to apprenticeships and training — a reduction of more than \$380 million in net terms in the Skills in Need program, including apprenticeship incentives for mature workers. The Australian Apprenticeships Incentives program and the Australian Apprenticeships Access program were also reduced, and \$150 million was pulled out of the trade training centres program. This also includes cuts to universities and research programs. The bottom line is: what have we heard about this from the Labor Party? What have we heard about this from the opposition? We have, as always, heard nothing.

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is clearly debating the issue. The opposition’s position is not a matter of government administration, and I ask you to bring the Premier back to answering the question within the standing orders.

Mr BAILLIEU — On the point of order, Speaker, I welcome the return of the member for Bendigo East, and we wish her well, but I was making the point that we have not heard from the opposition other than in a point of order. That is all we get.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Premier to get back to answering the question.

Mr BAILLIEU — Clearly the point of order is more important than standing up for Victorians, because the opposition simply will not.

Member for Frankston: conduct

Mr ANDREWS (Leader of the Opposition) — My question goes to the Premier. I again refer the Premier to the roasting by the member for Frankston, and I ask: if the member for Frankston has not yet paid back money he owes to the Victorian taxpayer, as he himself

promised, why then does the Premier continue to refer to the member for Frankston as a good local member who ‘has delivered’?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — I say again: it is quite clear that the Leader of the Opposition has absolutely no regard for the Ombudsman in this state. I make the point again, as I have: the member for Frankston — —

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr BAILLIEU — The Ombudsman has — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! We will return to the answer when we get some silence in this place.

Mr BAILLIEU — It is clear that the opposition has no regard for the Ombudsman or the recommendations the Ombudsman has made. Opposition members have already sought on two occasions to prevent that from proceeding; they have sought to divert this process, and they are doing it again. We say again: we will uphold the recommendations of the Ombudsman in full. That is as it should be. In regard to the member for Frankston, I note the protective services officers on the Frankston railway station — —

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr BAILLIEU — I note the additional police — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier is starting to debate the issue, and I would prefer that he did not debate the issue.

Mr BAILLIEU — With the greatest respect, I was asked about the member for Frankston, and the member for Frankston has been a very strong supporter of protective services officers on the Frankston railway station, and they have been delivered, likewise additional police at the Frankston police station, likewise additional funds for the Frankston Hospital — —

The SPEAKER — Order! Premier!

Mr BAILLIEU — The opposition leader might not care, but we do.

Bushfires: Marysville hotel development

Ms McLEISH (Seymour) — My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Bushfire Response. Can the minister update the house on the latest development in the coalition government’s work to support recovery in communities affected by the 2009 bushfires?

Mr RYAN (Minister for Bushfire Response) — I thank the member for her question and for being present with me this morning at Marysville, where we were able to make an announcement which I am sure will be celebrated by the whole house as well as the community at large.

We recognise the devastating social and economic effects of the February 2009 bushfires, and particularly the loss of life that occurred when those fires impacted on many Victorian communities. One of the focal points was the beautiful township of Marysville. An important milestone in the recovery process for Marysville and the surrounding region was achieved this morning with the announcement of the new Marysville hotel and conference centre project. After an extensive tender process the government has reached agreement with private sector developers and hotel managers to build a \$28 million hotel and conference centre in Marysville. The new development will be on land in the centre of Marysville acquired by the government last year. For those who know the town — and I think we all do — it is on the site of the former Cumberland facility and the adjoining block.

The Victorian government is providing \$19 million towards the project, and the facility is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2014. The successful tenderer for the project is a consortium involving Melbourne Civic City Pty Ltd as the developer, Toga Pty Ltd as the developer and hotel operator and Metier3 Pty Ltd as the project architect. Each of these entities is well known to us all as being the providers of superb facilities not only throughout Victoria but across Australia in different respects.

The facility will be known as the Vibe Hotel and Conference Centre, Marysville. The \$28 million facility will include 100, 4-star-rated rooms as part of the Vibe hotel; a conference centre and associated spaces for up to 300 people; dining options, including a new restaurant/cafe and a new wine bar/pub; a spa, health and wellbeing centre and associated recreational spaces, including a gymnasium and an outdoor pool for hotel guests; and car parking for 200 vehicles. The hotel will be built to a standard required to obtain a 5-star green rating from the Green Building Council of Australia.

This new and fantastic facility will add character, quality and social benefit not only to Marysville but also to the towns within the triangle. It will also provide a tangible economic stimulus to the tourism industry and to private sector business investment across the region. The project will create 85 new jobs over the course of the construction phase. At completion there will be some 60 jobs available on a full-time basis over the first five years of the operation of the facility.

The project plans will go on public display from 1 November until 7 December. The developers have again emphasised to me and to the people to whom we spoke this morning that they are very concerned to have local input into the final design from the people of Marysville and the region to make sure that the facility is in keeping with local aspirations.

Subject to planning considerations, construction of the new Vibe Hotel and Conference Centre, Marysville, is expected to commence in mid-2013, and the facility will be open to guests in late 2014. In November the government will be holding a local community open day in Marysville to provide an opportunity for the local community to meet the architect and the project team to discuss the plans. This is a great day for a community that suffered tragically on that terrible day in February 2009.

Public sector: wages policy

Mr PALLAS (Tarneit) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer confirm that the government’s public sector wages policy is set to be reduced from 2.5 per cent to 2.1 per cent — yes or no?

Mr WELLS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for his question. It is very clear that when we came to government we had a wages policy of 2.5 per cent plus productivity offsets. We have achieved outstanding outcomes with Victoria Police, we have achieved outstanding outcomes with Victorian nurses and we have achieved outstanding outcomes with the Victorian public service. We will continue to put that policy in place, and we will continue to work with the wages issues that are coming up over the next few years. That policy remains intact.

Exports: food and fibre industry

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. Can the minister update the house on the latest export figures for the food and fibre sector in Victoria?

Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — I thank the member for Benalla for his

question and for his very keen interest in the export of food and fibre out of this state. Yesterday I had the pleasure of going to Murray Goulburn's distribution centre at Laverton — one of the great stories for the food industry in Victoria — and announcing that the food and fibre exports out of Victoria for the 2011–12 year were just on \$9 billion, up 11 per cent on the year before when it was just over \$8 billion.

In the dairy industry \$1.9 billion of dairy products was exported out of Victoria. Talking to the Murray Goulburn people yesterday, I found that \$1.2 billion of that dairy product went through that distribution centre at Laverton on its way overseas. Grains industry exports were up 61 per cent from last year, with exports totalling \$1.8 billion. In the meat sector, \$1.6 billion of meat was exported out of Victoria to destinations, particularly in Asia but also around the rest of the world. The animal fibre industry, particularly the wool industry, had \$1.4 billion of exports, with most of that going to China.

If members consider Victoria's position in food and fibre exports, they will see that 29 per cent of the food and fibre exports out of Australia come from Victoria, a state with only 3 per cent of the arable land mass in this great nation. Victoria is doing very well there. I particularly give credit to Victorian farmers, who are the building blocks of this industry and the great job that they have been doing, recovering from the drought and taking advantage of the better seasonal conditions in Victoria. Those food and fibre export figures amount to \$1600 per person for every person in Victoria.

If members consider the destinations where this product is going, 8 out of the 10 top countries are Asian countries: China being at the top followed by Japan, New Zealand and Indonesia. This is an endorsement of the export strategy of the Premier and the government, and the fact that we are going to see this grow in the future. The Premier recently led a very successful trade mission to China with over 400 businesses and around 600 people. About 100 of those businesses were food and beverage industry participants, and, as I understand it, out of that whole trade mission they are expecting to write something like an extra billion dollars worth of business over the next couple of years.

The export contribution that food and fibre is making is a key part of the Premier's strategy in those overseas missions, not only the one to China but also the one to India earlier in the year and the one to the United Arab Emirates before that. In particular, in relation to the United Arab Emirates mission, Bega Foods in northern Victoria signed some key contracts for cream cheese in the United Arab Emirates that led to an increase in milk

demand from Tatura, an increase in jobs at Tatura and an increase in investment in the sector up there.

This is also one of the reasons that the government, through the Growing Food and Fibre Initiative in the budget, is investing an extra \$61 million over the next four years into key research in agriculture in Victoria. The Department of Primary Industries is driving research and development in the dairy industry, the grains industry, the red meat sector and in key horticultural industries, particularly the almond industry and the table grape industry. We have seen some success in the China market for grapes, with over 200 containers of grapes going to China in the last year.

There is also extra research going into the pome fruits — pears and apples — particularly at Tatura. These figures are great news for the Victorian economy, a great credit to Victorian farmers who have produced the produce that is exported, and it all augurs well for the future.

Acacia College: future

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — My question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: when did the minister first become aware of concerns regarding the operation and management of Acacia College?

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for her question. Last week we all found out that Acacia College in Mernda, which is a school that is run under the auspices of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania, would be closing at the end of this year because the church had decided that it was no longer in a financial position to support that school. It is a shocking time for the parents, students and teachers of that school because it was the last thing they expected. When you saw the reaction of the principal it was obvious that he was very disappointed and upset and that it was the last thing he was expecting.

The school has a great name, and it was doing great things. There are about 520 students at the school this year with further growth predicted for next year. The students come from a range of areas. It is a P–9 school so most of the students are from primary schools. Parents from that area were investing in their choice for their children's education in the long-term. Unfortunately the long-term future of that school as it now stands is no longer what anyone expected when they enrolled their children.

We first found out about that late on Wednesday — it would have been late afternoon that I found out — through the Victorian Registration and Qualifications

Authority, which is the registration authority for schools in Victoria. VRQA had not had official word of the closure, but it had heard unofficially. As soon as it heard unofficially, representatives from VRQA came to my office to let me know. Everybody was basically in the dark about all the factors leading up to it. That afternoon there was a staff meeting at which the staff were told that on Wednesday night there was to be a meeting for the parent community. The word came out only then and, as I said, that was when we found out.

The next day I was up in the Mallee with the member for Swan Hill when I spoke to the moderator of the Uniting Church. At that stage there was interest from the Catholic Education Office as a possible purchaser; however, that decision has not been made. The most important thing as far as we were concerned was to ensure that the students were placed and that parents had the opportunity to look at a range of options for the future education of their children. We were working towards that end. As I said, we found out — I found out — last Wednesday afternoon.

Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay: health

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Can the minister outline details of the coalition government's plan of action to improve the health of the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay?

Mr R. SMITH (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I thank the member for Forest Hill for his question. It was my great pleasure a couple of weeks ago to launch at the International Riversymposium here in Melbourne the government's plan for a cleaner Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay. This plan is designed to provide for a better, healthier and cleaner river and bay environment, and it will also inspire a greater appreciation by the community of the importance of these icons.

When we first came to government we found that when there were incidents such as the algal blooms that occurred in Port Phillip Bay earlier this year there was a lack of coordination in the response from government agencies. This was a legacy of the previous government, which did not have oversight of the departments or agencies involved. We are going to make sure that over the next five years a task force I have established will oversee the investment of more than \$1 billion in programs and initiatives that are designed to protect and maintain the quality of these waterways.

This money is a significant investment by the government, and under this plan it will be the first time that the work being done by government agencies and government departments, as well as local governments and communities, will be coordinated centrally so that we get a great outcome and have a positive effect on the Yarra and so that the work done from catchment to coast is centralised and coordinated.

The plan contains four key priority areas. We are going to manage the threats to water quality by targeting litter and pollution hot spots; we are going to provide the community with more timely and more accessible information around water quality; and we are going to tighten the management and response activities of the various government agencies so that we deal with the legacy left to us by the previous government, which did not have any oversight. Finally, we are going to be supporting the community in taking action to care for the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay.

The government's very successful Communities for Nature program showed us that people in the community are very keen to get involved in supporting their local environments. The member for Forest Hill had two groups in his area that were beneficiaries of that particular grants round, and I am sure many other members in this house also have constituents who were beneficiaries of such grants. With the next round of funding opening later this month I will be specifically asking groups that have an interest in the Yarra and Port Phillip Bay to make applications to the government through that grants round so we can support their work.

I am very pleased to say that this plan has received glowing endorsement from the community. In fact Ian Penrose from Yarra Riverkeepers said in a press release:

Today's announcement by the minister for environment, Ryan Smith, of a plan for a cleaner Yarra River is a welcomed step forward in caring for Melbourne's major fresh waterway ...

The press release further says:

Every time it rains the rubbish on our streets, run-off from rural areas and spillages from our sewers are washed into the river.

Mr Penrose said 'The plan considers these issues, for example, by proposing improved stormwater management and more accessible water quality data ...

The press release also says:

Those of us who love the Yarra thank Minister Smith for taking this initiative.

It is clear that those opposite do not love the Yarra. I also quote from an *Age* article, which states:

Environment Victoria healthy rivers campaigner Juliet Le Feuvre praised the minister for taking an interest in the health of the state's waterways and welcomed better coordination.

The government's plan will ensure that Victoria's tax dollars are spent in a coordinated way with proper oversight for the first time to get the best outcomes for the money that is spent. It will also foster a sense of environmental citizenship so that Victorians can understand the role they can play in maintaining the health of the Yarra and the bay. Through this plan Victorians can be very confident that they are getting strong leadership from this government on environmental issues that are important to them.

Bushfires: emergency services communications

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer the minister to warnings today from the Victorian fire services commissioner, Craig Lapsley. In light of Craig Lapsley's comments and questions over the shortfalls in the operation of radio equipment for emergency services and GPS transmitting capabilities, can the minister reassure emergency services personnel and all Victorians that both these systems will be fully operational before the start of the 2012–13 fire season?

Mr RYAN (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the member for her question, and I welcome her return to the Parliament; I say that in all sincerity. The question is a very appropriate one, if I may say so, in terms of the impending fire season. In answer to the matters about which the member has asked, I am able to say to her that fortuitously the CFA (Country Fire Authority) now has the second-largest budget available to it in its history to enable it to be appropriately prepared for the ever-present threat of fire in this state.

In terms of radios, we are now reaching the conclusion of a program costing a little over \$40 million for the acquisition of a new radio system. We have about 11 000 radios in the field and about another 3000 of them that are available for expansion and for spare parts, and I am delighted to be able to say that the distribution of that aspect of the network is all but concluded. We are at a point where the network to enable the carriage of the digital radio signal is going to be the subject of an agreement, I would hope, in the not-too-distant future. A lot of work has been done in that regard, and as the fire services commissioner said very recently, the necessity of establishing a system which provides us with first-class operational capacity

is the priority with regard to the acquisition of the radios.

Just last weekend, as a further aspect of this same program I was able to announce the delivery of the 1700 transportable bag radios. These are important assets for the CFA. They will enable radios to be moved from one vehicle to another, and that will permit the captains of the brigades to have much more flexibility in the use of their own vehicles at a time when the fire threat is impending. It will mean therefore that the captain, whoever he or she may be, can move the radio from one vehicle to another in a way that will not necessitate the radio having to be fixed into the vehicle that is in use.

In addition to those matters, we are well advanced with regard to the aerial fleet. We anticipate being able to make announcements about the content of the fleet and its deployment over the course of the next little while. The fire services commissioner, I am pleased to say, has had a very important role to play in the general administration of arrangements. We are going to see some different strategic placement of the aircraft in the course of this year, and we will make certain that those matters are advised to the public of Victoria in the very near future.

Insofar as the warnings that are available to people are concerned, we have now successfully negotiated the involvement of Telstra for this year, and we are going to see the emergency alert available on a location basis on mobile phones in a way that has never happened before. We have also successfully negotiated to have both Optus and Vodafone included in that system as from next season. That will be a magnificent addition to the suite of initiatives that are available to warn the public of Victoria in the event of the ever-present threat of disaster, be it fire, flood or otherwise.

Taking the situation in its totality, I am able to say to the public of Victoria in response to the member's question that — as Neil Comrie, the implementation monitor, has said — we are better prepared than we were in 2009 for the ever-present threat of fire, but we will take it as it goes.

Swimming: Summer Kidz program

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Can the minister inform the house how the coalition government is providing young Victorians with important water survival skills?

Mr DELAHUNTY (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank the member for Bayswater for her question and for her ongoing support for and commitment to giving every Victorian the opportunity to be confident in and enjoy swimming and aquatic activities. The coalition government is committed to ensuring that every Victorian has the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation activities of their choice. In particular we are committed to ensuring that Victorian children are provided with the opportunity to participate in learn-to-swim programs that will assist them with the skills and confidence to swim safely not only in pools and at beaches in Melbourne but importantly in lakes and rivers right across regional Victoria.

The coalition parties outlined this commitment in the 2010 election campaign, where we said if we got into government, we would deliver \$1.6 million over four years to ensure that the VICSWIM Summer Kidz learn-to-swim holiday program could continue. This is in contrast to the approach of the Labor government, which absolutely turned its back on the program and as a result the Summer Kidz program did not run in 2010–11.

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, that was a rather unenthusiastic but gratuitous attack on the opposition by the minister. It was out of order under standing orders. Perhaps the minister needs to throw the lifesaver up to the member for Frankston instead.

Mr Ryan — On the point of order, Speaker, in fact this was not an attack on the opposition at all. It was a reflection on the former government, as it then was, as opposed to the opposition, as it now is and hopefully long will be. The fact is the answer the minister is giving is entirely appropriate, and the point of order is out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but I do ask the minister to return to answering the question.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I inform the house that the Summer Kidz program is a learn-to-swim and safety program designed for participants between the ages of 4 and 12 which will run from Monday to Friday during the summer 2013 holiday program. The VICSWIM program is not only important for survival skills but is also a chance for young kids to make new friends, boost their health and wellbeing, and importantly learn new skills so that they can be safe in pools or around beaches in Victoria. I inform the house that even more lessons will be held this year courtesy of the 2013

VICSWIM Summer Kidz program. Nearly 110 venues around Victoria are set to run this program during 2013.

Mr Helper — On a point of order, Speaker, with regard to the minister reading his response, I well remember the lengthy ruling you made earlier this year about the inappropriate nature of members reading their contributions. The minister is clearly reading his answer, and I suggest that you point out your ruling to him.

The SPEAKER — Order! My ruling was in regard to members reading speeches. The minister is giving a detailed answer to the question that was asked of him, and it was very good. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I am pleased that the member for Ripon has woken up and is listening. Last year the Summer Kidz program was run in January. We exceeded our target by 63 per cent last year, with 4800 kids participating in that very important summer learn-to-swim kids program. This year 50 per cent of participants will be from targeted groups — that is, children from rural and regional areas, importantly new arrivals and refugees, as well as children from non-English-speaking backgrounds and people from the Indigenous community. More importantly, this program gives kids the opportunity to get the skills that will minimise the risk of their drowning in pools and streams around Victoria.

