

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION**

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## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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**House Committee** — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Graley, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Drum, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, and Mr P. Davis.

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**Rural and Regional Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr Drum.

**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella and Mr Watt. (*Council*): Mr O'Brien and Mr O'Donohue.

### Heads of parliamentary departments

*Assembly* — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

*Council* — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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**Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Premier:**

The Hon. P. J. RYAN

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

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The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP
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Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Murray Valley	Nats
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank <sup>5</sup>	Broadmeadows	ALP
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Barker, Ms Ann Patricia	Oakleigh	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Seymour	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Madden, Mr Justin Mark	Essendon	ALP
Bauer, Mrs Donna Jane	Carrum	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean	Yuroke	ALP	Miller, Ms Elizabeth Eileen	Bentleigh	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield <sup>1</sup>	Broadmeadows	ALP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
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Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Lowan	Nats	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane <sup>6</sup>	Melbourne	ALP
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Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Sykes, Dr William Everett	Benalla	Nats
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Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Kilsyth	LP	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Lyndhurst	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Ballarat East	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Swan Hill	Nats
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin <sup>3</sup>	Niddrie	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Keilor	ALP	Weller, Mr Paul	Rodney	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Kanis, Ms Jennifer <sup>4</sup>	Melbourne	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wreford, Ms Lorraine Joan	Mordialloc	LP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Ballarat West	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP			
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP			

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

<sup>2</sup> Elected 24 March 2012

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 27 January 2012

<sup>4</sup> Elected 21 July 2012

<sup>5</sup> Elected 19 February 2011

<sup>6</sup> Resigned 7 May 2012



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**BALLARAT****Thursday, 6 September 2012****The SPEAKER (Hon. Ken Smith) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.****PROCLAMATION****The SPEAKER** — Order! The Governor has issued the following proclamation:

I, the Hon. Alex Chernov, Governor of Victoria, acting pursuant to section 8 of the Constitution Act 1975, hereby:

- a. fix the Ballarat University Mount Helen campus at University Drive, Mount Helen, as the place for the dispatch of business of the Legislative Assembly on 6 September 2012 until the completion of its business on that day or, if necessary, the following day; and
- b. confirm that the place for the dispatch of business of the Legislative Assembly shall thereafter revert to Parliament House, Melbourne.

Given under my hand and the seal of Victoria at Melbourne, this 7 August 2012.

Hon. Alex Chernov, AC, QC  
Governor  
By His Excellency's Command

I would like to welcome everybody here to Ballarat and to the university, and I hope today is a successful day for not only Parliament but also members of the public from Ballarat.

I now ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to admit Ms Bonnie Fagan to give the welcome to country.

**Ms Fagan escorted into chamber by Serjeant-at-Arms.****WELCOME TO COUNTRY**

**Ms FAGAN** — Good morning Elders, Honourable Speaker, members of the house, mayor of the City of Ballarat, Cr Mark Harris, chancellor of the University of Ballarat, Dr Paul Hemming, vice-chancellor of the University of Ballarat, Professor David Battersby, ladies and gentlemen:

Nyurra wurriyn Nari-Yik Bonnie. Wadawurrung-ak Dya-Nyuk

I will repeat that in English:

Hello, my name is Bonnie. This is Wadawurrung country.

For my family, the Wadawurrung people, it is believed that our land was created by the ancient spirit Bunjil, the wedge-tailed eagle. Bunjil created the land and all of its features. He also created Kulin, man, from the clay of the riverbed and breathed life into him. Bunjil is believed to have come to rest at Lal Lal Falls and returned to the sky as the brightest star which looks upon us today.

My family has adapted to live in two worlds — walking continually on this land in Ballarat on which we stand for thousands of years. 'Ballaarat' is a Wadawurrung word meaning resting place. We respect our provider for providing us with rich natural resources such as stone, ochre, water, flora and fauna. Continually in our culture we still look to the skies for guidance on the change of season.

Ballarat is rich with remnant culturally significant sites, including ceremonial grounds, scarred trees and artefactual material. These sites tell us of a continual tangible history. Oral history passed on from Elders and known areas of significance are being recorded to allow us to tell a story of the intangible history of the area.

I would like to acknowledge my ancestors and pay respects to my Elders, both past and present, and to any Elders who may be here with us today. I would also like to acknowledge the importance of the Wadawurrung people and their future Elders.

Traditionally, a welcome to country would have you take part in a smoking ceremony. This is to cleanse you of any negative energy. This ceremony also holds great significance, as it asks our ancestors to return to Earth and protect us while we are on country. On behalf of my Elders I would like to welcome you to our country and ask that you respect it as much as we do while you are here. Thank you.

*Honourable members applauding.*

**Ms Fagan escorted from chamber by Serjeant-at-Arms.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to admit the mayor of the City of Ballarat and the vice-chancellor of the University of Ballarat to the chamber.

**Cr Harris and Professor Battersby escorted into chamber by Serjeant-at-Arms.****ADDRESS BY PREMIER**

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — What a wonderful welcome, and what wonderful country. At the outset I

acknowledge Cr Mark Harris, mayor of the City of Ballarat; Professor David Battersby, vice-chancellor of Ballarat University; and Bonnie Fagan. We also acknowledge all those, past and present, including our indigenous community, the Wadawurrung, whose love of our land, care of our country and connection to this place and this city have left us with such a legacy and treasure, which we seek to nurture at every opportunity.

This legacy is the product of the coming together of indigenous communities, in the 1850s in particular, and post-settlement communities. It is very much a legacy of the people who came here at that time, who were invariably very young when they arrived. They came here from all over the world. They came with inspiration, aspiration and ambition to raise families, grow businesses and plan and build for future generations. What a legacy they left here in Ballarat: magnificent civic architecture, institutions and businesses. That legacy is what makes Ballarat such a proud and successful part of the Victorian economy and way of life.

I take this opportunity to thank in particular the mayor of the City of Ballarat for the warm welcome he has given to all members of Parliament over the last couple of days. Many members of Parliament from both sides of politics have been in the Ballarat region during the last few days, and we thank you for your welcome. I also take the opportunity on behalf of all members of Parliament to thank you, your councillors and the officers and staff of the city for the great job you did in assisting with putting this regional sitting in place.

I particularly thank the vice-chancellor of the University of Ballarat, Professor David Battersby, for having us at his home. Many of us have had an opportunity to be at Ballarat University many times over the years. The university is looking magnificent, and it is a great pleasure to be here. The Speaker and I thank the vice-chancellor and his staff, from whom we have received magnificent support and cooperation here at the Mount Helen campus.

The University of Ballarat has an exceptionally impressive pedigree. One of its antecedents was the Ballarat School of Mines, which was established in 1870, some 140 years ago, as the School of Mines, Ballarat. It is another reminder of the aspiration of the members of the community who came here. They were small in number, but their ambition was great. The Mount Helen campus dates back some 40 years as the original tertiary division of the Ballarat School of Mines, so its modern buildings and the great bush campus here carry the weight of that earlier history. Today some 25 000 international and domestic

students, combining academic, vocational and technical teaching and training, attend this campus. There is a well-earned research profile as well.

The existence of this university allows students from across the regions to have access to post-secondary education in a great way. Having these facilities here makes it easier for students from the regions to access the education they seek. That is obviously of benefit to families in terms of commuting, lifestyle and cultural and sporting facilities as well. There is an interesting glass cabinet here at the university which records the engagement over recent decades of former governments, former premiers and former members of Parliament with the university. It is a great record and it is a very proud record.

We are also pleased in a wider sense to be here in this important and historical regional city of Ballarat meeting as a Legislative Assembly for the first time. It was in August 2001 that Parliament, as an initiative of the then Bracks government — and a good initiative — created history when for the first time each house of the Victorian Parliament sat outside Melbourne. At that time the Legislative Council met in Ballarat and the Legislative Assembly convened in Bendigo. Today we have reversed that coin, and the upper house is meeting in Bendigo's town hall.

We are delighted to be here in Ballarat. There may still be some Victorians old enough to recall that this sort of innovation stems back — and this will not come as a surprise — to the period from 1901 through to 1927 when our federal parliamentary colleagues, the first Parliament of Australia, sat in Spring Street and the Parliament of Victoria sat in the Royal Exhibition Building.

Ballarat has of course been a significant influence in the politics of our state. The Eureka Stockade and surrounding events are evidence of that in our history books, as are the reports of the many people from across the world who came to this region, as I said, in search of gold but with an ambition and focus on future generations. In many ways they were the genesis of the very proud and successful multicultural thread which runs through Victoria today of which we are all stridently supportive and which we will seek to defend at every opportunity.

At least three previous premiers — Tom Hollway, Sir Henry Bolte and of course Steve Bracks — either represented Ballarat in the Parliament or had very strong connections with the city, and Australia's second Prime Minister, that great Liberal Alfred Deakin, was the federal member for Ballarat. Two prime

ministers — Robert Menzies and James Scullin — spent part of their schooling at Ballarat High School, and John Curtin was born relatively nearby at Creswick; he made up for it when he sensibly married his wife Elsie, because she came from Ballarat.

Of course there are permanent reminders of every Australian Prime Minister from Edmund Barton to Kevin Rudd in the wonderful Prime Ministers Avenue in Ballarat's beautiful botanical gardens, themselves started in 1857 and a reminder again of the important legacy that those who settled here and put their roots down here in Ballarat left us.

Ballarat has produced many other great contributors to our state and nation: aviation pioneer Reg Ansett, great war leader Leslie Morshead, High Court judge Sir Douglas Menzies, great Australian virologist Frank Fenner, Archbishop Sir Frank Little, marathon runner Steve Moneghetti and the first chancellor of this university, that great Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey. There were great sportspeople, such as Tony Lockett, Mick Malthouse, Steve Moneghetti of course and the legendary Cat Bobby Davis, and we cannot be in Ballarat without paying tribute to the Roosters and to Gerald Fitzgerald.

This is just a reminder of what is so much a part of Ballarat, and there is a legacy here which continues to be built. I want to particularly note the Avenue of Honour of some 4000 trees, which were planted after the First World War and are nurtured and loved still. Everyone who passes through the Avenue of Honour cannot help but be reminded of the commitment of those who served this nation and served this region, and that avenue says much about Ballarat.

There is a remarkable stream of institutions in Ballarat that commenced in those years and continue. We have talked about the gardens, and there are also the businesses; the wonderful Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Australia's oldest and largest regional gallery; the Prime Ministers Avenue; the longest running Lyric theatre building, started in 1875; the magnificent architecture; the town hall; the post office; the station; Lydiard Street; and some of those streetscapes which are quite extraordinary in their own right. And of course, Speaker, there is also Sovereign Hill and the area that surrounds it.

Ballarat is a powerhouse of Victoria's regional economy, with more than 8000 local businesses, 18 000 businesses in the surrounding region and a large service economy. Victoria's agricultural exports contribute more than 25 per cent to the national total, and Ballarat contributes in large part to making

Victoria's food and fibre industry this state's largest export. Booming services and opportunities for manufacturers, as well as of course the University of Ballarat and its education precinct, make this region one of the great economic regions in Victoria, and Sovereign Hill makes it one of the great tourism regions. This region has reached out to the world through its businesses and institutions, and through events such as the 1956 Olympic Games.

This is a proud city and a proud region. I wish the university and the city well, as both continue to develop the ever-closer ties between town and gown; those links have existed here for many years and they continue to grow. We are all very pleased to be here today to bring the Parliament to regional Victoria. We hope many local people come to see their legislators in action both here in Ballarat and also in Bendigo.

Thank you again for the warm welcome, and we look forward to the day proceeding well.

### ADDRESS BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — I am delighted, firstly, to join the Premier in acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, to pay my respects to their elders, past and present, and to thank in particular Bonnie Fagan for her welcome to country. I also acknowledge Cr Mark Harris of the City of Ballarat and Professor David Battersby, the vice-chancellor of the University of Ballarat, and again join with the Premier in thanking all those concerned for their input with the set-up and the logistics involved in organising a regional sitting like this and also for the hospitality we have enjoyed here.

I am grateful to the Premier for his acknowledgement that this regional sitting program commenced back in 2001, and I think it is a great example of an innovation that can strengthen our democratic institutions and lead to a greater understanding in the community of exactly how the Parliament of Victoria works. But it is also a great thing for us as members of Parliament. One of the great privileges of the office that I hold now, and other offices I was privileged to hold in the previous government, is that it allows me to travel to all parts of the state and to see regional Victoria, both the regional cities and the smaller country towns, and get a true sense of all the qualities that make those communities so special.

So for all of us who came here today it is much more of a gift from Ballarat to us rather than anything we might, if you like, give to the city. For us to be able to see, feel

and experience the vibrancy, the energy, the great passion and the history of the city and this region is a great thing. Of course I am sure the galleries will be filled with very keen observers today, and that is very important as well. The regional sitting program is a wonderful program, and I congratulate the Premier for continuing the efforts of previous governments. I am sure our Legislative Council colleagues will have a similarly fulfilling experience in that other great regional centre, Bendigo.

I mentioned a moment ago that one of the great privileges of my current role, and my other roles over time, has been to visit all parts of our state and to move throughout regional communities. Having grown up in regional Victoria I have a keen sense of the importance of the regional parts of our state — not just big cities but also much smaller towns — and whilst I have never lived in Ballarat, this is a special place for me and my family. My mother's family are all spud farmers from this area, and their hands are stained with the cold red dirt from Bungaree, Dean and Springbank, and whilst I have not lived here this is a special community — special to our state, special to all of us personally and certainly special to me.

My grandfather was a spud farmer and had to leave the farm because of difficult times to become a train driver, first steam and then the sparks, down in Melbourne. He always referred to his family in Ballarat and families like those we knew on the land — working hard, toiling for generations to build a better future for their kids — as 'my people'. I think that enduring sense of identity — those special qualities that Ballarat holds so dear — is still strong, proud and vibrant today, all these years later.

The history of this city is the history of our state in many ways. The Premier has detailed information about the period from the gold rush right through to agriculture and manufacturing. This is a city that tells a much broader story — a story of hope; a story of great challenge; a story of enterprise; a story of investment, toil and struggle; and a story of great achievement. That is something we should all take a moment to reflect upon as we spend this day in such a great city.

The other opportunity we have today, as we spend some time in regional Victoria as a Parliament, is to reflect not just on Ballarat but also on regional Victoria and the special needs of regional Victoria. In my experience this community and communities right across regional Victoria have a reasonably healthy scepticism about the work that governments do, but they have significant expectations about the role of government. They have a fundamental belief that what

governments do matters and that the choices that governments make are very important. There is an opportunity for us to reflect upon that today. We can look at all the strengths of this community and at the opportunities and choices we as a legislature make and reflect upon how we might find opportunities within the challenges that Ballarat faces and opportunities within the challenges that regional Victoria faces in what are undoubtedly uncertain times.

I will give an example of the power of government action and the fact that I think regional Victorians, whilst sceptical, have a fundamental faith in the fact that governments can influence the outcomes and opportunities, perhaps most of all in regional areas. Ballarat Health Services is not simply a place where people in this community receive the dedicated, specialist and acute health care they need but it is also the biggest employer in this local area. It is that way in which we should view the role of government, particularly the state government, in terms of investments, choices and priorities.

We as a Parliament, including members of the government, have enormous power in terms of delivering and supporting, in complex and innovative ways, growth, strength and prosperity in regional communities like this one. Our decisions are very important and perhaps they become more important the further away from the Melbourne CBD we get. It is a simple point, but an important one. Today's regional sitting is an opportunity for us to reflect upon all of those things.

I also say — and the Premier touched upon this — that there is great history in this city. There is history in terms of the growing democracy in our state. The Premier mentioned miners and the growth and development of a proper franchise in our state. He mentioned Sovereign Hill and the dedication to that important and colourful period in our history. So we owe Ballarat a great debt in many ways. We should also take some time today to reflect on the fact that the Ballarat community, as the custodian of that chapter of our history and so many other important chapters, has a great reverence for the past, is the custodian of it and celebrates our history very well. We should all be indebted to this city and its people for that.

Similarly as a state we should be indebted to Ballarat and grateful for the role it has played, as the Premier indicated, as an economic powerhouse from the 1850s of the gold rush to food, fibre, manufacturing, agriculture more broadly and service economies. This is a powerhouse in every sense. It is one of our great

regional cities with a strong history and a very bright future.

In regard to the point I made earlier about the decisions governments make, I say governments can influence and make it just a little bit easier for a community like this to be stronger, to build a better and even more prosperous future and perhaps even a more golden future than we had in times past, which we have reflected upon.

If you will indulge me for a moment, Speaker, we as a parliamentary Labor Party are very proud to have served this community and to have made decisions in its interests. In coming here today I drove past IBM, the State Revenue Office, what was Rural Ambulance Victoria's regional headquarters and the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority, and in terms of other services and facilities I have spent some time at the hospital and local schools. Like the Premier I have made several trips to Ballarat in recent days, and it is with some pride that we reflect upon the decisions and choices that we made. They are powerful; they are important.

Whilst self-praise is no recommendation, Speaker — I have a healthy appreciation of that — we are proud to have made those investments. Together with the enterprise, hard work, skills, innovation and in many respects the confidence and the courage of the business community and the workers — well-organised workers, can I say — in this city, working together in a strong partnership, we were very pleased during our time in office to be able to make a mark on this city and to leave it in, might I boldly suggest, a better place than we found it. We are very pleased about that.

Equally I am sure those on the other side of the house will be very pleased with some of their decisions and the work they have done. That is what regional cities and growth are all about. It is not about one government and one period in time; it has to have been a consistent effort both here in Ballarat and in so many other parts of regional Victoria.

If I can just conclude by saying Ballarat is a city that tells a much broader story. As I said at the outset, the history of Ballarat is in many respects the history of our state, and we will talk about gold later on. The regional sitting programs are very important, not just because the communities get a better sense of what the legislature does but also because they are a great opportunity for us to spend time collectively in regional Victoria, to show our strong support for regional Victoria as a Parliament and to celebrate all the great things that are happening in regional Victoria, including

its vibrant multiculturalism, strong arts culture, innovation, investment, strong service industry and those industries that are synonymous with our economic story, such as manufacturing and, as the Premier indicated, food, fibre and agriculture. All of those things we celebrate during our one day together. That is an important contribution that we can collectively make.

I thank all of those who have welcomed us to Ballarat. I congratulate the Premier on putting in place a regional sitting program. It does the government great credit, and we look forward to a day of debate. This is a day where we will deal with some important issues. It is a day where we as a Parliament will clearly show this community and all regional communities that Victoria extends well beyond its capital city, that we value our thriving regions and that we are all here together to support them to grow, to be fairer, to be stronger and, as the Premier noted, to reach out to the world.

### ADDRESS BY MAYOR OF CITY OF BALLARAT

**Cr HARRIS** — Speaker, the Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Ted Baillieu, the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, our local members — the member for Ballarat East, Geoff Howard, and the member for Ballarat West, Sharon Knight — ministers, members of the Legislative Assembly and University of Ballarat vice-chancellor David Battersby, we extend to you the warmest of welcomes to Ballarat today and to western Victoria.

Firstly, I too would like to acknowledge the Wathaurong people, the traditional custodians of this beautiful land in which we meet, and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present. I thank Bonnie Fagan for her generous welcome to country this morning. I would also like to thank the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for their addresses, which I felt were indicative of their knowledge and concern for Ballarat in particular, but also for the whole region.

As the Premier reminded us, in 2001 Ballarat hosted the first ever regional sitting of the Legislative Council, which is a little more than a decade ago, and we are proud to welcome the Legislative Assembly to our city today. Ballarat is one of the largest regional cities in Australia and the gateway to western Victoria, with a population of over 400 000 people.

Perhaps to correct a misnomer I will comment that we have never really thought of ourselves as Central Highlanders; we are indeed western Victorians. From the gold rush on Ballarat has acted as a key centre for

trade and provision of services through western Victoria. Ballarat's recent growth has meant that we are well placed to continue that historic role, particularly in sectors such as health and education, as exemplified here by the University of Ballarat.

Our city boasts a diverse and dynamic economy with longstanding strengths in manufacturing and retail, complemented by recent growth in sectors such as health, community services and information and communications technology. The University of Ballarat tech park around us has grown to become the largest tech park in Australia, with over 30 businesses providing more than 1200 jobs and more than \$300 million in economic output every year. Major manufacturing firms known nationally and internationally such as Mars, McCain's, Gekko Systems, Selkirk, Haymes, MaxiTRANS, FMP and Goldacres have chosen Ballarat as the base for their manufacturing facilities.

More importantly, however, is our social capital. As regional members here would well know, regional Victorians are by any index of social cohesiveness well ahead of their city counterparts, with high rates of volunteering and membership of community groups, born out of a need for cooperation and the local resilience that less concentrated resources and the real threat of fire and flood demand. Some indexes such as measures of gross domestic product per capita and unemployment rates lag behind the city, but for this reason they do not tell the full story of the regions. We have maintained high levels of wellbeing because of this community cohesiveness, even when challenged with transition in manufacturing and primary industry.

The way forward we see, economically, is to look to what we already do well and not to generic regional models. Western Victorians have their own suite of priorities in economic development. We have in this region, as we have said, many success stories, both social and economic, and we need to leverage from these as we move ahead and help transition the sectors and communities into these successful niches, such as ICT here at the university. Governance, resources and planning should also reflect this. Indeed we, like our city counterparts, look to resource allocation and planning that is equitable and straightforward. Regional Victorians want no more than this, and I feel that as regional communities we would also be the first to understand when there is allocation of assistance to fire and flood-damaged regions before our own.

Perhaps, however, unlike our city counterparts, we look to enhance local input into resource priorities and planning as a compensation for the centralised nature of

government and bureaucracies and as a way to achieve equity. For this reason we look to the other tiers of government to endorse local governments in their regional groupings as having a key input into resource allocation and to help us become true owners of our regional plans. Productivity in government can always be enhanced by using all tiers in a coordinated way. Local government can play an increased part with an increased use of its own resources, such as in statutory planning and the joint development of regional plans.

Western Victorians, indeed regional communities across the state, look to their collective regional groups of local government to be more directly involved in resource allocation and the setting of priorities that perhaps in the past federal and state governments have deferred to other authorities. We need to enhance our regional decision making with more equity and improved productivity of government.

Within local government itself productivity can also be enhanced by the simple recognition that the most efficient way to deliver services is with a regionality that reflects where people seek their services from, with service delivery reflecting the most efficient constructs and not being based on historic lines on maps. Local government is about representing communities at a grassroots level and for this reason is about locality; but we should not be averse to sharing services across local boundaries when it makes good economic sense.

While state government's interactions with the community are many and varied, its interaction with local government's community representatives no doubt at times can seem like listening to a long list of asks. The move to a better coordinated and structured partnership must for this reason be of the highest priority.

Ballarat led this nation's first resources boom, and its Chartist manifesto at Eureka fired the first brave experiments towards an expanded adult suffrage. This region has its own individual suite of successes that we must build on, and we look forward to Ballarat again leading in industry and ideas and contributing its part to this great state. Thank you, Speaker, for continuing this regional sitting initiative and particularly for this sitting in Ballarat. Ballarat has always been a place of plain speaking, and I wish you all well in your deliberations today.

*Honourable members applauding.*

## ADDRESS BY VICE-CHANCELLOR OF UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT

**Prof. BATTERSBY** — Speaker and members, the University of Ballarat appreciates the opportunity to host this sitting today of the Victorian Legislative Assembly at the Mount Helen campus. It is an honour to join the mayor of the City of Ballarat to address you today. I too acknowledge the Wathaurong people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet.

In 2010 the Parliament of Victoria reviewed the university's act. We took the opportunity to incorporate in the preamble to our act an explicit commitment 'to improve the access of Aboriginal peoples in tertiary education' across the regions served by the university and at our campuses in Ballarat, Ararat, Stawell and Horsham. In tandem with this change to our act, and to further the process of reconciliation, the University of Ballarat has recently developed its second reconciliation action plan, which was approved by the university council earlier this year and launched by the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Some 45 years ago the 100 hectares of land occupied by the site on which we meet today was a sheep farm. The idea of converting a sheep farm into a major tertiary education campus was challenging. When trying to visualise how large the university might become, a conservative estimate of 2000 students was settled upon, somewhat short of the 25 000 students we have today.

A century earlier, in 1870, under the watchful eye of Sir Redmond Barry, the predecessor institution of the University of Ballarat, the School of Mines, Ballarat, or SMB, came into existence. So there is a very proud tradition of tertiary education in the city of Ballarat and we are now seeing a rejuvenation of the university infrastructure with the investment of more than \$100 million in the development of a new science and engineering precinct, new immersive nursing laboratories, and a new sports precinct here at the Mount Helen campus. We are also constructing a manufacturing technology training centre and a new technical education centre at the SMB campus, with new trades training facilities having just been completed at the Horsham campus. We have the commonwealth and indeed state governments to thank for contributing funding to these important projects.

Alongside these developments the university's technology park, which members drove through this morning, has now grown to be the largest and most diverse technology park of its type in regional

Australia. We have more than 30 tenants, including IBM, the State Revenue Office, the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority and so on. The technology park itself now employs in excess of 1200 staff. This is one of the great success stories of Ballarat, involving a partnership between the university, the state government and the City of Ballarat. The University of Ballarat and its technology park now contribute more than \$890 million annually to the regions we serve. This economic contribution to the regions has almost doubled since 2005. The economic activity of the university has also led to over 4600 full-time jobs. In Ballarat the university now makes up 12.3 per cent of employment and contributes just under 13 per cent of all household income.

But it is not just about jobs, infrastructure and economics. Universities are about people, progress and providing access to opportunities. The University of Ballarat has the highest proportion of regional students of any Australian university, with more than 70 per cent of our domestic students coming from the regions. Many of these, in fact about 80 per cent, are the first members of their family ever to attend university, which is an enormous privilege for us at the university. Three in four of our graduates take up employment in the regions following the completion of their program of studies and training at the University of Ballarat. By any objective measure we achieve success in all sorts of ways at this university.

This week the Australian *Good Universities Guide* has given us a glowing report with five stars for a range of achievements including teaching quality and graduate satisfaction. In Victoria we now rank as the no. 2 university for our combined star ratings. This is a great report card for our university and particularly for our staff at the university.

Teaching quality and ensuring the employability of our graduates are our obvious strengths, but our research also makes a difference. In this regard the formation of a collaborative research network between the University of Ballarat, the University of Melbourne, Monash University and Deakin University heralds a new future for us as we partner with these universities for the benefit of our researchers and the students they supervise, and great research outcomes have already been achieved.

Our University of Ballarat researchers are active in a number of fields of study. Let me provide just two examples of how our research is actually making a difference. The first example involves cardiovascular disease. A big heart size and high blood pressure are both conditions that commonly lead to heart disease,

which is the no. 1 cause of death and disablement in Australia. Sometimes these diseases occur when the body is under stress, such as from smoking. At other times no cause can be found. Men are more prone to die of heart disease than women of a similar age. Our research group at the university is examining the genetic causes of heart disease. While there are many universities in Australia with excellent cardiovascular research laboratories, we have the only world-class laboratory that is investigating the genomics of cardiovascular disease.

Another example involves our sport surface research group, which has undertaken leading-edge research on the link between surface properties and injury, the validity of surface testing equipment and the development of guidelines and standards for synthetic turf use for Australian football and cricket. This research has now led to a certification process for synthetic turf surfaces in Australia and has been used to inform the development of standards for other sports worldwide.