I can also inform the house that an additional 31 venues will be available for the learn-to-swim program this year, so I inform members of Parliament and people right across Victoria that they should get in and enrol in the program. Already 1000 kids have enrolled in the program. This is great news for Victorians. This investment by the government is in contrast to the approach of the previous government, which absolutely swam away from this program. This program will give greater access to kids to learn new skills in swimming.

POLICE REGULATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Mr RYAN (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) introduced a bill for an act to amend the **Police Regulation Act 1958 to establish a Police Registration and Services Board, to amend the provisions for appointments, transfers, appeals and reviews and to make miscellaneous amendments and for other purposes.**

Read first time.

STATE TAXATION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Mr WELLS (Treasurer) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Land Tax Act 2005, the Road Safety Act 1986, the Taxation Administration Act 1997, the Trustee Companies Act 1984 and for other purposes.

Mr HOLDING (Lyndhurst) — I ask the Treasurer for a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr WELLS (Treasurer) — In regard to land tax, it better clarifies the exemptions for a principal place of residence and such matters as contiguous land, people moving from independent living, people moving into retirement villages, and other matters with regard to trust companies and trustees.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

RETIREMENT VILLAGES AMENDMENT (INFORMATION DISCLOSURE) BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Mr O'BRIEN (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Retirement Villages Act 1986 in relation to the information to be provided or made available to prospective residents of retirement villages and for other purposes.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — I request that the minister provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr O'BRIEN (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — As I flagged in the title and the brief introduction, it is in relation to the information to be provided or made available to prospective residents of retirement villages. It implements a key coalition election commitment, which was to make sure that people looking to enter retirement villages have relevant information provided to them in a timely fashion.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

ROAD SAFETY AMENDMENT (OPERATOR ONUS) BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Mr MULDER (Minister for Roads) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Road Safety Act 1986 in relation to the operator onus system and for other purposes.

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — I wonder whether the minister could provide a further explanation of the bill.

Mr MULDER (Minister for Roads) — The bill deals with a significant road safety issue that operated under the former Labor government in Victoria that enabled motorists who were running red lights and speeding to avoid detection, to avoid infringement notices and to avoid accumulating demerit points that should have been lodged against their licences.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (GOVERNANCE) BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Skills) Act 2010 and various university acts and for other purposes.

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — I wonder if we could have a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — The bill abolishes the Victorian Skills Commission and also modernises the governance of TAFEs and other adult education institutions and also universities that are covered by Victorian acts of Parliament.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 5 to 14 will be removed from the notice paper unless members

wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 8.00 p.m. today.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Geelong Ring Road: section 4C noise attenuation

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of Victoria and the South Barwon electorate entitled to vote for members of the Parliament, draws to the attention of the house the threat to the health, quality of life and property values from noise and pollution, of the close proximity of the proposed arterial road currently known as section 4C. This road, soon to be renamed, is estimated, by 2020, to carry 17 000 vehicles daily, many of them heavy commercial vehicles.

Contrary to state government’s declared core values, consultation with the adjacent communities of Grovedale, Waurn Ponds and Marshall was neither open nor transparent. The Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, described the consultation process as ‘shabby’.

Despite weaknesses declared by the Liberal government’s advisory committee, which was established to investigate the consultation process and alternative alignments, Minister Guy did not order relocation of the road.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria provide funding for:

1. a 2-metre noise wall to be built on top of the already planned 2-metre earth mound to lessen the impact on the health and wellbeing of existing northern side residents;
2. these walls to also cover the full 4.5-kilometre northern length of the proposed new road;
3. a dense-grade asphalt road surface to dampen the vehicle noise;
4. dense vegetation to be planted north of the wall to reduce noise and pollution.

By Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (1192 signatures).

Roslyn Primary School: upgrade

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Roslyn Primary School council points out to the house that Roslyn Primary School delivers 21st century educational programs and requires that school facilities are equal to being a 21st century learning environment.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria approve to fund a whole school rebuild to replace school facilities built in 1951 at Roslyn Primary School, Belmont, Victoria.

By Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (901 signatures).

Barwon Valley and Nelson Park special schools: facilities

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the unacceptable conditions relating to schooling for students of the Geelong region who have an intellectual disability (with an intelligence quotient less than 71).

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria commit to both short and long-term solutions to:

1. alleviate the problem of overcrowding in the two specialist schools (Barwon Valley and Nelson Park);
2. provide a new special school facility that best meets the needs of the students.

By Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (1699 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for South Barwon be considered next day on motion of Mr KATOS (South Barwon).

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 15

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) presented Alert Digest No. 15 of 2012 on:

- Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2012**
- Climate Change and Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2012**
- Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012**
- Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2012**
- Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (NOPSEMA) Bill 2012**
- Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012**
- Tobacco Amendment (Shopper Loyalty Schemes) Bill 2012**
- Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012**
- Transport Legislation Amendment (Marine Drug and Alcohol Standards Modernisation and Other Matters) Bill 2012**

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

DOCUMENTS**Tabled by Clerk:***Financial Management Act 1994:*

Financial Report for the State of Victoria 2011–12, incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No 4 — Ordered to be printed

Reports from the Minister for Roads that he had received the reports 2011–12 of:

Rolling Stock (VL-1) Pty Ltd

Rolling Stock (VL-2) Pty Ltd

Rolling Stock (VL-3) Pty Ltd

Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 — Cumulative summary of returns as at 30 September 2012 — Ordered to be printed

Ombudsman — *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001*: Investigation into allegations of improper conduct involving Victoria Police — Ordered to be printed

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Report on the 2009–10 and 2010–11 financial and performance outcomes

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

Alpine — C29 Part 1

Greater Bendigo — C194

Greater Dandenong — C147

Melbourne — C201

Murrindindi — C35

South Gippsland — C61

Victoria Planning Provisions — VC96

Police Appeals Board — Report 2011–12

Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994 — Nomination order under s 6, application order under s 8 and a statement under s 9 of reasons for making a nomination order (three documents)

Rolling Stock Holdings (Victoria) Pty Ltd — Report 2011–12

Rolling Stock (Victoria-VL) Pty Ltd — Report 2011–12

Statutory Rule under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* — SR 112

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 101, 111, 112

Documents under s 16B in relation to *Sex Work Act 1994* — Determination of the time period for regular swab testing under ss 19(2)(a)(ii) and 20(2)(a)(ii)

Victorian Rail Track — Report 2011–12

Water Act 1989 — Lower Campaspe Valley Water Supply Protection Area Groundwater Management Plan under s 32A.

The following proclamation fixing an operative date was tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 8 February 2011:

Leo Cussen Institute (Registration as a Company) Act 2011 — section 8 — 18 October 2012 (*Gazette S345, 16 October 2012*).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2012

Council's amendments

Returned from Council with message relating to amendments.

Ordered to be considered next day.

ROYAL ASSENT

Messages read advising royal assent to:

16 October

**Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances
Amendment Bill 2012**

Fire Services Property Levy Bill 2012

23 October

**Community Based Sentences (Transfer) Bill 2012
Primary Industries and Food Legislation
Amendment Bill 2012**

Working with Children Amendment Bill 2012.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Message read recommending appropriations for:

**Climate Change and Environment Protection
Amendment Bill 2012**

**Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous)
Bill 2012**

**Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development)
Amendment Bill 2012**

**Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled
Beaches) Bill 2012.**

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE**Reference**

Ms ASHER (Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business) — I desire to move, by leave:

That, in relation to the report of the Ombudsman, *Investigation into Allegations against Mr Geoff Shaw MP — Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001*, this house refers recommendation 2 to the Privileges Committee for investigation and report.

Leave refused.

Ms Asher — On a point of order, Speaker, on three occasions the government has proposed that this matter be referred to the Privileges Committee forthwith, and on each occasion the opposition has refused leave to refer the matter to the committee as recommended by the Ombudsman under the Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001, which is a system set up by the Labor government.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Standing and sessional orders**

Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections) — By leave, I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday, 25 October 2012 so as to allow:

- (1) question time to begin at 2.30 p.m.; and
- (2) the interruption of business for adjournment under sessional order 8(1)(b) to occur at 4.30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.**Orders of the day**

Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections) — By leave, I move:

That:

- (1) the orders of the house making the resumption of debate on the second readings of the:
 - (a) Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012; and
 - (b) Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012 —

orders of the day for Wednesday, 24 October 2012, be read and rescinded;

- (2) the order of the house making the resumption of debate on the second reading of the Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012 an order of the day for Thursday, 25 October 2012, be read and rescinded; and

- (3) these bills be made orders of the day for today.

This motion enables these urgent bills to be debated during the course of today and tomorrow and potentially on Thursday. Most importantly, notwithstanding the Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012 being an order of the day for today as a result of this motion, there is an agreement between the government and the opposition that the bill will not be called on until tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.**EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE****Reference**

Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections) — By leave, I move:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools be referred to the Education and Training Committee for consideration and report no later than 30 September 2013, including:

Evidence supporting music education in schools

- (1) benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career;
- (2) general benefits to students as a result of music education;
- (3) benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education;

Current provision of music education in Victoria

- (4) music education provided through specific funding for music education;
- (5) music education provided through non-specific funding, for example, general student resource package funding;
- (6) music education provided through parent contribution;
- (7) the extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools;

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools

- (8) optimum governance and oversight arrangements;
- (9) optimum use of targeted funding;
- (10) optimum balance of central mandates and supports; and
- (11) optimum balance of music specific funding, non-music specific funding and parent contribution.

Motion agreed to.

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 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, 25 October 2012:

Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012 — amendments of the Legislative Council

Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012

Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012.

It is quite clear that as a result of the apology and debate on the motion on forced adoption a significant portion of Thursday will be dedicated to that debate and, importantly, I am very thankful to the opposition for the way it has negotiated that.

In relation to the government business program we have taken a number of bills off the program that were advertised to all parties. The three bills I have read out are urgent bills, and of course there are Legislative Council amendments to the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012 that should be able to be dealt with expeditiously. As I indicated to the house moments ago, the Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012 will not be called on until at least tomorrow to enable proper debate on it.

This is a truncated government business program compared to what was advertised. It reflects the fact that a large portion of Thursday will be taken up with the debate in relation to forced adoptions. I look forward to that; I am sure many members will make contributions either on the motion before the house or in the debate on a take-note motion that is going to be proposed at some later stage. With those few words I commend the government business program to the house.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — I would also like to make a few remarks on the government business program that has been moved by the Leader of the House and confirm, as the Leader of the House has indicated, that the opposition has been pleased to

cooperate with the government this week on matters to do with the reordering of the program.

We have a rather unusual week this week. Today through the condolence motion the Parliament duly paid its respects to the former leader of the Country Party, Peter Ross-Edwards. No doubt a portion of the day tomorrow will be taken up with the significant privilege matter that is to be considered by this house, and Thursday is obviously going to be a very important day as we pay our respects and pass on the apology regarding the forced adoptions that occurred in this state over previous decades. It is a rather busy program, within which these bills need to be accommodated, and as has been indicated, the opposition has been pleased to agree to the reordering of the bills to enable those that are time critical to be potentially passed during the course of this week.

I also note the appreciation of the opposition for the government agreeing to extend the sitting of the house by half an hour on Thursday afternoon to accommodate more speakers, if they wish, to address the issue of the forced adoptions. There will no doubt be people who would like to speak, and if we had gone to the normal adjournment time of 4 o'clock, it may not have provided them with that opportunity. I undertake to the Leader of the House that at this stage we certainly do not intend to see the adjournment debate begin later than 4.30 p.m. on Thursday.

We know The Nationals in particular like to get home early on Thursday, which brings me to that old chestnut — that is, I do not know how The Nationals will cope being here for an extra half hour on Thursday; I am sure they will work it out. We have a busy program, given everything else that is going on this week, I hope valuable debating time which should be set aside for debate on legislation is not taken up with second readings. I am an eternal optimist, and I hope that does not happen this week, but if it does, we will know that once again it is The Nationals who are forcing the hand of the government on this issue.

Finally, I will address the issue that is now on the notice paper and to which the point of order was raised previously by the Deputy Leader of the House regarding the granting of leave to deal with the privilege matter. This matter of privilege is coming to the house in an unusual circumstance. I am not sure if it is the first time a matter of privilege has come to the house in this way — —

Mr McIntosh — On a point of order, Speaker, I am loath to interrupt the honourable member on her first day back, but this is really not part of the government

business program — that is, the motion that is before the house — and should not in any way be canvassed or debated during this debate. As I said, this is a very narrow debate in relation to government business, and we are now exceeding that debate.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order.

Ms ALLAN — There is a very busy program this week, and it is important that the opposition has the opportunity to examine all matters before it in an appropriate way, whether it is legislation before the house — and I have already indicated our desire to maximise time for the debate on legislation — or any other matters that come before the house, particularly the privilege matter to be debated tomorrow. We want it dealt with appropriately, and we will now have the opportunity to examine the motion that has been moved.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member is getting off the point again.

Ms ALLAN — With those few remarks I am pleased to indicate to the house that the opposition will not be opposing the government business program.

The SPEAKER — Order! It is as if the member for Bendigo East has not been away at all.

Mr HODGETT (Kilsyth) — Welcome back! I rise to make a couple of brief comments on the government business program moved by the Leader of the House. As we heard, the Leader of the House moved a number of motions by leave just prior to moving the motion on the government business program, which will in effect allow for a number of very important matters outside the course of the ordinary events of a parliamentary sitting week to occur this week. We had a condolence motion earlier today. There may be consideration of the motion that was moved by the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business.

Ms Allan — He is talking about it!

The SPEAKER — Order! I was just about to say that the member should get back to the debate on the motion.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr HODGETT — Very limited time! Of course the apology in relation to the forced adoptions will be considered on Thursday. In effect the motions that have been moved will allow us to change the proceedings this week for those debates to occur. I too take the

opportunity to thank the opposition for its cooperative negotiations in allowing those three bills to become orders of the day. As has been outlined, we have agreement that when we get to government business we will deal with the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012 first, followed by the Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012. Then we will debate the Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012 tomorrow. We will also deal with the Legislative Council's amendments to the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012.

We have also heard that, due to the rearrangement of business, question time will take place at 2.30 p.m. on Thursday, with the guillotine shifting a little due to the sitting being extended by half an hour. Hopefully that will allow us to get through all the important matters I have mentioned, as well as allowing for adequate scrutiny of the bills before the house. On that, I commend the motion to the house.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the government business program. What a delight it is to have the member for Bendigo East back; she is certainly in excellent form and in full throttle. We ought not assume that the position that the member for Bendigo East has taken on behalf of the opposition will be a consistent one. We will look at the government business program on a week-by-week basis, as we would be expected to do. However, in the context of what by any measure is a pretty unique week, we think it is appropriate that we support the government business program.

Today it was obviously important that we pause for a period to mark the death of that great parliamentarian Peter Ross-Edwards. The business of the house has now commenced, and there are three significant bills that will be debated over the next couple of days. I indicate to the Leader of the House that we will expedite the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012. It is a relatively straightforward amendment bill. Subject to how the house is proceeding at that time I indicate that there will possibly be only one speaker for the opposition — me — and perhaps also one speaker from the government side to facilitate the bill's passage.

The apology for past forced adoptions is a matter on which I am sure many members of the house have had representations from their constituents. For many people it has been an extraordinarily distressing matter. We will have almost the whole of Thursday to debate the apology in a proper fashion. Many victims of forced adoption will have the opportunity to be in the chamber

or in Queen's Hall. As I understand it, there will also be a direct telecast at the Windsor Hotel, and I think that is a terrific thing. For many people this is a deeply felt wound that they have had to carry for an extraordinarily long time. There will be an opportunity for those people to witness this historic event, which at the very least will provide symbolic reparation for the many people who have been so badly scarred by this.

The apology for past forced adoptions is analogous to the privilege I had when I represented the Victorian government at the national apology to the stolen generations given by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. I know just how important these apologies are. The apology for past forced adoptions is symbolic at one level, but it is also a recognition that the highest institution in this state acknowledges that a very bad wrong was done to so many people who were subject to forced adoption.

I know that the Parliament will address this question with dignity. On Thursday it will be important that members of Parliament, in a bipartisan manner, say to those people who were victims of forced adoption that we stand with them. We understand their pain. We understand the grief and loss so many people have suffered. If the government and opposition can be part of a process that begins to repair some of the terrible damage that has been done to people who were subjected to forced adoption, I believe that is a thoroughly worthwhile use of the Parliament's time. In that context we support the government business program this week.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to support the government business program. I also note the earlier condolence motion for Peter Ross-Edwards, during which many kind words were said which will be of comfort to his family. It was a fitting tribute to a remarkable man who led The Nationals for a very long time.

I also thank the opposition for its pragmatic approach to changing the order of business so we can get on and deal with some of the bills of substance this evening, in particular the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012, the Road Management Amendment Bill (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012 and the Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012. It may well surprise the house to know that Mildura has a patrolled beach. In fact we have a surf lifesaving club — without the surf — which provides a valuable role in patrolling the beaches in the Mildura region. Apex Park is an extremely popular swimming spot, and I welcome this initiative to control smoking at that site.

I also agree with and support the words of the member for Richmond regarding the apology for past forced adoptions on Thursday. This is an issue that is close to the hearts of many people in this house. There are a number of people in my electorate who have been affected by forced adoption. The apology will go a long way to helping heal those people who have carried those scars for such a long time. I note that the motion is not subject to the guillotine, so it will lie on the notice paper and there will be a later opportunity for people to make contributions on it, should they wish to do so.

To finish off I welcome back the member for Bendigo East, and I say to her that I noted her comments. The Nationals will cope with being here 30 minutes longer, but I leave her with this question: will the opposition cope with the later finish, given its history?

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — We have certainly seen an outbreak of collective goodwill regarding the government business program this week. That is appropriate, but I do not think we should draw any conclusions from the return of the member for Bendigo East. The opposition's approach is very much about the unusual circumstances in which we find ourselves this week in acknowledging the passing of a great parliamentarian, the former Leader of The Nationals, Peter Ross-Edwards, and a very significant and sincere apology that will be made in relation to past forced adoptions.

Although there will be a motion of this house, I am pleased that our colleagues from the Legislative Council will be present and will have an opportunity to speak on that matter as well. It is a very important motion — just like the apology made to wards of the state during our time in government — so that people who have suffered because of past government actions can come into this Parliament and directly hear our apology and be treated with respect and supported. I encourage members to take the opportunity of using the additional half hour on Thursday before question time begins at 2.30 p.m. to spend the time talking in person with members of the community who will be here. When the apology to the wards of the state was made there was a great deal of emotion and people really felt the need to speak with parliamentarians about their feelings on that matter. I will certainly value the additional half hour to spend time with great Victorians.

While I am on my feet I want to congratulate the member for Brighton, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, on attaining 20 years of service and for being the longest serving female member of Parliament, surpassing the great Sherryl Garbutt, who was the previous member for Bundoora. There have only been

slightly over 100 women who have served in Victoria's Parliament, so to have attained 20-years service is a great feat, and I sincerely congratulate her.

I also thank the government for taking the prudent step of dropping a number of bills from the government business program this week in order that in addition to amendments coming back to the Assembly from the Council on the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012, we only have the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012, the Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012 and the Tobacco Amendment (Smoking at Patrolled Beaches) Bill 2012. If the latter bill passes this chamber and the Council, it is scheduled to come into effect on 1 December. It is incredibly important it be debated and passed so that the community will become aware of the important content of the bill. With those words I note the unusual outbreak of cooperation, which the community would be deeply surprised to see, whereby both sides of the house are supporting the government business program this week.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau: achievements

Ms ASHER (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — I wish to draw to the attention of the house the exceptional performance in recent times of the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau. Business events, as the member for Dandenong, who is a former tourism minister would know, are a very important component of the tourism industry. In the first quarter of the 2012–13 financial year Melbourne was successful in its bid to host 14 international and national business events. All of these events combined will hopefully attract about 7550 delegates and generate \$27 billion for the state economy over the next six years.

Events include the Engineers Australia National Conference 2014, the Congress of International Federation for Structural Concrete 2018 and the general meeting of the International Mineralogical Association 2018. Unfortunately in a 90-second statement I have time to focus only on congratulating the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau for exceeding its key performance indicators in the 2011–12 financial year. We have secured 210 international and national events for Victoria, up 62 per cent on the 2011–12 target. These events will

generate \$361 million for the economy over the coming years. Well done to everybody involved.

Roads: Cranbourne electorate

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — It is a serious concern that the Baillieu government is sitting on its hands when it comes to road funding in the electorate of Cranbourne. Roads are an important part of the transport network in my electorate, one of the fastest growing electorates in south-eastern Victoria. While in government Labor gainfully invested over \$500 million within the city of Frankston and city of Casey to upgrade and duplicate arterial roads, including the whole duplication of Cranbourne-Frankston Road, with about \$90 million invested in this road linking Cranbourne with Frankston; the duplication of Thompsons Road between the Mornington Peninsula Freeway to EastLink; and three lanes in each direction between EastLink and Dandenong-Frankston Road. An investment of \$30.5 million was made by the Labor government, on top of the \$22 million that was spent on the duplication of Thompsons Road between the South Gippsland Highway and Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road. This government must keep up the whole duplication of the very important Thompsons Road and not walk away from improving it.

The government is yet to commit to even one duplication of an arterial road in the electorate of Cranbourne. Residents are screaming out for road upgrades in my electorate because roads are getting congested during peak hours as a result of the rapid growth in the area. My recent electorate-wide survey resulted in residents seeking government action on a number of road projects.

Member for Albert Park: conduct

Ms RYALL (Mitcham) — On Thursday during the last sitting of Parliament the member for Albert Park yelled insultingly across the chamber at me with a smirk on his face, 'I thought it was Loud Shirt Day yesterday'. Indeed it had been Loud Shirt Day on the previous day, and for a very important reason. There are thousands of deaf and hearing-impaired children in Victoria, and Loud Shirt Day is the one day in the year when we stop and think about them and the impact their impairment has on their lives. We think about how different their lives would be with the gift of sound and speech, and we show our support as leaders in our community.

I grew up with deaf kids who had big hearing aids and significant speech impediments yet were wonderful people. I played netball in a team of deaf netballers, and

I taught myself sign language to better communicate with them. Taralye in my local community is dedicated to early intervention services for children who have deafness since birth, and I see children there with cochlear implants and hearing devices with no speech impediments or obvious disability. A world of opportunity is at their feet.

I will not sit by while the member for Albert Park in a cheap attempt at a personal put-down makes light of something very serious and something worthy of support. It is gutter politics, plain and simple, and sadly seems to be part of a pattern of behaviour from the member for Albert Park. That conduct has no place in the Parliament or indeed in the community. I call on the member for Albert Park to apologise for his childish behaviour and to apologise to every deaf child and their family in Victoria and to Taralye for demeaning and insulting the very important work it does in building support in the community.

Whittlesea City Little Athletics Centre: season opening

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — I was honoured to officially open the season of Whittlesea City Little Athletics Centre last Saturday, 20 October, at the Meadowglen International Athletics Stadium in Epping. Whittlesea City Little Athletics is home to six local clubs, and they are Epping, Meadowglen/Lalor, Northern Stars, Mill Park/South Morang, Thomastown and Metro. All teams were present and in fine form, demonstrating very strongly that fitness and sport are alive and well among our local young people. These young people are supported by an army of parents and many other helpers. Little Athletics is truly a family activity.

The kids were treated to the presence of some of our Olympic stars — namely, Day Kaila McKnight, Scott Martin and Tamsyn Manou. The national anthem was sung and photos were taken with and questions posed to our athletics champions. I would like to congratulate all the families and helpers for supporting their kids in Little Athletics. I especially congratulate the centre's executive committee members Phil Atkins, Nick Magnasalis, Cheryl Duff, Ian Shepherd, Darren Condon and Vanessa Henderson, and centre team manager Anthony Valle. The supporters give up many hours each week, year in year out, to ensure that young people get all the encouragement they need to get involved, do their best and have fun. That is certainly what they did last Saturday.

Vocational education and training: federal funding

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Labor's hypocrisy on health, education and vocational training was exposed for all to see yesterday when federal Treasurer Wayne Swan revealed a series of ill-conceived and highly damaging cuts which will impact on front-line services. While Treasurer Swan was slashing funding, where were his Victorian Labor colleagues? Did we hear them call for Victoria to receive its fair share? No. Were there calls for the commonwealth to fund its own massive promises and stop passing the buck to the states? No. Were there calls for the federal government and its bureaucracy to share some of the pain created by their own financial ineptitude instead of ripping off the states? Of course not. Were there calls for the return of the \$436 million pilfered from the national health payments or the repudiation of indexation changes, which will hit government schools? Do not be silly.

There was not one peep from the Victorian Labor Party, only deafening silence — silence from the same bunch of people who have been falsely claiming for months that this government is cutting vocational education and training when the truth is it has provided an extra \$1 billion over four years, silence while federal Labor slashed funding for education and training, silence in the face of a \$380 million cut from the Skills in Need program, silence when \$150 million was ripped out of the Trade Training Centres in Schools program, silence when the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive program was cut by \$54 million and the Australian Apprenticeship Access program was cut by \$11 million and silence when \$70 million was carved from Victorian universities. The hypocrisy of Victorian Labor knows no bounds.

Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

Dylan Patchett

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — I rise today to congratulate a young resident of my electorate, Dylan Patchett of St Helena, who recently achieved the status of junior tap champion for 2012 in the under-12 division of Ballarat's iconic Royal South Street Eisteddfod. This annual eisteddfod covers 15 theatrical disciplines, including voice, music and movement, with over 40 000 performances delivered to 30 000 people over the 14-week duration of the competition. This prestigious competition has helped five generations of aspiring Australian talent gain performance experience, and it is the longest operating arts competition in Australia, having celebrated its 120th anniversary last year.

Impressively, despite still being in primary school, this is Dylan's fifth year as an award recipient in the competition. Under the guidance of the Bev Palmer Performing Arts school he has previously competed and been recognised for his talents in the jazz, tap, classical and song and dance categories. He is in good company there. Many well-known Australian performers have appeared in the Royal South Street Eisteddfod at the start of their illustrious careers, including Anthony Callea of *Australian Idol* fame, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Jonathon Welch, founder of the Choir of Hard Knocks. Young Dylan is a credit to himself, his parents and our local artistic community. I have no doubt that, like so many other South Street competitors, he will leave a legacy of a great contribution to the arts in Victoria.

Police: Bairnsdale

Mr BULL (Gippsland East) — It is only in recent years that Victoria has had the lowest number of police per capita of any Australian state, so it was with great pleasure that I recently met with 12 new police officers stationed at Bairnsdale. The increase in police numbers has seen the station staffed to its full capacity for the first time in many years. It is part of this government's commitment to the provision of 1700 new police across the state. Along with the Country Fire Authority receiving its two biggest budgets in the past two years this reaffirms the government's commitment to the state's emergency services.

Lucknow Football Netball Club: premierships

Mr BULL — I acknowledge my old club, the Lucknow Football Netball Club, for winning the 2012 East Gippsland Football League grand final, breaking a 15-year premiership drought and winning the B-grade netball grand final. I also congratulate the Bairnsdale under-18 team on its first premiership back in the major Gippsland League competition.

Lakes Entrance Football Netball Club: grand finals

Mr BULL — Lakes Entrance Football Netball Club participated in five grand finals, winning the reserves and under-18s football and the A-grade and C-grade netball.

Heyfield Football Netball Club: premiership

Mr BULL — Heyfield won the senior premiership in the North Gippsland Football League in a huge upset.

Avon River bridge: safety rails

Mr BULL — While driving across the Avon River bridge at Stratford on my way to Parliament this week it was great to see the new safety railing that has been erected. This is something the community sought for many years. It will significantly increase visitation to the area by providing a safe passage over the Avon River for rail trail users. The bridge has been avoided by many in the past for safety reasons.

Federal government: funding cuts

Mr BULL — I note the federal government's funding cuts to public hospitals, schools, training and universities. This will impact on front-line service delivery, and I would hope that members on both sides of the house would condemn this action.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — It has been a great pleasure and privilege to be involved in a number of wonderful events for this year's Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It has been a very pink October. To start the month off I hosted a Mini-Fields of Women event to pay tribute to all those affected by breast cancer in our community. It was a time for reflection with our field of pink ladies circling the pretty pond at Buchanan Park in Berwick.

The successful event was attended by nearly 100 people from the local community and raised \$750 for Breast Cancer Network Australia. Special thanks to my hardworking team of ladies that included Nichole Hayes, Kym Frost, Lisa Neindorf, Therese Howell and everyone who was involved. Thanks also to Annabel Elsom from Breast Cancer Network Australia for her guidance and support. Breast Cancer Network Australia is a wonderful organisation that informs, empowers, represents and links together people affected by breast cancer.

The tireless Kym Frost and her team of Delishously Pink ladies put on the fifth annual Delishously Pink fundraiser and morning tea. Her team included Chris Cortese, Michelle Coster, Alison Kramer, Lisa Neindorf, Dianne Norman, Debbie Slade, Dana Reedman and Caitlyn Slade. They were once again joined by the entire Frost family, including Kym's mother Joan Hargreaves. Over \$2500 was raised for Pink Ribbon Day and Pink Hope.

Gwen Clough and the Hampton Park Bowls Club ladies hosted their annual Pink Ribbon breakfast and raised well in excess of \$900. They have now raised

almost \$5000 in five years. The entire club gets involved. This year's event was dedicated to Gail Williams, a proud and long-serving member, bar manager, club champion and ladies president of this wonderful club, who recently passed away. She will be missed by all. Thank you for supporting such a great cause.

Vermont Primary School: 50th anniversary

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I recently had the pleasure of attending the Vermont Secondary College's 50th anniversary celebrations, which comprised many events including an open day, the unveiling of a commemorative mural, the launch of a 50th anniversary book, an evening get-together, as well as year-level reunions and displays. It was a great time of celebration, and I congratulate those involved in organising these events, together with the principal, Mr Tony Jacobs, on all the preparation and hard work that was put in to ensure that it was an enjoyable and memorable day.

Federal government: funding cuts

Mr ANGUS — The federal Labor government's so called mini-budget announced yesterday represents an attack on hardworking Victorian taxpayers and Victorian businesses. It contains many funding cuts for Victoria, including cuts in national health payments of \$67 million this financial year and \$436 million over four years, as well as a series of cuts to apprenticeship programs and funding for universities, schools and other training options amounting to many hundreds of millions of dollars. In Victoria these cuts are in addition to the previous multi-billion-dollar reductions in GST funding and the lack of infrastructure funds that are made available. State Labor members should be out defending Victoria's position, but unsurprisingly they have remained silent on behalf of their constituents in the face of this financial attack.

With billions of dollars of taxpayers money being wasted on an ongoing basis by an incompetent federal Labor-Greens government it is time for the state opposition leader to stand up for all Victorians and call on the federal Treasurer to admit what most Victorians already know — that is, that he and his colleagues are simply unable to manage the Australian economy. He should implore the federal Treasurer to request that the Prime Minister call a federal election as a matter of urgency so that this unsustainable financial mismanagement can be brought to an end.

St Mary's House of Welcome

Ms KANIS (Melbourne) — On 19 October this year I helped serve lunch at St Mary's House of Welcome in Fitzroy. The service was part of St Mary's advocacy work for Anti-Poverty Week, and it welcomed members of Parliament to help at the meal service each day.

Each day St Mary's hosts two lunch sittings where a free hot meal and tea and coffee are served to people in need. Each day approximately 100 people come to St Mary's for sustenance and friendship. This year the service users, who are some of the most disadvantaged in our society, decided to raise money for an overseas charity providing for women and children. It was overwhelming to learn that by the end of the week they had donated more than \$800. I would like to congratulate and thank the staff and service users for demonstrating true generosity and a giving spirit. Victoria would be a better place if everyone were as generous as them. I would also like to congratulate St Mary's on its work in advocating for people in need.

North Melbourne: Spring Fling festival

Ms KANIS — On 21 October I attended the Spring Fling festival in North Melbourne. This festival is a celebration of all things North Melbourne, from schools and the Lost Dogs' Home to great food, multiculturalism and dancing. One of the things we love about North Melbourne is that it has such a strong sense of community, and the Spring Fling epitomised that community spirit. I would like to thank everyone who was involved in organising the event, particularly the volunteers and the centre.

Benalla electorate: schools clay target shoot

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — Congratulations to members of the Benalla branch of Field and Game Australia and to Benalla College on conducting the 50th annual schools clay target shoot last Monday. Over 270 male and female students from schools in north-eastern Victoria, southern New South Wales and even Geelong participated. Well done to Rod Berger and his team.

Country Fire Authority: Benalla brigade awards

Dr SYKES — Congratulations to the Benalla Country Fire Authority brigade members who were awarded service medals last Saturday night, in particular Graeme Green, who was recognised for 60 years of service; Jack Harrison, who was recognised

for 55 years of service; and Alan Beaton and Bill Armstrong, who were recognised for 50 years of service. Junior members were also recognised, with awards going to Mitchell Beaton, Nic Bailey, Ryan Nedeljkovic, Jessie Beaton and Sharnee Chenhall. A highlight of the evening was an extremely generous donation of \$1000 to the brigade by the Benalla Bowls Club catering team of Chris Lie and Lucia Ku; they and their children Stephanie, Eva and Matthew have been in Benalla for only three years.

BreastScreen Victoria: Mount Beauty visit

Dr SYKES — Congratulations also to Trish Dixon and local Mount Beauty women for getting the BreastScreen Victoria mobile van to visit Mount Beauty. Already over 150 women have booked in for a check.

Typo Station: graduation day

Dr SYKES — Congratulations to the Evolve team, led by Paul Stolz and chair Kevin Lynch, on another successful graduation day at Typo Station last Saturday and for their continuing excellent work in helping young people to get back on track.

Benalla Spring Show

Dr SYKES — Finally, congratulations to Wendy Beer and her team for conducting the highly successful Benalla Spring Show last weekend.

Western suburbs: TAFE funding

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — Earlier this month LeadWest released a damning report simply entitled *Social Impacts on Melbourne's West of TAFE Funding Cuts*. The report makes it clear that the funding cuts to TAFE will have a disproportionately high impact on Melbourne's west, an area that already suffers above-average unemployment and faces a range of challenges due to high pockets of disadvantage. The cuts to Victoria University are bordering on catastrophic, with the total reduction in state funding now projected to be in the vicinity of \$40 million per year. This, along with cuts in Swinburne University funding, represents the largest funding reduction for any TAFE provider in Victoria. Most tragically, these cuts have forced Victoria University to cease offering almost all of its entry-level certificate I and certificate II courses. The report estimates that there are 9000 entry-level learners in Melbourne's west receiving important pathway training for unskilled adults and young people.

Last week I joined a very impressive group of entry-level students who were learning English as a second language (ESL) at Victoria University's St Albans campus. For many of these newly arrived Victorians studying ESL is a critical pathway to employment and social inclusion. At the end of the session a number of concerned teachers told me that due to the Baillieu government's cuts to TAFE the course fees for many ESL students had almost tripled, which many students simply cannot afford. This is a disgraceful decision which will hurt our most disadvantaged citizens and makes a mockery of the government's so-called investment in skills.

Wodonga Institute of TAFE: driver training

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — I will give an example of how the coalition government is strengthening the TAFE sector in north-eastern Victoria. Last Thursday I was thrilled to be accompanied by the Minister for Higher Education and Skills at the opening of the Logic campus of Wodonga Institute of TAFE. The project included the purchase of 40 hectares of land and the construction of a driver training track and buildings. The \$16 million project was fully funded by the Victorian government and delivered within budget. The Wodonga TAFE Logic campus is a state-of-the-art facility that supports the increasing demand on Wodonga TAFE to service the road transport, supply chain, motor sport, civil construction and forestry industries and delivers a comprehensive range of driver education. The project concept was developed in consultation with industry, taking advantage of Wodonga Institute of TAFE's strong links with the logistics, transport and warehousing industries. The Albury-Wodonga region is a central transport hub, where Wodonga TAFE is a key provider of transport-related training.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Carmel Ackerly and Neil Aplin of Driver Education Centre Australia, who were present at the event where the official announcement was made of the merger of Wodonga TAFE and DECA. Through extending DECA's operations the merger will allow for the expansion of the DECA brand into new geographic areas, increasing activity and ensuring DECA's viability well into the future. I congratulate Tony Brandt, the president of the board, his board members and Michael O'Loughlin, the chief executive officer of Wodonga TAFE. On a personal note, this is a highlight of my political career in this Parliament.

Police: Brunswick open day

Ms GARRETT (Brunswick) — I rise to congratulate our local police and community on making the Brunswick police open day held on Sunday, 21 October, such a success. Between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. at Clifton Park in Victoria Street, Brunswick, the community was able to come down and meet many members of the local force and elite officers. They were able to check out police cars, trucks and equipment and, in a crowd favourite, were treated to a visit by a police helicopter, which touched down in the centre of the oval. It was terrific to see the little kids wide-eyed and happy — almost as happy as some of their parents — while they were getting photos taken next to the helicopter and its pilots. There was balloon-making for the kids, a couple of mini-rides and a police puppy dog in training for its life in the force. The police band belted out some tunes, along with a loudspeaker playing top-40 hits. The council and the White Ribbon Foundation were there with information and advice.

It really was a very special day, which gave the local community a terrific opportunity to meet their local police officers, ask them questions and, most importantly, thank them for their hard work and dedication. Particular mention should be made of local Acting Senior Sergeant Shayne Kerley, who organised the event. It was a huge effort and required an enormous amount of work. He is to be congratulated, as is, as always, Inspector Dean McGowan, for his ongoing leadership and commitment.