I would like to conclude with some comments about the university's role as a proud and enthusiastic provider of vocational education and training (VET). Indeed this nation's first technical and further education institution was the School of Mines, Ballarat, so our long lineage equips us well for changes in government funding and policy. The recent state government budget decisions about vocational education and training are a reminder of the difficult decisions that have to be taken by governments. The response of our public institutions, such as the University of Ballarat, is equally a reminder that our society is remarkably robust when there is an opportunity not only to question governments about decisions but more importantly an opportunity to participate with governments in setting the framework for future provision of vocational and education training in our state.

At the University of Ballarat we have embraced the changes, and we can see some significant opportunities before us. For example, we have announced that on 1 January 2013 the university will establish the University of Ballarat Industry Skills Centre for the region. This announcement has been well received. This will bring together all of our apprenticeship training, which we will grow and for which we will provide a one-stop shop for regional employers and industry. The establishment of this centre will coincide with the opening later next year of our new, multimillion-dollar Manufacturing Technology Training Centre in Ballarat. This is a first for regional Australia.

Another initiative is equally significant. The federal government recently awarded the University of Ballarat and six regional Victorian TAFE institutes in Victoria \$24.8 million to extend higher education opportunities to regional Victorians. This state government has provided an additional \$3.3 million to support this important project. Very quickly there will be 1600 regional Victorians from Sunraysia to Gippsland to the Wimmera participating in this initiative through their local TAFE institute. The students who enrol in these courses would not otherwise have had access to degree qualifications.

Given the success of this initiative, the university has now proposed to the state government an extension of this major project to deliver selected vocational education and training courses, especially in areas of skills shortages, across regional Victoria through a partnership to be known as the Menzies Affiliation. The Menzies Affiliation will enable VET students to continue to have access to programs in the regions where they live and work, facilitated by their local TAFE institute working in partnership with the University of Ballarat.

This initiative will ensure that currently sustainable programs can be enlarged further, that essential programs which are deemed necessary to meet current skill shortages but which are unviable at the local level can be preserved, that opportunities exist to develop centres of training excellence and that improved revenue flows will see the retention and extension of networked training opportunities for Victorian regional students, industries and communities. It is proposed to that the Menzies Affiliation deliver selected VET programs in the first half of next year. We are indeed excited about this regional partnership, which we think will enhance opportunities to meet the training needs of regional Victorians.

Speaker, in welcoming you to the university may I personally mention all our local MPs on both sides across the great regions of Victoria served by the University of Ballarat, from the electorate of Melton in the east to the electorate of Lowan in the west. On behalf of the University of Ballarat, our chancellor Dr Paul Hemming, our council, our staff and our students allow me to wish all of you well in your deliberations today.

*Honourable members applauding.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Professor Battersby and Cr Harris, I thank you both for your addresses to the house and for the assistance you have given to the Parliament of Victoria in the setting up of the

Assembly's proceedings here in Ballarat. It has been very helpful.

**Cr Harris and Professor Battersby escorted from chamber by Serjeant-at-Arms.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of motion: removal

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 12 to 21 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notices to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

## PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

### Swinburne University of Technology: Lilydale campus

This petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the state government's plans to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from TAFE funding. In particular, we note:

1. since these cuts were announced, Swinburne Lilydale has announced the closure of its TAFE and university;
2. 240 local jobs will be cut, and the future of 2500 students is uncertain as a result of this campus closure;
3. with 49 000 full-time jobs already lost in this term of government, skills training has never been more important for Victorians.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urge the Baillieu state government to abandon the planned funding cuts, guarantee no further cuts will be made and work to secure the future of Swinburne University Lilydale campus.

**By Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) (2789 signatures).**

### Higher education: TAFE funding

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the state government's plans to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from TAFE funding.

In particular, we note:

1. the TAFE Association has estimated up to 2000 jobs could be lost as a result of these cuts;
2. many courses will be dropped or scaled back and several TAFE campuses face the possibility of closure;

3. with 49 000 full-time jobs already lost in this term of government, skills training has never been more important for Victorians.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urge the Baillieu state government to abandon the planned funding cuts and guarantee no further cuts will be made.

**By Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave) (25 242 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

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

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

## DOCUMENTS

**Tabled by Clerk:**

*Crimes Act 1958* — Instrument of Authorisation under s 464Z

*Freedom of Information Act 1982* — Statement of reasons for seeking leave to appeal under s 65AB

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

Greater Shepparton — C136 Part 2

Mildura — C60

Mornington Peninsula — C137, C150

Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria — Report 2011–12

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012* — SR 89

*Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* — SR 90

*Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987* — SR 93

*Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* — SR 92

*Forests Act 1958* — SR 91

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — SR 94

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 86, 88, 89, 90

Young Farmers' Finance Council — Report 2011–12.

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

*Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 — Remaining provisions (except s 240 and Schedule 7) — 1 September 2012 (Gazette S291, 28 August 2012)*

*Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2012 — Whole Act — 1 September 2012 (Gazette S291, 28 August 2012).*

## WORKING WITH CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL 2012

*Council's amendments*

**Returned from Council with message relating to amendments.**

**Order to be considered later this day.**

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Message read advising royal assent on 4 September to:**

**Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill 2012  
Criminal Procedure and Sentencing Acts  
Amendment (Victims of Crime) Bill 2012  
Road Safety Amendment Bill 2012.**

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

#### Program

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

That, under standing order 94(2), the notices of motion, government business, relating to the following items be considered and completed by 4.00 p.m. today:

motion in relation to a mineral emblem for Victoria

motion in relation to the Regional Growth Fund.

This is an opportunity for many members to speak about very important matters, particularly in relation to the mineral emblem and the Regional Growth Fund. There was some discussion between the government and opposition about including the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 on the program. It is the government's intention to start that debate today, but we are not putting it to the guillotine, which will enable that debate to continue, as a number of members want to speak on that bill.

I acknowledge that the opposition and the government have worked very closely to try to ensure that as many members as possible will get the opportunity to speak today. The normal speaking times that apply in debates on motions and bills have been truncated to ensure that we have that opportunity. I thank the opposition for its

cooperation, knowing this is an opportunity for most members to make a contribution to debate on a motion or bill or by making a members statement during the course of the day. I have put to the opposition — and no doubt its members will be pleased — that there will not be any second-reading speeches during the course of today.

I also note the hypocrisy of the opposition. Under the former government in the sitting year of 2010 almost one-third of all bills were second read in the course of debates during the week rather than on Thursday afternoons.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr McINTOSH** — Noting that hypocrisy on the part of the opposition, I commend the motion to the house.

**Motion agreed to.**

### MEMBERS STATEMENTS

#### Ballarat: health and community services

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Minister for Mental Health) — It gives me pleasure today to commend a number of high-quality Ballarat-based service providers which, with the support of the coalition government, are expanding their services in this important area. Firstly, I recognise Ballarat Health Services, particularly its mental health services, which is funded to deliver a new five-bed mother and baby mental health facility. This will help mothers in the region to stay within their community after having a child if they experience postnatal depression, for example. They will be able to get the treatment in their local community rather than having to move to Melbourne, as is currently the case.

I would like to recognise Berry Street, a new provider of residential care for children. It works in out-of-home care and child protection and is now providing services in the Ballarat region. It will shortly be opening a new four-bed residential unit in the Ballarat area as well. There is also an additional tender currently out for further residential beds in the Horsham area, which we know has had a lot of interest and will lead to a further expansion in the number of residential beds available.

Thirdly, I recognise the disability services provider Pinarc, which has recently been funded to expand its respite facilities and community respite for adults with complex needs. McCallum Disability Services, with recurrent funding of over \$2 million and capital funding of nearly \$1 million, will have a new six-bed

accommodation facility for people with disabilities in Ballarat.

### **Ballarat: health and community services**

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — The Baillieu government stands condemned not only for slashing funding to the TAFE sector, which will have devastating effects on the provision of TAFE services in the Ballarat region, but also for cutting many other services which have been highly valued by the members of this community. The cuts include more than \$300 000 less for health promotion activities at Ballarat Community Health. Twenty staff will be directly affected by these cuts, including 11 health promotion officers, 6 nurses, 1 exercise physiologist, 1 physiotherapist and 1 allied health assistant. Eight of those positions will be made redundant, and some staff will have reduced working hours available to them.

These staff provide services to the community in over 30 programs, including exercise, falls prevention and strength training for older adults, a smoking cessation program of one-on-one coaching and support, pap screening, health education programs relating to diabetes education, sexual health and childhood obesity, and health and relationship education. These programs all directly address identified areas of health concern for this region and to date have been demonstrated to have had beneficial and positive outcomes for many people.

The Baillieu government cuts will see many people miss out on these very important health promotion opportunities and instead become more likely to experience preventable chronic illness and bad outcomes in the future. I urge the government to review these cuts and restore funding to the community health service.

### **Ballarat: tourism**

**Ms ASHER** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — I wish to draw to the attention of the house the coalition government's commitment to the tourism profile of Ballarat by funding a whole range of tourism and events strategies to promote the region. We have provided support for the 2014 World Masters Rowing Regatta at Lake Wendouree. This event will deliver a direct economic benefit to Ballarat through participants staying in and around the city and using local businesses.

Other local events that the government will be supporting include the Melbourne to Ballarat Road Race, the Ballarat Beer Festival, the Now and When

exhibition as an extension of the Ballarat International Foto Biennale and the Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields music festival. I see there is a lot of support for the Ballarat Beer Festival!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms ASHER** — The economic rationale of this is to promote an overnight stay, because that generates the economic benefits of tourism. We continue to support Sovereign Hill. I also welcome the significant private investment in attractions such as Kryal Castle, which will add to the dynamic tourism offerings in this particular area.

Members will be interested that in the year ending June 2012 international overnight visitors to the Ballarat region increased by 9.5 per cent year on year to 22 500. Domestic overnight visitors to the Ballarat region increased by 1.9 per cent to 533 000 from the previous year in March 2012. This is a very good result for Ballarat — —

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

### **Education: funding**

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — I am absolutely disgusted at the Baillieu government's blatant attack on public education. This government, which came to power partially on the promise to make Victorian teachers the highest paid, has shown clearly how little it thinks about and understands public education. The list of cuts so far includes: Victorian certificate of applied learning coordinator funding, cut; School Start bonus, cut; the school component of the education maintenance allowance, cut; literacy, numeracy and IT coaches, cut; TAFE funding, cut to the tune of \$220 million, with 43 courses gone; and 70 positions in place to support struggling schools have been axed. The clear pattern here is to attack those who are most vulnerable or those who need just a bit of extra assistance to continue in education or to find a pathway that works both for them and for our community.

I cannot imagine how our hardworking teachers feel when they get up in the morning knowing they have to deal with kids who may not have had the best start in life, who may not have had breakfast that morning or dinner the night before, who may not be living with their families or who may have been witness to or subjected to violence at home. Imagine what it would be like to face these and many other challenges at work and to turn up day after day to teach and to do it with ever-diminishing resources. No-one with even the

slightest understanding of public education would wreak this type of havoc. I ask this government: why does it hate public education?

### **Education: regional and rural Victoria**

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — This government is committed to education in regional Victoria. So far this year we have committed \$3 million of our \$87 million plan to rebuild Phoenix College in Sebastopol into a full education precinct based on a new partnership between education, health and childhood development.

Ballarat is also leading the way in developing world-leading language education clusters. Eight schools in and around Ballarat are sharing resources to provide world-class education in Chinese and Japanese. Schools in the Grampians region are also enjoying 10 specialist science and maths teachers who are working with students at these schools to build networks of excellence in maths and science, including two maths specialists based at Alfredton Primary School.

Together, clusters of schools in this area are now able to plan and deploy their student support services officers, based on the needs of this community, because of our decision to give power back to schools. Schools in this area are also benefitting from our \$7 million investment in new videoconferencing technology in over 300 extra schools across Victoria.

A great example of the collaboration made possible by these investments is Ballarat's Mount Clear Secondary College science specialist centre, which allows schools from around Victoria to visit or link in and share world-class science lessons. These are real examples of where education in Victoria is heading under this government, with Ballarat leading the way. We believe in partnerships because we believe the best outcomes are produced by collaboration. It is communities like Ballarat that are leading the state by finding new and innovative ways to deliver world-class 21st century education.

### **HM Prison Ararat: expansion project**

**Mr HELPER** (Ripon) — The Premier and the Minister for Corrections should hang their heads in shame for dishonesty and incompetence in their management of the Ararat Prison project. Because of their feeble attempts to blame the previous government for the debacle this project has become during their watch they lost the last micron of credibility on 3 August. On that day the Premier announced that

'After weeks of negotiations, the coalition government has cleaned up another flawed Labor project'. The precise moment the Premier made this announcement was the moment that he and this ratchet government ran out of excuses for their mismanagement of this project.

Earlier this week about 14 subcontractors were informed that they would get about 25 cents in the dollar of the money they are owed for their work on the project. How does the Premier reconcile this with his protestations that subcontractors will be paid 'valid claims'? In anybody's language, a dollar that is only worth 25 cents is not valid. It may be beyond the comprehension of the Premier and the minister that there are real people and real families hurting as a result of their action or, more accurately, their inaction. Small businesses, as most of the subcontractors are, will collapse. That should be enough to wake the Minister for Small Business from her slumber. Where is her support for these small businesses? The Premier and the ministers should hang their heads in shame.

### **Multiculturalism: government support**

**Mr KOTSIRAS** (Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship) — Victoria's population is changing, and 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that multiculturalism in Victoria is increasing. Victoria remains the multicultural capital of Australia, with 27 per cent of its population having been born overseas. Ballarat is part of Victoria's multicultural success story. It has welcomed thousands of migrants over the years. ABS data for 2011 shows that almost 9 per cent of the population of Ballarat were born overseas — that is, 1 in 10 people living in Ballarat were born overseas.

Ballarat welcomes refugees from all over the world — Afghanis, Iranians, Sudanese and Togolese. However, with new migrants and refugees there come challenges. That is why all tiers of government — federal, state and local — must work together to provide the appropriate services when and where they are needed to make sure these new refugees become an integral part of our community. Unfortunately the federal government is refusing to participate and assist refugees to become active members of our community. I understand that we have called for a national framework to be established to make sure there are clear indications of the roles of the federal government, state government and local government. I call on the federal government to do something.

### Government: performance

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — The Baillieu government is failing country Victoria. It has slashed \$290 million from TAFE funding, causing the closure of over 50 University of Ballarat courses, impacting on 2200 local students and the sacking of 100 staff. These vicious cuts to TAFE have also meant that the Country Fire Authority (CFA) certificate IV course that was run out of Ballarat University now has to be done through a Sydney university. What a disgrace that our distinguished firefighters have to train in Sydney. This comes on top of the secret \$41 million cuts to the CFA. After this they will now have to turn off the lights.

The equine centre at Ballarat University, which is important to the industry, has also been cut by this government. The government has failed mums and dads, small businesses, subcontractors and workers at Ararat prison. The Premier promised them full payment for work completed, but they have been offered only a quarter of what is owed to them. This is a disgrace to the small businesses and contractors this government purports to represent.

Another promise broken by the government was the promise to make Victorian teachers the best paid in Australia. They are being offered only 2.5 per cent and performance pay. They should be respected more than that.

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

### Health: funding

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — The Baillieu government has demonstrated its commitment to improving our health system. In this year's state budget \$13.68 billion has been allocated to the state's health system. This is a \$1.3 billion increase on the bottom line since the coalition government came to office at the end of 2010.

I am very pleased to see that in this year's budget \$46.4 million has been allocated to upgrade the Ballarat hospital. This funding will deliver the coalition government's election commitment to redesign the existing building infrastructure at the hospital. The project will relocate the ambulatory care services to a new three-storey building at the front of the hospital, which will provide space for 60 additional, much-needed beds. The project will also provide additional car parking in a new decked structure, which will incorporate the much-needed helipad on its roof.

Last year we saw a \$1.8 million upgrade to Ballarat District Nursing and Healthcare. The funding was distributed last year and was used to refurbish and expand the physical facilities to include increased clinical space and education and training facilities. As members can see, these are fantastic achievements.

In Daylesford there has been an increase in paramedic staff, with an additional three equivalent full-time positions. We have also seen that the goldfields, Pyrenees and Ararat municipalities will share in over \$100 million for preventive care services. It is great to see what this government is doing in the Ballarat region.

### Higher education: TAFE funding

**Mr HERBERT** (Eltham) — I rise to commend the strong actions of local members of the Australian Education Union, the National Tertiary Education Union, Trades Hall and student groups in fighting against the devastating cuts to TAFE funding which have created so much hardship for people seeking to improve themselves through training and education. The cuts, which are ripping \$300 million from TAFE institute budgets across this state, are seen nowhere more clearly than here in Ballarat, where we have seen \$20 million cut from Ballarat University TAFE campus budgets, 100 jobs lost, 2000 students affected and course closures in the arts, horticulture, agriculture, engineering, automotive, fitness, events, hospitality, finance, business, racing, transport and logistics, to name just some.

What a disgrace; what a shocking reward for this fantastic education and training institute that provides the local community with the skills needed to get jobs in local industries, the skills needed to thrive, and the skills needed for people to fulfil their hopes for the future. What a reward for a university that is the third oldest tertiary institution in this state — an institute that has provided skills to Ballarat since the establishment of the first School of Mines in 1870.

I commend local residents, unions and students who are fighting this government's scorched earth policy on TAFE institutes, and I wish them well for their peaceful demonstration today at 1 o'clock. Hopefully the government will see sense and reverse these horrendous cuts to TAFE institutes and enable education to once again thrive in this state.

### Regional and rural Victoria: arts funding

**Mrs VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — The Baillieu government is proud to be giving lots of support to

regional festivals and arts organisations, including Horsham's Art Is, the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues, Arts Mildura, Geelong's Back to Back Theatre and Courthouse ARTS, the Castlemaine State Festival and the Flying Fruit Fly Circus and HotHouse Theatre in Wodonga. This year \$3.5 million has been provided to support all council-owned arts venues in regional Victoria, comprising 20 art galleries, 12 performing arts centres and 7 multi-venue performing arts programs. Touring Victoria has received \$537 000 to support tours to more than 90 destinations across regional Victoria in 2013.

It is terrific to hear that poet Homer Rieth of Minyip has received an arts development grant of \$10 000 for the development of an epic large-scale poem about the Murray-Darling river system. The fantastic Anglesea Music Festival has received a contemporary and live music development grant of \$5000. The festival Kick Starter program offers workshops and training for students to work alongside sound engineers and grassroots musicians throughout the festival. SheppSounds has also received a contemporary and live music development grant of \$5000. SheppSounds is a music program that supports Shepparton musicians to record, perform and promote their music.

Congratulations to Rushworth P-12 College for receiving an extended school residencies grant of \$36 500 for an in-school collaboration with Geelong's Courthouse Youth Arts. The project was called *This Highway Home* and was presented on 17 August — —

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

### **Country Fire Authority: funding**

**Ms DUNCAN** (Macedon) — As the member for Macedon, representing one of the most fire-prone areas in this state, I am appalled at the news that this government is cutting over \$40 million from the Country Fire Authority (CFA) budget. This Baillieu government decision will result in further job cuts and shortfalls in essential training, putting firefighters and our communities at risk. Residents of Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges are only too aware of the high fire risk we face this summer after a winter of good rain, with grassfires already starting across the state yesterday, yet this government has chosen to cut funding to the very organisation that will protect our state. Because of these cuts CFA regional officers are being asked to make savings in everything from fuel for their vehicles to printing and uniforms and even firefighting ration packs — for goodness sake — and the government did not want us to know about this.

Leaked CFA documents also reveal that the government wants to cut costs for the fire-spotting towers used to identify major fires. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has acknowledged that there will be delays in providing 342 new positions for the CFA. It will now take more than four years to create those jobs. This is a broken promise which ignores the recommendations of the bushfires royal commission, and I again remind the government that it promised to implement each and every one of those recommendations.

While the minister would have us believe that these cuts will not impact on service delivery, it beggars belief that \$31 million could be taken away from the CFA without impacting on the safety of both the volunteers themselves and the communities they seek to protect. The irony of standing here at Mount Helen, another fire-prone area, and the home of the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority 000 call centre, with the government still refusing to build a fire station — —

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

### **Regional cities: growth**

**Mr BURGESS** (Hastings) — I wish to thank the Minister for Regional Cities for the invitation to the Celebrating Regional Cities morning tea last week. The coalition government is strongly committed to supporting more balanced growth throughout the state, and Victoria's regional cities play a critical role in accommodating a larger share of that growth. Accelerating regional city growth improves the quality of life in regional areas and helps to grow a more prosperous state.

### **BlueScope Steel: Hastings plant**

**Mr BURGESS** — I wish to thank the Victorian Treasurer for visiting BlueScope Steel in Hastings last week. I would like to acknowledge the important role BlueScope Steel plays in creating industry and employment in Hastings in the Western Port area. BlueScope is one of the largest employers on the Mornington Peninsula, and we are committed to encouraging its further development. The role of government is to provide the basis for the operation of business so business can provide jobs in local areas. The coalition is committed to delivering a sound basis for BlueScope and other manufacturers and businesses to continue to operate throughout the Hastings area and throughout the state.

### Port of Hastings: development

**Mr BURGESS** — I also take this opportunity to congratulate the coalition government and in particular the Minister for Ports for getting on with and indeed fast-tracking the development of the port of Hastings. I also note that after 11 years of inaction from Labor when it was in government, In opposition Labor is still trying to hobble and derail the future of Victoria by undermining the development of the port of Hastings at every opportunity.

### Ballarat: tourism

**Mr MADDEN** (Essendon) — At a time when more Victorians and Australians are travelling overseas than ever before it is important to recognise and draw upon the great opportunities for tourism in the local region, particularly in the likes of Sovereign Hill and the *Blood on the Southern Cross* night-time show, the Avenue of Honour, the Prime Minister's Avenue, Lake Wendouree, the impressive streetscape of Ballarat and of course the Ballarat Begonia Festival. We should make sure that Victorians are made aware of the opportunity for short stays not only in regional Victoria generally but in particular in Ballarat.

### St Patrick's College, Ballarat: Herald Sun Shield

**Mr MADDEN** — Whilst it hurts me to say so, I would like to recognise and congratulate St Patrick's College, Ballarat, for its local success in the Herald Sun Shield, in which it was able to overcome St Bernard's College, which services the electorate of Essendon, by 57 points. Those teams were able to play their game at the MCG prior to the Hawthorn-Gold Coast game, and St Pat's Ballarat built upon a great tradition of football rivalry between itself and St Bernard's College in Essendon. I understand that St Pat's has 19 top-tier players who play in the TAC Cup competition, many of them from the North Ballarat Rebels, whilst the Calder Cannons have about five players represented in the St Bernard's team. Again, I offer my heartfelt congratulations, although it hurts me to do so.

### Regional Growth Fund: Morwell electorate

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — I note a media release of 4 September issued by the Premier and the Minister for Regional Cities, who is also the Minister for Major Projects, that refers to an \$835 000 coalition government funding allocation to the Ballarat West employment zone construction blueprint. The intent of the project is to provide a significant economic and jobs boost to the Ballarat community through the Regional

Growth Fund. This is one of many important projects throughout regional Victoria which the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund has assisted in this term of Parliament.

I wish to reflect on some of the significant Regional Growth Fund projects for the Morwell electorate that have been announced, including a snapshot of those that were successful under the very popular \$100 million Putting Locals First Fund. For example, Gippsland Heritage Walk at Kernot Lake in Morwell can now be completed, whilst funding for substantial improvements at Victory Park, Traralgon, which is a popular destination for local residents and visitors, has been very much welcomed. Likewise a feasibility study to develop a new pavilion and an art and culture pathway at Churchill has been successful under the fund, as has the PowerWorks Energy Education Centre, which wishes to undertake a future directions strategy.

Businesses such as Fisher's Timber in Morwell, Stirloch construction in Traralgon, Hydro Australia in Morwell, GippsAero, Lion Australia in Morwell and Australian Paper have all been the beneficiaries of funding by this coalition government, with the absolute intent to retain and create job growth in the Gippsland region. Just like the Ballarat announcement by the Premier earlier in the week, the Gippsland region is deriving enormous benefit from the fantastic Regional Growth Fund.

### Ballarat: Greek community

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** (Dandenong) — I rise to highlight the importance that Ballarat has for the Greek-Australian community in Victoria. The first Greeks in Victoria were known to come to this area. Like many people at the time, they jumped ship and came to the Ballarat and district goldfields. The first one was Andreas Lekatsas, who arrived at the goldfields in 1851 from the island of Ithaca. Natale Spiridon Giorgio D'Angri, well known in this district, came in 1852. He struck gold with his mates, and he was often referred to in the media at the time as the Golden Greek. He went back with his wealth to the island of Corfu, but he had the itch and came back here in 1855, when he settled in the Ballarat community and was involved in the Ballarat Horticultural Society and many other things. Of course to those early Greeks, hearing the word 'eureka' they felt at home. In Greek it is εὕρηκα, meaning 'I have found it', and that was very warming for them.

### **Ballarat: military history**

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** — Also with regard to Ballarat's military history, people from Australia served in Greece in World War I and World War II. I want to acknowledge that on the island of Lemnos, which was the base of the Gallipoli campaign, Donald Chisholm from Learmonth was killed in action, as was Corporal Charles Gunn, a labourer from Albert Street, who like many was recruited in Sturt Street here in Ballarat. They were torpedoed by a German U-boat on HMS *Southland* off the coast of Lemnos and are now buried in the commonwealth war cemetery there, as is Private Henry Stevens, who was born here in Ballarat, and Private James White from Learmonth Road in Wendouree. Also — —

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

### **Regional and rural Victoria: government initiatives**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — For the first time in over a decade Victoria has a government that realises that the state goes beyond the tram tracks. The Victorian coalition government is committed to rural and regional Victoria. The Baillieu government has invested in the long-term sustainability of agricultural and horticultural businesses to the benefit of those industries as a whole and of my electorate in the Yarra Valley. A major election commitment was to reinstate the \$4 million fox bounty.

Foxes are a major problem in the Yarra Valley, with skulls seen as far down as Mount Evelyn. The Black Saturday bushfires eradicated much of the foxes' prey, forcing more fox populations to move closer to settled areas. The \$10 price for fox scalps has been unprecedented in its success, with over 100 000 foxes killed in under 12 months, resulting in a noticeable difference for our farmers. This stands in stark contrast to Labor's FoxStop program, which exterminated a mere 20 000 foxes over three years.

Another initiative of this government is the investment of \$4 million over four years into researching the effects of smoke taint. Victoria has more wine producers than any other state. Over 1600 grape growers and 600 wineries generate \$278 million of economic activity. I can proudly say that 55 of the premium wineries call the Yarra Valley home and are a key pillar of the local economy. Grapes are sensitive to smoke. Heavy smoke from bushfires or planned burning can render an entire season's crop worthless. It is estimated that \$100 million of grape and wine

production was lost to smoke taint in the 2007 financial year. The government's investment will allow a centre of expertise to study and increase our understanding of how smoke taint — —

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

### **Electricity: feed-in tariff scheme**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — The Liberal-Nationals government's decision to cut the solar feed-in tariff to just 8 cents is further proof that this government does not get it when it comes to what regional Victorians want and expect from their government.

When it comes to renewable energy, the government is taking the state backwards. This cut will mean that jobs will be lost in regional and rural towns in my electorate, like Bendigo and Castlemaine, because there has been a higher uptake of solar panels in these regional areas. What this government is doing is letting electricity retailers buy the electricity off our solar panels at peak times for 8 cents so they can then sell it to your next-door neighbour for 30 cents, thereby propping up the electricity retailers' profit margins by using electricity from PV (photovoltaic) panel owners.