Australian Year of the Farmer: Patchewollock celebration

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Last Sunday the Patchewollock community had an Australian Year of the Farmer celebration event attended by 500 to 600 people. It featured local and visiting artists, a support walk, sheep races and the unveiling of Mallee fowl sculptures. Locals and visitors from afar filled the yard at the back of the pub and were six deep over the 100-metre sheep racing course. I was given the job of starter, and unfortunately the sheep went the wrong way. Considerable creativity had gone into the event. Well done to the Patchewollock Progress Association for organising this remarkable event.

Agricultural shows: Mildura electorate

Mr CRISP — It is also show time in my electorate. The weekend before last Cardross and Hopetoun had their annual shows, and last weekend it was Mildura's turn. Each show is different. Cardross, a small active

community, has a show with an emphasis on all things home — gardening, cooking and craftwork, as well as competitions. Hopetoun's show reflects its community in the centre of the Mallee with grains and livestock, as well as arts and crafts, displays and entertainment. Mildura has a large regional show, with pavilions packed with displays, demonstrations of all kinds and hardworking charities, as well as equestrian events and spectacular entertainment. None of this would work without the commitment and dedication of volunteers. Organising and running shows is hard yet vital work, as these are often the headline events in a community calendar. I would like to record my thanks and appreciation to each and every one of the volunteers who made these events wonderful.

Armistice of Moudros: commemoration

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Dandenong) — I rise to call on the Victorian and national governments to support recognition of the Armistice of Moudros. The armistice was signed on 30 October 1918 — that is, a week from today 97 years ago. It ended the hostilities started in the Dardanelles and at Gallipoli between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies. The armistice was signed by the Ottoman Minister of Marine Affairs, Rauf Bey, and British Admiral Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe on board HMS *Agamemnon* in Moudros harbour on the Greek island of Lemnos. It is fitting that they chose this location, the island of Lemnos, as it is where the war began. The island was the mobilisation base for the Allied forces, including hospitals and supplies, and it was also where the war in the east ended.

Commemorations have really been lost, as we commemorate those who fought in the First World War and those who died 12 days later as part of Remembrance Day on 11 November. However, at least some parts of the Greek community in Australia and on the island of Lemnos do remember this event, which is important both to Greece and to Australia — that is, the signing of the armistice and the ending of the eastern war in the First World War. It also coincides with one of Greece's national days, which is Ohi day, or No day, on 28 October, so it is very fitting that although the vast majority have forgotten how important this armistice was in ending the Gallipoli campaign, at least some in the Greek community are sharing both their Australian and their Greek heritage in this remembrance.

Prostate cancer: Baw Baw Biggest Ever Blokes BBQ

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — I rise to congratulate the organising committee of the Baw Baw

Biggest Ever Blokes BBQ, which will occur this Friday at Lardner Park. Approximately 750 people have confirmed their attendance, which is an exceptional result for a first-year event. Though it is a fundraising event, the Baw Baw Biggest Ever Blokes BBQ also aims to raise awareness of the risks associated with prostate cancer and generate much-needed funds to help reduce the number of deaths from the disease.

The Baw Baw Big Blokes BBQ in West Gippsland has been organised by a group of eight local men: president Michael Grogan, who has been very well supported by John Davine, Dale Cook, Andrew Schreyer, Barry Lea, Craig Debnam, Brett Evans and Duncan McNeil. Since the original Big Blokes BBQ in Shepparton many other rural centres have held events, including Bendigo, Echuca, Ballarat and Bairnsdale, with others planned for Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland.

If identified and caught at an early stage through blood test or rectal examination, prostate cancer can be cured. Early detection is the key to better outcomes and the potential cure of prostate cancer. Importantly the funds raised by this event will be distributed locally to the prostate cancer nurses of the West Gippsland Hospital and Latrobe Regional Hospital and nationally to the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

Twenty thousand new cases of prostate cancer are diagnosed each year in Australia, with approximately 3300 men dying from the disease annually, while 120 000 Australian men are living with prostate cancer today. I congratulate the committee and the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia on this important initiative and wish them well for the event later this week.

Westmeadows Primary School: song competition

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — I rise to commend Westmeadows Primary School in my electorate, which recently entered the GenerationOne Creative Change School Competition, which aims to end the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The competition will see Westmeadows Primary School students from grades 3 to 6 performing their own version of the song *Hands Across Australia*, which is the theme song of GenerationOne. *Hands Across Australia* was written by Melinda Schneider and Les Gock and was originally recorded by an ensemble of Australian artists, including Christine Anu, Ernie Dingo, Jon Stevens, the Australian Girls Choir and many more.

Students will use a range of musical methods to create their own version of this song, with the winning school collecting \$15 000 in prize money. Submissions will be made in film clip, slide show or PowerPoint form. It is wonderful to see Westmeadows Primary School taking part in this competition and knowing that through it students are gaining a better understanding of our very important Indigenous heritage.

We can always do more to help end the disparity that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, but it must start with greater education and understanding.

Chris Beattie

Ms BEATTIE — On another matter, I wish to thank all members of the house who have sent their best wishes, cards, texts and SMS messages during my recent bereavement. It is wonderful to have the support of so many people.

Disability services: Scope Shannon Park

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — On 17 October the Minister for Community Services officially opened the redevelopment of Scope at Shannon Park in Newtown, and on Thursday I had the pleasure of visiting the centre with Andrea Coote, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place.

I commend the fundraising efforts of the Shannon Park Appeal Committee, which raised \$1.245 million, including a \$255 000 grant from the Victorian coalition government, towards the \$4.34 million redevelopment. The facility is vibrant, modern and accessible and provides inclusive support services for people with a disability.

Combined Probus Club of Highton: 10th anniversary

Mr KATOS — I was delighted to be the guest speaker at the Combined Probus Club of Highton's 10th anniversary celebration luncheon on 18 October. Congratulations to president Margaret Walker and members on this milestone. It is pleasing to see the club has grown from a small group of people meeting for lunch back in 2002 to a membership of 90 today.

Health: federal funding

Mr KATOS — The Gillard government stands condemned for its cuts to Victoria's health system. Canberra's share of expenditure on public hospitals has dropped from 44 per cent in 2008–09 to 39.1 per cent today. Yesterday federal Treasurer Wayne Swan

announced further cuts of \$67 million in this financial year to the national health payments to Victoria and cuts of \$436 million over four years. These cuts are cruelly targeted at front-line health services, and the Victorian government is standing up against these cuts, unlike those opposite in this house who are sitting in absolute silence.

Children's Week

Mr KATOS — I was delighted to join my wife, Vicki, and my four boys, who came along with us to the Waurn Ponds library last Friday as part of the Children's Week launch. The Waurn Ponds library is a fantastic facility that caters for young and old in our community.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Geelong–Whitehorse roads, Mount Clear: traffic management

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — It is nearly two years since the Baillieu government came to office. Sadly this has not ushered in any noticeable progress in the Ballarat East electorate. Even projects funded under the former Brumby government have still not been completed.

Notably, \$2 million was allocated in Labor's 2010 budget to upgrade the Geelong–Whitehorse roads roundabout to improve traffic flow on a road which in recent years has become very congested, especially at morning peak times. Despite my writing to the Minister for Roads in the first month of the new government asking him to take a personal interest in this project and to treat this as a priority, nearly two years later work on the roundabout has still not commenced.

Users of this road are rightly asking, 'When?'. When will this government actually see the roundabout upgrade completed, and when will the additional works committed to be undertaken?

Police: Daylesford station

Mr HOWARD — Likewise, \$2 million was allocated in Labor's 2010 budget for a new police station in Daylesford. Again despite my urging the Deputy Premier to progress this project as a priority, nearly two years into government we still see Daylesford residents asking when they will hear that a contract to construct the new police station has even been announced. Residents of the Ballarat East electorate clearly deserve better from this government, not just in terms of completing its own projects but by

spending the funding that was allocated under the former Labor government.

AAMI Park: facilities

Mr WATT (Burwood) — I was interested to read the Auditor-General's report last week that talked about some of the projects in Victoria, including the Melbourne rectangular stadium, also known as AAMI Park. I was intrigued by the fact that the previous government did not bother accounting for catering in the facility. But that is okay; it did not have to account for catering because it did not account for any seats, so there would not be any spectators to eat any food. You do not need to account for spectators, because why would you need spectators when you do not have any sport? The previous government did not even bother with accounting for turf at the facility. It is amazing to think someone would build a sporting stadium with no turf, no sport and no spectators. That is very interesting.

Federal government: funding cuts

Mr WATT — Members also may be very interested to note that recently the midyear economic and fiscal outlook from the federal Labor government shows the removal of quite a bit of money from Victoria, and yet we hear not a word from those opposite. That is a shame. There has been a reduction of \$380 million in net funding for the Skills in Need program, \$150 million of cuts to funding for the Trade Training Centres in Schools program over the forward estimates, \$11 million out of the Australian Apprenticeship Access program and \$54.1 million out of the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives program. It is amazing that those opposite have said nothing.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 10 October; motion of Mr CLARK (Attorney-General).

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) — It is my great pleasure to rise tonight to make what I promise will be quite a short contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012. I hear the sighs of disappointment from members! When one comes to the content of the bill, one notes it is effectively an omnibus bill with a range of reasonably small, technical amendments to a number of pieces of legislation. This is not grand legal reform. Having said that, I understand it is necessary to make technical changes in respect of

some acts; some of those changes are small, and it is often sensible to make them in one go.

Let me begin by saying that the opposition will not be opposing this bill. Effectively it seeks to amend the Accident Compensation Act 1985, the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995, the Supreme Court Act 1986, the County Court Act 1958 and the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. As I said, most of these amendments are relatively straightforward and in the eyes of the opposition are controversy free. There are a number of mild concerns in respect of a number of them that we wish to place on the record, but we will not be opposing the bill.

I will describe each of those amendments in a little more detail. The bill seeks to repeal section 134AE of the Accident Compensation Act, which currently requires judges in the County Court to provide detailed, extensive and complete reasons when they are deciding a plaintiff's application — a plaintiff in these circumstances is often a worker — for leave to proceed with a common-law claim for damages in relation to a serious injury. This is an area of the law that the opposition will watch with great intent.

One of the things that Victorian Labor is extremely proud of is the restoration of common-law damages after the re-election of a Labor government under former Premier Steve Bracks, so members on this side of the house do monitor these things with a great deal of interest. We wish to place on the record that we are very up-front in our passion and desire to ensure that Victorian workers are always able to exercise the full entitlement of their rights, including those under the common law.

Having said that, the removal of this section will mean that from the moment that the legislation comes into force, which is proposed to be 1 January 2013, County Court judges will be required to provide only clear, proper and adequate reasons when deciding these matters. It should also be noted that there are some transitional arrangements in respect of this particular area, which I will refer to now.

Where an application for leave has been made and heard but where a decision is still pending as at 1 January 2013, the date on which the amendment is due to come into effect, the court is required to provide reasons as if that section had not been repealed. However, for all other relevant applications for leave commenced before 1 January 2013, the repeal will be in effect and the court will no longer need to provide detailed, extensive and complete reasons, as it is currently required to do under the act. In other words, it

will depend on where the process of a worker's application submitted prior to 1 January 2013 is at on 1 January 2013, and that might relate to whether the application has been heard and a decision is pending or whether in fact the application has just been made. The form of rationale for the decision the judge will be required to provide will depend on where the application is at on 1 January 2013. The opposition makes the gentle observation that that is quite an anomalous situation and wishes to gently say that may be problematic, but I will come to that matter in a moment.

I put on the record our appreciation to the staff of the Department of Justice in respect of this matter. The proposed amendment apparently has been suggested by the County Court judges as a means of trying to increase efficiency and reduce backlogs in the court system. I also note that the Law Institute of Victoria supports the proposed changes. It has said effectively that these changes are in the interests of efficiency and freeing up judges' time so that they are able to hear more cases. They all sound like sensible observations to me.

The opposition shares the goal of making the justice system more efficient, and one can achieve efficiency through a variety of means. One of the issues that we take up to the government goes to the government's response to backlogs in the courts and the funding allocations that are made available. But efficiency can take many forms. It is very important that in addressing what is quite a noble desire to make the justice system more efficient one must always be conscious of the potential impacts that can have on the purity, for want of a better term, of the justice experience. We also wish to express some caution that in striving for greater efficiency in the justice system we do not wish to compromise justice in the process. That is something on which we intend to keep a watching brief.

In terms of the transitional arrangements that I spoke of earlier, the opposition has some concerns about the proposal in that respect. Our concern is specifically around the effect of retrospectivity in only some cases. It may be that members of the government wish to clarify this matter for us. This is our best understanding of the transitional arrangements at this point in time. We remain open to clarification in case we have not interpreted these transitional provisions in the way the government had intended. As I said, it is incredibly important that we clarify these sorts of matters during second-reading debates on bills, given that they are often used as an important source by many, including the judiciary, in terms of the interpretation of the law.

The bill's effect potentially could be such that if a plaintiff makes an application today but the application has not been heard by 1 January 2013, the retrospective nature of the transitional arrangements might take away what could be considered a vested procedural right to detailed reasons. That is a concern that we wish to put on the record. As I said, the opposition remains open to government clarification. Failing that, we would also flag that we would intend to further interrogate this matter in the committee stage in the other place. What we are fundamentally concerned about here is to ensure that there is no prejudice or unfairness to plaintiffs in that situation, particularly if that is in fact a vested procedural right to detailed reasons. We very transparently and openly place that matter on the record.

This bill also makes a number of amendments to the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995. The bill substitutes section 13(1) of the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act to allow the tribunal to report to the Attorney-General on recommendations in relation to adjustment to judicial conditions of service as the tribunal considers appropriate. Ordinarily such a discretion would raise my hackles. I prefer very clear obligations about reporting processes, but this circumstance is slightly different, and I will briefly step through the reasons.

It seems to me to be quite a sensible alteration to the current system. The current situation requires those reports to be made at least every two years, but given that judicial salaries have now been linked to the commonwealth judiciary and that recommendations about judicial salaries were the main purpose of these reports, there is now far less need for the tribunal to spend its time providing these reports to the Attorney-General as a matter of course every two years. In short, there is no longer the need to do it as often, and so giving the tribunal the discretion to report to the Attorney-General as the need arises strikes me as a sensible amendment, and we support it.

The bill also makes a number of amendments to the Supreme Court Act 1986. Effectively the bill substitutes paragraphs in section 17AA of the Supreme Court Act 1986 to clarify that court rules can be made empowering judges and associate judges to refer matters to a judicial registrar for hearing and determination provided the court permits the delegation of that class of matter. The bill also seeks to clarify the rule-making power regarding the matters or classes of matters that are appropriate for a judicial registrar to hear and determine. The bill seeks to substitute paragraph (de) of section 25(1) of the Supreme Court Act to clarify that the court has the power to make rules

concerning which classes of matters may be heard or determined by a judicial registrar or referred to a judicial registrar for hearing and determination. My theme is becoming consistent. The opposition supports the intent of this provision.

We understand that these provisions are designed to increase the efficiency of the justice system and also to deal with the fact that there are substantial and significant pressures in terms of the list at the Supreme Court. To the extent that we wish to flag any putative concern it is this: we do not wish this system to be an excuse for the government to continue to refuse to provide the Supreme Court with sufficient resources in order for the Supreme Court to process cases and do its work efficiently. We also believe that there is some degree of risk with a proposal that may result in more matters being referred to judicial registrars for hearing and determination in the future. It is difficult to get a sense as to the likely weight or volume of referrals. As I said, the intent is a good one, but no. 1, it should not be used as an excuse not to resource the Supreme Court properly, and no. 2, we caution the government that it ought to keep a very strong watching brief on the pattern of behaviour that emerges in terms of the referrals to judicial registrars as a result of this bill and the consequences of those referrals.

There are also some amendments to the County Court Act 1958. The bill inserts a new paragraph into section 14(5) of the County Court Act 1958 to provide that previous service as Chief Magistrate immediately prior to appointment to the County Court counts as service for the purposes of calculating a judge's pension entitlements. We might cutely refer to that as the Ian Gray amendment. I must say that Mr Gray did an outstanding job in his work at the Magistrates Court. It is a terrific appointment, and we wish him all the best in his new role as a County Court judge, particularly with respect to his work at the Coroners Court.

With your indulgence, Acting Speaker, I also place on record on behalf of Victorian Labor members our deep and abiding appreciation for the work that the previous coroner, Judge Jennifer Coates, did. Both those individuals are outstanding and both those appointments have served and will continue to serve the community well. The opposition agrees that it is entirely appropriate that Mr Gray's years of service as Chief Magistrate ought to be recognised. We have no hesitation in supporting an amendment to enable that. It is incredibly important that we try to be responsive to the need to provide proper career paths to utilise and benefit from the wisdom and experience of good officers of the court. We say that Mr Gray is a fine

example of that, and we support the amendment on that basis.

Finally, the bill seeks to amend subsections 38(1) and (2) of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. This amendment effectively extends the time the government has available to it to undertake a review of the act. There is currently a review of that act with a report to be tabled in Parliament by 30 June 2013. The effect of this amendment is that that report will not be required to be tabled until 31 December 2013. The opposition fundamentally agrees that this is a necessary amendment given that the Council of Australian Governments is conducting a review of counter-terrorism legislation and that the review has only recently begun. As such, it is sensible that any review done in this state ought to be cognisant of or influenced by and responsive to the COAG review.

It strikes us as only slightly strange that this is the second time that Parliament has been asked to extend the reporting period with respect to the review of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act, and it may be that the government ought to have been more circumspect in seeking its original extension, which would have avoided the need to come back to the Parliament again to seek a further extension. That is not a point that we will necessarily grandstand about. We understand what is driving the need for the amendment and we certainly do not oppose it.

By way of concluding remarks, I reiterate that the opposition does not oppose this bill. We support all efforts to try to make the justice system more efficient. Our construction of efficiency includes accessibility. Victorian Labor is deeply proud of its strong history of having the policy aim of access to the justice system. However, we wish to place on the record our concern that in the pursuit of efficiency in the justice system justice itself is not at any point or in any way compromised. Having placed those views on the record, I wish the bill a speedy passage through the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in the debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012. With your blessing, Acting Speaker, I want to note that our thoughts and prayers are with the member for Yuroke. It is great to see her back in Parliament following her recent bereavement. It is also good to see the member for Bendigo East back in the house.

The purposes of the bill are many, and it amends five acts. While the amendments are not groundbreaking, they are nonetheless very important. I commend the

Attorney-General, who is at the table, for his ongoing work with regard to the efficacy of the judicial system. These measures are very important. The bill amends the Accident Compensation Act 1985 by repealing section 134AE. It amends the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 to extend the deadline for the tabling of a report on the operation of the act and for other purposes. It amends the County Court Act 1958 in respect of pension entitlements and recognition of service. The Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995 is also amended in respect of reporting periods. The Supreme Court Act 1986 is amended with regard to rule-making powers.

Firstly I will address the amendments to the Accident Compensation Act 1985. When section 134AE was inserted into the legislation in 2000 its intent was to ensure that County Court judges provided detailed reasons when determining a worker's application for leave to proceed with a common-law claim for damages for serious injury. In assessing how this particular provision performed it was concluded that it took additional time and placed an unnecessary burden on judges and also injured workers. All members would appreciate that when you are an injured worker the sooner those determinations are concluded the better, so this is an important provision. Importantly there is still a requirement for reasons to be provided for applications for leave to proceed, but they will be appropriate for an application made by way of originating motion. This amendment is an important one that will save time, remove an unnecessary burden upon judges and make sure we have a more timely process in regard to making determinations for injured workers.

With regard to the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 the bill amends section 38(1). As it stands a review of the act's operation is to be conducted and reported to the Parliament by 30 June, 2013, as the member for Altona mentioned in her contribution. What we are doing here is extending that deadline to 31 December 2013. The reason we are doing that is that a review of counter-terrorism legislation is being conducted under the jurisdiction of the Council of Australian Governments at the moment, and that is expected to be reported back to COAG later this year. Delaying that reporting date will provide time to consider the findings of that review, and of course it will avoid duplication at the same time.

These are important provisions. As we know, in a contemporary world it is imperative that we have counter-terrorism legislation that actually impacts upon anybody who gives some thought to undertaking such heinous activity. It is important that we get this legislation right. I am sure there will be some good

outcomes out of the COAG review, and I am sure the community will support any improvements to the counter-terrorism legislation.

In regard to the County Court Act 1958, as I said earlier, the amendments essentially seek to improve pension entitlements and the recognition of service of judges. In this particular scenario we are rectifying an anomaly in the calculation of judicial pension entitlements. Currently service in a range of judicial and statutory offices is considered in any such calculation, but the office of Chief Magistrate is not included among those offices, so these amendments will rectify that anomaly. That is common sense. It is supported by the opposition, and in particular it was supported by the member for Altona in her contribution.

In regard to amendments to the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995, we are talking about reporting periods, and again this is a common-sense but important amendment. At the moment the Victorian Judicial Remuneration Tribunal is required to make recommendations to the Attorney-General in relation to the conditions of service of judicial officers at intervals of not less than one year and not more than two years. The act needs to reflect what is current practice, and these amendments will therefore remove the requirement that the tribunal report to the Attorney-General at those specified intervals. It is another common-sense amendment.

Lastly, with regard to the Supreme Court Act 1986 there are amendments around rule-making powers. Quite simply, we seek to improve the effectiveness of judicial registrars in the Supreme Court. The bill enables the court to make procedural rules, but it also ensures that certain matters can be referred to judicial registrars by associate judges for their determination.

In summary, these are very sensible provisions which not only improve the administrative burden within the judicial system but also streamline the process at the same time. I am pleased the opposition has not sought to oppose these very sensible provisions. I congratulate the Attorney-General on another sensible piece of legislation before us this evening, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — I rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012, which is an omnibus bill that makes some minor amendments to five acts, being the Accident Compensation Act 1985, the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995, the Supreme Court Act 1986, the County Court Act 1958 and the

Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. As I said, the opposition supports these amendments.

The bill repeals section 134AE of the Accident Compensation Act, and this is an important amendment. Section 134AE requires judges of the County Court to give detailed, extensive and complete reasons when making a decision on a worker's application for leave to proceed to a common-law claim for damages for serious injury. The court will still be required to provide clear, proper and adequate reasons for applications for leave to proceed; however, in future, reasons for decision will be appropriate for an application made by way of an originating motion. The removal of this requirement will hopefully assist the court to resolve serious injury applications more quickly, which will benefit the court processes by making them more efficient. It will also assist injured workers to receive a more speedy outcome.

The bill amends section 13 of the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995. The Judicial Remuneration Tribunal is required to make recommendations to the Attorney-General in relation to judicial officers' conditions of service at intervals of not less than one year and not more than two years. The requirement to report periodically does not reflect the JRT's current statutory functions, which were changed by the Judicial Salaries Act 2004. It is believed this amendment will better reflect the limited functions that are now performed by the tribunal.

The bill also amends the Supreme Court Act 1986. It is hoped that it will increase the effectiveness of judicial registrars in the Supreme Court. The amendment will enable the court to make procedural rules to allow associate judges to refer particular matters to judicial registrars for determination. Again, this is to assist with court processes.

The bill amends the County Court Act 1958 by providing that service in the office of the Chief Magistrate counts as service in the office of County Court judges for the purposes of pension or pension entitlements. Members may not know that magistrates do not receive pensions, and maybe that is an amendment for another day. I should declare a conflict of interest! Never let a chance go by, Acting Speaker.

This omnibus bill also amends section 38(1) of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, which requires the responsible minister to arrange for a review of the operation of the act to be conducted and a report to be tabled in Parliament by 30 June next year. This amendment extends that date for review to 31 December 2013. This makes sense, given there is a

current review of counter-terrorism being conducted under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments, which is expected to report later this year. This extension will allow for full and proper consideration of the outcome of the COAG review, or so we hope, which will assist in giving proper consideration to the issues and determining whether there is a need for any further legislative amendment.

As I said, this bill makes some fairly significant but relatively minor amendments that will still have some impact on five justice acts, and I commend those amendments to the house.

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — It gives me pleasure to rise and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012. This bill makes amendments to five particular acts in the state of Victoria. They include the Accident Compensation Act 1985; the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995, or the JRT act; the Supreme Court Act 1986; the County Court Act 1958; and a newer one, the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, which I will call the terrorism act from now on.

I want to touch on these acts bit by bit, but there is something I want to go back to for the sake of the member for Altona, who posed a question to the Attorney-General. I would like to give her some clarification. The member for Altona talked about the part of the bill which relates to reducing the time required by the court to finalise serious injury applications under the Accident Compensation Act 1985, which will come into effect on 1 January next year. All the other amendments we are talking about today come into effect the day after royal assent is given.

I want to clarify the issue in relation to the amendment to section 134AE of the Accident Compensation Act 1985. The amendment allows County Court judges to give, if you like, less detailed reasons when deciding if a worker who puts in an application can proceed with a common-law claim for damages for serious injury — and it does have to be nominated as a serious injury. Obviously those sorts of substantiations will be made at the time. The County Court approached us and asked for these amendments so court resources could be better used.

The member for Altona was seeking clarification as to whose applications would be affected and at what stage of the process applications would be heard under the new law as opposed to the old law. It is quite simple. Clause 4(1) of the bill says:

If an application for leave to bring proceedings under section 134AB(16)(b) has been made and heard but a decision has not been made on that application before 1 January 2013 ... the court ... must give reasons as if section 134AE had not been repealed.

That is as clear as it can be. If a case has been heard by the time these amendments come into effect on 1 January 2013, it will be treated as if it had been brought in under the old act. Anybody whose case is heard after 1 January 2013 will be governed by the new laws. If you want to see the full benefit of this amendment, which is to unclog the justice system and certainly to unclog what is happening in the County Court, the only way to do it is to look at new cases. If we were to go back and look at cases that are currently being heard or those that are sitting in the backlog, it would just create a further backlog. New cases heard after 1 January will be heard under the amendments we are discussing today; anything that has been heard or put before the court prior to that date will be heard according to current law, and that is very plain.

I note that the member for Altona said she had some hesitation about that, although she said that the opposition would not be opposing the bill on those grounds. I hope that now the clarification has been given the opposition might support this bill rather than simply not oppose it.

Clause 5 removes the reporting requirements of the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal. This is a fairly logical and very small amendment, but it is obviously pertinent to how the JRT reports to the Attorney-General and how often it does so. It is a minor amendment but certainly an important one.

One of the other amendments being made is the clarification of the rule-making power of the Supreme Court, which relates to the Supreme Court Act 1986. This will allow certain cases in certain circumstances to be heard for determination by judicial registrars rather than by associate judges. Again this is a way of unclogging the system and making the court system much fairer and much more affordable for more people.

We are also amending the pension portion, if you like, of the remuneration part of the County Court Act 1958, which is going to allow for changes, as I say, for pension purposes. In relation to people who have gone to the County Court as judges after being Chief Magistrate, the amendment will allow for the time they served as Chief Magistrate to be taken into consideration when their years of service are calculated for pension purposes. The positions of solicitor-general, positions with the Director of Public Prosecutions and positions of chief or senior Crown prosecutor all

currently have that entitlement, if you like, rolled over to the more senior position. It is not at this point in the case of the Chief Magistrate and the County Court. It is an anomaly. We are fixing it up, but it probably should have been caught a little earlier. Certainly it is something that needs to be done, and there have been cases, of course, in the past where that anomaly has not served us well, so this is certainly a step in the right direction.

Another thing the bill does is to extend the time available to undertake and bring into the Parliament a review of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. Currently a Council of Australian Governments review is happening whereby each jurisdiction is having a look at all the state laws that relate to terrorism. That procedure was supposed to have commenced quite some time ago, but it did not come into effect until August, I think it was. For that review to be handed down, reviewed by the states and reported back on by the end of June next year would involve quite a short time frame, so we are effectively getting another six months for the state to be able to review the review and table that in the Parliament. That has to be done by 31 December next year. It certainly does not have to be on 31 December — I cannot imagine we would possibly be sitting then — so it can be brought forward if the review is done earlier.

I believe what we are doing here is making some very good amendments that are going to make many lives a lot easier and that are going to make the judicial system a lot fairer for many people and also faster, which in itself makes the system fairer as well. The system will cost less for people, obviously, if they are spending less time in court, and that has to be a good thing for justice in Victoria. The amendments are extremely logical, needed and worthwhile, and I commend the Attorney-General for the work he has done on this, in identifying and correcting these anomalies. I wish this bill a speedy passage through both houses.

Ms GARRETT (Brunswick) — It gives me enormous pleasure to rise and make my contribution to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012, a bill which, as the house has heard, makes minor amendments to five acts, which I will touch on shortly. Given that the focus of much of the discussion this evening has been on the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the changes this bill will make to it, it is appropriate that we address those changes first and follow on from some of the issues raised by both the lead speaker, the member for Altona, and the previous speaker, the member for Bayswater.

With respect to the issue of retrospectivity that members of the opposition have raised, in its current form the bill states that where leave to make an application under the relevant provisions of the act has been made but a hearing has not commenced prior to 1 January 2013, the new provisions will apply. Our concerns regarding retrospectivity are that those who have made applications under the current provisions may well be having their cases determined under a different set of provisions; hence the retrospective component.

We may not dispute that the act is clear in its terms, but we are concerned — and we just put this on the record and seek clarification — that there may be many people who have made application under existing provisions, expecting fulsome and detailed reasons to be given, who may find themselves in this situation, because the hearing has not yet commenced. We note these provisions take effect quite quickly, within the next couple of months. Those people may potentially be at a disadvantage, and the retrospectivity which we know the Parliament is always loath to impose upon applicants and others may be the very outcome of this bill.

I therefore absolutely endorse the comments of the member for Altona. I do not think they were addressed adequately by the previous speaker. Given people are making applications under current provisions and not then having their hearings determined within those provisions, the issue of retrospectivity should be the subject of a full and adequate explanation. I am sure those on my side of the house will be in full agreement with me on that.

An honourable member — Hear, hear!

Ms GARRETT — I note that fulsome endorsement from many members of the chamber!

Given we are discussing the amending of the Accident Compensation Act 1985, I note that we are closely watching this government and what form it will choose to take on the vital issue of compensation and adequate protections for injured workers. We know in the previous manifestation of a coalition government —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Weller) — Order! The member may be straying from the bill. I ask her to come back to the bill.

Ms GARRETT — With respect, Acting Speaker, I am talking about the amendments to the Accident Compensation Act. I will say that this amendment has a potential impact on people's rights by virtue of retrospectivity; we are waiting for some clarification.

We will also be watching closely on other issues to do with injured workers, as I am sure members would expect us to be. I would also note — and I will then return immediately to the bill — our concerns regarding the ripping out of close to \$500 million out of WorkCover —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Weller) — Order! I ask the member to come back to debating the amendments that are at hand.

Ms GARRETT — Moving on from the Accident Compensation Act 1985 to the other acts upon which this bill touches, including the minor amendments that are made regarding the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995, I endorse the comments made by the lead speaker and others that while this may have been an unusual amendment given the context of these issues being tied to the commonwealth judiciary, there is much less on which to report and therefore these amendments are appropriate in that circumstance.

The omnibus bill also makes some amendments to the Supreme Court Act 1986, allowing for the referral of matters to judicial registrars for hearing and determination. On face value this is a reasonably innocuous provision, and as such the opposition does not oppose it. However, we would again note — and this is firmly on the topic of the bill, Acting Speaker — that judicial registrars should not by default be substitutes for judicial officers, particularly on the range of very important and complex matters which the community relies on judicial officers to determine and ensure that the many avenues of natural justice and other important protections are adhered to. We again sound a note of caution that we will be watching to ensure that these amendments do not then lead to cuts in funding for the court system, that they do not become commonplace and that the proper processes of justice are served. Again, I sound a note of caution.

The bill also makes an amendment to the County Court Act 1958 regarding the recognition of judicial pensions. It was a significant anomaly not to include the Chief Magistrate in the list of officers in respect of the calculation of judicial pension entitlements. We pay our respects to Chief Magistrate Ian Gray on his recent appointment to the role of state coroner and congratulate him on that important appointment. This is a very significant role in our community; one which he will carry out with distinction. We do not oppose this amendment. Finally the omnibus bill amends the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 to extend the time available to undertake a review of the act because of Council of Australian Governments processes. We do not oppose these minor amendments.

Clearly these are complex issues of national security and those sorts of reviews should be given the utmost support. We understand their significance.

In conclusion this is an omnibus bill making minor amendments to five pieces of legislation, and while at face value the amendments are minor and are appropriate to be dealt with in an overarching bill — we have no objection to that — there are a range of significant issues raised in some of those pieces of legislation and more broadly in the government's approach in those areas. We are flagging our concern about some of those issues. We again note that we will be taking a very keen interest on behalf of the Victorian community to ensure that this government upholds its obligations in the area of safety and its commitment to injured workers, and also its responsibilities in the other areas on which this bill touches, including community safety. Having said that, I advise that the opposition does not oppose this bill. I commend it to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

ROAD MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (PENINSULA LINK) BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 10 October; motion of Mr MULDER (Minister for Roads).

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — It is an honour to make a small contribution to the debate on this bill today. The opposition will not be opposing this bill. This bill continues the legacy of major projects initiated by the previous government. It deals with the handover of the management of Peninsula Link Freeway to the private sector entity Southern Way Pty Ltd. This is a private-public partnership governed by a project deed between the state of Victoria and Southern Way, with the state government providing quarterly payments for delivery under an availability model. As part of the management handover, Southern Way will be responsible for towing services on the Peninsula Link Freeway, for clearing the road and for maintenance for a period of 25 years.

The bill makes various amendments to the Accident Towing Services Act 2007. The bill empowers the Peninsula Freeway Link Corporation to exercise some powers of a state road authority and appoints the corporation for specified purposes as the coordinating road authority under the Road Management Act 2004.

This is a substantial project that will open up the Mornington Peninsula and has provided 4000 jobs during its construction. The project cost is some \$759 million and it will enable residents of the Mornington Peninsula to bypass eight sets of traffic lights and five roundabouts, provide a freeway standard road to Rosebud and save up to 40 minutes in travel time to Melbourne. It is a vital project for Victoria. It will provide greater logistical capacity in the transport of goods to the marketplace and serves to highlight the level of infrastructure budgeted for by the previous government for the Victorian community.

As with so many other projects, this government is the ribbon cutter. The project is largely completed and will open in 2013. It has already been funded. This government will now complete the project by doing not much more than cutting the ribbon. However, it is important that the project be completed, along with many others initiated by the previous government.

In the last budget about \$4.6 billion worth of infrastructure projects in the road portfolio were being undertaken. However, 90 per cent of those were funded and started under previous state and federal governments. This government has to start making its mark in the road space and fund infrastructure in a much more substantial way. If members consider that \$4.6 billion funding allocation and compare it with the most recent budget, they will find that the allocation for new road funding was only about \$120 million. The problem with that is, as we all know, congestion in Melbourne is increasing. It is getting more difficult for people to get to work, and the cost estimate for the Victorian public is about \$2.6 billion. My concern is that \$120 million will go only a short way towards dealing with the congestion we have in Melbourne. This government needs to say how it is going to deal with this congestion issue.

At this stage the government has proposed the idea of the east-west link as a major project. We are still terribly unclear how it will be delivered and funded. I invite members to consider the congestion in the area west of the city where each day 165 000 cars travel over the West Gate Bridge, or the major problem of 156 000 cars travelling through the streets of Footscray and surrounding suburbs in the inner west region of Melbourne. The other week there was a major accident on the West Gate Bridge that literally brought the city to a standstill. Some time ago the government was going to look at a second river crossing over the Maribyrnong River as part of WestLink. The government in its wisdom unfortunately decided that at this stage it will not proceed with the second river

crossing and it dismantled the infrastructure developing that proposal in a design capacity.

My concern is that currently the government is looking at a link from the east to the north — I will call it cemetery link — but the greatest pressure on congestion at the moment exists in the west, and we need to get on with the job of building that second river crossing from the west. Further, if members consider the east and the congestion on Hoddle Street for drivers coming off the Eastern Freeway, 65 per cent of drivers travel to the city or the south of Melbourne for work. They do not go to the west or the north. It is currently very difficult to make the idea of the east-west link work because there are not enough cars travelling towards the west to make it financially viable.

What really needs to happen is a major treatment of Punt Road — a bit like the major project we are talking about which was just completed — to deal with the congestion which occurs along Hoddle Street every day. Approximately 90 000 cars travel along Hoddle Street seven days a week, and that congestion is only expected to get worse. In many ways the government needs to refocus its attention on a couple of major projects, which could include the second river crossing that was in the process of being designed, but it also could look at where major congestion is occurring before the Eastern Freeway. It is not occurring on Alexandra Parade but on Hoddle Street. Until that congestion is dealt with we will still have substantial congestion, and the east-west link will, firstly, not fix it, and secondly and most importantly, will be very difficult to make financially viable with the amount of traffic that moves from the Eastern Freeway towards the north and the west of the city.

If we compare the situation with that of Peninsula Link, that probably could have been a tolled road and possibly would have been financially viable, but my concern at the moment is that the government has its focus on the idea of an east to north link and maybe an east to west link eventually, which might be 15 years off. We still have terrible problems both in the east and the west which need different treatments.