People who own the panels in regional areas like Castlemaine are often pensioners, people with young families or people on fixed incomes. Why should they get paid less for their solar electricity than the big corporations? The cuts to the solar feed-in tariff favours big business, not local householders suffering under rising electricity prices.

In Castlemaine the Mount Alexander sustainability group, which is a small not-for-profit organisation, has helped over 500 local families, businesses and sports clubs put solar PV panels on their roofs. They, along with the many people who have signed up to solar panels, are appalled by the announcement by the Liberal-Nationals government that there will be a cut to the feed-in tariff from 25 cents to a miserable 8 cents.

Solar panels are a part of the solution to climate change and higher electricity bills; the first of those issues this government just does not believe in, and the second it has exacerbated by this decision, breaking its promise to — —

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

### **Cudgewa Recreation Reserve: funding**

**Mr TILLEY** (Benambra) — I was pleased to accompany the Minister for Sport and Recreation recently when he announced coalition government funding of \$230 000 towards the new facilities at the Cudgewa Recreation Reserve. The total project of \$440 000 includes contributions from the Towong Shire Council, the Bendigo Bank and the community, and the community is to be commended for this project.

### **Corryong Recreation Reserve: funding**

**Mr TILLEY** — Furthermore, whilst on the Towong shire, I am pleased that the Corryong community is pulling together, working towards a master plan for the Corryong Recreation Reserve to submit a proposal for state government funding, and I urge the community to continue with this process. I know with confidence this is occurring as they were successful in securing \$80 000, announced just last night by the minister, towards resurfacing and lighting for the netballers — the first stage of a reinvigorated recreational reserve precinct.

### **Omeo Highway: sealing works**

**Mr TILLEY** — Just two weeks ago we also saw the commencement of the sealing works on the Omeo Highway on the Mitta Mitta side, and a community barbecue was held at the Walnuts siding. Both workers and the community alike were pleased to attend to be a part of this historic day. With next year being the 100th year of VicRoads, I look forward to celebrating the completed sealing of the Omeo Highway — the state's first gazetted highway.

I am confident that the coalition government is committed to rural and regional areas right throughout the state, in particular support for Benambra. Wodonga is another great gateway to our great state, as is the regional city of Ballarat, where we are enjoying this sitting today. Both Ballarat and — —

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

### **Electricity: feed-in tariff scheme**

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park) — I rise to condemn the Baillieu government for its extraordinary backflip on the solar feed-in tariff. On 24 November 2010 the then opposition spokesperson said:

We think there is a lot of interest in a gross feed-in tariff as a way of boosting investment in renewables.

The then opposition's commitment to a gross feed-in tariff was also contained in its election platform and repeated across regional Victoria in the lead-up to the last election. Since then all we have had is a slicing and dicing of Labor's scheme, which promoted the successful uptake of solar photovoltaic panels on homes in all postcodes across the state, in poorer suburbs and richer suburbs, and grew significant numbers of jobs in clean energy, in particular in the regions, including Ballarat.

The government's announcement last Monday to slice the net tariff to a paltry 8 cents a kilowatt hour will have a significant impact on regional Victoria, with hundreds of jobs expected to be lost.

I remind the house that the government's slice-and-dice attacks on the scheme and industry have caused businesses to cease investment in regional Victoria. The international Mark Group was to have expanded its operations to new premises in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Gippsland, providing hundreds of jobs for Victorians in regional Victoria. However, these plans became uneconomical once this government commenced its war on the solar feed-in tariff scheme and the renewable energy industry. This government ought to be condemned for saying one thing in support of families — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member's time has expired. The time for making statements has now ended.

### **GOLD: STATE MINERAL EMBLEM**

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I move:

That, noting its significance to the history and development of the state, this house recommends that gold be declared the mineral emblem for the state of Victoria.

Earth resources are critical to the Victorian economy and to the peace and prosperity which Victoria has enjoyed and seeks to maintain. Victorians look to coal and to mineral sands but will always look affectionately towards gold. It is appropriate today, at this historical first meeting of the Legislative Assembly in Ballarat, that this house take the formal opportunity of affirming the importance of mineral exploration in Victoria's history by supporting this declaration to make gold our mineral emblem.

As a geographical entity, Victoria is one of the richest gold centres on earth, and since gold was first discovered in 1851, the state has yielded about 80 million ounces — 2500 tonnes — making up about 2 per cent of all the gold ever mined throughout the

world. Gold provided the foundation for the prosperity of and population growth in Victoria and for the commercial and trading hub which our state has become. The richest producers in Victoria were in Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine-Chewton; indeed this so-called golden triangle is regarded by many as the richest source of alluvial gold in the world.

But it is not just about the past; in recent days a 3.66-kilogram nugget, dubbed the Destiny nugget, was found in the region. However, the specific location, naturally enough, has not yet been disclosed. However, those lucky prospectors have kindly loaned the Destiny nugget to the Gold Museum at Sovereign Hill for the public to see. In mentioning Sovereign Hill it is worth reminding the house that it was the distinguished former Premier of Victoria Sir Henry Bolte who helped realise the development of Sovereign Hill, which has become a significant economic contributor to Ballarat as well as being a wonderful tourist attraction.

Victoria is still regarded as having significant potential for new gold mines. The Minerals Council of Australia, in a recent press release, commented that GeoScience Victoria predicts that the state's undiscovered gold endowment could be as much as 80 million ounces, which is worth more than \$120 billion at today's prices. Primary gold in Victoria mostly occurs as grains and masses in reefs and veins of white quartz, and there are thousands of these gold-bearing quartz reefs from the west to the east of the state.

For a number of years the gold output from Victoria was greater than in any other country in the world with the sole exception of the Californian goldfields. Victoria's greatest yield for one year was in 1856, when over 3 million ounces of gold were won from the diggings, and that was the same year in which Victoria won responsible self-government. Gold discoveries in Beechworth, Ballarat and Bendigo sparked gold rushes similar to the California gold rush. At the peak, some 2 tonnes of gold per week flowed into the Treasury building in Melbourne. Anyone who has visited those now empty vaults can only marvel at the thought that they were once stacked high with gold ingots.

Melbourne was a major boom town during the gold rush. The city became the centre of the colony, with rail networks radiating to the regional towns and ports, and we are reminded that, apart from the growth of Melbourne and regional centres, the gold rush undoubtedly helped develop our railways, ports and regions. Politically the gold rush was very important in terms of Victoria's development. Much has been written about the Eureka Stockade, but we must never forget that the massive influx of people prospecting for

gold saw the introduction of the male franchise and secret ballots.

Another important element of Victoria's gold rush was the influx of immigrants, and we have already spoken a number of times today about Victoria's multiculturalism, which commenced in Ballarat on the diggings. Australia's demography changed dramatically as a result of the gold rush. In 1851 the Australian population was around 437 600, of whom some 77 300, or just fewer than 18 per cent, were Victorians. A decade later the Australian population had grown to more than 1.1 million, and the Victorian population had increased to 530 000 plus — a sevenfold increase — totalling just under 47 per cent of the total Australian population. In some small country towns where there were significant gold discoveries the population grew enormously. An example is Rutherglen, the population of which grew in 10 years from around 2000 to 60 000.

The wealth of gold also heavily funded exceptional colonial architecture in Ballarat, Bendigo and many country towns, and we have talked about that already today. We see it in the churches; we see it in the town halls; we see it in the lodges; and we see it in the courthouses.

The last gold rush in Victoria was at Berringa, south of Ballarat, in the first decade of the 20th century. Goldmining declined in Victoria not because there was no more gold but, in part, because of debt and the cost of pumping. The First World War had a major influence as many young men — I mentioned earlier today that those settlers and diggers were invariably young — who would have otherwise found work in the mines went away to fight for this nation. International changes such as the abolition of the gold standard in Europe also affected the viability of new mines. However, in recent years the steady rise in the price of gold has seen a resurgence in commercial mining activities, with mining resuming in both of the major fields of Bendigo and Ballarat. There are also other promising signs.

Members will know we all grew up with a story about the Welcome Stranger nugget. It is the name given to the largest alluvial gold nugget ever found, which had a calculated refined weight of over 62 kilograms, measuring 61 centimetres by 31 centimetres. It was discovered by Cornish prospectors John Deason and Richard Oates on 5 February 1869. Wasn't that a day for them!

The nugget was found 3 centimetres below the surface near a root of a tree on a slope that led to what was then known as Bulldog Gully. It was an extraordinary find.

At the time of the discovery there were no scales capable of weighing it, so it was broken into three pieces on an anvil by a blacksmith named Archibald Wall at Dunolly. I am sure Archibald Wall never forgot that he broke the Welcome Stranger into three pieces.

Deason, Oates and a few friends took the nugget to the London chartered bank in Dunolly. The bank advanced them £9000. Deason and Oates were finally paid an estimated £9381 for the nugget. In today's dollars it is estimated that that one nugget would be worth around \$1.2 million. The previously most significant nugget found in Ballarat was the Welcome nugget found in 1858, which weighed some 69 kilograms.

The Welcome Stranger nugget was soon melted down and the gold was sent as ingots to Melbourne for forwarding to the Bank of England. It remains the largest nugget ever found anywhere in the world. It is our hope that, if this motion passes today and an identical motion passes in the Legislative Council, which is meeting today in Bendigo, another historic gold city, we will use the known shape of the Welcome Stranger nugget as representation of Victoria's mineral emblem.

The Minerals Council of Australia has welcomed this significant motion. Megan Davison of the Victorian division of the Minerals Council of Australia in a media release entitled 'Victoria — A golden state' applauded the announcement and said:

It is important that Victorians acknowledge the rich history of the gold industry and its vast contribution to the state since the 19th century mining boom.

With the rapid expansion of the mining sector across Australia and globally, the 160-year history of the Victorian minerals industry in the collective memory is sometimes forgotten. With the Parliament adopting a mineral emblem, this will be a timely reminder of the state's history and its future.

Yesterday the Minister for Energy and Resources and I had the opportunity to visit the Boral quarry near Dunnstown. Like other Victorian quarries, the Dunnstown quarry services essential infrastructure of our state. It is yet another reminder that the value of our stone resources in recent years has exceeded the income gained from other resources, including gold, in this state. We should never forget the role that our earth resources sector plays in the state.

We have had a number of other state emblems over the years. We were the first state to adopt a floral emblem: a pink form of the common heath colloquially known as the pink heath was proclaimed as our emblem in 1958. In 1971 a land faunal emblem, Leadbeater's

possum, and a bird emblem, the helmeted honeyeater, were adopted. How could we forget that in 2002 the marine faunal emblem, which is common and colloquially known as the weedy sea dragon, was proclaimed by the previous government?

I believe support for this motion today will be a reminder for us to value of the golden heritage of those who went before us in this state and a signal of a golden future for our economy and our people, founded, as Victoria has been, on endeavour, hard work, aspiration, ambition and warmly welcoming strangers to come and settle and be part of our joint future. I commend the motion to the house.

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — I am pleased to rise in support of the motion moved by the Premier for the establishment of gold as the mineral emblem of our great state. As I said earlier today, the story of Ballarat is very much linked to the story of gold and all that followed, and that in turn is very much the story of our state. So it is appropriate that the Premier has brought this motion to the house, and we are pleased as a parliamentary Labor Party to support the Premier in this important motion.

If we look a little bit at that rich history, as the Premier has done in reflecting upon that period, it is very important to note not just the creation of wealth and opportunity but also the great mood there was for social change and reform, the benefits of which had not previously been seen but which endure today. It is, as the Premier noted, appropriate that today in Bendigo and Ballarat both houses of the Parliament will be debating this motion. No doubt this motion will receive the support to which it is entitled and we will have a mineral emblem for the first time, and that is appropriate.

The 1850s gold rush was a period that shaped our state's history like no other. Here we are in Ballarat, at the very heart of the frenzy that was the Victorian gold rush. As we have noted, gold was first discovered here in 1851, and from that initial precious find in many senses the city of Ballarat was born. By the end of 1853 there were more than 20 000 miners working on the Ballarat goldfields, and importantly, as the Premier noted, they came from all parts of the world. If we reflect upon our brilliant cultural diversity, the multiculturalism that makes Victoria such a strong, rich and fundamentally interesting community in which to live, we note that the birth of that multiculturalism — that cultural diversity on which there is no political division, only political unity, around its worth and value — happened here. So many travelled so far from so many different locations in search of prosperity,

wealth, a better future for their families and untold riches — some riches from the ground and others in all that they built and bequeathed to us. That multicultural heritage is important to note as well.

Like us, those early miners and others associated with the gold rush wanted to provide for their families and give their children only the best opportunities. At that time their best option was to come in search of, and indeed find, gold. But life on the goldfields was not easy. The rapid influx of new fossickers saw the colony of Victoria scrambling to regulate and keep pace with the growth. Soon after gold was first discovered, the new Victorian colonial government introduced a requirement for miners to purchase a licence to prospect for gold on Crown land. Miners were opposed to this measure and demanded the right to vote if they were to pay taxation. They also demanded the right to buy land on which they could mine.

This story is a part of our history that is celebrated and well known across the community, but it is worth reflecting on again today. Over the next few years several protests and what might be termed skirmishes between miners and authorities sadly culminated in the murder of a miner, James Scobie. Miners accused the magistrate and police at the time of improper behaviour when the suspected killer, the owner of the Eureka Hotel, went free. During the ensuing riot the Eureka Hotel was burnt to the ground.

This story and indeed the broader story of the Eureka Stockade is quite brilliantly played out at the sound and light show, *Blood on the Southern Cross*, at Sovereign Hill every day. The Premier noted that many governments over a long period of time have been supportive of this major tourist attraction that brings so many people, particularly young people, to this region to learn about, understand and better appreciate such a critical point in our history. That sound and light show is very well done and is a highlight of the tourist attractions in this community.

In November 1854 a group of 10 000 miners gathered on Bakery Hill and formed the Ballarat Reform League, which at that time was one of Victoria's first organised labour movements. Its aim was to negotiate with the gold commissioner of the day and the Governor of Victoria on taxation and voting reform, and I am indebted to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security for his strong support of a united labour movement. At the November meeting the league passed a motion, and it is important to quote from the motion that was passed at that early meeting of the Ballarat Reform League. It states:

That it is the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called upon to obey — that taxation without representation is tyranny.

Weeks later, as negotiations with authorities failed, the Ballarat Reform League met again. The symbol of their struggle, the Eureka flag, was unfurled for the first time. Peter Lalor was elected to lead the group of miners, and they burnt their licences. The authorities sensed that the rising tensions might be about to boil over and sent for reinforcements from Melbourne. The miners established a new camp and erected barricades. Before dawn on Sunday, 3 December 1854, police and troopers set upon and attacked the Eureka Stockade. Sadly, 22 miners lost their lives that morning. A further 13 were arrested and committed to stand trial. History tells us that none were convicted, and the following year the government met the demands of the miners and the Ballarat Reform League, including extending a vote to any miner who had purchased a £1 mining licence. This was the first and only armed civil uprising in our nation's history.

The Eureka Stockade holds much symbolism for our state and our nation and is entwined in the history of gold, the subject of the motion before the house today. We regard those miners in the same light and appreciate the fight they took up that shaped our nation and our state and gave us the values that we hold so dear today. In many respects the society we live in with its freedoms, liberties, rights, entitlements and obligations that define us was shaped by them.

It is not too much to say that that period in our history, that struggle and its ultimate outcome, engendered the mateship and the camaraderie that Australians hold dear as our defining qualities. Those qualities were solidified over the next 150 years through many different disputes. They were solidified, we would argue, in the formation of a labour movement that is fundamentally committed to supporting the rights and entitlements of working people. But well above and beyond politics or any ideology, they have been cemented and solidified in our historic collective efforts in defence of our freedom, in sacrifice and in amazing service. The Premier noted the avenue of honour in this great city. The values and principles those miners were fighting for have continued and been solidified through the sacrifice and service of so many from this community, Victoria more broadly and across our nation. Those principles are as relevant today as they perhaps have ever been.

In unity lies strength. That is what the miners knew in 1854, and that is what I and my colleagues know. I think all fair-minded Victorians know only too well that in unity lies strength. We as the Labor Party still hold

the core values that were central to the Eureka rebellion and the principled stand those miners took in an organised and disciplined way. We as a community and a Parliament must never forget those who fought for the quality of life we now enjoy, and we must never be complacent about the value of unity and collectivism. Gold is a great reminder of that and is an important part of our history. It represents the economic beginnings of our state and gives us many more things, perhaps more valuable, to treasure.

The Premier mentioned architecture. Each of us is privileged to work and spend much time in our beautiful Parliament House, but that is not the only building that was essentially constructed during the gold rush. As the Premier said, the architecture of churches, cathedrals and many civic buildings stand, as do the buildings themselves, as a testament to that period of time and will be enjoyed for many generations to come.

It is important to reflect that perhaps we would not build a Parliament House quite like the one we have if we were to have another gold rush; our priorities today are a little different. That again tells a story about the development and evolution of the things we consider important. A young state wanting to make a statement constructed that building and so many others that, as I said, stand as a testament to this period in our history and the prosperity and the ambition of the people of this great state.

I will conclude by saying that I am pleased to support this motion. A mineral emblem, in this case gold, is a fitting tribute to such an important chapter in our history. It is fitting that we are in Ballarat today to debate this. It is a worthy motion, one that I think pays proper tribute to such an important part of Victoria's story. Again I make the point that it is central to Ballarat's story, and that in itself is the broader story of our state: hard work, perseverance, making the most of our natural advantages, doing it with integrity, doing it in a collective way, always looking to extend the hand of fairness and to distribute the proceeds of that prosperity and building great things that will endure for so many years to come. With those few words I am delighted to support the motion moved by the Premier.

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I rise to support the comments of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition on the motion before the house, which would see the declaration of gold as the mineral emblem for the state of Victoria. I listened with much interest to the history of events as outlined by the Premier, and likewise I listened with

much interest to the Leader of the Opposition recounting the history of the uprising at Eureka.

Yesterday I had the great honour to attend the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka. That facility is under construction at the moment and will be complete in four or five months time. I was afforded the further opportunity of touring the building and then speaking to the people who were gathered there, particularly the many schoolchildren who were in attendance. This will be a magnificent tribute to the events which have been outlined today by the Leader of the Opposition. They form part of the rich history of Victoria — no pun intended — in terms of its association with issues around gold. Generally, as has already been reflected upon, the notion of gold and its association with Victoria tends to have a concentration around the golden triangle: Bendigo, Ballarat, Castlemaine, Chewton and the townships of those regions.

It is probably not generally known that Gippsland was also founded in large part upon the discovery of gold. Those initial discoveries were made in the 1850s. People were able to access the areas of Gippsland which were under exploration via Port Albert. Coming to Port Albert in those days was a dangerous activity. The waters around Bass Strait were extremely hazardous. Many ships foundered and many lives were lost, but in pursuit of gold the people kept coming. To this day there is a wonderful representation of the events of that era within the museum at Port Albert, and I commend it to all members of the house. The museum is maintained by a group of volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that this extraordinarily important part of Victoria's history is preserved for all generations.

As people came through Port Albert into the areas of Gippsland which were under consideration by those seeking to find gold, many areas were opened up. Such wonderful places as Crooked River, Omeo and Boggy Creek were the focal points of the first investigations. It is no accident, as the member for Gippsland East well knows, that the Golden Age Hotel is located at Omeo to this day. Over the course of the subsequent years, as gold was discovered in different locations it had to be tracked back to Port Albert under armed guard because it was through that port that the gold was exported. In looking at some of the newspaper articles of the time I had regard to the *Argus*, which reported that on 19 September 1863 some 2100 ounces of gold were deposited in the newly constructed Bank of Victoria at Port Albert. That equates to about 62.5 kilograms of gold in today's terms, and interestingly that equates in turn almost precisely to the weight of the Welcome

Stranger nugget, as has just been described by the Premier.

Over the course of the subsequent years many more people continued to come to the region. *Argus* reports indicate that by 1865 the production of gold from the region had grown from some 4300 ounces to some 25 000 ounces in that year, with about 50 per cent of that coming from the mines at Walhalla. Those of us who have been to Walhalla recently will know that it remains a beautiful town. It is a strong focal point of local tourism, and to visit the town now is to see much of the development of the region, going back to that era of the 1850s and 1860s.

There was more to come over the subsequent years. As the discoveries ranged far and wide, one of the major locations for exploration and then the mining of gold was Stockyard Creek. As you would know, Speaker, Stockyard Creek is only a hop, skip and a jump to the west of Port Albert. It is about a half-hour's drive today, but in those days it was a much more difficult task. Gold was discovered in about 1870, and from the period of 1870 through until 1872 some 2000 people came to live at Stockyard Creek. The *Argus* records that at its peak Stockyard Creek hosted 17 hotels and a general store. As an aside, it is a historical fact in relation to developments on the goldfields that the people providing essential services, such as those provided through hotels, often made much more money out of the whole process than the people who were out there digging.

Be that as it may, there is an interesting legend that has grown up around Stockyard Creek. In 1871 the police magistrate at Sale was also acting as the gold commissioner for Gippsland. His task was to settle disputes in relation to gold leases. In or around 1871 he was called to resolve one such dispute at Stockyard Creek. He objected to the use of the name 'Stockyard Creek' for the location where this hearing was to be conducted and suggested that the town's name be changed. Legend has it that a proposition was advanced that the name of the town be changed to 'Foster'. It is not without coincidence that the name of the magistrate and gold commissioner for Gippsland was William Henry Foster.

Gold has shaped the development of our great state in many ways. It has shaped, and continues to do so, the settlement of the wonderful state of Victoria. It is a great thrill for all of us to be here in the magnificent town of Ballarat, and I have great pleasure in endorsing the motion before the house.

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — I am pleased to be contributing to this debate regarding gold being declared the mineral emblem of Victoria, and I note that the opposition supports the motion. I say I am pleased, but I am also proud for two reasons to be speaking in support of the motion on this historic day in Ballarat. Firstly, I am proud as the member for Geelong, a town which played a pivotal role in the gold rush, and secondly, because my family, the Trezises, left Cornwall as tin miners in the 1850s and established themselves at Buninyong, where they eventually worked at the Hiscock goldmine. Thomas Hiscock is credited with one of the earliest discoveries of gold in the area, which led to the 1850s gold rush. Hiscock discovered gold near the Buninyong cemetery in August 1851. The find was reported in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 12 August 1851. The article reads:

We yesterday received from Buninyong a packet containing some of the finest specimens of gold ... They were found within a mile or two of the township by Mr Hiscock, a respectable resident there.

My grandfather Clarrie Trezise grew up in Magpie. As locals know, that is just over the hill from the Hiscock goldmine, where his grandfather and father worked all their lives. I can genuinely claim that if it were not for gold being discovered in this area, I would not be here today — far from it, as a matter of fact. As I said, I am therefore very pleased to be supporting the motion before us today.

From a Geelong perspective not only did the city play a vital and historic role in opening up the Western District of Victoria to pastoralists but it was also the disembarkation point for prospective miners from all over the world on their way to the goldfields of Ballarat and beyond. No doubt every one of those diggers stepped off the ship at Geelong full of hope of making their fortune on the Victorian goldfields. Some did, but many did not. Some went on to mark their names in our political history, including Peter Lalor, who was working on the construction of the Geelong–Melbourne train line immediately before departing for Ballarat and his place in this nation's history.

Interestingly, the other major port town at that time — a direct rival to Geelong — was Melbourne. I think we all know the story of those deceptive and devious Melburnians who, in their quest for more commerce through the diggers and the goldfields, actually produced a map that showed Melbourne a lot closer to the goldfields of Ballarat than Geelong, when of course that was not the case. Some in Geelong still argue that things have not changed much in 160 years!

There is also another historic fact that links Geelong, Ballarat, the gold rush and this Parliament together. As we know, Peter Lalor became a member of this house, and in fact went on to become the Speaker. It is interesting to note that Lalor was severely injured at the Eureka Stockade. He was smuggled out of Ballarat by his supporters, hidden under a dray of goods bound for Geelong. There his injuries were treated at a local pub and he laid low at his girlfriend's parents' school which they ran in McKillop Street, Geelong, a site which I live 100 metres from today. He remained there until the government declared a general amnesty for the diggers who fought at Eureka.

The city I represent in this Parliament has an important link to the early days of gold in this state. Once the gold rush had finished and the diggers had stopped coming, Geelong did not fade away nor die. Like today, the town continued to flourish and many fine institutes have sprung up to service the needs of Geelong of the mid-1800s and beyond. They include fine institutions like Gordon TAFE, which this year is celebrating 125 years of educational service to Geelong, despite the \$14.6 million government cuts to date that have made dozens of people redundant in that college. As far as I am concerned, this government stands condemned for the cuts to TAFE colleges right around this state, including Ballarat and Geelong.

The history of Victoria and in fact the history of this state and this nation's democracy in no small part has its origins in the goldfields of Ballarat and the battles the diggers fought for their rights to mine without harassment in relation to what they declared was an unfair licence to dig. I believe it is very fitting that gold be the mineral emblem of this state and be recognised. I am pleased to support the motion.

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Minister for Gaming) —

The night too quickly passes  
And we are growing old,  
So let us fill our glasses  
And toast the Days of Gold;  
When finds of wondrous treasure  
Set all the South ablaze,  
And you and I were faithful mates  
All through the roaring days!

Henry Lawson eloquently captures the spirit, the romance and the promise that Victoria's gold rush held, not only to the local population but to thousands who came from around the world to seek their fortunes and ultimately to make their homes here in Victoria.

Gold has had a profound impact on the development of this state — economically, socially and politically.

Gold is known as a royal metal, which has an appropriate symbolism for a state named after the Queen. The e-gold heritage website notes that on the morning of 8 December 1851 the *Argus* correspondent on the Mount Alexander diggings reported that a notice addressed to fellow diggers had appeared at Forest Creek. At the heart of the diggers' grievance was the Victorian government's proposal to double the gold licence fee to £3 per month.

Initially the requirement to possess a licence had been imposed in order to deter gold seekers. The government feared that the rushes would lead to a breakdown of civil authority. This was the precursor to the event that lives on in Australian history as the Eureka Stockade. This was an uprising of hardworking, independent, small business people and entrepreneurs against excessive government regulation and overtaxation and, as such, it formed a proud part of this state's cultural and political heritage.

One century and one week ago today one of my ministerial predecessors, the Honourable Peter McBride, MP, then Minister for Mines, approved the publication entitled *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of Victoria — List of Nuggets Found in Victoria*. For obvious reasons, Deputy Speaker, such a list is necessarily incomplete. It states:

Owing to the conditions of life on the early gold fields, it was more prudent to conceal the discovery of a large lump of gold than to publish it, and, in consequence, the records of nuggets are very incomplete, and it may safely be assumed that less than half of those found were recorded.

It seems to be the case that some of the earlier miners also had a bit of an aversion to taxation, whether with representation or without.

Given the travails that were experienced by the Department of Mines in trying to estimate the quantity of gold, the historical records are somewhat incomplete. However, there is a downside in some ways to the gold rush, and this is noted in the same publication. It states:

There is a tragic side to nuggets also, for in the early digging days the sudden acquisition of more or less wealth in the form of a nugget often caused the mind of the finder to become unhinged.

That was referred to as 'gold fever', and it has certainly been something that has driven a lot of people, both Victorians and others, to seek gold in this state.