There are other issues that come to mind as we talk about Peninsula Link. They include concerns I currently have in relation to maintenance funding for roads across the whole of the state of Victoria. I have been up to many parts of the south-west and some parts around the north-east of Victoria. There are substantial problems and enormous potholes developing in those areas. In the most recent budget of the Baillieu government there was a 60 per cent cut to road resurfacing in regional areas, which will affect many

members of this house, including the Acting Speaker, the member for Rodney. In urban Victoria there was also a 50 per cent cut to road resurfacing. There seems to be a reluctance from the government to invest in this vital infrastructure, not only as it tries to deal with substantial congestion but also with the day-to-day issues of maintenance funding.

There have been substantial proposed cuts of 450 jobs in VicRoads. There have also been cuts to staffing in the road incident response units, which undertake the clearing of incidents on major arterials and freeways in Victoria. Those units have been halved and that measure will add to the continuing congestion issue.

There is a lot to be said for investing in roads and investing in major infrastructure, as we have seen with Peninsula Link, but also investing with the intended outcome of clearing congestion. As I previously said, I do not think that at this stage the east-west link will deliver the outcomes the government expects it will, and I think the government will find it difficult to make it work financially without some \$5 billion — maybe \$6 billion or \$7 billion — worth of government funding to make the project viable for any private investor.

When we look to make people's lives better and their travel to work easier, we need to make sure that the money we spend delivers beneficial outcomes to all. I see Peninsula Link delivering that in terms of people getting to work, in terms of logistics and also in terms of industries like market gardening and the like that are scattered all the way down the peninsula. At the moment I do not think this government has really focused on that. Sure, there is some degree of limitation with regard to the revenue base — and that is less than it was; there is no doubt about that — but there are difficult decisions to make, and people's capacity to get to work, undertake work and run their businesses is affected by the quality of our roads.

I have travelled to places like the south-west coast, to Heywood and Woolsthorpe and places like that, and I have looked at the quality of the roads there. It is of concern to the industries in that area, in particular the dairy industry in terms of its ability to get its milk in and out of the farms, because at the moment some of the roads around the south-west coast are in a state of absolute disrepair. I know there was a recent announcement about funding for that area, but my concern is that maintenance will not fix the roads at this stage. Many of these roads will have to be rebuilt because of the state they are in. It might have something to do with the weather; it might have something to do with the wind farms. That said, the

money still needs to be spent to ensure that we have safe, viable roads for businesses to use.

If we look at the most recent figures in relation to road safety, we see that we have had more fatalities this year than last year, which is tragic. However, I think it is incumbent upon any government in these situations to look at ensuring that its funding is keeping up with road safety, because at the moment in many parts of regional Victoria and in some parts of urban Victoria that is not the case. With that small, varied and wide contribution on roads, and with the indulgence of the Acting Speaker, I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs BAUER (Carrum) — It is a great pleasure to make a contribution to the debate on the Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012. As we have heard from the minister, the bill will support the opening of the Peninsula Link project, which is a 27-kilometre stretch of freeway that will connect Carrum Downs with Mount Martha on the Mornington Peninsula. The bill aims to make amendments to the Road Management Act 2004 and the Accident Towing Services Act 2007 in order to effectively manage the Peninsula Link freeway.

The legislation that this bill encompasses is required to support the contractual model between the state and Southern Way Pty Ltd that has been entered into for Peninsula Link. The bill provides that Southern Way be appointed in place of VicRoads as the responsible road authority under the Road Management Act 2004 to allow and enable it to undertake operational functions such as maintenance inspections, repair of the roads and construction. It also allows for Southern Way to be appointed in place of VicRoads as the coordinating road authority for specific purposes, including that it have the power to prevent works by third parties without consent under or over the road, that it be notified of the proposed installation of any non-road infrastructure on the roads such as utilities, that it be informed when permitted works have been completed and that it be permitted to exercise some of the powers of a state road authority, such as removing unregistered vehicles or damaged vehicles to safer locations. The bill also simplifies the accident towing regime compared with that provided by EastLink.

Although Peninsula Link is just outside my electorate of Carrum, all Victorians will benefit from Peninsula Link through the reduction in travel time and easing of congestion on our roads. It is certainly going to be well received by not only the Carrum electorate but also the wider Victorian community as it will make it easier for people to get to work and travel to the tourist destinations on the Mornington Peninsula that so many

of us really enjoy and love visiting. We believe that Peninsula Link will save close to 40 minutes travelling time from the city to the Mornington Peninsula and Mount Martha, which is a significant saving. It will also add, as we have heard, to the state's economy by providing close to 4000 construction jobs, and that is certainly something that is very welcome. Quite a few people from within the Carrum electorate have been involved in some way in the construction of the project.

Under the bill Southern Way Pty Ltd will be in charge of the operations of Peninsula Link for a 25-year period, which may include construction, maintenance, road repairs and inspections. Southern Way will, as I mentioned earlier, be permitted to get rid of abandoned vehicles, and this will make the traffic flow much more effective near construction sites or accidents. In addition to the Peninsula Link freeway, Victorians will also benefit from the Peninsula Link trail, which is to be a 25-kilometre shared user path for walking and cycling. The trail starts at Patterson Lakes in my electorate. I had mentioned that Peninsula Link was outside my electorate starting in Carrum Downs, but the shared user path, which is a bike and pedestrian trail, will be 25 kilometres long and will be a great asset to our community, because cyclists and people out walking will be able to walk from Patterson Lakes all the way down to the Mount Eliza Regional Park, and that is a beautiful park.

I joined the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the Council, Edward O'Donohue, on certain segments of the trail. We were out on our bikes and it was bucketing down with rain when we rode that section of the shared user path, which meanders through some beautiful wetlands that we have in the Carrum electorate. It has created a great amount of community interest with the earthmoving, the construction of all the bridges and the hive of activity that the building has involved.

I would like to place on record my acknowledgement that the Peninsula Link trail, in particular the shared user path, has been a major issue for many people living in my electorate, especially those in Patterson Lakes. Construction of the shared user path at Patterson Lakes, which is connected to Peninsula Link, ground to a halt in the middle of last year when it was revealed that residents within Legana and Illawong courts in Patterson Lakes had not been adequately consulted with. Through all the planning stages for the project under the former government, residents in Patterson Lakes had not been consulted adequately. They were worried and are worried about issues such as privacy, security and overshadowing by the big bridge that will now connect Illawong and Legana courts in Patterson

Lakes across Thompsons Road to the Peninsula Link shared user path.

I received a letter from a constituent of mine who is concerned about the path. She is concerned that some of the path is going to be constructed in her backyard. At first she was concerned that the value of her property would drop, but she has come to realise that she has been lied to about where the path is going to be, and she is angry about how it will affect her safety and the safety of her property. Planning for this path has been long term. However, our community was not adequately consulted by the previous Labor government when Peninsula Link was in the planning and consulting stage. Many of my constituents are not happy with the location of the path. Under the previous government tenders were sought, contracts were awarded and then genuine consultation began. Initially the shared user path was to be east of the Peninsula Link freeway, and our community was very happy with the placement of that. However, it was determined to move it closer to Patterson Lakes and to the two courts that I have mentioned without adequate consultation with our local community.

After I was elected in 2010 it came to my attention that adequate consultation of the community by the former member for Carrum had not taken place, so I began intense discussions and negotiations with the Linking Melbourne Authority and Peninsula Link. I would like to place on record my commendation of them on the amount of time they have since spent with impacted residents. I am pleased that we could agree that extra fencing and landscaping would be provided, and we have implemented this in the planning and design stages of the project. As a local member I have been pleased to have been involved in trying to make small changes. Obviously contracts have been awarded — there was not much wriggle room there — but as a result of negotiations we have certainly tried to lessen the impact on residents. It has been agreed, also as a result of our negotiations, that the path will be closely monitored in relation to vandalism and antisocial behaviour, which quite a few in the community are concerned about.

In closing I welcome Peninsula Link. I think it will be fantastic for the wider Victorian communities, linking them to the Mornington Peninsula and getting people down there to enjoy all that the Mornington Peninsula has to offer. Although initially there was not adequate consultation in my community during the planning and development stages of the project, I still commend the Linking Melbourne Authority and Abigroup for working through the issues with our community and for doing what was possible within the contractual

sconstraints to make the amenity better for residents and for my constituents. I look forward to Peninsula Link opening. I believe, as the signs say when you drive past them, that it will be open in early 2013.

Mr Lim — Are you sure?

Mrs BAUER — I believe so. As I said, I am looking forward to Peninsula Link opening, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I wish to make a short contribution on the Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012. This is a standard bill when it comes to public-private partnership projects. It appoints a private company — in this case, Southern Way — as the operator, manager and owner responsible for maintaining Peninsula Link for the next 25 years. Without this amendment the road cannot be operated as it is a public-private partnership, so the opposition is not opposing this bill.

The bill provides Southern Way with wider powers to undertake complete road management functions. Peninsula Link is another great Labor road project initiated by the previous Labor government in and around my electorate of Cranbourne. This is one of the many road projects delivered by Labor when it was in office. Today this Liberal-Nationals coalition is attempting to take the credit and congratulate itself in the same way it has done by cutting the ribbons of many Labor projects that have been completed since 2010.

I wish to put on record some history in relation to this fine project. Late in 2006, \$6.5 million was allocated by the Bracks government to kick-start the link, including the initial stage involving the environment effects statement (EES) and other planning matters. At that stage a full consultation process was carried out, and as the local member of Parliament I was kept in the loop. However, to the amusement of voters in the Frankston area the then Liberal opposition promised a mere \$250 million to build a 22-kilometre toll-free road if elected in 2006.

As a result of Labor funding of \$759 million the project has seen the light of day. This would not have happened if the Liberal-Nationals coalition had been elected in 2006, because it had allocated only \$250 million to build this road — a road that cost the Labor government \$759 million. I should mention that this is on top of \$500 million in funds that the previous Labor government provided to Casey and Frankston council areas. We would not be debating this bill had the Liberal-Nationals coalition got into office in 2006.

Peninsula Link has created 4000 jobs and provided residents of the Mornington Peninsula with a fantastic transport link to Melbourne. The link will bypass eight traffic lights and five roundabouts, providing freeway-standard roads to Rosebud and saving motorists up to 40 minutes of travel time. It was not this government that had the foresight for such a project; this is definitely a Labor legacy.

Peninsula Link starts from Carrum Downs, which is in my electorate of Cranbourne. In late October 2006 the then Labor government announced that an environment effects statement would be carried out. During March 2007 work on the EES commenced with a \$5 million contribution. On 16 October 2008 the then Labor government announced the bypass would be built as a public-private partnership and that there would be no tolls for motorists.

In March 2009 the then Labor government issued an invitation for expressions of interest to build the link. Southern Way consortium, comprised of construction companies Abigroup and Bilfinger Berger and financier Royal Bank of Scotland, was awarded the contract to design, build and operate the freeway on 20 January 2010.

Under the public-private partnership the consortium is required to operate and maintain the freeway for 25 years. On 29 July 2009 the first sod was turned by the then Labor Premier, John Brumby. During 2009 Labor also contributed funding towards the realignment of the intersection of McMahons Road and Moorooduc Highway in Frankston, investing in a \$2.1 million P-turn to assist with the alleviation of traffic congestion.

Peninsula Link establishes a strong contribution towards jobs, tourism and subsequently economic opportunities in and around my electorate of Cranbourne. It is also a bonus for cyclists and walkers with paths being constructed along the link. It is quite amusing to see many government MPs in both houses appearing in photo opportunities during the construction of the link. Had they won the 2006 election they would have allocated only \$250 million, and there would not have been a Peninsula Link. As I mentioned, the opposition will not oppose the bill.

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Road Management Amendment (Peninsula Link) Bill 2012. Obviously this road project will have a major positive impact on my electorate of Nepean. The road starts from EastLink, towards the end at Seaford, and comes out at the Mornington Peninsula Freeway at Mount Martha. It is 27 kilometres long, and as other members have said, it

will bypass eight sets of traffic lights and five roundabouts. Depending on the time of day that you travel, the week and the season of the year, that trip can take 40 minutes or even more. The 27 kilometres, at 100 kilometres an hour, will take about 17 minutes, so it is going to save a lot of time. Although I have travelled that distance at the speed limit in 17 minutes without getting one red light, it is the safety and amenity of the road that is important, and as I said, for most parts of the year and of the day it is going to be a lot quicker than the existing route.

It will make a huge difference to my electorate because it is going to make the southern peninsula far more accessible to many more people. Obviously it will be great for locals — for example, for those of us who commute to Melbourne or to Dandenong for work, for visiting and for access to the airport. I will be able to drive from Rosebud in my electorate to the airport without encountering one traffic light, so it will really strengthen the connection. We saw a massive boom in visitation rates to the Mornington Peninsula after EastLink was opened, even with the toll, which incidentally was a broken promise. However, EastLink has been a boon to the Mornington Peninsula, and Peninsula Link will only add to that.

A bit of work has been done by the local shire council regarding the possible implications of Peninsula Link on road traffic and a range of other issues. We think there will be a bit of a spike in terms of extra people moving down to the area and extra traffic, but we really think that on balance it will be only an initial spike. Basically the road is going to improve amenity for the people of Frankston and the area around the Moorooduc Highway, with far reduced traffic volumes. It will also make the Mornington Peninsula far more accessible for business and for tourism.

Tourism is the largest business employer on the Mornington Peninsula. In fact the Minister for Tourism and Major Events visited the electorate last week and talked to local tourism groups. Our accessibility to Melbourne will increase, which is especially important with new tourism groups, such as those from a number of Asian countries like China. I think Japanese tourists are already there to a certain extent and are no longer taking group tours. They are venturing out on their own and hiring cars, and they are prepared to travel to places like the Yarra Valley, the Mornington Peninsula and the Great Ocean Road. Peninsula Link will make it easier and far more direct to get to the Mornington Peninsula. It will add to the tourism flavour of the peninsula and add to the breadth and number of people visiting the peninsula for tourism.

About three weeks ago the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, Mr O'Donohue, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, and I were taken on a tour of Peninsula Link. We drove the full distance. First, we celebrated the completion of the last overpass, which is the main and biggest overpass, where the road joins EastLink and the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. It will become almost like a three-way freeway interchange. They were pouring the deck on the last overpass of, I think, the 20 or 30 overpasses throughout the entire link. We then drove the full length of the road, which was interesting. Some parts have a fair way to go, and they are still putting in the foundation rock, but in other parts the road has been already asphalted and the lights, the gantries and the steel ropes to divide the two sides of the freeway are all going in. Depending on where you are, the link is at different stages of completion.

The weather has been shocking over the last two years, which certainly has put the project well behind schedule, but to the contractor's credit it has now caught up and people are working very hard. Being back on schedule, the project is due to be opened early next year. Obviously a lot of people would like it open for Christmas, but a lot of time has been missed due to wet weather. Some of the territory which the freeway flows through is very sandy and other areas are very swampy. Those areas required a lot of work and were badly affected by the weather of the last two years.

As other members have explained, the bill is really a mechanical one — excuse the pun — which will enable the ongoing operation of the project by the contractor. This is really the final step in paving the way for what is a great project.

The member for Cranbourne mentioned some of the history of the project, and I would like to correct the record. In the mid-2000s — in 2005 or 2006, when EastLink was under construction — there was a proposal from the EastLink contractor, which was very keen to continue that road down to the Mornington Peninsula, covering the same route where Peninsula Link has been constructed. There would have been massive cost savings because the contractor was already on the job, the equipment was down there and it was going to be a fairly easy job to continue with the construction. The land had been reserved and in the *Melway* since about 1968, which was almost the first edition of the *Melway*, so the land was available and the contractor was ready to go.

We went to the 2006 election promising \$250 million towards the cost of the construction, and the then federal government was prepared to kick in

\$150 million. That \$400 million in total was more than adequate to complete that road. We have heard all sorts of estimates of the cost of the road, but the latest one is \$760 million. It would have been great to have completed it five years ago at a cost of \$400 million, but it did not work out that way. It is always good to know the history of these projects.

I wish the bill a speedy passage, and I know the people of Nepean are really looking forward to the completion of this project.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Dandenong) — It is a pleasure to speak on this bill, having had some involvement with the issue when in cabinet. It is a machinery bill which moves Peninsula Link from being a road construction project to being a fully operational road, with all the logistics that involves. In many regards it is also a bill that allows us to celebrate the importance of the project. I am sure government members have been very pleased they had a Labor project where they could go and open bridges and do the ribbon cutting. Despite what the Minister for Education, the member for Nepean, said about its history, Peninsula Link might have been in the *Melway* for a long period of time but the reality is that Labor filled most of the gaps in the *Melway*, whether it be the Dingley bypass, or other projects, and of course that includes EastLink. The reality is this project would not have happened if the previous government had not committed to EastLink; it is a natural extension of EastLink.

What a quality project this is! From Hoddle Street you can drive all the way to Frankston on one road without any traffic lights. That puts the eastern and south-eastern suburbs in a very competitive position. The future of a well-planned city and society is based on accessibility, and that is why these road, public transport and rail projects are so important. Anything that improves accessibility, reduces congestion and reduces the chance of accidents leads to improved productivity for the state. We hear from members on the other side that Labor has no productivity agenda, but all this infrastructure building is about the productivity agenda. If you have a better road, it improves productivity and allows goods to flow freely. It allows people to get to and from work more quickly and, as the member for Nepean said, it allows for a more efficient tourism industry because suddenly it is 40 minutes quicker to get to certain places than it would have been without the project.

We all know what it is like when we drive down to the Mornington Peninsula in peak times and have to cross eight traffic lights and five roundabouts. They will be

removed as part of this project. We know that slows down productivity. As a former minister for tourism — and that is why I supported this project — I know the natural advantage the Mornington Peninsula has in tourism with its assets and its accessibility to Melbourne. In the past people were slowed down by the traffic on the road, particularly in summer. They always remember the day they went down to the peninsula when it was basically chock-a-block from Frankston all the way to Sorrento. That does not make for a great experience.

Peninsula Link will take a huge amount of traffic off the roads in the Cranbourne, Frankston and Mornington electorates and also off the Nepean Highway in the Nepean electorate. It is very important for the whole area. It will take traffic off the Nepean and Westernport highways, allowing the traffic that needs to be there to service the communities and visitors in that area.

Of course Peninsula Link is an expensive project, and it is a shame that there have been delays. The government now responsible for this project refers to the weather, but when the Labor government had weather problems with its projects, it was referred to by the then opposition as mismanagement and a cost blow-out. I will not accuse the government of that because we all want to see the project finished. It would have been great to have it ready this summer. Nonetheless it is happening, it is going to come online and everyone will get to experience and enjoy it.

This project is important to my electorate of Dandenong, which is the biggest retail and commercial area outside of Melbourne's CBD and the biggest industrial area in Melbourne. A lot of people work in Dandenong but live down on the peninsula, and I know that when I have meetings with businesspeople they say they are looking forward to the project being finished; it will allow them to get to their places of employment more quickly. They also know that the whole area south of Dandenong will be so much more accessible to industries that need to move their goods around, and it will allow them to run a more efficient business. We have a lot of food industries in that area, and moving goods more quickly and more safely is very important for those industries.