It has been estimated that around 80 million ounces of gold have been mined in Victoria since 1851, which is equivalent to 2.2 million kilograms — or 10 jumbo jets — in gold. There is a dispute as to whether gold was first found in Victoria in Warrandyte or in Clunes;

I know the member for Warrandyte is very keen on the former, and I suspect the member for Ripon might be quite a bit keener on the latter. It is one of those great historical debates that shows how key gold is that even to this day, over 150 years later, people are still arguing over where gold was first found.

Even a century ago the special endowment that Victoria's gold had bestowed on the state was quite clear. Some of Victoria's most magnificent public buildings are a direct result of that heritage of gold. When you walk around the beautiful city of Ballarat or Bendigo or one of the many other regional centres you can see that that wealth and that independence was built on the basis of gold, including of course our own Parliament House.

**Mr Delahunty** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — And its library, as the member for Lowan says.

The trials and tribulations of the prospector are part of our cultural heritage. I would like to refer to one example. A newspaper article tells of the day a particular nugget was found and states:

... the prospector had given up the search due to bad weather.

But during a lull in the rain the prospector gave it one more go. He soon literally struck gold under a clump of foliage around a tree.

Initially he thought it was a large piece of rock, but once he held it in his hands he realised by its weight that it was much more.

He held up the dirty mass in his hand to show his friends, but dropped it by mistake.

One of his friends called out 'Is it bigger than 10 ounces?'.  
The prospector said —

pardon my French, Deputy Speaker —

'It's bloody bigger than 10 ounces'.

This is not a report from the *Argus* of a century ago; this is a report from the Ballarat *Courier* of a week ago. The 3.66 kilogram nugget worth half a million dollars that was found in the golden triangle indicates that Victoria is still very much a state with plenty of gold to be had.

Gold has been a very important part of Victoria's past. We have a number of active goldmines which are producing gold and producing jobs in Victoria. Gold is very much a part of our present and our future, and we need to make sure we have the appropriate

development of that wonderful mineral endowment this state has been so blessed with.

I would like to conclude with a quote from the American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said:

The desire of gold is not for gold. It is for the means of freedom and benefit.

The story of Victoria is very much a story of people in pursuit of freedom and benefit, and as such I can think of no more fitting mineral emblem for the state of Victoria than gold.

**Mr NOONAN** (Williamstown) — I am very pleased to rise to join with other colleagues across this Parliament to speak in support of this motion. The purpose of course of this motion is to commend that gold be declared the mineral emblem for the state of Victoria.

In his book *A History of Victoria* prominent historian Geoffrey Blainey made the observation that our state's gold rush began in the same month and year that Victoria was formally separated from New South Wales. The colony of Victoria was officially proclaimed in July 1861. That moment was not lost on Geoffrey Blainey, who makes the following observation in his book:

Never had a new colony received such a birthday present.

So generous was this natural gift that Geoffrey Blainey noted that gold was to become a shining advertisement for Victoria — a point, I suspect, that is not lost on our modern-day Premier in 2012.

Much has been stated about the tremendous impact that the discovery of gold has had on many regional cities, particularly in those early days of the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s. The gold rush of the 1850s also had an enormous impact on my own electorate of Williamstown, which in those days was described as a seaport for infant Melbourne. After gold was discovered in the early 1850s the growth of the seaport was phenomenal as thousands of gold seekers began to arrive, many from the tin mines of Cornwall and many more from the Californian goldfields. According to local historians, ships crammed into Hobsons Bay, and shops, pubs and ship repair works sprang up along Nelson Place on the shoreline.

By 1870 Williamstown was known as the major cargo port of Victoria with piers, slipways, shipwrights and gangs of wharfies all working along the shore opposite Nelson Place. The customs department, pilots, the Victorian navy and the Melbourne Harbour Trust all established bases in Williamstown. Many of

Williamstown's most significant period buildings were constructed during that same period, including the Timeball Tower, the Williamstown Mechanics Institute and customs house. Gold would forever change the face of Williamstown.

If we fast-forward more than 160 years, we find ourselves in the modern era. Given the motion before the Parliament today, it is appropriate to reflect, as other speakers have, on Victoria's present and future mining prospects. In the last sitting week I noted that the Treasurer, the member for Scoresby, remarked, 'Victoria is not a mining state'. While it may be fair to say that Victoria does not generate a large income from mining when compared to other states, such as Western Australia and Queensland, the Treasurer would do well to recognise that the production value of minerals produced in Victoria during the 2009–10 period was more than half a billion dollars. It is also worth noting that gold production accounted for \$300 million during the 2009–10 period. This is not an insignificant figure.

According to the Minerals Council of Australia the minerals industry invested almost \$1 billion in capital works for new and expanded mining operations in Victoria. A further \$60 million was spent on exploration activities in 2009. The Victorian government's submission to the inquiry into mining by the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee was positive about the impacts of mining in Victoria. The submission indicates:

The sector contributes to economic prosperity, particularly in regional Victoria. It provides employment opportunities and consumes goods and services supplied by local businesses that form a vital part of the wider regional economy.

The government submission stated that the resources sector provides employment to 6227 people, to be precise, half of whom live in regional Victoria. It is also worth noting that there are approximately 5000 people located in metropolitan Melbourne who are employed in the head offices of mining companies and by the service providers to mining companies. These are all important jobs for Melbourne and Victoria. There are many great opportunities in Victoria in terms of future mining prospects. I refer once again to the Victorian government's submission to the mining inquiry, which states:

Global commodity prices of rutile and zircon have both increased in recent years, making mineral sands production a more attractive industry. Increases in demand for both these products are anticipated. The conditions appear to be in place to encourage mining companies to enter the market. There is potential for significant growth in mineral sands production given the untapped deposits existing in Victoria.

We may be celebrating gold today, but I am sure that it is the growth in Victoria's mineral sands industry that should be capturing the government's attention. Whilst Labor in opposition is happy to support this motion, we are conscious that there is a need for more than just emblems and symbols in ensuring this state's future prosperity. Finally, Victoria could do a lot worse than look to South Australia to learn about how governments can drive up exploration investment in the mining sector.

**Motion agreed to.**

## REGIONAL GROWTH FUND: BENEFITS

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — It is my great pleasure today to move:

That this house congratulates the Liberal-Nationals coalition government on the Regional Growth Fund, which is creating new prosperity, more job opportunities and a better quality of life in regional cities and country communities.

I look forward to the support of the Labor opposition because even it understands that the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) brings enormous prosperity to regional parts of Victoria. It is the centrepiece of the government's strategy in driving growth in the regions. We are proud to be able to say that the operation of the RGF to date has been a spectacular success and we will be able to see much more of the fund's activities occurring over the course of the balance of our time in government.

I pause to say that this is a \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, \$500 million of which is allocated in this first term of government. A further \$500 million will be available to whoever forms government after the next election in 2014. Of the \$500 million, \$100 million is dedicated to the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, \$100 million to the Putting Locals First program, \$100 million to natural gas extensions, and the final \$200 million to economic infrastructure development right across the state.

Very substantial benefits have already been gained as a result of the application of the fund. To date more than 500 grants worth more than \$160 million have been announced under the Regional Growth Fund. That expenditure has in turn leveraged total investments of more than \$450 million.

Just looking at the economic infrastructure program on its own, the government has supported 26 projects to date. It is anticipated that they will create over 1100 direct jobs and a further 2200 indirect jobs. In addition more than 2400 jobs will be retained as a direct

result of this project and a further 1100-plus jobs will be created during construction. They are the figures so far, and they relate only to that element of the fund which is to do with economic development.

Ballarat has been the beneficiary in various respects of the operation of the fund. Some \$2 million of the \$100 million Local Government Infrastructure Fund has been allocated to the great city of Ballarat. It is one of the 48 regional municipalities which will share in the proceeds of the Regional Growth Fund through a formula agreed upon by councils across those 48 regions. Ballarat is one of those regions and is receiving \$2 million from the Local Government Infrastructure Fund. This has enabled the replacement of Magpie Bridge, which has been an aspiration of many people for a long time. That was able to be completed. It has also enabled work to be done on the Learmonth-Sulky Road, for which funding assistance has also been sought over a period of time.

There have been other grants to the private enterprise sector, including \$500 000 to the Committee for Ballarat. This committee, as members know, does great work in supporting the communities around this wonderful region. Funding of \$500 000 has been dedicated to establishing the regional leadership program and in particular the secretariat which services that important program. In addition \$800 000 has gone to the Committee for Ballarat for the development of leadership courses in the western Ballarat region. This will enable people who are leaders in the community to go through the committee's programs, which will be so critical to the future of our regional areas in this state.

On top of all this there has been an absolute raft of smaller grants. Time is against me going through them all, but there are many of them. They have been centred not only here in Ballarat but around the municipalities which comprise the western region. Only in the last 48 hours the Premier announced another \$835 000 from the Regional Growth Fund for the Ballarat West employment zone.

Apart from what the government has contributed through the Regional Growth Fund — and no doubt the Minister for Regional Cities will reflect on this in his contribution — it has allocated \$35.5 million to the Ballarat Western Link Road. This in turn is going to enable the opening up of a significant area for the purposes of future development in Ballarat.

But it does not stop at Ballarat — far from it. In Geelong we have allocated \$15 million towards the design and construction of the \$45 million Geelong library and heritage centre. I know the member for

Geelong is absolutely thrilled about this — 70 new direct jobs, 80 indirect jobs, 25 retained jobs, 299 construction jobs. He just wishes he could have done this. I can see it written all over his face as I speak.

We are providing \$460 000 towards the construction of a dam and the provision of water efficiency initiatives for the \$996 000 Flavorite hydroponic tomato project at Warragul. I know the local member is thrilled because this means 130 new jobs, 170 retained jobs and more construction jobs. In addition there is \$2 million to assist Hazeldene's chicken farm with its \$8.7 million energy and water security project at Lockwood, involving 100 new direct jobs, 1000 indirect jobs, 625 retained jobs and another 100-plus jobs in construction.

In Mildura the government is providing \$7 million of the \$13.3 million Parklands project — 36 new direct jobs, 49 indirect jobs, 4 retained jobs and an additional 32 jobs in construction. I was in Mildura only last week or the week before to turn the first sod on the Mildura airport project. This is a \$6.4 million project for which the government is contributing \$5.2 million from the Regional Growth Fund, with the remaining \$1.2 million coming from the local council. Again this means retaining existing jobs and creating new jobs in terms of what will be provided once the work is done. A lot of jobs will be created in the construction phase. Unfortunately the federal government would not contribute to that project. We filled the gap and enabled this project to happen. I could roam around and go through all 500-plus projects. I know members want me to, but time is against me and I will not do that. But what I can say is that this motion is reflecting importantly on issues to do with employment in regional Victoria.

Despite what is said by some people, the fact is that since the Baillieu government's election in November 2010 total employment in regional Victoria has increased by 16 300. The unemployment rate in regional Victoria has dropped from 5.7 per cent in November 2010 to 5.4 per cent in July 2012. In the last 18 months this is particularly significant when you see what has happened in other states. Throughout the same period employment in the regional areas of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania declined by just over 20 000 people. I might say that apart from Victoria the only other states to report an increase in regional employment were Western Australia, which had an increase of 6100, and South Australia, which had an increase of 2600.

Of course there are threats to all of this. We have the carbon tax. That has thrown a wet blanket across many

industries in the regions, and no more so than in the Latrobe Valley. What an appalling state of affairs we have seen emerge in the last 24 hours. That region lived under the threat of the former Labor government wanting to close down the Hazelwood power station; that is what Labor said it would do. Thankfully Labor was beaten at the last election and did not get the chance to do it, but people there have not forgotten and they will not forget. On top of that, for the last 12 to 15 months those communities in the Latrobe region have been put through the grinder by the federal Labor government which was going to do all sorts of things on the back of the carbon tax. Of course it has all fallen over; it has all amounted to nothing. We hear now that the federal Labor government has abandoned the contracts-for-closure process; there are not going to be any closures in the Latrobe Valley. Those communities are now relieved of the attacks on them by a combination of the federal Labor government and the former state Labor government, now the opposition.

Needless to say they are pleased to see this outcome. But it does not finish there. We as a government received a lot of undertakings from federal Labor about what it was going to do to help a Latrobe Valley in transition, and we expect those commitments to be met. We expect that the people of the Latrobe Valley region will benefit in the manner in which the federal Labor government has told us it would over the course of the past 12 to 15 months.

Across different parts of the state we have issues we have to contend with. The carbon tax is one of them; the other one of course is state Labor. Recently the member for Tarneit issued a press release in which, very selectively, he went through the unemployment figures. He had gone through them very selectively. In fact when you take the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data and deal with it in the way I have outlined today and look at total employment figures you see that the simple fact is we have seen substantial growth in the way regional Victoria has developed over the course of the period we have been in government.

The Regional Growth Fund is doing a fantastic job in being able to drive growth, create employment and enhance prosperity in the regions of the state of Victoria. We are so proud of the way we have been able to introduce it and make sure that for those 48 regional municipalities there is a quarantined sum of money through our \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. The application of these funds will see even more than the 500 projects that have developed to date. We are going to see much more over the period leading up to the next election and hopefully beyond November 2014.

**Mr HOLDING** (Lyndhurst) — This morning the Leader of the Opposition said that self-praise is no recommendation. Never have truer words been spoken. A wit once said, ‘Self-praise can be put in the same class as anything else you get for nothing’. In Germany they have a saying, and that saying is ‘Der eigener lob stinkt’. It means ‘Self-praise stinks’. The arrogance and conceit of this motion — a motion that the opposition cannot and will not support — is this: this government is asking this Parliament to congratulate it for cutting funding to regional Victoria. That is what this motion is asking this Parliament to do, and we on this side of the chamber will not do it. We do not support the idea that you should praise the government for cutting funding and reducing services to regional Victoria.

When we came to office we put regional Victoria first. We put regional Victoria first because regional Victorians remembered being called the toenails of the state by the former Kennett government. Those words ring in the ears of regional Victorians.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! It would be embarrassing for any member to be asked to leave the chamber because of their unruly interjections. I ask honourable members to come to order.

**Mr HOLDING** — Even today regional Victorians remember being called the toenails of the state by the then Kennett government. They remember hospitals being closed; they remember schools being closed; they remember nurses, teachers and police being retrenched; they remember country rail services being withdrawn and closed; and they remember the impact that these decisions had on regional communities right across the state. They remember regional unemployment being at 12 per cent when the Kennett government was in office.

We in the Bracks and Brumby governments said we would put regional Victoria at the centre of all the decisions we made as the state government, and that is why we established Regional Development Victoria and the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. It was not a fund based on giving handouts to regional communities; it was a fund that was based on working in partnership with regional communities, because regional communities said to the state government that what they sought was an opportunity to grow their populations, grow their employment, attract investment and use those things to build and strengthen their communities and to build the sorts of services and the lifestyles that communities right across the state wanted. That is exactly what regional communities said

to the Bracks government and the Brumby government; that is exactly what they said to us.

What happened when this government came to office? It had to rebrand the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund as the Regional Growth Fund, but what did the government do? It made some very significant changes, which the Deputy Premier is asking this Parliament to congratulate the government on making. The first thing those opposite did was say that this fund would be used to fund core services like education and health. That is exactly what the Deputy Premier said: that the fund would be used to support core services like education and health. What comparison can we make? Over the last four years of the Bracks and Brumby governments \$1.6 billion was spent on health, education, infrastructure and community services in regional Victoria, yet this government expects the Parliament to praise it for establishing a \$1 billion fund over eight years to replace the \$1.6 billion spent over the last four years of the Bracks and Brumby governments.

What else did the government do with this Regional Growth Fund? The second thing it did was say that some of this fund could be spent in Melbourne. It had to provide in the legislation the capacity for this fund to be spent in Melbourne, so the government doubled the size of the population that could dip into this fund by adding another 1.2 million people. Not only did the government offer less money but it said the money had to be shared between more people — twice the number. Yet those opposite expect this Parliament to praise and congratulate the government on putting this arrangement in place.

The government also took the economic development and jobs focus off Regional Development Victoria, moved the body 600 metres down the street, at a cost of about \$1 million, and placed it in the Department of Planning and Community Development. That is not something that would have sat at the heart of what the previous Bracks and Brumby governments would have done to promote population growth and investment and to create jobs in regional Victoria, yet this government expects us to praise it for doing that.

What else have we seen? We saw the then opposition promising that no jobs would be cut from the public service, but we now learn that 4200 jobs have been cut. After breaking that promise, what did the government say? It said none of the jobs cut would be front-line positions. That is what it said; yet we now learn that according to this government there are no front-line staff in the Department of Primary Industries. What news this is! So according to the minister none of the

staff who go to farms, who mop up after fires and floods, who help control foxes and wild dogs, who protect us from fruit fly or locusts and who tackle animal diseases and weeds are front-line staff.

We see the closure of Department of Primary Industries offices throughout regional Victoria — in Ararat, Birchip, Camperdown, Cobram, Kyneton, Ouyen and St Arnaud. DPI staff are being moved out of 15 other regional offices where they are co-located with Department of Sustainability and Environment staff.

We have seen the abolition of the first home owners bonus. This was a bonus put in place by the former government, which was deliberately biased in favour of regional communities and new housing starts. Yet this government expects this Parliament to praise it for the work that it is doing in regional Victoria. Killing this first home owners bonus will cost jobs in regional communities, it will drive down construction activity and it will have a disastrous impact on regional communities, yet this government expects this Parliament to praise it for its work in regional communities.

What else has the coalition government done? We have seen it taking the axe to TAFE. Right around regional Victoria we see TAFE institute closures. Advance TAFE is closing outreach centres in Yarram, Heyfield, Orbost, Swifts Creek and Mallacoota. G-tec in Bairnsdale and Cafe Rossi and the Sale office will all close. Thirty-six courses are gone from Advance TAFE. GippsTAFE has lost \$10 million, 32 staff are being made redundant, 60 courses have been cut and fees have gone up. Here in Ballarat total TAFE activity is to be reduced by 30 per cent to 40 per cent — over 50 courses gone. Yet this government expects this Parliament to praise it for its work in regional Victoria.

The truth is that regional communities depend on having a strong and vibrant TAFE sector. They need a strong and vibrant TAFE sector because a strong and vibrant TAFE sector keeps people in regional towns. It gives them skills and training opportunities that do not result in a drift to Melbourne but instead give people the opportunity to be educated and trained in their own communities and to find jobs, seek opportunities and raise families in those communities.

These TAFE cuts will not just hurt for the next couple of years, they will hurt for generations to come because local communities will be gutted as those TAFE campuses close. All members opposite, particularly those who represent regional areas, know what an impact these TAFE cuts will have on those communities. The Victorian certificate of applied

learning, the Victorian certificate of education and apprenticeships in schools have all been cut, and these cuts and closures will hurt communities for many years to come.

We all remember the story of Narcissus, who looked into the lake and fell in love with his own reflection. We have it on display here in this chamber with this motion of self-praise and self-congratulation. On this side of the chamber we do not support the conceit and arrogance that sit at the heart of this motion and ask us to congratulate this government for devastating regional communities, for abandoning them and their TAFE and training needs, for walking away from their need to support the construction industry and, more importantly, for asking us to support and praise a Regional Growth Fund that in real terms is cutting funding to regional communities right across the state. We reject the motion, and we will not support it.

**Dr NAPTHINE** (Minister for Regional Cities) — It is a pleasure to follow the member for Lyndhurst. The only time the member for Lyndhurst ever went to country Victoria he got lost. They had to send the search parties out for him. He got lost the only time he ever went to country Victoria. The member for Lyndhurst, who will be forever remembered for his great contribution to Victoria, which was the \$23 billion desalination plant, has the hide to come here and criticise this government for putting money into regional and rural Victoria. That is not to mention the north–south pipeline.

The member for Lyndhurst was Minister for Water in the previous government, which said it would never take water from the north and send it to the south. It spent \$800 million on the white elephant of a north–south pipeline, taking water from our food-producing farmers in the Goulburn Valley and the irrigation zone, and taking away from the economic growth of Victoria to send it down the pipeline to flush the toilets in Melbourne. That is the member for Lyndhurst.

Now the member comes here opposing the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund — the \$1 billion to invest in jobs, population growth and infrastructure in regional and rural Victoria which is, typically, opposed by the city-centric Labor Party. The member for Lyndhurst reiterated here today exactly what the Labor Party is all about: it is city-centric, it does not understand country Victoria and it does not understand regional Victoria, and all it is interested in is spin and misinformation.

In contrast to 11 years of neglect by the Labor government, the coalition government proudly has a

real strategic plan to grow population, economy, jobs and quality of life in regional and rural Victoria and regional cities like Ballarat. That plan is supported by a comprehensive approach underpinned by the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. It is supported by the Regional Victoria Living Expo — a fantastic event held in Melbourne.

**Mr Wynne** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Richmond will come to order.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — It would have been terrific if members of the Labor opposition had gone to the regional living expo and seen firsthand what is happening in the great city of Ararat, what is happening in Bendigo and Ballarat, what is happening in Warrnambool, what is happening in the north-east and what is happening in Gippsland. They would have seen that, and they would have seen that people in those areas are saying, ‘This is a great place to invest. Come and live in regional and rural Victoria’.

The people of country Victoria are very supportive of the Regional Growth Fund. They are very supportive of this government because they appreciate that this government is not a government about spin, reports, glossy brochures and advertising. It is about rolling up the sleeves and getting the job done.

Let us look at an example. The Ballarat West employment zone was clearly the no. 1 priority for the city of Ballarat and the committee for Ballarat. Most people in Ballarat say, ‘If you are going to do something for Ballarat that will make a real game-changing difference to Ballarat, invest in the Ballarat West employment zone’, and that is what we have done.

The Ballarat population will increase by 25 000 over the next 10 to 15 years. The Minister for Planning, Minister Guy, has already approved an additional 6000 lots for housing in Ballarat West in the Alfredton area. We have already invested. This coalition government has already invested \$38 million in the Ballarat West link road. We have spent \$300 000 on the early stages of the Ballarat West employment zone. It is a unique site. It is a great site. I would expect the members for Ballarat to stand up here and say, ‘The Ballarat West employment zone is important to Ballarat and it is important to Victoria’, and they should welcome the coalition government’s support. It is 623 hectares, and as that is developed it will deliver 9000 jobs for people in Ballarat. That will grow the population of Ballarat. That will grow the economy in

Ballarat. It will generate \$5 million worth of economic benefit.

On Tuesday I was proud to stand there with the Premier to announce that, using money out of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, we had allocated \$835 000, to be matched by the City of Ballarat, to prepare a construction blueprint for the Ballarat West employment zone — a big tick for the coalition delivering on the most important job-creating infrastructure for Ballarat. We have also used money from the Regional Growth Fund to invest \$5 million in additional beds for student accommodation here at the University of Ballarat, as well as at Deakin University at Warrnambool and Geelong.

We have invested in industries such as GippsAero, Lion Australia, SPC, Hazeldenes, Olam Almonds, Flavorite Tomatoes and True Foods at Maryborough — great industries growing with the support of the Regional Growth Fund and this government. We are investing in key infrastructure like airports at Mildura, Portland and Bendigo and cultural centres like the Geelong library and heritage centre. The very important cultural centre Simonds Stadium has also been assisted by the Regional Growth Fund.

In conclusion, we are investing in job-creating infrastructure, cultural infrastructure and all those things that make a difference to regional and rural Victoria. Most importantly, we are also investing in its people. We have invested \$6 million in leadership programs to grow the skills of future leaders in regional and rural Victoria. That is what the Regional Growth Fund is about. We on this side of the house have members who have grown up in country Victoria, who understand and care about country Victoria and are proudly delivering for country Victoria. They are not city-centric people who want to take away from country Victoria. It is absolutely appalling to me that the Labor Party would oppose this motion and a strategy which will deliver economic growth, jobs, opportunity and a better way of life for regional and rural Victorians.

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — It would be laughable to debate this motion about the Regional Growth Fund here in Ballarat except that there is nothing funny about the Regional Growth Fund and the way it has been distributed. That it is creating new prosperity and more job opportunities are brave claims for this government to make. In this region there are 3800 fewer people working now than there were when the Deputy Premier was sworn in. That is the prosperity delivered by this government: thousands fewer people in work and no jobs plan.

A detailed look at the infrastructure funding from the Regional Growth Fund is very interesting. Of the \$88 million announced over 2011 and 2012 for infrastructure projects Ballarat has received only \$5 million from the fund. Infrastructure development funding has bypassed Ballarat, with money funnelled to electorates held by The Nationals. By my reckoning 30 per cent of the electorates eligible for funding from the Regional Growth Fund are held by Nationals MPs, but 43 per cent of the infrastructure funds have gone to Nationals-held electorates. While 35 per cent of electorates eligible for the fund are held by Labor MPs, only 22 per cent of the infrastructure funds have gone to Labor-held electorates.

Perhaps the Deputy Premier's 'rivers of gold' flowing to his Nationals mates are a form of compensation for the hurt being experienced by those regional communities due to the cuts to TAFE. I know if I was a member of The Nationals, I would be feeling pretty ashamed of myself at the moment. The Nationals are junior coalition partners to the Liberals, and the Liberals are doing what they always do: attacking communities outside Melbourne.

Ballarat is the second-largest city in regional Victoria, but the Baillieu government is choosing to provide projects in Mildura with more than four times the infrastructure funding it provides to Ballarat. Over the last two years the Baillieu government has announced five infrastructure grants for Mildura totalling over \$20 million. Over the same period Ballarat received just one infrastructure grant of \$5 million, and Mildura's population is around half that of Ballarat.

When Mildura is receiving four times the funding that Ballarat is receiving, serious questions need to be asked. I welcome the \$5 million grant to the University of Ballarat to create student accommodation. It is a great project, and I would love to say 'But wait; there's more!' There is no more. That is all the infrastructure funding we have got. Comparing that to Labor's record of investment in Ballarat through the Regional Development Infrastructure Fund is instructive. Projects which stand out are IBMs expansion at the Technology Park at the University of Ballarat, which members passed on their way here this morning, and the upgrading of the Art Gallery of Ballarat, where we will attend a civic reception later today.

Why is Ballarat missing out on infrastructure projects? When the Premier made an announcement about the regional office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Ballarat he said:

DPC regional will also assist in ensuring communities can access the coalition government's \$1 billion Regional Growth

Fund ... the centrepiece of the government's regional policy agenda.

This raises another question: if Ballarat has only received \$5 million of this funding, what has the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) been doing for the last year or so? It would be difficult to ask those at the department this question, as it is no longer located in the shop-front office promised by the Premier before the last election. The costs associated with the set-up of the Ballarat office of DPC in Sturt Street was \$88 000, and less than 14 months later they have now been hidden away in another government office. Imagine what that \$88 000 would have funded in our local area.

If someone in Ballarat wanted to get some help from DPC to get access to the Regional Growth Fund, where would they go? There are no signs indicating where the office is currently located, and incredibly according to the DPC website the office is still at the former Sturt Street site. Today we have a government looking to congratulate itself to cover its failure to invest in Ballarat. The chief self-congratulator is also the chief diverter of funds from Ballarat — that is, Pork Barrel Peter Ryan, the Minister for Rural and Regional Development. I absolutely reject this motion.

**Mr WALSH** (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — It is a pleasure to join with the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Regional Cities to support this motion. To think that members on the other side of this house would oppose something that is good for country Victoria absolutely defies logic.

The member for Lyndhurst in his contribution talked about the fact that people will remember. Yes, people will remember. They will remember the north-south pipeline, and they will remember the desalination plant. Every year for the next 27 years the people of Melbourne will have \$400 extra on their household bills to pay for the member for Lyndhurst's desal plant. Most people in Melbourne will pay off their mortgage before they finish paying for the member for Lyndhurst's desal plant. That is what they will remember about the member for Lyndhurst.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WALSH** — The Thomson Dam is over 70 per cent full.

The member for Ballarat West talked about Labor mates who actually received money from the Regional Growth Fund. I assume the member for Ripon will come across to our side of the house and vote with us, because he is obviously one of the mates of The

Nationals who got some money out of the Regional Growth Fund.

**Mr Helper** — Not enough!

**Mr WALSH** — Tell the member for Lyndhurst; he is against it.

True Foods in Maryborough is one of the great stories of the Regional Growth Fund. This business has been relocated from Melbourne to Maryborough. Last year there was an announcement that \$500 000 from the Regional Growth Fund was invested in a \$3.4 million investment in Maryborough to create 165 jobs. This year they have already achieved that target and have received another \$100 000 from the Regional Growth Fund for an \$850 000 expansion. Another 50 jobs will be created in Maryborough. I say to the member for Ripon, and urge him on this, 'When your mates oppose this, come across to our side and go for the people who are actually supporting your electorate'.

A great project that has been supported is the Olam project at Carwarp. It is a small silo community where there will be a \$60 million investment in an almond processing plant. It will create 90 jobs, or 60 full-time equivalent jobs. That was leveraged off a \$467 000 investment from the Regional Growth Fund to assist in water and road upgrades worth \$1.5 million. There is a \$60 000 investment there.

Adjacent to that there is the opportunity for a power generation plant that will take 120 000 tonnes of almond hulls out of the processing plant and then truck in additional almond hulls. Just down the road Silex Systems has plans for a solar farm. They are the sorts of projects that our government is driving in country Victoria. They are things that the other side of the house never did in its 11 years in government.

Some other great projects have been funded around the state. SPC Ardmona, an iconic brand around Australia, has been functioning for over 80 years. It received \$3.9 million to assist in upgrades and the installation of new technology at its plant, which has guaranteed the retention of 870 jobs in Shepparton. I am sure the member for Shepparton is very appreciative of that.

A smaller project, but a great project nonetheless, and one driven by the member for Seymour since coming into government, is the Yea saleyards, which received \$400 000 for works including the construction of a roof from which water can be harvested and an upgrade of the office and canteen. It is a great project. I went there before the election to announce that we would undertake this project if elected to government. Once in

government I went back with the member for Seymour to open it. It is a really great project.

It will be interesting to see if the opposition votes against this motion. If it does, it is voting against the 48 councils around Victoria that absolutely love this fund. There are 48 local government areas around Victoria that love the fact that there is a government with a dedicated \$1 billion fund to assist them to drive economic activity in their shires. Every council across Victoria has benefited from this project. Every council now has the opportunity to create economic activity and growth. Every one of those 48 councils has the opportunity to create more jobs in their regions. It is a great project. I support the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Regional Cities on what I believe is a very good motion before this house.

**Ms DUNCAN (Macedon)** — It is ironic to follow the Minister for Water, who condemns our former government for building water infrastructure across the state. How quickly government members forget the position this state was in in 2007, when we stood a very good chance of running out of water in all of our cities across this great state. How quickly they forget.

I would also like to acknowledge the people in the gallery here today and to thank them for coming and taking an interest in Parliament and providing us with a bit of an audience. It is very nice to see so many people here. I would also just like to remind this chamber and this gallery that just three months ago we debated this exact same motion in the Parliament of Victoria. In fact when I saw this motion I thought I was suffering from a case of *deja vu*. Surely we are not doing this again. We are going to put on a show for the good people of Ballarat because this government does not have a lot else to do.

I am very pleased to have an opportunity to again highlight the sham that is this infrastructure fund. We heard the Minister for Water condemn opposition members for opposing this motion and suggest that we therefore oppose funding for regional Victoria. Nothing could be further from the truth. I would like to again remind this government that it is very quick to forget that when we upgraded the railway lines from Melbourne to Ballarat, to Bendigo, to Traralgon and to Geelong — the first upgrade these tracks had had for 100 years — this government, then in opposition, opposed them. It opposed the rail upgrades and it opposed the new trains. It scoffed; it laughed. When we were in government and decided to put in better signalling systems those opposite called it a cost blow-out. It was not that there was better technology around and we wanted to buy it; no, it was a cost

blow-out. They ridiculed that project at every turn, and we remember that.

Let us look again at this infrastructure fund. We have heard from previous speakers on this side about the amount of money that is in that fund and will be spent in the term of this government.

**An honourable member** — How much is it?

**Ms DUNCAN** — About \$500 million. Forget \$1.6 billion; that is a sham. It is now being diluted across more areas, as we have heard — nearly twice as many areas now. All the interface councils around Melbourne can apply for this funding now. That never happened under our government.

As we have also heard, it is now being used to fund core services. While on the one hand this government makes cuts to education, health, the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), not to mention TAFE, on the other hand it takes money out of this fund to fund other things. It robs Peter to give to Paul, and people should not be fooled by that.

Just \$500 million of this fund will be spent in this government's first term, and 70 per cent of it has already being committed in its 2010 election promises. There is actually only about 30 per cent left to fund really new projects. What have members of this government been doing for the last two years? They have been cutting ribbons on our government's projects. They ridiculed the Bracks and Brumby governments, but they are very happy to go out there, stand in front of the cameras, have their photos taken and brag about projects they had nothing to do with apart from cutting the ribbons. How is this motion reason for congratulating them?

In the seat of Macedon that I represent we are seeing ambulance response times increase, and we are seeing cuts to the CFA. I cannot believe members of this government would cut funding to the CFA. In opposition they were bragging about increasing fuel reduction burns in this state. I was and still am a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee that made the recommendation to increase fuel reduction burns, yet what does the government do? It cuts funding to DSE and CFA — unbelievable!

I would like to conclude by giving one small example of what this government does, or rather does not do. I would like to quote the member for Rodney. Let us cast our minds back to November 2010, about three weeks

before the election, and a media release of his, which states:

A coalition government will connect gas to Heathcote under a new \$100 million Energy for the Regions natural gas extension program, Nationals member for Rodney Paul Weller said.

The media release goes on to say that the coalition had agreed to guarantee funding for the project, saying it was news that Heathcote people had been waiting to hear for a long time. The member is further quoted as saying:

They have been disappointed time and again by the tired old Brumby government, but we are prepared to give a firm undertaking that if elected to power on November 27, this major project will be going ahead.

The member's press release goes on to say:

Mr Weller has been fighting an ongoing battle to get the current government to agree to natural gas for Heathcote ...

The member is quoted as saying:

Well, today we announce a new approach to the way people are going to be treated in rural areas.

The member has also said:

That is one of the things that will happen under this Regional Growth Fund: Heathcote will receive gas.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms DUNCAN** — Okay, we get it — Heathcote is going to get gas. But no — no more. What we now have is a press release dated 30 May saying:

Mr Weller said, following a commitment to connect many country communities, gas distributors were invited to bid to supply natural gas to specific communities across the state, including Heathcote.

'However, it was disappointing there had not been any bids for the Heathcote connection to date', he said.

He never said this was the gas companies' promise to Heathcote; this was his promise to Heathcote.

The press release continues:

Speaking in Parliament —

the Deputy Premier —

... said the uncertain economic climate impacted on the direct bidding process, which ultimately did not bring about the strong response anticipated for a number of communities —

including Heathcote.

I am sure the poor old people of Heathcote will support us in opposing this motion from this government that gives with one hand and takes with another and says one thing in opposition and a completely different thing in government. It stands condemned.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FOOD LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 15 August; motion of Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security).**

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill is an omnibus bill which makes several amendments to the Food Act 1984, the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 and the Local Government Act 1989. The main thing of note in the bill is the changes to the implementation time line for the egg standard, which is a framework which was due to come into effect in November this year. It establishes a suitable regulatory framework under the Food Act, with the Department of Primary Industries as the regulating authority, and it gives the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries the powers that the Secretary of the Department of Health has to deal with food safety breaches.

I am pleased to lead the debate for the opposition and indicate that we will not be opposing the bill. I am the granddaughter of a poultry farmer not too distant from Ballarat. My grandfather Eric Green farmed poultry — chooks and turkeys — in Llanelly, and he and my grandmother made a good living out of that and raised their six children there. In my electorate of Yan Yean on the northern outskirts of Melbourne there are a number of egg producers — in Doreen and South Morang — and they do an outstanding job.

The opposition has had discussions with the Victorian Farmers Federation, and the VFF has indicated that it supports the changes in this bill, particularly those that relate to the egg standard, because they will give farmers an additional two years to scale up the appropriate standard facilities, so we support that.

The opposition is concerned that this is a primary industry food bill, yet we heard earlier that the Department of Primary Industries is losing a whole lot of front-line staff. This government does not seem to think DPI has any front-line staff, which might be news to the farmers who rely on support from these staff. We will see 500 jobs lost in DPI, and the farming community is concerned that those staff remain. It has been confirmed that DPI offices in regional communities including Ararat, Birchip, Camperdown, Cobram, Kyneton, Ouyen and St Arnaud will close down. I fail to see how this is going to provide additional support to the farming and primary production community.

In relation to the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, which is amended in this bill, Local Government Victoria and other responsible agencies are provided with the power to impound or issue notices to ensure livestock are appropriately confined and not wandering on roads or other land, because they can present a danger for motorists, spread disease or cause pregnancy in very young neighbouring stock. It is interesting that the government says this is a road safety measure. We know that livestock wandering on the road is a problem in regional communities, and also now in outer urban communities such as the one I represent, and that it can cause injuries and death. Yet in this do-nothing government, in which the Minister for Roads has not delivered a road safety action plan after almost two years in office, it falls to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to take action on improved road safety.

Another proposal in the bill concerns the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. It widens the court's ability to issue an order disqualifying or placing conditions on a person who is in charge of animals or a person who is found guilty but not convicted of a cruelty offence. It also provides for an inspector to require a person to supply any known evidence relevant to the investigation of another person. Importantly the secretary of DPI will be empowered to declare an emergency and appoint suitably qualified persons as inspectors for the duration of that emergency. Huge numbers of livestock were injured or killed in the horrific fires of Black Saturday in 2009, including many in my electorate. I witnessed this firsthand when going into Strathewen on the back of a fire truck the day after that terrible disaster. Volunteers from Wildlife Victoria and other volunteers did a great job looking out for wildlife that had been killed or injured, but the fire was so severe that unfortunately very little wildlife survived.

However, many domestic animals needed support, and I want to put on the record my thanks to the many volunteers who swapped their skill sets and worked so well in ministering to the needs of the domestic animals that were injured in that terrible disaster. It is important that DPI have this power and provide appropriate training, because it was a terrible shock for those volunteers. I recall seeing one particular volunteer who saw the demise of some of his own animals, rather than others that he had been looking for. He was singularly unprepared for that, and he was in terrible shock. It is important to give DPI this power.

As I said, the opposition is not opposing this bill. We support national regulation of the type proposed with the egg standard that is in the bill before the house. It is important to have national standards that are agreed to across governments and across state boundaries, and that is something the Labor Party has always supported, whether in government or in opposition. We support the measures within the bill that propose to defer that egg standard for another two years. With those comments I commend the bill to the house.

**Dr SYKES (Benalla)** — It gives me pleasure to contribute to the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The amendments in the bill will improve the protection of public health and safety, protect the welfare of animals and improve the ability to respond to national disasters such as fires and floods and also outbreaks of serious endemic or exotic disease.

I am pleased to speak on this bill as a farmer, a veterinarian and a member of Parliament. I draw on my experience in those roles to make my comments.

I would like to concentrate on four aspects of the bill: firstly, the exemption of Victorian egg producers from stamping each egg with the property of origin identification for a couple of years; secondly, the strengthening of powers of by-laws officers in relation to stock on roads and entering premises; thirdly, enabling the imposition of orders preventing ownership or care of animals by some people, which I will turn to; and fourthly, in relation to —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Dr SYKES** — Yes, we will get back to the fourth one.

**Mr Herbert** interjected.

**Dr SYKES** — It is all right. I just remind people that in primary industry we rely heavily on rain to grow grass and other feed, and in spite of what the member

for Yan Yean once said in the Parliament, it has rained again. The Thomson Dam is 70 per cent full.

I return to the bill. In relation to the requirement for the stamping of eggs, this is a requirement that has come through Food Standards Australia New Zealand and the food ministerial council — despite Victoria arguing very strongly against the proposition because it was felt that the intention of requiring whole-of-chain identification of product in order to trace back when there are situations of food poisoning in humans could be achieved by a better means.

A salmonella outbreak in humans that is attributable to eggs generally occurs 24 to 36 hours after consumption of the eggs. If you rely on stamping of the eggshell for your trace back, then you are going to have to forage around rubbish bins to find the property identification code, whereas if you implement the Victorian suggestion to have the stamping of egg cartons, there is a high chance that you will have easier and more reliable trace back.

Interestingly, the reason this proposition got up is that apparently under the federal Labor government whereas in times gone by these sorts of situations were agreed by consensus of those present at the table, now we have agreement by a majority vote. We have a situation where some jurisdictions sitting at the table who have very limited food production industry in their states are able to come up with bureaucratically orientated approaches to issues that result in significant implications for and impacts on food-producing states. That is an imbalance; it is inappropriate, and we need to make sure that food producers are properly represented. The Victorian government is looking to enable a deferral of two years on the implementation of this legislation because it will cost food producers somewhere in the order of \$30 000 to put in place their stamping machines.

Moving to the issue of livestock on roads — and my colleagues will expand on this — basically we are going to increase the powers of by-laws officers to enter premises, mainly during daylight hours, to provide written instructions on action required to adequately contain livestock and, where necessary, to seize and impound livestock if the by-laws officer is not confident that they are adequately restrained on those premises.

Many of The Nationals and country Liberal Party members are well aware of issues of stock getting onto the roads in disaster situations and sometimes even in day-to-day circumstances. I must fess up that on

Sunday evening some of the stock from my place got onto the road.

**Mr Walsh** — They should have been seized.

**Dr SYKES** — No. I was very fortunate. One of the great things about country Victoria is that, whilst you need legislative powers to enable by-law officers to take these sorts of actions, you can very often rely on good neighbours to do the right thing, and they certainly helped me out in that situation.

I should also indicate that livestock owners and land managers need to appreciate that the standard of fencing required depends very much on the type of livestock — for example, merino wethers can be easily restrained whereas anyone who has had crossbred lambs knows that there is no fence that will contain a crossbred lamb or a kid goat. Similarly if you have dairy heifers, you will know they are little Houdinis and can get out of even the most secure premises.

If we look at the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, clause 34 amends section 12 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 to allow a magistrate to make an order limiting or disqualifying a person from being a person in charge of an animal where that person has been found guilty of an offence but not convicted or found guilty because of mental impairment.

**Ms Green** interjected.

**Dr SYKES** — This is very relevant, I say to the member for Yan Yean, because animal welfare incidents often involve people who are suffering or dealing with a complex set of issues which may include social, emotional or economic circumstances that can be very distressing. We found that in the case of the bushfires and the 1983 drought.

When I was a vet in the Department of Agriculture the staff were involved in the enforcement of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. Difficult situations we had to deal with often involved people who had other issues besides cruelty to animals. They might have been elderly or mentally impaired, or they might have felt that it was all too much to deal with when coupled with the stress of the drought. This amendment enables a magistrate to be compassionate and not report a conviction, if appropriate, but also gives them the ability to consider the welfare of the animal. That is a common-sense, practical approach to the situation.

The fourth aspect of the bill that I would like to touch on, which slipped my mind a few moments ago, is the

issue of empowering the Department of Primary Industries to be able to access information from local government in relation to landownership in the event of an outbreak of a serious exotic or endemic disease or in the event of natural disasters such as bushfires and floods. This is absolutely essential to enable a rapid response for the protection and treatment of animals in the case of floods and fires and for the containment of an outbreak of disease in the case of a serious endemic or exotic disease.

As a veterinarian I have had considerable experience in dealing with badly burnt livestock, and it is absolutely critical that you are able to do what is necessary, whether it be to humanely destroy them, get them to an abattoir or provide treatment. Knowing who owns the livestock simplifies that. Similarly, in relation to exotic diseases among livestock I can assure the house that it is absolutely essential that you move quickly to contain an exotic disease outbreak, and the ability to identify ownership of the stock is fundamental to that. From my experience as a veterinarian dealing with exotic disease outbreaks, particularly in the UK in 2001 during the foot and mouth disease outbreak, I know that the implications of not achieving rapid containment are horrific.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! It is time for us to break for lunch. The City of Ballarat and the University of Ballarat have invited members to lunch in the Albert Coates Complex at 1.00 p.m. Members can meet our hosts from the university and chat with leaders from the student senate.

**Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.**

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Employment: government policy

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to today's rise in Victoria's unemployment rate, an increase from 5.4 per cent to 5.6 per cent, with some 14 800 jobs being lost in Victoria last month, and I ask: will the Premier now finally acknowledge that Victoria is in the midst of a jobs crisis and develop a plan to keep Victorians in work?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question; it is an important question. I note that for the last two months the Leader of the Opposition has not touched this issue because for the last two months the figures have been in the other

direction, and the man who did not want to be ceaselessly negative has rushed to one set of figures. Anyone who understands these figures understands that these figures are volatile. The government has been following a very clear plan, a plan to restore budget capacity in this state — because the budget we inherited from the previous government was utterly unsustainable.

We have been working very hard. Some people do not want to accept responsibility for the unsustainable budget position they left behind. We have focused on productivity. Some people are not interested in productivity. We have focused on growing our markets. At the end of next week, I will be joining other ministers on a trade mission to China — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BAILLIEU** — I note the dismissive attitude of opposition members, just as they dismissed the trade mission to India. This trade mission to China will have twice as many delegates as attended the Indian trade mission. We have been assisting industries in transition. We understand that. We certainly understand the impact that the construction industry has, and that is why we have sought at a national level a Productivity Commission inquiry into escalating construction costs, because those construction costs — acknowledged widely in the nation now, following the lead that we have taken — are pricing Victorians and all Australians out of the infrastructure of the future, jobs of the future and clean and clear productivity and premium infrastructure.

Some people do not care about that. Some people give support to those who are blockading projects. Some people want to stand side by side with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union while it blockades projects and does so unlawfully and illegally. Some people refuse to support the government's legal action in the Supreme Court to have the CFMEU's attitude to this blockade and its unlawful stature tested in the courts again.

Already that blockade has twice been determined to be unlawful and illegal by the Supreme Court. But those who stand with the CFMEU leadership do not care about construction; they do not care about infrastructure. They want to be ceaselessly negative about absolutely everything, and they want to see projects fall over in this state. Who would it be who is standing side by side with the union leadership while it undertakes this unlawful blockade? Of course it is the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition stood with the CFMEU, embraced it and endorsed its work.

**Ms Hennessy** — On a point of order, Speaker, reluctant as I am to interrupt the Premier during his irrelevant tirade, he was asked about his jobs plan. In his response he has said nothing to the people who have lost their jobs, as is demonstrated in today's unemployment figures. I ask that you bring him back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The answer is relevant to the question that was asked; it is related to jobs.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — Come in spinner, I would say, because we have been saying for years that productivity is an issue in this state. Some people are ignoring that, including those on that side. That is the problem with the opposition. We have focused on this issue nationally. We have taken a lead on it, and that has been recognised. Those who stand alongside the CFMEU on a blockade of lawful projects in an illegal manner, including those who stand on a blockade of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre project, are obviously embarrassed about it.

**Mr Merlino** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is not being relevant to the question. The 14 800 people who lost their jobs last month want the Premier to stand by them. That is what the people of Victoria want.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — On the point of order, Speaker, I was asked about our plan. Our plan is very clear and focussed on productivity improvements. Members of the opposition can stand there and pretend that this is not an issue for the economy, but if they do, they are at odds with every serious commentator in this nation.

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

**Mr BAILLIEU** — I make the point again that productivity is important, and we will continue to pursue this. The Leader of the Opposition ought to be ashamed about the position he has taken on this blockade, ashamed about the position he has taken about the CFMEU leadership — and perhaps the Victorian public are not surprised.

### **Road safety: numberplate slogan**

**Ms MILLER** (Bentleigh) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier advise the house of recent initiatives and actions the coalition government has taken to work with the community to reduce the trauma of the road toll in Victoria?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — Tragically 287 people lost their lives on the roads last year — that is 287 people too many. Yesterday I was pleased to join with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Police and Emergency Services; the Minister for Roads; the Assistant Treasurer, who is the minister responsible for the Transport Accident Commission; and the Attorney-General at the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority here in Ballarat to announce the Ministerial Council for Road Safety in Victoria. In addition to that we announced and released a directions paper entitled *Victoria's Road Safety Strategy — Have Your Say*, and indeed an important survey into road safety carried out by newspapers across this state.

Today we are announcing that soon Victoria's numberplates will carry a new road safety message. The new Victorian numberplates will carry the road safety message 'Stay alert stay alive'. It will be on every numberplate in Victoria when the numberplates change over. The message 'Stay alert stay alive' will be a constant reminder to be alert and drive safely on our roads. That stay alert message is for pedestrians, it is for cyclists, it is for other drivers and it is for passengers as well — to stay alert to the circumstances in the vehicle, to stay alert to the circumstances on the road and to stay alert to speed limits, level crossings, road hazards, road conditions and their own behaviour.

I am sure it is the wish of every member of this house to see the road toll fall further. We have had a long-term road safety proposition in this state, going back to the days of the 1034 campaign in the very early 1970s. A lot of young people would not appreciate that in the early 1970s, 1034 people lost their lives on the road in one year. That turned minds at that time, and ever since then there has been a bipartisan approach to this message to stay alert to driver safety: to take a rest if you are drowsy, to focus on the road and not the radio, and to focus on the road and not your phone or a text message. It is a safety message to get all Victorians behind the wheel to stay alert and stay alive and drive down the road toll as a community.

It is an important message. It will put road safety front and centre for every Victorian family and every Victorian on the road. The initiative will build on our reputation as a world leader in road safety. Those 287 people who died last year were certainly 287 people too many. This year more than 190 people have died on our roads already, and in addition to that around 5000 people have been hospitalised and obviously in the process traumatised by serious injuries incurred on our roads. We know that continual reminders and continual education of new drivers is

very much a part of reinforcing this message. The new numberplate message will effectively, we believe, do that. It will mean there will be hundreds of thousands of reminders to drive safely on our roads every single day.

In Australia's history the numberplate has come to represent a statement of the values of a community. To drive down the road toll together, to end the senseless waste of life, to continue to maintain world leadership in road safety and to continue to prevent the loss of life and injury that comes from road accidents is a commitment of the Victorian community. It is an issue that every Victorian ought to be committed to personally, and we should be proud of the record we have in seeking to drive down the toll.

The search for a numberplate message started last year. We are pleased that as a result of consultation with the community and professional advice, the message 'Stay alert stay alive' will soon be on all new numberplates in Victoria. I urge every member of this Parliament and every Victorian to heed that message.

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) (*By leave*) — I join with the Premier in making it very clear to all Victorians that across this chamber there is strong bipartisan support for action to reduce the road toll. Each of us in different ways has been touched by that toll; each of us pays a price in different ways as a result of road trauma. I congratulate the Premier on the initiative he has announced today. I reiterate that all sides of this house are strongly committed to making sure that we do whatever we can to spare as many families as possible the heartache and the pain of road trauma.

### Higher education: TAFE funding

**Mr HERBERT** (Eltham) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the government's decision to slash \$290 million from Victorian TAFEs and the requirement for TAFE providers to submit to government a transition plan by 7 September detailing how these cuts will impact on their courses, their staff and their students. Will the Premier agree to make all TAFE transition plans publicly available so that all Victorians can see for themselves the impact his savage budget cuts are having on the Victorian TAFE sector?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I thank the member for his question, and I say, as I have said many times, the changes that were introduced by the previous government in 2009 left a totally and utterly unsustainable funding position for vocational education and training in Victoria. The Labor government budgeted for 2011–12 some \$850 million for vocational

training in the state. We warned that the changes it had introduced would potentially lead to a blow-out. We committed to an Essential Services Commission inquiry, and that was undertaken last year.

What we saw was a blow-out from \$850 million to over \$1.3 billion, and that was unsustainable. We have heard from some in this chamber a view that somehow this is a change that was not necessary, that the unsustainable position could continue. If it is that the opposition —

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier was asked a question in relation to the public release of TAFE transition plans, and I ask that you draw him back to that question. That is what all communities are entitled to an answer to. Will he make those TAFE transition plans publicly available?

**Mr Ryan** — On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier was asked a question in relation to TAFE. He is providing relevant information in the course of responding to that question. The preamble to the question forms part of the question. He is entitled to answer it in the manner that he is, and he is being relevant.

**Mr Merlino** — On the point of order, Speaker, and the point that the Deputy Premier just made about the preamble, if you listened again to the question, you would hear that the preamble talked about the transition plans due on 7 September, and the specific question only referred to transition plans — both the preamble and the specific question relate to transition plans. The Premier should be brought back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order on the basis that it started off about the \$290 million cuts to TAFE and transitional plans. The answer was relevant to the question that was asked.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — Anybody who suggests that the changes that have been introduced to put vocational training on a sustainable basis are unnecessary is committing to future blow-outs. One thing we do know is that those opposite are good on the negative, but they have not offered a single solution to the problem they left behind — not one single solution. The Victorian people understand that the opposition is going nowhere. It is going nowhere and is senselessly negative. When it comes to the changes, they are changes recommended by the Essential Services Commission, foreshadowed and supported by the commonwealth minister, as we know. In 2008 Holmesglen Institute of TAFE had this to —

**Mr Andrews** — On a further point of order, Speaker, in the 1½ minutes remaining to the Premier, I wonder if he might address even for a moment the substance of the question, which was: will he make transition plans publicly available? He has not addressed that in his answer in any way at all to this point, and I ask you to draw him back to the question and even have him pretend to address it in the next 1½ minutes.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The answer is relevant to the question that was asked.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — Holmesglen TAFE in its submission to a discussion paper on skills reform had this to say:

Remove TAFE from the public service award, enabling TAFE to attract staff by offering competitive salaries and to reward outstanding staff.

That was from Holmesglen before the blow-out. That was Holmesglen begging the previous government to get this right, which it did not do.

When it comes to transition plans, the transition plans will be implemented by the TAFEs, and clearly as those transition plans are implemented they will be public plans because they will be implemented. We heard today from the vice-chancellor of Ballarat University, a dual-sector university with a significant vocational sector. The university has seen the opportunity to get this right. It understands the need to make changes. TAFEs and vocational providers around this state are working with the minister to put vocational training in this state back on a sustainable footing, because if we do not, there will be a massive blow-out continuing into the future. That is the way of the Leader of the Opposition, but I can assure the young people of Victoria that that is no solution.

### **Emergency services: alert system**

**Mr HODGETT** (Kilsyth) — My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Can the Deputy Premier update the house on the severe weather conditions that have affected areas across Victoria and the progress that has been made in alerting the community to emergencies?