The project supports industry and jobs in Dandenong, and that is one of the reasons why as a government we supported it — that is, because of the freight benefits to industry in Dandenong, as well as the broader benefits to the economy through tourism and the flow-on benefits to the community.

It is great to have the shared walking and cycling trail. You can ride from the north of EastLink in Ringwood all the way down to the end of Peninsula Link. EastLink has an annual fundraiser when it is closed for a charity cycling event. Maybe something could be done further south as well to highlight the opportunities of the Mornington Peninsula as a cycling destination. Cycling goes on down there, mainly along the Nepean Highway, and what a great thing it would be to be able to do that. When other freeways, such as the Eastern Freeway, were built, the cycling paths were added later on. The Monash Freeway does not have a full cycling system, although bits and pieces have been added. New roads like EastLink and Peninsula Link allow us to build in the infrastructure at the design stage, which is much more cost-effective. It certainly provides greater benefits for the local community.

The member for Carrum highlighted earlier that neighbours have concerns when there are pathways behind their houses. However, we know that cycle paths behind properties have worked quite well in other locations so long as they are managed and planned for properly. It is better doing it this way. Government agencies do not necessarily always get it right and, despite all the representations made on behalf of residents who have been concerned along parts of the long road project, there will probably be fine-tuning later on for a joint shared pathway that meets the needs of landowners who, when it opens, I think will be some of its biggest champions.

I know people who live behind a bike path think it is so good when their kids can get out and ride on a safe bike path where they are not crossing roads or traffic lights. It is a really good environment when families are able to get out cycling for health or other reasons.

I am pleased that this bill is in the house. I am pleased that the project is proceeding, albeit it is delayed. I am looking forward to using the link to visit my brother's holiday house at McCrae down on the peninsula and avoiding traffic jams. However, I have become very good at working out the back roads. The locals I know have advised me what back roads to use to be able to get quickly down to the peninsula and avoid the traffic. However, I am sure that the people on the back roads would love to see that traffic reduced in time.

Of course the region's population continues to grow; it is still a very rapidly growing area encompassing the Cardinia, Casey, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula municipalities. The population is still growing in those areas, and this road will become even more important to the people of Melbourne and to visitors to the region. I really look forward to seeing stronger tourism growth

on the peninsula. I know some of our best wineries, Deputy Speaker, are down on the peninsula. There are also great natural attractions, including the coastline. This area has much tourism potential that is untapped. Tourists bring mega millions of dollars into areas. They bring in services that locals enjoy when the tourists are not there. When you look at all the cafes, restaurants and wineries et cetera and all those other broader facilities that tourists use, you realise that when the tourists are not there the locals use all those things, and they gain a great benefit simply because this travelling economy comes right to them. That is part of the reasoning behind this project.

I look forward to it all happening, as do all members, and to the reduction in traffic it will bring. However, having been involved with this project in the early stages, I think those of us who made the decision had a hard task — it is hard to choose where to invest resources. At the time the government of the day felt this was one of the highest priority infrastructure projects for Victoria, which is why we put the money into it.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Rail: Sunbury services

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that Sunbury commuters continue to have access to V/Line services following the electrification of the rail line to Sunbury. Members will be aware that under the previous government \$270 million was committed to electrifying the metropolitan line and extending it through to Sunbury. This project included a much bigger park-and-ride facility at Diggers Rest, the handing back of 100 car parking spaces for rail travellers at Sunbury, as well as the upgrading of the Sunbury station, to make it a premium station with staffing from first to last train and the upgrading of the station facilities, including the installation of closed-circuit television.

While a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other place described the project as a \$270 million waste of money, we know the purpose in electrifying the line to Sunbury was to increase dramatically the capacity of the Sydenham and Bendigo lines. It will deliver almost 200 additional metropolitan services to Sunbury each week. While this project will increase

services, increase the carrying capacity of those services and increase safety at the station, many people in Sunbury, particularly older commuters who travel mostly off peak, wanted continued access to the V/Line services.

As part of the Brumby government's support for this project and its commitment to the people of Sunbury, a dual service was promised, giving Sunbury commuters the best of both worlds. The V/Line timetable has just been released. It indicates that Bendigo passengers can be dropped off at Sunbury but that Sunbury passengers cannot be picked up. It appears mixed messages are being sent to the people of Sunbury, with the timetable suggesting there will not be a joint service but with a spokesperson saying that commuters will still be able to access V/Line trains.

The action that I am seeking is for the Minister for Public Transport to clarify this situation and take all necessary action to ensure that a dual service is provided for the people of Sunbury so that they can indeed have the best of both worlds. While the metropolitan involvement will provide many additional services to the people of Sunbury, of course the V/Line service is one they have had for many years. As members would know, the V/Line trains are larger; they cannot carry as many people, but they are quite comfortable and have a conductor, which is why many people in Sunbury want to continue to have access to them. I understand a dual service is provided to Sandy Point, and there is no reason for it not to be extended to Sunbury. We know it is possible, and I call on the minister to ensure that that occurs for the people of Sunbury.

Planning: Mount Waverley electorate

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — The matter I wish to raise tonight is for the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is for the minister to outline how the government's new planning reforms will provide residents of the Waverley area with a greater ability to obtain appropriate planning outcomes for the local community. Planning is a very important issue in my electorate because it determines the nature and character of building and development, and it needs to cater for residences, businesses and commercial developments — in short, it needs to cater for many stakeholders. To have a planning system which acknowledges the need for diversity in housing, whether it be because of people having different housing needs at different stages of their lives or to ensure that our local business community can continue to grow with proper commercial and other business

development, our planning system must recognise those needs, and that is not always an easy thing to do.

I note that over the last decade or so certainly that need to strike the right balance has certainly not been met in my electorate. Residents have felt they have not had an opportunity to have a say on their planning system. In short, they have felt the planning system did not recognise their voices or provide for appropriate development. I will mention just two examples of inappropriate development that many residents in my electorate and surrounding areas have raised with me: the 53-apartment development on Huntingdale Road which went through under the previous planning system and a 29-unit development, also on Huntingdale Road. Those two projects are examples about which residents said to me as their local member that they did not feel they had a voice in the planning system.

I note there are three new zones in this planning reform package: the neighbourhood residential zone, the general residential zone and the residential growth zone. The Minister for Planning has indicated that these three different zones should provide for greater diversity in the planning system. In particular I am informed that the new neighbourhood residential zone should ensure that councils have an opportunity to do things like protect appropriate streetscapes and appropriate character to ensure that development is not inappropriate in different areas. At the same time the general residential zone will also provide councils with an opportunity to allow some higher level development, as well as development under the residential growth zone. What I really seek is for the minister to indicate how these zones under this planning system will deliver better planning outcomes for the Waverley and Monash areas to get appropriate development and preserve neighbourhood character.

V/Line: rolling stock

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — The matter that I raise is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns the ongoing delays we have seen in the purchasing and ordering of new V/Line carriages, thanks to his continued delaying and dithering on this issue. The action I seek is for the minister to get on with his job and order these carriages as a matter of priority. We know there was an unspecified amount for an unspecified number of carriages in the May budget, but of course that was six months ago and no firm commitment has been given on the number of carriages that will be ordered. Instead we have seen that the former CEO of V/Line called on the government to order a minimum of 40 new carriages. The minister has come into this place and said the maximum he will

come at is about 32 carriages, which is well short of the 40 that Rob Barnett called for, and then through the media he said he will be ordering just 30 new carriages, which is 10 less than we need.

In V/Line's annual report we see that over \$10 million was spent on buses to replace V/Line services, and that is up by more than \$4 million from the previous year. There have also been significant disruptions, particularly on the Geelong line. There has been a timetable fiddle on the Geelong line services which has done nothing to improve the punctuality targets of that service.

The latest timetable changes right across the V/Line network show that there will be extended travelling times for services. That will particularly disrupt some commuters trying to get into the city every day. Commuters in regional Victoria are not only baffled by what has been happening with respect to the ordering of new V/Line carriages but they are also getting angry with this minister for continuing to punish them and their services in regional Victoria. At the same time V/Line fares are going up, and there will be another increase in V/Line fares next year. While there are no new services and no new V/Line carriages being ordered, V/Line fares are on the increase and, as I said, will be increased again next year. It is little wonder that passengers are getting increasingly angry about the minister's refusal to get on with the job, put in an order and get the V/Line carriages built, as he committed to in the May budget. Unfortunately commuters will have more time, in terms of the services they catch every day, to consider why the minister is sitting on his hands and refusing to get on with the job of ordering those V/Line carriages. Nonetheless I call on him, as I have done previously, to do so.

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

Tourism: north-eastern Victoria

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — My issue is for the attention of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and my request is that she commit to the ongoing support of tourism in north-eastern Victoria, an absolutely fantastic location for tourism. There is magnificent scenery all along the Great Dividing Range. We also have some beautiful river valleys, and there is open country where there is grazing, cropping and horse studs. We also have four of the state's alpine resorts and many national parks, including Mount Buffalo National Park. There are the waterways of Lake Eildon, Lake Nagambie, Lake Buffalo and Lake William Hovell. The beautiful scenery is

complemented by many fine wineries in the Strathbogie Ranges and the upper Goulburn region, and at Nagambie there is Chateau Tahbilk and Mitchelton. There are the Warby Ranges, King Valley, Ovens Valley and Kiewa Valley wineries.

In north-eastern Victoria the absolutely magnificent natural setting is a great location for festivals, and there are many in both spring and autumn. In Bright there is the Bright Autumn Festival, which is really well known, but there is also the Adventure Travel Film Festival, which was first held this year and which attracted over 500 people. It is a celebration of amateur filmmaking and adventure activities, and it will be held again in February 2013. North-eastern Victoria is also a great location for more adventurous activities.

In addition to skiing in the winter, Mount Buller is striving to become an all-year-round tourist resort, with both summer and autumn activities, including events such as the Bike Buller Mountain Bike Festival. The festival was first held in 2009 with about 250 competitors. In 2012 the number of competitors rose to over 600, with more than 2000 visitors. That event will be held again in March 2013. Also at Mount Buller there is the Scody High Country Cycle Challenge, which was first held in 2009. In 2012 over 700 attended. The event provides for six ride options, from 60 kilometres through to 180 kilometres over a two-day period. That event is on again in March 2013.

The coalition government and the Minister for Tourism and Major Events have been extremely supportive of regional tourism, and my electorate has been the beneficiary of a number of grants in times gone by. I ask the minister to continue to support tourism in north-eastern Victoria and in particular in the electorate of Benalla. I look forward to a favourable response from the minister.

Lalor Gardens Primary School: funding

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I again raise an urgent matter for the Minister for Education regarding the appalling plight of Lalor Gardens Primary School. The action I seek from the minister is that he listen to the school community and his own backbenchers in the other place and provide the funds necessary to finish off the school. The parents, children, teachers and staff had high hopes for their school. They believed their children would have state-of-the-art buildings with modern facilities for modern learning and a successful future. An opportunity was offered that demonstrated government confidence in them and their children's ability to grasp educational opportunity with two hands and have higher aspirations to succeed.

However, since the election in 2010 those dreams have been dashed. I have raised the funding problems of the school many times in Parliament, but the pleas from the school have fallen on deaf ears. I will keep on trying in the hope that the minister will find a heart.

Lalor Gardens Primary School has been denied the funds needed to finish this great school because of massive budget cuts to state education in Victoria. In June I urged the minister to provide funding for outside restoration to convert a building site into a playground. The outside area was perilously uneven, scattered with heaped mud, dirt, rocks and broken concrete and without drainage, so water was pooling up to three-quarters of a metre deep. I raised concern that the children's education would suffer if funding was not provided to do these urgent remedial works. Again I am urging the minister to take notice of this school because the education of its children is now about to suffer. Educational programs are about to be impacted because funds must be diverted to make the playgrounds safe.

As a direct result of the minister not providing one-off funds to finish the school, disastrous decisions have to be made. Class sizes will increase by up to four or five students, providing less support and attention to all students. Numeracy and literacy programs for children who need help will stop next year. At least two teacher positions and support staff will have to go, not because of fewer enrolments or an unsuccessful school but because their wages will be spent on crushed rock and drains. Extra support for children who are not proficient in English will be cut and parents will have to do their best by introducing an increase to the voluntary contribution levy, although that has proven not to be a reliable income source. Again I appeal to the Minister for Education to fix this problem and let Lalor Gardens concentrate on what it does best: teaching our children and future generations.

Eastern Districts Polish Association: car park upgrade

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship. The action I seek is that the minister seriously consider a funding application by the Eastern Districts Polish Association and provide the necessary funding to assist in the upgrade of its car park facilities.

Syrena house, located on Stud Road in Rowville, is home to the Eastern Districts Polish Association. This facility serves as a significant cultural facility for the Polish community from not only the eastern suburbs of Melbourne but across broader Melbourne. The club is ably led by its president, Zygmunt Bielinski, and its

senior citizen's club president, Eugene Kosenko. Like many community-based organisations, the association relies on its volunteers, and there are many volunteers who help in its operation. The club has many senior members. Polish migrants first arrived here in significant numbers after the Second World War. The 1980s saw the next wave of migrants arrive in their efforts to escape persecution at the hands of the totalitarian communist regime.

The members of the Eastern Districts Polish Association have worked hard for many years to establish this significant facility. It serves as not only the home of the senior citizens community but also as a Polish language school, which operates on Saturdays. Furthermore, the facility also serves a Polish scouts troop. Many Polish community events are held at Syrena, including the traditional Easter and Christmas celebrations. Further, the facility serves as the venue for the annual Polish festival in March and the Polish fair in December. These events attract approximately 3000 visitors per year. The venue is regularly utilised by a range of organisations, given its size and locality on Stud Road in Rowville. The external rear car park is heavily utilised by the association for many of these activities. Currently this car park is substandard and in need of upgrade. The organisation has limited car-parking space, with attendees often having to park along busy Stud Road. An upgrade of this car-parking facility would be an important improvement.

I understand that the association has applied to the minister for funding to help increase the car park capacity at Syrena house. I know the minister has visited Syrena house on many occasions and understands the importance of this facility. This government has made a clear commitment to provide ongoing support to a range of community organisations. Last year it provided \$100 000 to the Polish community for its fair, and this year I was pleased to advise the community that it has received \$55 000 for this year's festival. I call on the Minister for Multicultural Affairs to take action by seriously considering a funding application by the Eastern Districts Polish Association and providing the necessary funding to assist with the upgrading — —

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

Acacia College: future

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for him to do all in his power to assist the 720 Acacia College students enrolled next year in prep to year 10 and also

their families and school staff following the shock closure the school announced last week.

As a local resident and opposition member there are many political points that I could make about who should have done what and when, but I am pleading with the minister in the spirit of bipartisanship not to rule anything in or out. Our families deserve nothing less. We need to work together. I am not for a minute saying that the government should hand over dollars to private providers to prop up a school, but it is a fact that displaced families from Acacia College will have no alternative, as government primary schools are full to bursting and there is no government secondary college in postcode 3754. Two things are needed: options for the 720 kids from prep to year 10 in 2013 and options for families in postcode 3754 who need a secondary college. With imagination I think we can achieve both.

No-one would ever countenance the view that towns in regional Victoria like Swan Hill, Horsham, Colac, Sale, Wangaratta or Bacchus Marsh should operate without a government secondary college. All these towns are smaller than Mernda-Doreen. In particular Mernda-Doreen and Wangaratta have exactly the same population and the same average number of kids per family, although the median age in Wangaratta is 41 while the median age in Mernda-Doreen is 29, so you do not need to be an expert to work out that there will be many more kids coming. Bacchus Marsh also has exactly the same population as Mernda-Doreen, with the average age being 38 in Bacchus Marsh compared with 29 in Mernda-Doreen. Bacchus Marsh currently has the same number of government primary schools as Mernda-Doreen, as well as a Catholic school. It has 1400 kids in government schools, as does Mernda-Doreen, although Mernda-Doreen's government schools are set to burst, with 1800 kids expected next year. It still does not have the government secondary college it needs.

I commend the developer of Renaissance Rise, RCL Group. Its CEO, David Wightman, told me he had tossed and turned in bed worrying about these families and wondering what he could do as a local developer to make a difference. He has made the generous offer to buy back the land previously sold to the state government in 2009 for the purpose of building a prep-to-12 government school just around the corner from Acacia College, on the corner of Trevi Drive and Breadalbane Avenue in Mernda. It is a viable option; it is not the only one. I thank the minister for agreeing to meet with the parents of Acacia College students next week, but I urge him to act —

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

Bayswater North: parkland development

Mr HODGETT (Kilsyth) — I rise to call on the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, who I am pleased to see is at the table, to visit the Bayswater North retarding basin in my electorate and provide an update on the project to beautify this area of land.

As the minister will remember, I made an election commitment to fund a \$200 000 redevelopment of this site to turn it into family-friendly parkland. It would undergo a revamp to include walking paths, picnic areas and recreational pursuits. This would provide local residents with a spacious and clean area of parkland next to the Canterbury Gardens shopping centre and in close proximity to a local housing estate. This commitment was received with great enthusiasm by the local community, including the Bayswater North community renewal team, which assisted with the community consultation process.

I wrote to all residents in the area and held a consultation meeting on site to gather ideas and suggestions for the design of the park. I have since worked with representatives from Maroondah City Council on designs and costings for this project, and I am pleased to say that the project is ready for funding. Preliminary designs include walking paths and seating as well as works to the existing water frontage, which will significantly improve the accessibility of the basin. It will also provide access from surrounding entry points and open the parkland up to encourage use by local families. This plan was received with great positivity by local residents, especially those in proximity to the park, who do not currently have easy access to these sorts of facilities.

This project will continue the coalition government's commitment to environmentally conscious improvements, as it will transform this area of Melbourne Water-held land into a clean, accessible area of parkland. As I said, the parkland will be in proximity to local shops and will be a safe and open area for use by local residents. I commend the Baillieu coalition government on its commitment to projects such as these, which take existing government assets and turn them into environmentally friendly assets for the local community to benefit from and enjoy.

I have had fantastic feedback from residents in my electorate, who are excited at the prospect of the additional recreational space. I will be delivering on this election commitment, as I am delivering on all my

election commitments. I look forward to the delivery of this project for the residents of Bayswater North, and I again call on the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to visit the site and give me an update on the project.

Swinburne University of Technology: Prahran campus

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. I am forced to seek the assistance of the minister, as sadly the member for Prahran has gone oddly silent on a subject that is close to the hearts of the people of not only Prahran but also the wider Victorian community. The matter arises as a result of the ABC last month leaking details of the secret plans to savage Victoria's TAFE system. What I seek from the minister is that he give a commitment that the Swinburne University of Technology sites in Prahran currently housing Swinburne's higher education and TAFE services, together with associated entities such as the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA), will not be privatised, sold off or lost as community-owned assets once Swinburne completes its forced retreat from Prahran — a retreat which has only come about as a result of this government's savage \$290 million TAFE cuts.