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the member for his question in relation to an issue of such critical importance to so many people who have been so terribly and adversely affected over the past 24 to 48 hours. Members will be aware of the severe wind events that have struck across

Victoria on late Tuesday evening and into Wednesday. There have been very high wind gusts recorded across different parts of the state: at Mount William, 137 kilometres an hour; at Mount Buller, 122 kilometres an hour; and at Wilsons Promontory, 107 kilometres an hour. Even at St Kilda winds were recorded at 98 kilometres an hour.

Over this period there have been over 3100 requests for assistance from metropolitan regions and across Gippsland. The vast majority of these were reports about trees being over roads — over 1000 of them; 800-plus trees having fallen down and damage to 800-plus buildings. This has meant that 118 State Emergency Service (SES) units and more than 800 volunteers have been actively supporting the response activities. As at this morning some 21 000 customers are still experiencing power outages, mainly in the eastern suburbs and through Gippsland, and the power companies are working as we speak to restore those supplies throughout the day. The worst affected areas include Eltham, Knox, Nunawading, Emerald and Doncaster and throughout Gippsland in Warragul, Moe, Morwell and Leongatha.

Thankfully the Ballarat region has fared better than other parts of the state. The Ballarat SES unit has been very active around the Grampians area and has responded to 61 requests for assistance. Some 250 properties have sustained significant building damage, including the Statesman Motor Inn at Ararat. Unfortunately its roof was blown onto a nearby road. Over 375 additional properties have sustained minor damage. Significant disruption has occurred to public transport, particularly on the Lilydale and Hurstbridge lines. The worst affected areas in Gippsland include Warragul, Moe, Morwell and Leongatha.

Tragically, we woke this morning to the news that a 70-year-old gentleman had died after hitting a tree on Mount Macedon Road last night, and of course on behalf of all of us I convey our deepest sympathies to his family.

I take the opportunity to reinforce to Victorians that in these very difficult and challenging conditions, it is important to drive carefully on the roads that have been impacted as a result of this event. On behalf of the Parliament I also want to take the opportunity to thank those tireless SES and Country Fire Authority volunteers who continue to do the great work they do, together with those from the other agencies who have been called on to deal with these events.

On an associated matter, I am also pleased to tell the house that we have now had Vodafone Hutchinson sign

up to the location-based alert system, which will see emergency alerts being delivered across every state and territory of Australia by Christmas next year as a result of that agreement by Vodafone. This is in addition to the agreement we have with Telstra. We continue to negotiate with Optus, which as yet has not reached final agreement with us. However, we are optimistic that that will be able to be achieved sooner rather than later.

I pay tribute to those who have been involved on behalf of the government in the negotiating team which has successfully brought this about. Having emergency alerts available on a location-based system is another element of the suite of measures that is available to keep people informed when disaster is nigh.

### Higher education: TAFE funding

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to TAFE courses here at the University of Ballarat in agriculture, automotive engineering, business administration, finance and horticulture, which upper house Liberal MP Simon Ramsay described as ‘programs of suspect relevance’, and my question is: why has the Premier refused to meet with students in these and other courses to hear from them directly about the impact of his \$290 million cuts to the TAFE sector?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I am sure the member for Ballarat West would not misrepresent the comments of Simon Ramsay.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BAILLIEU** — They do not ring true to me, Speaker. But suffice it to say that Ballarat University’s TAFE sector in 2011 was running at a loss. In 2010–11 it was running at a loss, or in the 2011 year it was running at a loss. The anticipated loss before any changes was multimillions of dollars. That university understood that even in a climate where there was a massive blow-out there were challenges: there were challenges in its TAFE sector in making its courses viable, and that is an issue which has been highlighted because of the blow-out, highlighted because of the changes that were introduced by Labor in 2009 and even more importantly highlighted because the market-based system which operates in Victoria now is to be rolled out around the country.

We heard this morning from the vice-chancellor of Ballarat University. As I said before, Ballarat University is embracing the opportunities here to get vocational training in Victoria on a sustainable basis. There were many courses offered by many TAFE

colleges for which there were no enrolments at all, and there were others which were already unviable. Some TAFE colleges have taken the opportunity provided by these changes to bring forward changes they knew they had to make, because with the new market-based entry arrangements in 2009 and with the changing nature of training as more training has gone online, TAFE colleges have had to adjust and vocational providers have had to adjust.

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier was asked why he would not meet with students. That is the substance of this question. We are here at the University of Ballarat, and it is not an unreasonable question to ask: why will the Premier not meet with the students that his cutbacks are affecting? That is the question, and he ought to address that in his answer.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The answer was relevant to the question asked.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — I make the point again, as I have made it many times, that we are seeking to align TAFE courses, both vocational courses and higher education courses, with the employment needs of industry. On that basis with these changes we have increased the subsidy rate for over 400 courses, including more apprentices and including courses directly related to industry needs. We have seen it too often, and I know opposition members are silent on these issues because they paid no attention to them.

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, instead of giving us a commentary on the opposition the Premier ought to address his answer to the question that was asked. I renew my point of order: the question was in relation to his failure, his choice not to meet with students, and that is what he ought address in his answer, not run a commentary on the opposition.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Points of order are not to be used to ask the question again. The Premier, to return to answering the question.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — I take this opportunity to say to all Victorians, and I take this opportunity to say particularly to vocational students: you need to understand why these changes are necessary — because there was a massive blow-out and the TAFE changes, the vocational education training changes, which were introduced by the Labor government were unsustainable. Even the federal Labor minister agreed. The only people who do not agree are over there, and that is why they are going nowhere.

### China: trade mission

**Ms WREFORD** (Mordialloc) — My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business. Can the minister update the house on the range of participants in the forthcoming super trade mission to China being led by the Premier?

**Ms ASHER** (Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business) — I thank the member for Mordialloc for her question and for her interest in business and jobs in the state of Victoria. As has already been indicated by the member's question, there will be a trade mission to China commencing at the end of next week, and it will be led by the Premier. We believe this will be the largest ever delegation of any country into China, and I am delighted that Victoria is taking the lead on this.

The house would be interested to know that 654 individuals will be participating in the mission and 414 businesses and organisations will be represented by the 654 individuals. The background to this, as the Premier indicated in his answer to the first question today, is that one of the four key foundations of our economic strategy is to help businesses find new markets. It is very important to assist small businesses, because obviously the market in Victoria and, indeed, in Australia is not big enough to sustain growth for our small business sector and it is very important to help regional businesses.

Ballarat and the surrounding areas will be well represented on this trade mission to China. In total there will be 11 businesses and organisations from this general area and seven of them will be from the food and beverage sector, as you would expect, given the product strength of the region. Three delegates from the University of Ballarat will be accompanying us. Obviously China is the greatest source of international students at the moment, and the university will raise its profile and discuss a number of possible collaborations.

We will have a representative from Sovereign Hill accompany us. It is a very important tourist attraction, one which I visited yesterday. I spoke with Jeremy Johnson and a range of other staff members to hear about their broad plans for the future. OzPress from the auto sector will also be one of the 654 individual businesses participating in this delegation.

In terms of tourism, I mentioned that Sovereign Hill is participating. The Premier will launch the specific details of the China tourism strategy, which has previously been outlined in general terms. The Chinese make up Victoria's largest tourism market. This year over 265 000 Chinese came to Victoria. They spend

over \$800 million per annum in Victoria's economy. We have set out a very aggressive pursuit of growth in this particular area. The Tourism Forecasting Council has forecasted that Victoria is set to receive a 7 per cent growth in tourism from China; however, we have set a target of 11 per cent growth in tourism from China. If it eventuates in our time frame, up until 2020, that will be 13 200 jobs for Victoria and over \$3 billion will be added to the Victorian economy.

Sovereign Hill will establish a presence in the minds of Chinese tourists. I congratulate Sovereign Hill for doing that. Obviously the Chinese are part of the history of the goldfields and Sovereign Hill is aggressively seeking to pursue more Chinese tourists. One of the great challenges, which I am sure members of the house will appreciate, is that of all of those numbers of Chinese visitors, just above 3.5 per cent of them stay in regional Victoria. The challenge for business and government is to ensure that those visitors stay overnight in regional Victoria, and that is what we are really attempting to do.

### Fire services: funding

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier maintain that the decision to cut \$66 million from the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) will not affect front-line firefighting services?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I thank the member for his question. The level of funding for the CFA and the MFB in 2012–13 remains above 2010–11 levels. The spike in funding in 2011–12 largely reflects the impact of the recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and related issues. These include significant capital acquisitions as well as some other programs to address the recommendations of the royal commission, which have since come to an end.

In 2011–12 some large capital expenses and one-off programs included the replacement of rural fire stations worth \$40 million, fleet upgrades worth more than \$20 million and township protection planning worth \$6 million. As these acquisitions and programs have come to an end, the budgets have been adjusted accordingly. We have committed to implementing the bushfires royal commission's recommendations. We stood behind the CFA; we stood behind the MFB. They do a mighty job. I particularly note the job that volunteers do.

We have supplied additional vehicles; we have supplied additional resources to the CFA. We have made a very significant announcement in the last couple of weeks

about introducing a new model for the fire services levy. The current levy is an insurance-based fire services levy where people who do not insure do not contribute.

**Mr Merlino** interjected.

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

**Mr BAILLIEU** — People who do not insure do not contribute. People who are under-insured do not contribute appropriately. That will be replaced with a property-based levy, as was widely recommended but was never done by current opposition members when they were in government. They had 11 years to do something when they were in government, and they did nothing. That levy has placed the future of the funding of fire services in this state on a sustainable basis. In regard to savings measures being undertaken — —

**Mr Merlino** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is not being relevant to the question. He is talking about the fire services levy. Is his answer a guarantee that the \$66 million — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Ports!

**Mr Merlino** — Is the Premier providing a guarantee that the other \$66 million does not impact on front-line services? That was the question he was asked — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Monbulk will resume his seat.

**Mr Merlino** — So that is the guarantee, Speaker — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member will resume his seat.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — In regard to the savings measures, front-line service savings are being undertaken by the Country Fire Authority, and the CEO of the CFA went through that line by line on radio — —

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

**Mr BAILLIEU** — Only the ceaselessly negative — —

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

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

**Mr BAILLIEU** — Only the ceaselessly negative would suggest that there are never opportunities to do things more effectively and efficiently. I say again: the level of funding for the CFA and the MFB in 2012–13 remains above 2010–11 levels. As members will know — and I am sure the opposition has not forgotten — the budget for the CFA is set on an annual basis, and next year's budget can be seen at the appropriate time.

### **Rail: Ballarat rolling stock plant**

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Can the minister update the house on the fit-out of the new trains at Alstom's plant in Ballarat?

**Mr MULDER** (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank the member for Forest Hill for his question and for his strong interest in manufacturing here in Ballarat. The workshop opened in Ballarat in 1917 as a result of a call from the regions to support manufacturing here. In 1999 this facility was taken over by Alstom. Here we are in 2012 with the Baillieu coalition government yet again answering a call from the regions to support manufacturing here in Ballarat.

Early yesterday morning I drove past the Alstom facility, and there were the new trains, purchased by the coalition for the metropolitan network, lined up, about to be fitted out by the skilled manufacturing people who work at the Alstom plant in Ballarat. This is a \$222 million investment in the rail network and the work to fit out those trains is being carried out right here in Ballarat by Alstom's skilled workforce.

Our investment of \$222 million has been matched with a further \$8 million investment by Alstom in its plant, a sign of absolute confidence in the coalition government and its commitment to the people of Ballarat. Alstom answered the call and matched the government's investment with a significant investment of its own.

These seven trains are being rolled out on time, and they will be rolled out on budget. They will start to be rolled out towards the end of this year. The completion of the rollout will take place towards the end of next year. There will be 65 direct jobs and 70 indirect jobs resulting from the coalition government's investment here in Ballarat. There are not just jobs at the Ballarat plant; small businesses are also benefiting enormously from the work that is being carried out here. Geodis Wilson, a freight and logistics services company, also

based in Ballarat, is supplying services to Alstom. AME Systems, manufacturers of wiring products and services, based in Ararat, is also providing services to Alstom. RPC Technologies, based in Geelong, is providing seats and interiors. Geelong is yet another regional centre to benefit enormously from the work that is being carried out here in Ballarat.

Melbourne companies are also providing services and supplies for the trains that are being fitted out here in Ballarat. Cablex, a wiring products and services company, based in Bentleigh, is a beneficiary, along with Glassform, suppliers of windscreens and side windows, which is based in Cheltenham. On 15 July the Premier and I visited the factory in Ballarat to announce these new trains, and, as I said, they are running absolutely on schedule.

There are around about 800 00 trips taken every day on the metropolitan network on board the X'trapolis trains. They are the most reliable of the fleet, and I say to the workforce here in Ballarat, 'More strength to your arm for the work that you are doing for our rail network throughout Victoria and the quality of workmanship that is being produced here in Ballarat'. Local content has been lifted with these trains. We have increased the amount of local content with the trains we are building compared with those delivered in the past. Around 54 per cent of work on these trains will be performed in Victoria when you throw the maintenance contract in on top of the actual fit-out of these trains. This is a great outcome for Ballarat.

### **Fire services: funding**

**Mr HELPER** (Ripon) — I direct my question to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's previous answer and to the government's decision to cut more than \$300 000 from the funding for the Country Fire Authority's Grampians region. Given these cuts will see CFA recruits receiving second-hand protective clothing, a review of issuing ration packs to volunteers who spend up to 18 hours in the field, scaling back first-aid courses and reduced expenditure on fire spotting towers, does the Premier still maintain that these cuts will not affect front-line services?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I say what I said before — —

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — The level of funding for the CFA and Metropolitan Fire Brigade in 2012–13 remains above what it was for 2010–11. The budget for subsequent years will be set in the budget process, as

has been the case in the past. What will be different in the future is that it will be funded by the fire services levy based on property, not on insurance policies. Those who have not contributed in the past will contribute. Those who have under-contributed will contribute fully. That is as it should be; that is what happens in other states such as Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. I would have thought after 11 years of doing absolutely nothing about this, the opposition would be pleased about it.

In regard to preparation, Neil Comrie, the bushfires royal commission implementation monitor, said in his final report at page 67:

There is clear evidence that Victoria is now substantially better prepared on a regular basis for bushfire risk than at the time of Black Saturday.

We have committed to implementing the recommendations of the royal commission. Neil Comrie has provided highly sophisticated, professional reports on implementation. We have made those commitments and we stand by them.

I say again that in regard to the matters the member raised and which were raised on radio during this week, the CEO of the CFA, Mick Bourke, went through this line by line to explain these matters. I would have thought it was time for the opposition to get behind the CFA, behind these extra resources available to the CFA and to stop scaremongering. We have seen more of that scaremongering today.

### **Ballarat: employment zone**

**Mr WATT** (Burwood) — My question is to the Minister for Regional Cities. Can the minister update the house as to what the government is doing to promote jobs and business growth in Ballarat?

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Minister for Regional Cities) — I thank the member for Burwood for his question. The government has a clear policy to grow the population, the economy, jobs and the quality of life across regional and rural Victoria, including in the magnificent regional city of Ballarat. The City of Ballarat, the Committee for Ballarat and key industry leaders, indeed the broad Ballarat community, have told me, have told the Premier and have told the coalition government that their no. 1 priority for jobs is to develop the Ballarat West employment zone. They said, in their own words, that the Ballarat West employment zone is a genuine game-changer when it comes to jobs and opportunities for Ballarat and for this region.

The Ballarat West employment zone is a massive site with enormous potential. It is 623 hectares in size. It surrounds the Ballarat Airport, adjoins the Western Highway and is strategically well placed for industrial development. There is the potential in the Ballarat West employment zone to provide 9000 new jobs for people in Ballarat. There is an estimated \$5 billion potential growth and economic benefit from developing the Ballarat West employment zone.

The coalition government has already got runs on the board when it comes to assisting the City of Ballarat develop the Ballarat West employment zone, working on the no. 1 priority for this city and this region. We have invested \$38 million in the Ballarat Western Link Road, thanks to the Minister for Roads. The Minister for Planning has released 6000 housing lots in Alfredton West, which is just to the south of the Ballarat West employment zone, and we put \$300 000 into the early stages of development of the Ballarat West employment zone.

I am pleased to advise the house today that on Tuesday of this week the Premier and I were at the site of the Ballarat West employment zone with representatives from the City of Ballarat and the Committee for Ballarat and with key industry leaders from Ballarat to make a significant announcement about the next stage of development of this massive project. The Premier announced that \$835 000 would be provided to a project of \$1.67 million, so there will be 50-50 funding from the Baillieu coalition government and the City of Ballarat to get this vital project ready for industries to move into the site. That \$835 000 comes from the coalition's \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. It is a real vote winner and a real winner in terms of jobs and development.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — It is about bringing jobs and economic opportunities —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — The Regional Growth Fund is strongly supported by this side of the house, but unfortunately we heard this morning that the Labor opposition opposes the \$1 million Regional Growth Fund, and it opposes investing in jobs and economic growth in regional and rural Victoria. In contrast to the Labor opposition, which is opposed to the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund and opposed to investing in the Ballarat West employment zone, this government is a

government that genuinely listens to regional Victoria, genuinely cares about regional Victoria and genuinely delivers for regional and rural Victoria, like it is delivering on the Ballarat West employment zone.

## PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FOOD LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed.**

**Dr SYKES** (Benalla) — In conclusion, the coalition government is committed to supporting rural Victorians, supporting farmers and supporting communities. This bill provides some common-sense improvements to existing legislation. Victorian egg producers are being better supported in dealing with poorly considered costing decisions. Victorian public health and safety will be better protected, the wellbeing of animals will be better protected and the economic and social impact of natural disasters and serious disease outbreaks will be reduced. I commend the bill to the house. I also thank the people of Ballarat for making us so welcome.

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — I am pleased to make some comments on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Legislation Bill 2012, which, as we have heard, is effectively an omnibus bill. That means it is making changes and tidying up a number of acts before the Parliament, including the Food Act 1984, the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 and the Local Government Act 1989. As previous members have noted, the major change brought about by this bill is the creation of an egg standard. The Food Act now governs the selling of eggs, so that eggs can be brought into line with meat and dairy products with regard to health and safety issues. In fact all primary produce sold now has to follow health and safety standards.

One of the major issues associated with the egg standard that concerns producers is the issue of stamping eggs. Under the legislation, eggs that are sold will have to be individually stamped. There have been concerns about the cost of this egg stamping. This bill enables a two-year lag before people selling eggs are required to have their eggs individually stamped to show where the eggs came from.

One of the issues of concern is that it is still unclear within this act how consistently this requirement will be applied; for example, it is unclear whether people from small-scale properties who sell eggs in farmers markets

will need to stamp their eggs and whether they will be brought under the same arrangements as the larger producers of eggs. There are issues in this bill associated with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Inspectors' rights to access properties when they believe that an animal may be badly treated, or to gain information with regard to that, have increased.

There are issues associated with livestock disease control, and there are also issues of animals straying on the road. We know that animals straying on the road can be a road hazard, and clearly we support the government in addressing this issue. People on adjoining properties or on other properties nearby who have animals stray onto their properties are now able to take action. This has been a problem with stud farming, for example, where a bull happens to cross a fence. We need to ensure that people take responsibility for keeping their stock within their fencing and that they can be held to account for that.

Overall we say that the issues involved in this bill are sound and practical. Although the opposition supports this bill, I do not think these issues are of particular interest to the people of Ballarat. What the people of Ballarat and the people of regional Victoria would rather have heard about today are issues concerning why, when this government came to office inheriting a AAA credit rating, it has made so many cuts to services, which are affecting people in Ballarat and across regional Victoria. They would have liked to see those issues addressed and more substantial legislation brought to bear today directing actual action — —

**Mr Weller** — On a point of order, Speaker, I do not believe the member is speaking to the bill. He is straying from the bill and I would ask you to bring him back to addressing the bill at hand.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but I ask the member to refer to the bill in front of him.

**Mr HOWARD** — I was making some general remarks in terms of the context of this bill for rural and regional Victoria. As I have said, while this bill is sound and practical in most instances, it does leave some questions to be answered. Certainly the people of rural and regional Victoria will be asking why this government still is not bringing more substantial action forward to support them in their communities, and I look forward to such action taking place, both here in Ballarat and in the regions.

**Mr BLACKWOOD** (Narracan) — It is with pleasure that I rise to make a contribution to the debate

on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill amends a number of acts. They are the Food Act 1984, the Impoundment of Livestock Act 1994, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 and the Local Government Act 1989.

The amendments to the Food Act 1984 provide for the regulation here in Victoria of the national primary production and processing standard for eggs and egg products, which will automatically come into effect in November 2012. Unless this bill is approved, Victorian egg producers will be required by the national egg standard to individually stamp each egg with required property identification. The egg standard requirement is intended to provide whole-of-chain traceability for egg product in the event of a food safety concern such as an outbreak of salmonella. Victoria argued that individual egg stamping was not required as we believed that trace back could be achieved equally or more effectively via egg cartons rather than, when someone presents sick, having to rummage through garbage bins full of food waste after cooking to search for cracked eggshells that may be 12 to 36 hours old.

We also believe that insufficient consideration was given during the nationally undertaken regulatory impact statement to the regulatory cost impact relative to the food safety risk, especially on smaller egg producers. The egg standard was pushed through at a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments food regulation ministerial council despite strong opposition from Victoria.

Interestingly, here in Ballarat, the chair of the food regulation ministerial council is Labor's Catherine King, the federal member for Ballarat and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing. I do not want to get too political, but the Victorian government argues that Ms King could have taken heed of the concerns expressed on behalf of Victorian egg producers and the industry and required an amendment to the egg standard to remove the stamping requirement, but she let Victorians down.

Industry estimates put the cost of purchasing and installing egg stamping machines at in excess of \$30 000, which is a significant impost, especially on small business. There are additional concerns about delays in being able to service those machines should they break down. Some Victorian egg producers currently have egg stamping machines; however, a large number, especially the smaller producers, do not.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has been working with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the

egg industry on the proposal to introduce a two-year exemption from the stamping reform. It is understood also that New South Wales intends to introduce a similar two-year exemption for its egg industry. The national egg standard also imposes a regulatory compliance obligation under the Food Act as it currently exists. Local government would be responsible for enforcing and monitoring compliance by egg producers with the new egg standard. We do not believe it is appropriate for local government to have that power and responsibility or to bear the cost of the enforcement, nor that council officers are suitably experienced or qualified to enforce compliance on farms and farming systems. Thus, this bill provides DPI with the power to regulate compliance on farms with the national primary production standards.

In relation to the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, the amendments that this bill introduces concerning livestock on roads will empower council officers to enter land and impound livestock that are inadequately confined and pose a risk to public safety. Council officers can impound livestock found on roads which present a public safety risk but cannot currently impound stock that are on roads or roadsides due to the fences being down but which move back onto private land when the council officer approaches. The new amendment will give council the power to impound livestock in such circumstances.

Some members may be familiar with the campaign started by Ms Danlee Hollard of Warnambool, who has been seeking tougher laws in regard to boundary fences following the tragic death in 2006 of her father, which occurred when his car collided with a bull. Ms Hollard established a Facebook page in support of the campaign and received considerable media coverage across south-west Victoria. While the measures in the bill will enable councils to better address the risk of stock crossing downed fences and walking onto roads, the provisions do not deliver the more regulated and exacting fencing requirements that Ms Hollard was seeking. It is considered inappropriate to seek to enforce a specific defined standard on all farming land-holders for the condition of their fences, and the cost to councils of enforcing such a standard would likely be too great.

The bill also improves the emergency response capacity of the Department of Primary Industries. It provides the secretary of DPI with the power to obtain from local councils information relating to land, including the name, address and contact details of owners and occupiers. This information will assist DPI to proactively plan emergency response activities and to make contact with landowners and land occupiers in a

timely fashion in the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak. Timeliness of response can be critical in containing a disease outbreak. Similarly this information will be of assistance during an emergency event such as fire or flood, as it will enable DPI to identify and contact land-holders who may require assistance with their stock.

Black Saturday demonstrated the need to appoint inspectors during an emergency to ensure that there are sufficient officers to effectively respond. There was an example of that need during the Black Saturday fires in my area of Labertouche, because in one instance there was a farm with 300 head of stock that were left with no food, water or fencing and had to be moved. Thankfully the owner was there and was able to do that, but if he had not been there, DPI would have had a massive problem or by-laws officers would have had a massive problem.

In conclusion, these amendments are practical measures that will reduce red tape and compliance costs for industry and provide local government with more options for sensible enforcement. The bill will improve the detection and containment of disease to protect public health and our livestock industry.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! It is my pleasure to ask the member for Ripon to come to the microphone now. I am pleased he is still in the chamber, given all the noise he made during question time.

**Mr HELPER** (Ripon) — Thank you very much, Speaker, for the warm welcome to the microphone for my albeit brief presentation on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. There is so much to say but so little time to say it in.

I will restrict my remarks to some five parts of the bill, the first part being part 2, which amends the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 to make it possible for inspectors to enter land or buildings to impound inadequately confined livestock. I congratulate the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security for bringing this matter forward. As a number of speakers have said, one of its manifestations is that it is a worthwhile road safety measure, and I certainly welcome that as somebody who has on a couple of occasions encountered livestock on the road in very close proximity. I certainly appreciate anything that reduces the risk of that happening again.

I suggest that as the Minister for Roads is sitting next to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security he might want to mention road safety in terms of fixing the potholes that are on our country roads at the moment

and that could easily swallow whole cows. They are also very much a road safety issue. I will return to speaking on the bill. I can see you, Speaker, coming forth in encouraging me to return to the bill.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member is right.

**Mr HELPER** — Part 3 amends the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994. I point out to members of the house an inconsistency between the explanatory memorandum in regard to clause 18 and clause 18 in the bill. The explanatory memorandum states:

... that a person must notify an inspector within 7 days, instead of 14 days —

which is what the current act provides —

after becoming aware of unusual circumstances ...

Clause 18 of the bill provides that that period be five days instead of the seven days stated in the explanatory memorandum. I presume that mistake will be corrected somewhere along the line. In the process of correcting that mistake, I encourage the government to consider changing the wording so it reads ‘as soon as practicable, but no more than 5 days’, because, as we all would agree, when preventing or controlling disease outbreaks time is of the essence and the shorter the time is in this context the better.

Part 3 of the bill also deals with the annual registration of beehives. The beehive registration fee is \$15 — I say this for the benefit of members who are not as close to that industry as they should be — for up to 50 hives and then 30 cents for each hive above that. The changes introduced by this legislation provide the ability to renew annually rather than having the renewal fee being due on a specific date of the year. I would like the government to consider ways of overcoming the administrative difficulties of large apiarists who acquire hives throughout the year and have to pay renewal fees for hives at the date they applied for them. They will have multiple renewal dates for hives during the year. When they have to pay only 30 cents per hive, it seems to be hardly worth doing.

Part 4 of the bill deals with amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. I raise an issue that is starting to become very significant in relation to this piece of legislation. This is not a partisan political point of view, as I am as responsible for this issue as anybody else. There are 52 sections in the act that deal with the powers and enforcement abilities of inspectors. That is an extraordinary number of provisions. This bill will insert a further five sections that deal with powers and enforcement abilities, which

is a 10 per cent increase. Somewhere along the line we should commission a *Yes Minister* episode about the self-serving nature of the changes that are being made.

Part 5 of the bill deals with amendments to the Food Act 1984. As many members have spoken on that, I will keep my comments brief. I congratulate the government on standing up to what I think were changes proposed under the national system of food regulation in relation to stamping eggs. That is the particular example the minister used in the second-reading speech, and that is where the national system first applies. It is a bit of nanny-state stuff in relation to food. I do not know of anybody who has gone through the process of reading the regulatory impact statement who would know how many lives and how much of the wellbeing of people are being protected by making this change which imposes an incredible burden on industry. Small producers will experience a greater impact and larger producers will also be impacted. In my opinion it is an unnecessary change. The Victorian system, which the previous government insisted on at the national level, involving the reliance on egg carton identification is far superior. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr WELLER** (Rodney) — It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill addresses five acts: the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, the Local Government Act 1989 and the Food Act 1984.

In regard to the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 we all know, particularly those on this side of the house, that straying stock are a hassle. We have heard that they are a problem on the roads, but they are also a problem when it comes to farming. If you are a sheep producer and you get someone else’s mob of lousy sheep in your flock, there is several days work involved, and it can be at great expense to productivity.

It is also an issue of animal welfare. If a stallion gets out, it will kick. Stallions can be very brutal and cause a great deal of damage to other animals, so it is important that we keep them in the right paddock.

There are also effects when it comes to productivity. I can speak from experience on my farm about a disease that affects the fertility of cows. When a cow’s fertility is affected, it does not get in calf, so it does not milk. If you have 20 per cent of your heifers not calving, that affects the production of your herd by some 4 or 5 per cent for that year, so productivity is down. We on this side of the house are about making Victoria more

productive, and this bill helps grow the productivity of Victoria.

Clause 3 is very important for many reasons. It amends section 5A of the Impounding of Livestock Act to give extra powers to council officers to impound cattle, sheep, horses, goats or any livestock that have been abandoned. For those who may not have read the bill, clause 3 gives an authorised officer more power to enter any land or building, excluding residences, where they suspect there is abandoned stock. The officer has to be able to go in to find the abandoned stock, identify people who can round up the stock, get the stock into a yard and truck them to an impoundment. Then the owner of the stock can do the work to either fix the fence or the gate so that the rest of the community and the officers are confident that those cattle, sheep, horses or other livestock will not stray and cause a problem again.

Clause 6 talks about reimbursing the person who impounds the cattle. Trucking cattle to a city yard comes at a cost. Finding people to round the cattle up costs. The council and its officers have to be reimbursed. We are not about putting extra costs on local government; we are saying it should be reimbursed and the offender should pay these costs.

Another purpose of the bill is to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. The bill widens the court's ability to issue an order disqualifying or placing conditions on a person being in charge of animals. As the member for Benalla said, for different reasons some people cannot care for animals as well as others can. This amendment allows the court to be more understanding of these circumstances and thus more flexible. That is a sensible amendment.

The bill also enables the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries to appoint more officers when it comes to events such as Black Saturday. After Black Saturday we did not have enough livestock officers to address the issues at hand. The bill gives the secretary the ability to appoint extra officers for the duration of the emergency. This is once again a practical thing to do.

Another part of the bill talks about the livestock codes of practice. In Victoria if you follow the livestock codes of practice, you have a defence. This bill includes an amendment to enable you to follow another code of practice that is respected — for example, the Australian code of practice for care and use of animals for scientific purposes. If you are following a code of practice, you can use that as a defence. Being a dairy farmer, I know there are rules in the code of practice in

relation to tail docking and the like. Tail docking should only be done when it is necessary for health or other reasons. If you do it, you do it long and early, because that is the most caring way.

When you are selling bobby calves you have to make sure they are at least five days old and have had a feed within 6 hours so they are healthy. The farmers understand the code, and what members on the other side would not understand is that to have productive animals you have to look after them. Animals that are not cared for are not productive, so codes and practices are important. Farmers in the main are quite confident about looking after their animals and doing the job, because they do not get production out of animals that they do not care for. We are very supportive of that.

The Parliament's bill refers to egg stamping. What we have to remember when it comes to egg stamping is the scale of some of the businesses in Victoria. I quote from an article in the *Shepparton News* of 21 August by Darren Linton. There is a lady mentioned in the article by the name of Jo Nelson. The article says:

The Victorian government is giving egg producers two extra years before they have to comply with new national egg-stamping requirements.

The move has been welcomed by egg producer Jo Nelson, who produces about 500 eggs a day on her Dookie property and sells them as 'Good Lookin' Googees' at regional farmers markets.

The article goes on to quote Mrs Nelson as saying:

I believe the machines are around \$30 000 ...

Here we are asking an egg producer to spend \$30 000 to stamp eggs when she is only producing 500 eggs a day. I am pleased to hear that the member for Ripon agrees it would be a lot more sensible to stamp the carton. That is why we have given egg producers two years extra to comply, because we understand the extra cost but we understand that we can still get a better food health outcome by stamping the carton rather than the eggs.

In conclusion, it is a privilege to be here to speak about a bill that affects the livestock industry in Victoria and to be able to speak with an understanding of how this legislation is practically going to affect the agricultural producers, local government and the consumers. The bill will make the product from the farms of these producers safe, and it will actually make it safer for the road users as well. While the member for Ballarat East called it an omnibus bill, there are many advantages in it for the people of Victoria. It contains multiple

improvements for the people of Victoria, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — I rise to speak on the bill before the Parliament today, the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As previous speakers have said, this bill contains a number of amendments to a variety of different pieces of legislation, including the Food Act 1984. These amendments in the main affect people in regional areas, but they also have some bearing on people generally.

In my former role as the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union food and confectionery state secretary I represented many people living in regional areas — in Shepparton, Echuca, Kyabram and Mildura and here in Ballarat. I make this point because government members in this Parliament should not forget that regional areas are made up of a diverse group of people with many different occupations. Not all are farmers. Many work in processing, in the distribution of food and agricultural products, in maintaining machinery and in general industry, public services, health, education and so on. Many farmers and their families also work in general businesses to supplement their farm income.

I think it is very fitting that today in Ballarat we are discussing bills and issues that affect regional Victoria. In the past it was the fact that governments, both local and state, had developed industry policies and provided incentives for companies to become established and remain in regional areas. For example, in Ballarat we have McCain and the old Bendix Mintex, now under a new name which has slipped my mind. There is the Nestlé plant at Broadford, Heinz at Girgarre and Simplot at Echuca. These are all industries that were wooed by government in the past to set up and provide jobs in regional Victoria, value-adding to farmers' produce and providing mass demand for what they grow. But now many regional workplaces are closing down, and there has not been a proactive response from the government to fix this problem. The legislation we are talking about affects people living in the regional areas, but the real problems, such as jobs and a strong economy in Victoria, and particularly in regional areas, is not being addressed and certainly has not been addressed today.

I turn to the bill before us. It amends five pieces of existing legislation around primary industries and food legislation. The amendments to the Food Act 1984 provide for a regulatory framework to support the national egg standards that will come into force in November. It also provides a reprieve for egg producers to delay egg stamping as a part of this system for two years, giving those egg producers time to install the

necessary equipment. I note the member for Ripon's concern about and querying as to whether or not this regulation is necessary.

The bill also makes amendments relating to the ability to impound livestock. We have heard a lot of information from the member for Rodney about those provisions and the practical consequences in terms of road safety of wayward livestock straying from their home paddocks. Livestock can wander onto roads, affecting the safety of drivers on country roads. Stock can also get onto other people's properties and create problems. This legislation is a positive move in that it allows for the impoundment of livestock, in a similar way to the law in relation to the impoundment of domestic cats and dogs. It also gives additional powers to officials to enter property to deal with this issue.

The amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 are partly in response to the Black Saturday bushfires in that they provide for the declaration of an emergency situation and for the Department of Primary Industries to appoint more officers during emergencies to deal with animal welfare. As I understand it, the amendments also provide exemption from charges to individuals who are working with animals for scientific purposes, as long as they follow proper codes of conduct. However, individuals rather than companies or corporations must be nominated to ensure that they are held accountable. This is particularly interesting, because with companies and corporations associated with the welfare of human beings, employers can often hide behind corporations and companies in denying water entitlements and rights. Let us hope that this is a move in the right direction. While supporting the rights of animals we should also take a step further and support the rights of human beings, including working people.

Another act this legislation amends is the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994. It enhances the ability of the Department of Primary Industries to rapidly respond to disease outbreaks. While this is a step in the right direction it would be good if the government were also committed to the same situation in terms of fruit fly, which affects many areas such as Shepparton, where there is a large fruit processing industry. As I understand it, the government has walked away from the fruit fly containment program, recently announcing that it has given up trying to tackle fruit fly. While the bill has a number of positive, progressive amendments there is also a lot more work to be done in terms of regional Victoria and support for people living in places like Ballarat.

**Mr BULL** (Gippsland East) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As previous speakers have pointed out, this bill will amend a number of acts. In my contribution I would like to focus initially on the amendments to the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, which provide local government and other agencies with the power to impound livestock or issue notices to ensure that livestock are appropriately confined and are not wandering on roads or on any other land. I might say that I saw firsthand on Monday the potential dangers of wandering livestock whilst travelling back from Gelantipy with the federal member for Gippsland, Mr Chester, when coming around a corner we were confronted by a very large Hereford cow in the middle of the road. To say that Mr Chester was somewhat startled would be an understatement.

These amendments would allow councils to enter land to impound livestock that is a risk to public safety. The current situation is that councils can impound livestock found on roads that are presenting a danger to the public, but they cannot impound livestock that have been on roads and then go back through a hole in the fence and onto private freehold land when the council officer appears. When that happens council officers are left with the dilemma of not being able to take any action. This is a common-sense amendment that will change that situation by giving councils the power to impound animals in such circumstances, removing that loophole and removing the danger to public safety.

Another very important aspect of this bill is the amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. The bill widens the ability of the courts to place conditions on a person where the person is found guilty but not convicted of a cruelty offence. I am sure that members on both sides of the house would speak out strongly against any cruelty to animals. The amendments this bill makes will widen the court's ability to place conditions on a person where that person is found guilty. It will give the courts more flexibility in relation to their findings whilst still being able to impose an order protecting the welfare of animals under a person's control. This is a very important step.

The bill will also enable an inspector to require a person not suspected of having committed an offence to provide evidence that may relate to the conviction of someone else or to further assist with the investigation of such an incident. This will provide very clear benefits and ensure that inspectors can access the information they believe to be relevant where they believe an offence has occurred, and it will assist in

determining who the person in charge of an animal at the particular time of an offence actually was.

The bill also addresses an issue that arose on Black Saturday by providing the capacity to appoint inspectors in an emergency situation, which is another very important measure. It will ensure that there are sufficient officers to effectively respond to emergency situations that may impact on animals and wildlife. The bill provides for the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to declare an emergency and appoint any suitably qualified person as a general inspector. This will ensure that we can appropriately respond and can assist the community in the event of an emergency such as a fire arising that would impact on animals and their welfare. These changes will allow more flexibility in the appointment of officers — for example, wildlife officers, in such a time of need.

As we have heard from previous contributors to the debate, the amendments the bill will make to the Food Act 1984 provide for the regulation of the egg standard in Victoria. Unless this bill is approved, Victorian egg producers will be required under the national egg standard to individually stamp each egg for identification, and we have a belief on this side of the house that this is overkill. The egg standard will come into force in November 2012, later this year, and will form part of the food standards code. The Food Act 1984 requires compliance with this code.

The Victorian government argued strongly that individual egg stamping was not required to trace the origin of eggs and that this was best achieved via carton labelling. Currently there is no clear mechanism under the Food Act whereby on-farm activities relating to the egg standard can be regulated, and there is no responsible authority. This bill also establishes DPI as the responsible regulatory authority, which fits under their auspice. The egg standard requires all eggs, including duck and quail eggs, to be stamped with a unique identifier for the purposes of traceability. This bill will enable the government of the day to delay the introduction of egg stamping to give the industry more time to plan and to install the necessary equipment, which we have heard before is excessive. It will also provide more flexibility around the introduction of this requirement.

In relation to the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, the bill will enhance the ability of DPI to rapidly respond to future disease outbreaks, which has many benefits, and will provide the department with further capacity to manage these better as well.

The bill reduces the period in which the incidence of unusual diseases that fit the criteria defined by the minister have to be notified to DPI from 14 days down to 5 days. This will allow the department to more rapidly analyse and respond to these unusual circumstances of death or disease in livestock. The bill will also provide the secretary of DPI with the power to obtain from local councils information relating to land and the ownership of land, including addresses and contact details, which is all-important in managing disease outbreaks. This will assist with a quicker and more efficient response to emergency situations. As we know, in the advent of an emergency situation like this, timeliness is critical to managing the outbreak.

In conclusion, these amendments are common sense and straightforward. They will be beneficial to a number of industries that operate in rural and regional Victoria, to which this government has strongly committed and has a record of supporting. For that reason, I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I start by thanking the city of Ballarat for hosting Parliament today, particularly on behalf of the people I represent in the Ivanhoe electorate, many of whom have links with Ballarat and visit here regularly. They are also pleased to know we as a Parliament have this opportunity to sit in Ballarat today. I saw my wife earlier, who hails from Bendigo but is in Ballarat today and told me that the Art Gallery of Ballarat is a place worth visiting. She was there with our daughter this morning, and I believe we are heading there later today.

Getting back to the bill, I want to comment in relation to the Food Act 1984 and some of the changes the bill makes in relation to the egg standard. Some may wonder what interest members who represent metropolitan electorates have in these matters. However, constituents in my electorate attend farmers markets at such places as La Trobe University, Hurstbridge and Abbotsford Convent. It is important that people have confidence in the quality of the produce they purchase from not just supermarkets or other large retailers but also farmers markets.

Some of the bill's amendments provide an opportunity to give peace of mind and comfort to people in the community who want to shop at farmers markets. Many of the sellers at farmers markets are small primary producers and boutique companies from regional cities in Victoria, and city people are very keen to support them in their efforts to do that. They provide

great opportunities for tourism, they provide great opportunities for the economy and they provide great opportunities for places, for example, like Delacombe in the Ballarat area, to provide other services.

At La Trobe University, just to the north of my electorate, on the border in fact, they provide opportunities to draw people in and support other businesses. Of course it remains important that the regulatory burden be reduced. Some of the amendments in the bill provide an opportunity through this two-year time frame for those producers to make the changes they need to make in relation to what is being proposed in these amendments.

I also want to touch on some other changes around livestock that have been mentioned by government members, in particular, around the Impounding of Livestock Act 1984. It is a slightly different matter, but it still relates to what we are considering in relation to an incident that happened recently in my electorate where dangerous dogs escaped from a property. An individual in my electorate whose guide dog had also escaped was chased by these dangerous dogs and killed in Bell Street, Bellfield.

It does not matter whether we are dealing with dangerous dogs or whether we are dealing with livestock in country Victoria, what is important is that people who own that livestock or who own pets in metropolitan Melbourne still have a responsibility or an obligation to meet their responsibilities to the community.

Although it is important to provide local government with further opportunities to work with the Department of Health and the Department of Primary Industries to monitor and impound livestock that get away from properties where they are being held, it is also important that we reflect on the damage that can be done by the spread of disease and the danger to motorists that can occur when livestock are not being managed or maintained appropriately by their owners. We must ensure that the various responsibilities apply to those who own livestock and those who own pets in metropolitan Melbourne. We need to make sure that those people are aware of their responsibilities to care for the livestock that is in their ownership.

There are a number of other aspects of the bill that I would like to make a contribution on, but I think at this time it is prudent to provide an opportunity for other speakers to contribute to the debate. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms McLEISH** (Seymour) — It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak about the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. It is particularly good to be speaking about a bill that has a focus on the rural areas in a rural location, and I am very pleased we are in Ballarat debating this bill today.

This bill seeks to amend five acts: the Food Act 1984, the Impounding Livestock Act 1994, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 and the Local Government Act 1989. I am going to focus on just a couple of those acts today. The first one is the Food Act, which will be amended by provisions relating to the introduction of egg standards. Through the Council of Australian Governments, which has its food regulation agreement, the egg standards have been developed, so I guess it is a national initiative. The egg standards are about primary production and process standards for eggs and egg products and, as such, it is going to impact on the producers of eggs and also the processors of eggs.

We are very aware of the dietary benefit of eggs to people, how often we should eat them and in how many different ways. Unfortunately every now and again there are outbreaks of food poisoning or salmonella. It is very important that in those instances we are able to track the source of the diseased product in the first instance. The egg standards will introduce accountability so that without too much effort we can identify where the eggs emanate or stem from to identify the source. This bill will put that regulatory framework in place for the implementation and enforcement of egg standards.

The egg standards will introduce the unique identifier that we have heard about, the egg stamp, and whilst that may sound good on one hand, there is certainly a flipside. As a government we have included a delay of two years in introducing this requirement, because not every producer is in a position to easily and readily implement it. We heard before from the member for Rodney about an egg producer whose farm produces 500 eggs a day — that is, 3500 eggs per week — and going through the cost of having their eggs stamped is onerous, costly and difficult.

On the other hand, there is a very large egg producer, Kinross Farm, based in Kinglake West in my electorate. It is an extremely large producer of eggs at its property at Kinglake West, but it also has a free range farm in Euroa, in the member for Benalla's electorate. The Kinross Group is a family-owned and managed business. It has been in business since about 1965, and it has stamped its eggs since 1971. But when we look at

the quantum of eggs produced and the automation and technology used, Kinross produces some 3.5 million per week, which is extremely different from the small to medium egg producers that we have heard about. Kinross stamps its eggs for quality, traceability and product integrity, and to differentiate its own products in the market because it is a large player. But we know there are many small to medium-size egg producers that will find it quite a costly and labour-intensive impost.

I am very pleased that through our consultation we have been able to introduce a provision that will allow a period of two years for this to be introduced. That may change further with duck and quail eggs, which also have a market and are much more specialised. I know that in many restaurants quail eggs are certainly a specialty. There may end up being a longer delay in introducing egg stamping for those producers.

I also want to talk about the impounding of animals, which is something that I am acutely aware of. Having livestock on the road is an issue of public safety. One of our family properties is on a major highway, and there is always a concern for us in making sure our livestock are contained. We have been in the unfortunate situation of having had our gates stolen and then being informed that our cattle were on a major highway. The thought of the liability you may cop certainly makes your stomach drop with fear. That situation is quite different from things that farmers have more control of that allow their animals to wander onto roads, such as poor fencing. In current cases officers can impound livestock which they find on the road, but if the livestock wander back over that broken fence, they cannot impound them. It would be very easy for the livestock to wander back onto the road after the officers have gone. What we have done is put powers of entry and impoundment in place and at the same time provided regulations for the care and management of impounded animals.

One of the other areas I want to touch on is disease control of livestock. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) already has measures in place to protect our industry. We are talking about public health risk and also the protection of our domestic and export markets, as the agricultural market is extremely important to Victoria. It is integral to this process that we have the regulations and legislation in place to strengthen DPI's powers.

This bill enhances the ability of DPI to rapidly respond to disease outbreaks, and one of the important elements is the sharing of information that will allow DPI to work better with local government authorities in different areas and obtain the contact details of property

owners. This will certainly help it do its job in terms of compliance and enforcement, but it will also help in proactive management in times of emergency events and allow it to do some planning before an emergency event. That level of proactivity will be welcomed. I am pleased to hear that those on the other side also wholeheartedly support these changes, because the agricultural industry is something that is of extreme importance not only to Victoria but to Australia.

I am proud to have come from a very long line of primary producers and to understand the importance of the industry. As the member for Seymour, it is great to be able to continue to work to support our farming generations. As I said, in my family some seven generations of farmers have been involved in primary production since the 1840s. I commend the bill to the house and congratulate the minister on bringing the bill forward.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the Primary Industries and Food Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. There are aspects of the earlier legislation that are egregious to primary producers and lower volume producers in the egg-laying industry. It is another example of how federal Labor governments have sought to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Whether one looks at the mining tax or the carbon tax, there are industry imposts which are burdensome. The member for Rodney gave the example to members of the house of a low-volume primary producer of 500 eggs who was obligated under the legislation to buy equipment to stamp those eggs.

The University of Ballarat has an egg supply, but to date there is no immediate example of an egg of this nature which has been stamped. The very good point was made by the member for Swan Hill that rather than rummaging through the rubbish bin looking at eggshells, it would be possible to go and have a look at the pack, which will have been stamped and could readily be labelled with a batch number.

The member for Brighton asked what I am going to do with the egg. I could table it with your consent, Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I want to see the egg put into *Hansard*!

**Mr THOMPSON** — I am reliant on your goodwill in that regard.

There is an important issue to consider. As chair of the parliamentary Road Safety Committee I know that last year there were some 287 deaths and multiple injuries on Victorian roads. In addition to that, a couple of years

ago some 33 000 deaths and injuries occurred on Australian roads. We might contrast that figure to the 35 000 deaths that occurred in just one calendar year on European roads in recent times.

Wandering livestock are an ever-present danger. The legislation before the house empowers council officers to impound livestock that may have been on the road at one point and have returned to private property. This is an important and practical reform that will deliver a good outcome.

The Sandringham electorate does not have many primary producers of eggs, although historically we are very strong consumers of eggs. They represent a very important source of protein. Throughout the schools and households in the Sandringham electorate, eggs make an important contribution as a staple food in the district. A number of Olympic swimmers and athletes as well as other athletes who have represented the nation have come from the Sandringham electorate and have relied on eggs as a protein source. Herb Elliott ran 1500 metres in 3.35.6 minutes in 1960 in Rome; it was a world record. He was a constituent of the Sandringham electorate.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I suggest to the member that he seems to be getting a little off track.

**Mr THOMPSON** — I remember exhilarating examples of great Australian achievements which have brought the Australian nation to its feet at different stages. It is important to understand the correlation between the food staple and its end user and to make sure that there are constructive outcomes so there is not an undue impost upon industry.

In the Sandringham electorate, to which I referred earlier, lives Nancy Bulner, a lady who participates in the Open Gardens Australia scheme. Proceeds from that activity have gone to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. She has her own garden, and in that garden there are a number of chooks. Her cottage garden and produce represents an outstanding example of local primary production within the neighbourhood. But if Nancy wished to go to Sandringham farmers market it would certainly be an undue impost on her to be required to invest in a \$30 000 egg-stamping machine. It comes back to the illustration used at the outset of this debate: it is important that in supporting industry in this state we do not kill the goose that laid the golden egg of industry — of enterprise, of production and of productivity.

In relation to some other issues, the bill will provide an emergency response capacity for the Secretary of the

Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to obtain relevant information from local councils. We are coming up to the 150th anniversary of the Torrens system, one of the great land registration systems in the world, and this will be marked later in the year. Rather than obliging inspectors to go to the land titles office to find out who the owner of a particular property might be, there is the opportunity to go to the local council, which has good records.

It is interesting that in relation to escaping livestock the responsibility may rest with the landowner, it may rest with the tenant of the property or in certain cases the livestock may be being agisted on a property and the management of that agistment process is in the hands of a third party. There will be scope under the emergency response capacity for the secretary of DPI to get information from locals. In relation to any disease control mechanisms, the timeliness of response can be a critical measure in trying to contain a disease outbreak. At different times, when there has been an outbreak of mad cow disease or other threats to the welfare of stock, the lifetime work of farmers has sometimes been buried at short notice.

The member for Benalla would have had firsthand experience with different outbreaks as a veterinary officer and inspector in determining whether it was necessary to destroy cattle or livestock. The cattle on a property may be the result of several generations of a refined breeding process required to develop stock to meet the current demands of the marketplace. It is therefore important that disease outbreaks are contained so that they do not spread to the next property. The availability of information will be an important aspect of that process.

**Mr Nardella** — Eggs-cruciating!

**Mr THOMPSON** — I will take up that egg-regious interjection suggesting that this contribution was eggs-cruciating.

**An honourable member** — Eggs-traordinary!

**Mr THOMPSON** — I am pleased to note that the interjections have now changed from eggs-cruciating to eggs-traordinary. I welcome that, because we need to understand the importance of primary production to the Victorian economy.

The port of Melbourne had a record level of exports that lifted by 9 per cent in the last period; in addition I note that there was a lift in imports of some 7 per cent. The expansion of activity in exports reflects the breadth of primary production taking place in this state right across our wheat, wool, meat and dairy industries

where we provide products to sensitive Asian markets. It is important that as a Parliament we do not impose unjust imposts upon the producers of both this state and the nation by obliging them to comply with burdens which they are not capable of meeting in a cost-effective way.

In the minister's second-reading speech he notes in relation to eggs-emptions in egg stamping that this is a power that would only be eggs-ercised in eggs-ceptional cases. The opposition has a good example that this is an eggs-ceptional case which requires a delay in implementation.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I think it would be an eggs-ceptional thing for me to say that the time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived and I am required to interrupt business.

**Mr Merlino** — I do not want to extend the contribution of the member for Sandringham, as entertaining as it was, but with your indulgence I want to thank Bridget Noonan, Sarah Cox, Hansard, IT, the attendants, security, grounds, library and all other staff on a fantastic regional sitting.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am not sure that was a point of order, but the compliments were well made and very well deserved.

## REGIONAL GROWTH FUND: BENEFITS

**Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr RYAN (Minister for Regional and Rural Development):**

That this house congratulates the Liberal-Nationals coalition government on the Regional Growth Fund, which is creating new prosperity, more job opportunities and a better quality of life in regional cities and country communities.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

## ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house now adjourns.

**Country Fire Authority: Mount Clear-Mount Helen station**

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — The issue I raise in the adjournment is for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I ask, as I have on

previous occasions, when he is going to honour his government's commitment to build a new fire station at Mount Clear-Mount Helen to properly protect the interests of this university, the wellbeing of the many businesses, schools and the residents who live in this area, who deserve to feel safe through the coming fire season.

In regard to the background to this query, the minister will remember that the Country Fire Authority (CFA) compiled a full fire service analysis of this region, which was completed in 2009. It identified that this region of the Ballarat area was not properly serviced to meet the 6-minute call-out requirement. The government of the day — —

**Mr Ryan** interjected.

**Mr HOWARD** — The minister is interjecting, but he will remember that the Labor government at the time this analysis came out committed to a new fire station — —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I am sorry to interrupt the member, but what action does he require?

**Mr HOWARD** — I am asking the minister to act to build a new fire station at Mount Clear-Mount Helen.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr HOWARD** — That is clearly the action I require. Labor did commit to a new fire station at Mount Clear-Mount Helen at the 2010 election. Subsequent to that, the coalition also, I am pleased to say, made that commitment to a new fire station.

We know that nearly two years have elapsed since that promise was made, along with, I might add, a promise to the staff at the Ballarat fire station, which I visited with the Leader of the Opposition again last week. They are very disappointed that the promise in relation to a new entry bay has still not been met, and inquiries to the minister seem to receive the feedback that the CFA determines priorities. That is the minister's response, yet ahead of the election he named these stations as two areas that would receive funding. He committed to that, but now it is not his fault; it is that the CFA is determining the priorities.

The issue really is that these commitments were made. The people at Mount Clear-Mount Helen look like going through another fire season anxious, as they have been in previous fire seasons when there have been fires in the Mount Clear-Mount Helen area. We know it is one of the 53 areas that have been identified as highly fire prone. Included as well as the university, as we

have heard, is the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority, the emergency services call centre — —

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

### **Local government: procurement practices**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — I am pleased to rise this afternoon to raise a matter for the Minister for Local Government. The action I seek from the minister is that she ensure that Victorian councils are informed of the opportunities that now exist for cost savings as a result of a procurement practice project that was completed recently. There were a number of councils involved in that project: first and foremost, our hosts here, the City of Ballarat — and I do thank the City of Ballarat for the hospitality we have been shown during this visit — and also the Rural City of Ararat, the Golden Plains Shire Council, the Hepburn Shire Council and the Pyrenees Shire Council.