I seek this commitment because the secret documents made clear that Swinburne has been forced into this position. TAFE and higher education services at Prahran are due to close by the end of 2014, and Swinburne is consolidating these reduced TAFE courses from across five campuses to two. It also seeks to recoup \$50 million from the sale of the sites to assist with its changes to its Hawthorn and other campuses as it seeks to accommodate these cuts. It has reduced a range of courses, including those in higher education, arts and technical support, as well as TAFE trades and the hospitality and automotive areas. It has upped fees by up to 26 per cent. It has sacked 220 staff, and it has made clear that the wonderfully successful NICA will be spun off as a separate entity more quickly than it otherwise would have planned. This will happen during the course of 2013.

Besides all this being a great shock to the students and families in the area, what we have really learnt is that in this particular area the member for Prahran has sadly ignored the plight of this community since these documents fell off the back of a truck. Since the refusal of the Premier to back the member's claims around the sites being a public asset, we have not heard much from the honourable member. He has learnt a valuable lesson: just because a minister does not specifically

deny something does not mean it is not happening. Perhaps he is appreciating that his previous roles of being the lion of Chapel Street and the lamb in Spring Street have come to an end as he learns that you cannot say one thing to your local community and vote for and support something else in this place. Since those documents fell off the back of a truck, to use a Pythonesque phrase, this member would not vroom on the back of a good 50 000 volts through him.

hat we have heard from reliable sources is that the disillusioned TAFE sector is facing serious danger in this area.

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

Hamerkaz Shelanu and Central Shule Chabad Community Centre: funding

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, and the action I seek is for him to provide funding under the Cultural Precincts and Community Infrastructure Fund in my electorate of Caulfield. The minister would be aware of a number of multicultural and multifaith activities that take place in the Caulfield electorate and, in particular, the work of my growing and active Jewish community. It was a pleasure to accompany the minister to Israel to share with him the traditions of great Israeli food, culture and history and to reaffirm the friendship between Israel and Victoria.

Two growing community organisations in my electorate that are building new facilities to cope with the growing demand of membership are Hamerkaz Shelanu and the Central Shule Chabad Community Centre. These groups are particularly servicing members who have chosen to emigrate to Victoria, with Hamerkaz primarily servicing the Israeli community and Central Shule Chabad servicing the growing South African community. I am proud to have a close relationship with both organisations and have attended many of their services, festivals and events. I particularly want to put on record my friendship with Rabbi Motty and Dina Liberow from Hamerkaz and Rabbi Riesenberg and president Ian Harris from Central Shule Chabad.

With the development of their new centres members of both organisations are seeking to feed not only their souls but also their hearts in addition to creating new kitchens to service their members and visitors. Food is a great way of breaking down barriers, and there is nothing better than breaking bread with people from

different cultures and communities. As the minister would be aware, both organisations have applied to the Victorian Multicultural Commission community support fund so they can fund the development of kitchen and dining facilities, and I was happy to support their applications.

I also understand that both Hamerkaz and Central Shule Chabad have undergone extensive appeals to fund their new buildings and that they are now in desperate need of additional funding to provide these facilities. I have also seen a great example of the work they do in demonstrating their multicultural activities, with Hamerkaz taking part in a Sukkot celebration in which the minister was also involved, reaching out to the Greek, Italian, Russian and other senior citizens groups in Caulfield.

I therefore ask the minister to provide an update on the funding for these facilities. Once they are complete I look forward to inviting the minister to sample the great kosher food and to show him firsthand the great work Hamerkaz and Central Shule Chabad do for their diverse communities.

Responses

Ms ASHER (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — The member for Benalla has spoken about three small local events that will take place in February and March 2013 in his electorate, those being the Adventure Travel Film Festival at Bright, the Bike Buller Mountain Bike Festival at Mount Buller and the Scody High Country Cycle Challenge at Mansfield and Mount Buller. The member for Benalla is always a persuasive advocate for his electorate. He is always a very forceful advocate — —

Mr R. Smith — I think ‘loud’ is the word you are looking for!

Ms ASHER — He is also loud, but he is forceful, and he gets results. Some loud people do not get results; the member for Benalla does. The member has been a strong advocate for the economic value of tourism in his regional area, and I am pleased to announce that the coalition government will provide \$7750 to these events as part of the October 2012 Country Victoria Events program. That consists of \$1000 to the Adventure Travel Film Festival, \$3000 to the Bike Buller Mountain Bike Festival and \$3750 to the Scody High Country Cycle Challenge.

The raising of these issues by the member for Benalla gives me an opportunity to advise the house that this particular funding program is offered twice a year. The

idea behind the program is to support small but very important local events which have a tourism impact and which make a contribution to economic development through local tourism. I am delighted to advise the house that a total of \$75 000 has been provided in this round to fund 22 small-scale events across Victoria. I can advise members that the next round closes on 1 April 2013.

In addition to the funding for the member for Benalla, the member for Benambra, with very strong advocacy, has received \$2000 for Chryslers on the Murray. A couple of weeks ago I was in the electorate of the member for Nepean, who is also the Minister for Education, and I announced that he had secured funding for the Colour the Sky kite festival at Rosebud. The Deputy Premier has achieved funding for the Prom Coast Seachange Festival, and the member for Lowan, who is also the Minister for Sport and Recreation, has been very successful in receiving funding for the Art Is ... Festival, the Horsham Country Music Festival, the Lake Bolac Eel Festival and the Southern Grampians Promenade of Sacred Music. The member for Morwell, my parliamentary secretary, has received funding for an acoustic music festival in his electorate. He has also advocated very forcefully.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Ms ASHER — As we can hear, the member for Polwarth is always loud and forceful. He has achieved funding for the Apollo Bay Seafood Festival and also for History Comes Alive: the Age of Gunpowder.

The member for South-West Coast, who is always advocating stridently for his community, has received funding for the Heywood Wood, Wine and Roses Festival and the Tour of the South West. Members for Western Victoria Region in the other place, David Koch, Simon Ramsay and David O’Brien, have also received funding for the Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields music festival, the Best O’ Lake, Lake Goldsmith 100th Steam Rally, the Bacchus Marsh Harvest Festival, the Great Trentham Spudfest, the Feast of March 2013 and the Hepburn Springs Swiss and Italian Festa.

I advise members that the next round of funding will close on 1 April 2013. I congratulate the member for Benalla on achieving funding. I congratulate all the other members who have achieved funding for their electorates, and I urge members to make sure that their applications are in on time in 2013.

Mr KOTSIRAS (Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship) — The member for Caulfield and the

member for Ferntree Gully raised matters in relation to the Cultural Precincts and Community Infrastructure Fund. This is a \$12 million fund which is to run from 2010 to 2014. As of today, more than \$6 million in funding has been provided. The fund consists of two components: smaller grants of up to \$100 000 and larger grants of \$100 000 plus. The fund provides support for the upgrading of existing facilities or the construction of new community facilities to promote greater use and access by community groups.

The member for Ferntree Gully raised a matter in relation to the Eastern Districts Polish Association, which is located in Stud Road, Rowville. I have visited the association on many occasions. It was established in 1981 to look after the interests and wellbeing of the Polish community in the eastern suburbs. I have been very impressed with the work the association's committee has done over the years. I have also enjoyed the Polish doughnuts, or paczki, on many occasions with the member for Ferntree Gully. In actual fact the member for Ferntree Gully has often taken some paczki home to share with his family.

The committee works extremely hard. The association has applied for a grant to upgrade its car park. I have been to the association's premises when it has been wet, and it can be very dangerous for young children. I am pleased to advise the member for Ferntree Gully that I have recently approved a grant of \$60 000 for the association to upgrade its car park. I look forward to visiting the association once the car park work has been completed. There is a lot more to be done, and I encourage the member for Ferntree Gully to continue to work with the association to make sure that its future needs are met.

The member for Caulfield raised a matter regarding both the Central Community Centre and Hamerkaz Shelanu in Caulfield. I have had occasion to meet with Rabbi Motti of Hamerkaz Shelanu. He took me through some of the different traditions of the Jewish faith, which was very informative and educational. Both these centres have been serving the community for many years by helping new migrants to settle in Victoria and providing programs for young people and seniors in Caulfield. These organisations also encourage multifaith gatherings, bringing people together to help them understand and appreciate different cultures and thereby assist our multicultural state.

The Central Community Centre has applied for a grant to upgrade its kitchen. I am pleased to advise the member that I have approved a grant of \$40 000. Hamerkaz Shelanu has also applied for funding to

upgrade its kitchen, and I have similarly approved a grant of \$40 000 for it. That is a total of \$80 000. These grants are based on merit; they are based on the many hours of volunteering provided to the community over many years. Members of these organisations consistently put up their hands to volunteer, never asking for money in return. It is about time that we began to support these groups and recognise the many hours of work they put in.

I pay tribute to both the member for Ferntree Gully and the member for Caulfield, both of whom have represented me on many occasions at events that I could not attend. They are very hardworking members. I congratulate the two organisations on receiving these grants.

Mr MULDER (Minister for Public Transport) — The member for Macedon raised an issue with me in relation to train services from Sunbury. She indicated that on completion of the Sunbury electrification project, Sunbury residents would be receiving a dual service of both the new metropolitan trains that will run due to the electrification of the line and existing V/Line services. The member for Macedon was concerned that Sunbury did not appear in the V/Line timetable as a drop-off and pick-up location. The simple fact of the matter is that Sunbury commuters will have access to both V/Line and metropolitan services. They will need to be reminded that if they travel from Sunbury into the city or from the city back to Sunbury they will require a myki, because they are actually travelling in metropolitan zone 2.

Sunbury residents will benefit from an increase in services of somewhere of the order of 64 per cent due to the new metropolitan services to Sunbury. A lot of those services will start earlier and finish later than the V/Line services and will run at a frequency of between 12 and 14 minutes. We will therefore be encouraging Sunbury commuters to get on metropolitan trains. Similarly, when travelling home from the city, we will encourage them to take metropolitan trains when they can.

The Sunbury electrification will mean that commuters to and from Sunbury and Bendigo will experience increased comfort due to their trains no longer being overcrowded. It would defeat the purpose if Sunbury residents decided to pack onto V/Line trains and leave metropolitan trains empty. To stop this from happening authorised officers and station staff will be encouraging people travelling to and from Sunbury to use metropolitan services. They will ensure that, particularly on the evening services, seats are available for those people travelling as far as Bendigo. We are

offering a dual service. I believe once people experience the frequency of the metropolitan service, with its earlier starts and later finishes, they will naturally convert to metropolitan services.

The member for Northcote raised with me an issue in relation to delays in the delivery of new V/Line carriages, and she has raised this matter in the past, wanting me to get on with the job and make sure we order the new V/Line carriages. If I recall correctly, the last time I spoke on this matter in the house the member for Northcote interjected, 'I hear you're getting 28 carriages'. There was a budget allocation for new V/Line railcars, and I said we would be negotiating to get the best possible deal for taxpayers that we could. Maybe if the matter had been negotiated by the member for Northcote there would be only 28 carriages, but I can assure her that we have done a better deal than that.

We are now getting to the tail end of tidying up that deal with the successful bidder for those particular railcars, and they will be greatly appreciated on the line. It would have been great if those railcars had been ordered as part of the regional rail link project, but as we know, there were no trains, no signals and of course there was no money for the Anderson Road grade separations. We had to go and find that money.

The member for Northcote also raised an issue in relation to \$10 million for buses, and as I am sure the member would realise, with the regional rail link project and the shutdowns that are going to occur, V/Line is naturally going to require more buses to replace those trains, and she can expect that will be an ongoing issue.

The member also spoke about problems in relation to disruptions to services on the Geelong line and how they are going to run. Interestingly, I went back and had a look at the *V/Line Annual Report 2011–12*, and the punctuality performance for short-distance trains — the Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong V/Line services coming into Melbourne — improved to 87.3 per cent of services being on time in 2011–12 versus 84.3 per cent in 2010–11. If I remember rightly, a Labor government was in power then, so in terms of punctuality there has been an improvement in those short trips.

The member for Northcote raised another issue in relation to Labor's fare increases detailed in its famous transport plan — two fare increases identified for the next two years going forward. I know the member for Northcote was not on the transport plan panel, but there were members on the opposition front bench who approved those fare increases and who booked them in the forward estimates. That was part and parcel of

Labor's transport plan. I assure the member for Northcote that on the major issue of V/Line railcars we have not done a bad deal. It is better than 28. Do we hear 30? What about 32? We have done a better deal than Labor would have done. We have held tough and hard negotiations to protect taxpayers' interests. Unlike the former Labor government, we are no pushover and we will make sure taxpayers get value for money. I thank the members for Northcote and Macedon for raising their two issues with me.

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — The member for Thomastown raised with me the issue regarding Lalor Gardens Primary School. We have had a conversation a couple of times about that in this place, and she pointed out issues — as she has in the past and in correspondence — regarding the condition of the playground following a cost overrun in the building project. We recognised the fact that there was a cost overrun, and we came to an agreement with the school that we would give them a one-off payment of \$80 000 as our contribution towards the cost overruns and the work that needed to be done in the playground at the school. As part of its end of the bargain the school said to us that it would undertake to do the rest of the work.

When we made that agreement with the school we thought in good faith that that agreement would be acceptable to both parties, but obviously that funding is still not enough. The school has not been able to do the works, and the sorts of options put forward by the school that the member has illustrated to me would add up to an easy \$300 000 — an incredible amount of money — for restitution of the playground and the landscaping that needs to be done. To me that seems an extreme path to take to bring the landscaping and the playground back to the condition that the school community expects.

The member asked for a one-off payment and we have given the school a one-off. She wants another one-off — and good members ask for that. Unfortunately I have a list of \$70 million worth of one-off requests from a range of schools around Victoria, where Building the Education Revolution projects were mismanaged and overrun, to bring up their original BER project to the standard it originally went to tender for. Due to a whole range of issues, including cost overruns, mismanagement and changing project managers — you name it, it happened — we have cost overruns of \$70 million throughout the state. I know this is not a BER project, but in terms of those sorts of projects that is the range of liabilities we have around the state.

At this stage we have given our one-off. We have an agreement with the school and we will do whatever we possibly can to help, but at this stage I do not have any ready money to give them to finish off the project. If the school has to take the sort of extreme measures the member is mentioning, it needs to talk to the regional office as to how a more reasonable outcome can happen for it.

The member for Yan Yean raised with me the issue which we touched on in question time today relating to the closure of Acacia College and the subsequent fallout in terms of provision for students in both government and non-government schools in that area. This government has a good record in providing government education in the northern part of Melbourne. In fact 21 per cent of the money we have spent on land purchases in the last two budgets has gone to the outer northern metropolitan area. Over the last two budgets we have allocated \$56 million for land purchases. That compares to just \$8 million in the last budget of the previous government. We have vastly increased — by seven times — the amount of money available for land. As I said, 21 per cent of that money has gone to the northern metropolitan area. As well as that, we have committed \$10 million in this year's budget for the Doreen South school. Construction of that school will be happening soon, and we hope to have it up and running by 2014. That money has been provided in this year's budget.

On top of that, we own another six blocks of land in the area for future development. We are also going through the process of acquiring land for the Doreen secondary college, so we are well down the track in terms of that provision. That will make a seventh block of land that we have in the area. It is important to note that as well as building up the land bank we have a range of needs throughout the growing areas of Melbourne, and we look at the needs and priorities with the money that is available to us each year. Obviously there are a range of budgetary considerations. We have had a further \$50 million a year cut from our budget by the federal government, and that will make our budgetary position even more difficult. That is the scenario.

We monitor the needs of schools in the growing areas, and we have a very good record of construction and land purchases in that area. There has been a suggestion that the developer out that way, the RCL Group, would be happy to repurchase the land we own in Mernda — which is one of the six blocks of land I talked about earlier and which was bought by the previous government in 2008 for a secondary college in Mernda — and that money could go towards the cost of the government acquiring the former Acacia College. It

would not be enough money to acquire the school; it would probably go only half way. I do not think it is an acceptable outcome; it does not solve the problem. You would have a growing area, you would not be replacing Acacia College with another non-government school and you would be selling the land purchased for the next government secondary college to be built in that area; in the end you would be one and a half schools down. To me it is not logical.

We have no intention of buying Acacia College. Another reason we would not do it is the cost, which is one of the reasons that the Uniting Church bailed out. The cost of the provision of roads, crossings and lights that the former developer and then the church took on was a further \$10 million. It is just not a good spend of our money when we have the land out there and we have the plans out there. As well as that, in terms of non-government school education for the parents who make that choice, there is interest in the purchase of Acacia College by the Catholic Education Office and also some other parties, and that process is well advanced. I want a more than adequate supply of education places out there for both government and non-government schools. I think the path we are going down is the best one to provide that.

The member for Yan Yean said to me that she wants to be bipartisan about the issue, but I read one of her tweets regarding this issue in which she said:

The offer of the developer to buy back the Mernda site is the opportunity to embarrass the government into action ...

There are a whole range of tweets like that, which is hardly bipartisan. In a letter to the developer, the member said she was:

... disappointed that government had not yet funded nor begun even any planning to build a state school on this site.

I have to look at all schools. I am the minister responsible for all schools and all students. I think our way ahead is the right one for everybody involved in that area. We have the runs on the board.

It is a difficult time. In fact my immediate consideration is of the options, and the member talked about the options for the students. We have to look at government and non-government options, and it will be up to the parents to choose. We are working through Independent Schools Victoria and the Catholic Education Office, and obviously our own department has looked at where the students come from. The bulk of them are from primary schools, and there is adequate provision in alternative schools for those students. That work is happening and parents are turning their

attention to it. The schools, both government and non-government, have been fantastic, and they are opening their doors and giving information to the parents so they can make the choice.

Yes, there will be considerable growth out there. Acacia College has 500 students and would have had 700 students next year. We need to provide government places for the growing population out there, and obviously there need to be non-government schools out there as well. I think if Acacia College were taken over as a non-government school that would be a good outcome. We are not going to do it. We are going to pursue our goal of building more government schools out there, and as I said, we have the runs on the board.

Mr R. SMITH (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I would like to respond, firstly, to the member for Kilsyth, a good and hardworking member who has delivered a great number of election commitments to his community. I note that he would like me to meet him at the site of the Bayswater North retarding basin to discuss and update him on the election commitment there. I am pleased to tell the member for Kilsyth that I have recently approved an allocation of \$200 000 to fulfil the member's commitment, and those funds will go towards the beautification of the site as well as the construction of recreational facilities for his community and those who live in close proximity to the area. I would be very happy to join the member out there as they begin to announce those works. Again I congratulate him on his advocacy for his area.

The members for Mount Waverley and Albert Park raised matters for the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Higher Education and Skills respectively. I will ensure that the two issues that were raised are brought to the attention of the respective ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 10.54 p.m.