I think we are all very much aware of the fiscal changes that governments — no matter whether federal, state or local — face, and it is incumbent on all of us who serve the public to ensure that we provide services in as efficient a manner as possible. Cutting costs does not have to mean cutting services. If we are to retain a strong local government sector and if we are to retain a strong regional and rural Victoria and continue to build a strong regional and rural Victoria, we need to make sure that the infrastructure and the day-to-day services that local government provides are provided in the most efficient manner.

Of course each local government across the state has an individual character; every council is slightly different. Local policies vary considerably from council to council. That is part of the benefit of good local government. I also think that councils are great adapters. Some years ago when I was on the Mornington Shire Council we conducted a review of services which looked in detail at what councils were doing. That was something that had not been done before — and I think the City of Melbourne picked up the idea shortly afterwards. The outcome of that was that in the ensuing year we were able to have effectively a zero rate increase. We maintained the services and we maintained our investment program in terms of community infrastructure, and we were able to do it without jacking the rates up.

I think this procurement project leads the way; it provides a good example. In this case five councils that were spending \$4.6 million on roads are now saving

\$630 000 a year. As I say, these ideas do work through the sector. Councils need to be made aware of them, and I urge the minister to get the word out and make sure that this project is recognised.

### **Rail: rolling stock**

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek from the minister is that he guarantee that \$188.6 million of funding for the manufacture of metropolitan trains is included in the 2013–14 and 2014–15 budgets. In a media release dated 14 November 2010 the minister, who was then the shadow minister, stated that the coalition would fund 40 metro trains over two terms, and that funding of \$200 million would be provided towards them in the government's first term — an ambitious policy, but there it is. The 2011–12 budget saw funding for only seven trains and there was not one dollar in the 2012–13 budget for additional trains. This leaves the government \$188.6 million short of its election commitment of \$200 million in funding in this term of government.

The reason I am concerned about the number of new metro trains is that there are two brilliant companies in my electorate, Alstom and UGL Rail, which could manufacture these trains to the highest standard. In fact Alstom received the contract for the first seven trains, while UGL Rail worked on a previous contract for 19 X'trapolis train sets. These companies are obviously made up of very skilled workers who take pride in what they do and work hard to get the job done. If the minister does fulfil his election commitment, I urge him to remember the outstanding workforces and the commitment of both companies.

Regional Victorian manufacturers need the opportunity to bid for major contracts, and that includes government contracts. At a time when we have seen manufacturing job losses in regional Victoria, including in my electorate of Ballarat West, I call on the Minister for Public Transport to commit to honouring his government's funding commitment of \$200 million for new trains in this term of government.

### **Roads: western Victoria**

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Roads. I call on the minister to continue the government's efforts to fix flood-affected roads and deliver new roads and road upgrades in western Victoria — something I am sure that opposition members are very aware of, because looking across the

chamber I see that many of them are already out there on the roads. I will talk about that a little bit later.

However, we need to reflect on some difficult years post flood. We had floods in December 2010 and January 2011 across Victoria. We had floods in March and February 2012 around Shepparton and Benalla, and in June 2012 we had floods in Gippsland. In western Victoria the Grampians were particularly hard hit by those floods and the damage that occurred. As the Minister for Tourism and Major Events will know, the effects of the floods in the Grampians have not just been on tourism but also on the daily lives of residents of the area.

Roads are vital for communication in country Victoria, both for moving produce to markets and for moving inputs onto farms to allow that production to occur. After floods the edges of roads become a problem. A gutter appears on the edge that washes roads away. Road shoulders become damaged, and vehicles stray off those because the road shoulders are soft. The tiny cracks in the bitumen that were not a problem during the drought became potholes as soon as traffic was allowed back on the roads after the floods. Often VicRoads and other authorities such as local governments that do these repairs have to repair the roads twice. The potholes are causing a hazard; they are repaired, but the soil is still wet underneath. Inevitably you get subsidence and other movement and the repairs have to be done again. This is a huge task for Victoria to face.

An example in my electorate was some serious heavy rain that occurred during February 2010. The Calder Highway at Red Cliffs took days to clear. The old sewerage farm that was nearby meant that we were able to pump water off the road and put it in the old evaporation basins. However, during that time the highway remained open. Trucks used it, cars used it and the road virtually collapsed and disintegrated, and it had to be repaired. This is the magnitude of the task that Victoria faces. I call on the Minister for Roads to continue the government's efforts to fix flood-affected roads and deliver new roads and road upgrades, particularly in western Victoria.

### **Fire services: funding**

**Mr MERLINO** (Monbulk) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The action I seek is that the minister outline in detail the impact on each and every Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) region in the state of the \$60 million cut to our firefighting services. This secret Baillieu government review of our

firefighting services came to light in an article in yesterday's *Age*, and it outlines a \$66 million cut overall. There is a \$41 million cut for the CFA, which is just under 10 per cent of its budget; and a \$25 million cut for the MFB. You simply cannot take \$66 million out of our firefighting capability and not impact on community safety. These are not extravagant organisations. Once the report got out, the Deputy Premier was forced to concede that the figure of \$66 million was correct. He is quoted in the article as having said:

There will be reductions for the CFA and MFB, they will be in the order of figures that are being talked about, that is so.

He then went on to claim that this will not impact on front-line services. We did not get a guarantee from the Premier during question time today, so we have a situation where the Deputy Premier concedes that the figure in the report is correct but that the detail contained in the report is not. The article in the *Age* claimed that the report includes cost savings such as fewer firefighters on duty for each shift and at night; is that correct or not?

It has also been revealed that the recruitment of 342 additional firefighters, one of the key recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, will be delayed. In this critical recommendation the royal commission stressed the need for a significant addition to the number of firefighters. That recommendation of the royal commission will not be delivered by the end of this term; it will now not be delivered by the end of the following term, but it will be delivered sometime in 2018–19. That is when it is going to be delivered. The current program goes to 2016. The statement made yesterday was that it will be a few years beyond that, so the full implementation of the recommendations of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires royal commission will be almost a decade late. The minister needs to come into this chamber and explain how these cuts will impact on each and every region through our CFA and MFB.

### **Wind farms: government policy**

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — The action I seek this afternoon is for the Minister for Energy and Resources to come to my electorate to give an update to constituents on the status of wind farms and renewable energy. In my electorate of South Barwon, the Friends of the Earth, with the help and backing of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, have been talking a lot of hot air, revealing once again that distorting the truth is so much easier than providing the

community with facts. Last month Leigh Ewbank, who is the Friends of the Earth spokesperson, wrote an op-ed piece in the *Geelong Advertiser* with a whole bunch of factually incorrect misinformation, using alarmist and sensationalist language.

After 11 long years of the former Labor government, where Labor made planning decisions on a whim, the coalition went to the election with a policy that was clear and precise on wind farms. When the coalition government was elected, it delivered on its promise to ensure that communities with wind farms were protected. We knew that these communities welcomed our new planning amendments because we asked them, we listened to them and we worked with them to ensure that they were protected.

According to Leigh Ewbank and the Friends of the Earth, they think communities do not deserve a voice. They do not believe landowners should be able to voice their concerns or to object in relation to where wind farms should be allowed in their communities. When I read Leigh Ewbank's comments, I was horrified, as were many constituents in my electorate who called me and spoke to me. An environmental group thinks community members should have no opinion and no say about what happens in their backyards. Members of Friends of the Earth have no credibility, no common sense and are as empty as the half-baked stunts they concoct down at the pub after one too many.

Let me put some facts about the coalition's commitment to practical support for renewable energy. Our comprehensive wind farm policy that was taken to the last election had been through a rigorous process of review, and its implementation ensures that we will continue to deliver on our election commitments and ensure communities have a say. Our policies provide greater clarity and certainty in relation to the consideration of wind energy facilities. The government will continue to work with industry in support of wind energy generation.

Claims that Victoria's wind farm investment has been put on hold are not true. There are more than 1000 wind turbines that have been permitted but have yet to be built. These permits are in addition to more than 250 wind turbines already operating and a further 170 turbines under construction. Developers still have the opportunity to begin construction of these approved facilities. If members of Friends of the Earth want to blame someone, they should focus on their Labor mates in Canberra. The Rudd and Gillard governments' chronic incompetence and mismanagement of the renewable energy scheme have made it difficult for permitted wind farms to get finance.

### Roads: Kilmore-Wallan bypass

**Mr DONNELLAN** (Narre Warren North) — My matter is for the Minister for Roads. The action I seek, which is a simple request, is for the minister to meet with the Kilmore-Wallan bypass group. Its members have a very simple request. They want to tell the minister that they want a bypass around Wallan and Kilmore.

On 18 August I attended a rally in the town. You could hear the drums and smell the anger with the government in the air. Along with Candy Broad, an upper house member for Northern Victoria Region, and my son I attended the rally, but there was not a Liberal Party member in sight. The community came out in droves, but unfortunately there was not a Liberal member anywhere — not the local member for Seymour, not an upper house member for Northern Victoria Region, not the Minister for Roads. They disappeared off the face of the earth.

These people have not seen the minister since the last election, and they are very keen to have him back so that he can listen. We attended and we listened, but it was very obvious that the Liberal Party had no interest in doing so. The only bypass they can be certain of here is that this government will bypass their views and keep doing so. The last time the government was represented in Kilmore it promised a northern bypass. The Premier and the Minister for Roads said they would deliver, but that is not what they have delivered to date; they have delivered very little. They are delivering eastern options which will tear the history out of Kilmore. The bypass will go straight through the sporting reserve, the equine reserve and Monument Hill. There are still no plans for the northern bypass.

This community knows when its views are being bypassed. I congratulate Lawrie Boyd, Wendy Law, Brian Mawhinney and Kevin Butler for putting on a very good rally. They even changed the date of the rally so members could attend. They moved it so that it would not take place during the break between parliamentary sitting periods to ensure that members of the Liberal Party could attend. But those members were nowhere to be seen; they were hiding in their holes and would not come out to meet the public. People know they will not get what they need from this government.

What did the government do after the rally? It sent the VicRoads manager to answer questions. Government members were not even brave enough to respond to the questions that the community demanded answers to. We know there were 1640 people from Kilmore and the surrounding areas who signed a petition asking for a

bypass of the two towns. They want the bypass that the government promised. The Premier and the roads minister both promised it, and they are failing to deliver it.

### Cycling: National Road Series

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — I rise today to call on the Minister for Sport and Recreation to support the 2012 women's National Road Series, a magnificent three-day cycling event in Ballarat. The Minister for Sport and Recreation is well aware of the need for the state government to support events in regional Victoria. As the minister's own seat is Lowan, the largest state electorate, he would have many opportunities to see how important local sport and major events are to regional areas.

This year's women's National Road Series will be held from 19 to 21 October. With the support of the state government and a positive response from the minister we can continue the coalition government's work of increasing regional exposure and encouraging tourism in the regions, which brings employment to these great towns and cities. It is a shame that with such a major event coming to town the members opposite who pretend to represent the area of Ballarat have failed to talk about the positive things that are showcasing Ballarat. I know the minister is excited about promoting healthy and active communities, and I will have the pleasure of again joining him in Ballarat in October to talk about his favourite topic — getting more people more active more often.

It is important to get the message out to schools, community groups and other agencies in regional towns that sport is one of the best preventive medicines. Joining a football club, a netball club, a local tennis club or a local walking club are all ways for local people to improve their health. Regional towns need sport to prevent social isolation and mental health issues and to reduce the risk of obesity, cancer and heart disease. Regional sports clubs are great meeting places for educating the community on the dangers of drink driving and speeding and the effects of bullying.

We may never truly understand the power of local sports and we may never be able to thank the volunteers enough for their work and commitment to ensure that local, regional and national sports continue. And we may never get a real perspective of how important national events are for cities like Ballarat. This event will support local business and send positive messages about sport and its benefits to people in communities like Creswick, Clunes, Skipton, Ballan, Wendouree and Buninyong.

I call on the minister to support this event and show regional Victorian communities that the coalition will continue to support them and support increased participation by women in sport to improve health outcomes. I am sure the Minister for Health, David Davis, will also support these regional sporting events that improve local communities' health outcomes.

### **Country Fire Authority: Golden Square and Kangaroo Flat stations**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and the action I seek is that he give an undertaking to the people of Golden Square and Kangaroo Flat in Bendigo West that the two new CFA (Country Fire Authority) stations committed to by the former government prior to the last election and announced by the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services will be built as planned within the same time lines proposed now that The Nationals have taken an axe and slashed \$41 million from the CFA budget. Even though The Nationals do not think that the CFA is a priority and are happy to slash the CFA budget, the residents of Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square should not be disadvantaged as a result.

This week we had the revelation that the government will slash \$41 million from the CFA budget, a decision it hoped to keep secret from the public and the thousands of volunteers who make up the CFA. The secret is out! These leaked CFA documents also reveal that the government wants to reduce the funding for fire spotting towers, which are used to identify where many major fires break out. The CFA is also expected to cut back on fuel, printing, training, uniforms and equipment for trainee firefighters. Now a big question hangs over the building of proposed new fire stations at Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square.

Not only is this happening but the Leader of The Nationals, who is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, has acknowledged that there will be delays in the creation of 342 new CFA positions. While the Leader of The Nationals continues his delusion that this massive cut will not impact on the delivery of front-line services, the CFA volunteers across my electorate know differently and are shocked and horrified that their safety will be put at risk.

Black Saturday is still on people's minds in Bendigo. The fires on that day came within 2 kilometres of the Bendigo CBD. To this day the Bendigo Bushfire Action Group still exists, providing support to those who were affected by the fires on that tragic and horrific day. They have not forgotten, the community

has not forgotten, but the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has forgotten. The CFA crews and hundreds of volunteers who fought fires in Bendigo and Redesdale will never forget. How can the Bendigo West electorate have any confidence in this government when it puts communities at risk and under threat, especially as we head into what is potentially going to be a horrendous fire season?

It beggars belief that The Nationals have allowed these massive cuts to the CFA to happen. It is imperative for the safety of the people of Bendigo West and the greater Bendigo region that they get the protection they deserve. That means that the construction of the two new fire stations at Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square should not be delayed or postponed just because the Minister for Police and Emergency Services continues to let down rural and regional Victoria and has made one of the dumbest decisions of his political career — to cut \$41 million from our wonderful CFA.

### **Wangaratta Turf Club: jockey facilities**

**Mr McCURDY** (Murray Valley) — I rise to make a request to the Minister for Racing, who is a fine minister. The action I seek is that Wangaratta Turf Club and other rural and regional turf clubs receive assistance to upgrade their jockey rooms, particularly for female jockeys.

Racing has a strong and proud history in regional Victoria, and in Wangaratta it has taken place over many years, having started in 1845. Like many regional cities we find we rely heavily on our racing industry, and we know how important it is to our economy. The Minister for Racing is aware of how important it is to our economy and supports it well. The CEO of Wangaratta Turf Club, Paul Hoysted, and the committee do a wonderful job and continue to work with our government to make sure that they get better outcomes for not just Wangaratta but other regions as well.

In 1985 Wangaratta Turf Club was one of the first country clubs invited to race on Melbourne Cup Day. The club has been a bit of a mover and shaker over the years, and there has been a bonanza for this club, as huge crowds have attended those events. Many people stay on for the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues, but will not address that issue today.

The Wangaratta Cup is raced over 2000 metres, and the event is over 150 years old. It is entrenched in history, and the racing industry in north-eastern Victoria contributes approximately \$32 million each year to the economy, employing over 500 locals. The minister

understands this, and we are very grateful that he continues to support our community.

But times have changed. With the addition of many females to the jockey ranks, particularly over the past decade, the club has advised me there is a need to provide better facilities because a greater percentage of jockeys are female. Today on average there are 12 to 15 female jockeys at each race meeting. A lot of female apprentice jockeys becoming involved in the industry, and a lot of them are riding at regional venues.

An improvement to the current facilities will make them more comfortable for female jockeys at Wangaratta Turf Club and other regional and rural turf clubs around the state. They will not have to wait outside with their bags and belongings; they will have the space to prepare for their events and they will be able to securely leave their items when they are racing. A lot of female apprentice jockeys are young; some are only 17 years old. This is an industry that we want to grow. We want to ensure that female jockeys have adequate facilities in our turf clubs. On behalf of Wangaratta and other regional turf clubs I request this from the minister.

### Responses

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Minister for Racing) — The member for Murray Valley raised an important issue. The coalition strongly supports country racing. That is quite different to the previous Labor government, which closed country racetracks — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order!

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — I was at Burrumbeet yesterday morning to provide \$20 000 for new horse stalls. I was at training this morning with Darren Weir at Ballarat to announce some funding to assist the Ballarat Turf Club to promote its Gold Nugget race day on 23 September, which will be another great race day for Ballarat.

The member for Murray Valley raised the need to upgrade jockey facilities at Wangaratta and other country tracks to better cater for the increasing number of female jockeys. Female jockeys are certainly making a growing impression in our racing industry, as has been demonstrated by the Payne girls, who have done a terrific job, and also Kate Mallyon, Nikita McLean, Jackie Beriman and Clare Lindop. They have done a terrific job as jockeys. I am advised that 50 per cent of the 2012 apprenticeship jockey intake is female, so it is important that we provide better facilities for female jockeys at our country tracks.

I am pleased to advise the member for Murray Valley that the Baillieu government has partnered with Racing Victoria and five country clubs to upgrade their jockey rooms. This funding will provide such things as improved heating and cooling, additional showers, improved hot-water supplies, large storage areas and specific facilities for more female jockeys. This \$235 000 project will be shared, with \$117 000 coming from the coalition government as it continues to put money back into country racing; the other half will be shared between Country Racing Victoria, Racing Victoria and the country clubs.

I am pleased to advise the member for Murray Valley that one of the clubs to benefit from the program will be the Wangaratta Turf Club, which is a very good turf club. It will receive \$55 000. The member for Polwarth will be pleased to hear that Terang and District Racing Club will receive \$12 000. Donald-Wimmera Racing Club will receive \$26 000, Echuca Racing Club will receive \$38 000 and Swan Hill Jockey Club will receive \$104 000 under this program. This funding will enable the upgrade of facilities for jockeys, particularly the increasing number of female jockeys who are doing a fantastic job in the racing industry. The racing industry encourages the participation of females across all aspects of the sport. Racing is a \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion industry across Victoria, involving 70 000 jobs.

I am pleased that we are seeing many more successful female jockeys. I am pleased that the Baillieu government has been able to partner with Racing Victoria and country clubs to provide better facilities for all jockeys, and in particular female jockeys.

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — The member for Ballarat East raised an issue in relation to a new fire station for Mount Clear-Mount Helen. As the member has identified, it was indicated back in 2009 that this facility would need to be built. Unfortunately the former Labor government did not build it. It committed to build it. It is a similar story to that which we see as we go around Victoria: the former Labor government committed to doing this and doing that across a variety of sectors but in actual fact too often had no money allocated to actually follow through on its commitments, so we had to pick up the pieces.

I freely acknowledge that we have undertaken to build this fire station. We will build this fire station for Mount Clear-Mount Helen. I can tell the member that the process in relation to the acquisition of land for the station that will satisfy the need is well under way and progressing. I am very confident that we will be able to

make an announcement in the not-too-distant future that I am sure will be welcomed by the member and his constituents, but there is an ongoing negotiation process. However, I renew the commitment we have made to build this facility. We will do it. As to the issues around the Ballarat city fire station — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr RYAN** — The Ballarat East fire station, rather. A project has commenced to update this heritage-listed station. That project is under way. The briefing and the concept design preparations have been undertaken, and this has all been done in consultation with the region and the brigade. Again, I am very confident in saying to the member that I think this very worthy project will proceed and that I will be able to make some announcements about this in a timely manner. I can assure him that we are very conscious of the necessity for this to be undertaken, and it will be undertaken.

The member for Bendigo West has raised a situation in regard to fire stations at Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square. As I stand here now, I do not have the information regarding those two stations, but I undertake to the member that I will obtain that information and convey it to her. As she knows, we have committed to the construction or renovation of 250 fire stations in our first term of government. We intend to see that fulfilled. As I stand here now, I do not know whether the two stations to which the member referred are included in the 250, but I will find out and advise her, again, in a very timely manner.

The member for Monbulk has raised a number of issues. This is a good time to deal with them, because this is the weekly scaremongering by the member for Monbulk on issues about which he is typically poorly informed. This is an opportunity to deal with those issues. Firstly, the member has expressed concern about the budget arrangements for both the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. As the member well knows, Mick Bourke, on behalf of the CFA, and Nick Easy, on behalf of the MFB, have made it very clear that what is proposed here will not impact upon front-line service delivery. They have made those commitments respectively, extensively and very publicly. So why the member should suggest, at least by implication, that these two men are not to be believed is — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Monbulk!

**Mr RYAN** — Those respected gentlemen have made the commitments referred to very clearly and publicly over the past 24 hours, and I have every confidence in the judgement of each of them. They are both extraordinarily capable, and I respect the points of view they have put forward.

I might say that the proposals in relation to these measures are appropriate and, again, timely. They deal with issues that should be the focus of attention of anybody in circumstances where things are tight in terms of money. You can make savings by being more efficient and by doing what needs to be done for service delivery in a manner which is appropriate to the needs of an organisation. In each instance the CFA chief executive officer, Mick Bourke, had gone through the documents which went to Northern Grampians shire line by line and indicated clearly that those measures will not have any impact upon front-line service delivery. I might also say that this latest bout of scaremongering — —

**Ms Green** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Yan Yean has been interrupting incessantly. I ask that she cease doing so.

**Mr RYAN** — It has been put forward in circumstances where only weeks ago the implementation report of Neil Comrie, the bushfires royal commission implementation monitor, was tabled. He made it very clear in the course of his report. At page 67 the report states:

There is clear evidence that Victoria is now substantially better prepared on a regular basis to respond to bushfire risk than at the time of Black Saturday.

He has made it very clear that the state at the moment is much better prepared than it was on Black Saturday. Furthermore, what is also apparent is that the member continues to overlook the fact that the budget for the CFA is the second largest ever in its history — surpassed only by last year's. We have done much more than the former Labor government ever did for the CFA. That is a fact that the member also chooses to ignore.

There is another matter that the member mentioned, and I have what I believe is an accurate transcript of what he said on ABC radio yesterday:

... one of the cornerstone recommendations of the bushfires royal commission was the recruitment of an additional 342 firefighters.

I now ask the member to produce the recommendation from the bushfires royal commission report which says as much. I think what he is confusing it with is the enterprise bargaining agreement which was negotiated before we came to government with Peter Marshall and his union mates. That is what he is confusing it with. Understandably he is a bit revved up about it, and he has got it wrong — yet another thing.

I might say that this is on top of last week's bit of scaremongering about 22 CFA trucks not being registered. Of course, as we know, it was 2004 when the first of those was unregistered. The next one was 2008, and there were three more in 2010, before the election. The simple fact is, as we know, there was a match of the databases of VicRoads and the CFA, and it turned out there were 22 trucks that were not registered, and yet we had this crying wolf on behalf of the member for Monbulk, aided and abetted again by Peter Marshall, not surprisingly. I can tell the house today that 20 of the trucks are registered, and 2 of them are having minor repairs and will be back in action soon. This is just another instance of the scaremongering being undertaken by the member for Monbulk.

What the member needs to do is concentrate on providing proper assistance and support to this great organisation, the CFA, instead of scaremongering and trying to get people to believe there is going to be some sort of derogation of the front-line capacity of either the CFA or the MFB. The member for Monbulk should have enough responsibility to ensure that he does not make these allegations, which quite clearly are wrong. They are wrong because, as has been amply demonstrated by the CEOs of both the CFA and the MFB, they will not be detracting from the front-line performance of their great organisations.

We as a government have funded the CFA in a manner that has never been known before, and we will do so to ensure that its needs are met on a continual basis, because we are very aware of the recommendations that were made by that commission. Unlike the former government, we have committed to making sure that we implement them. Unlike the former government, which walked away from several of those recommendations, we undertook to implement them, and by hell we will!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The level of interjections is — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Eltham is being disrespectful to the Chair.

**Mr Herbert** — Sorry.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Transport to respond to the member for Mildura, the member for Ballarat West and the member for Narre Warren North.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I also warn government members about interjecting inappropriately while the Chair is speaking.

**Mr MULDER** (Minister for Public Transport) — The member for Narre Warren North raised an issue with me in relation to the Kilmore-Wallan bypass, the Wallan-Kilmore Bypass Group, and its request for consideration to be given to alternative routes. I can inform the member for Narre Warren North that the group wrote to me to ask for consideration to be given in relation to a proposed route that it would like to see as part of the overall scoping of that particular project. I have written back and advised the group that that will take place, and I have instructed VicRoads to conduct the modelling for the route that the group proposed.

It is no secret that this project is the single biggest investment that the Kilmore-Wallan community has ever seen. That project is badly needed to protect the amenity of that community. One only has to stand in the main street of Kilmore with the trucks roaring through to understand the impact they have had on the town and will continue to have going forward until we deliver the Kilmore-Wallan bypass — and we will deliver it.

There was an alternative proposal put forward for Kilmore-Wallan, and that was a link road that took trucks down the street and ran them straight past a school. It is no secret either that the former member for Seymour was escorted out of office by the Kilmore-Wallan community for trying to shove that proposal down its throat, supported by the former Minister for Roads and Ports. The current member for Seymour has faced the community, she has met with the community on a regular basis, and she will continue to meet with it until all those options are explored. There will be a panel hearing, and the entire community will have every right to have the input it desires as part of the government delivering what is an extremely important project for Kilmore-Wallan. It is the single biggest investment that community has seen, and the member for Seymour is delivering that project for her community. I congratulate her on that.

The member for Ballarat West raised a query and concern in relation to the seven new X'trapolis trains, basically claiming that the money had not been allocated. I assure the member for Ballarat West that she is totally wrong. The \$222 million has been allocated for that project. It involves the purchase of the seven new trains, it involves stabling for those new trains and it also involves some funding to develop the business case for the 33 new trains that make up the balance of our commitment to the people of Victoria to deliver 40 new trains as part and parcel of our election platform. There are 33 to come. As I say, the business case is currently being developed for those trains, and we look forward to delivering those for the people of Victoria.

As the member for Ballarat West would no doubt be aware, there are 30 new V/Locity cars currently being negotiated. We believe we will get more than 30, but at this point in time there are negotiations for around 30. A number of those railcars will service Ballarat once the regional rail link project is delivered. We are going to open Talbot station. There is a new passing loop being constructed at Ballan, once again providing improved reliability on the Ballarat line, and it is my role to provide facilities and accommodation at Ballarat station for the Victoria Police protective services officers. It is not a bad package for Ballarat when you look at it. It is a great package for Ballarat, particularly when you look at our regional rail link project mark II. That includes trains, signalling and also grade separation on Anderson Road, which is fully funded. It is a rail project with trains, and we will deliver that for the people of Ballarat.

The member for Mildura raised an issue with me in relation to the major rain and flood events across Victoria and the action the government has taken in relation to Victorian roads in particular, and I advise the member for Mildura that the 2011–12 budget included \$121.5 million to repair flood damage to arterial roads. I know the member for Ripon would understand that \$121.5 million would build one hell of a pothole which a cow could possibly fall into. Funding for repairs of flood-affected roads in western Victoria has included \$8.3 million spent on repairs to Northern Grampians Road, which experienced eight landslips and issues with six individual bridge structures, and \$5.8 million spent on road reconstruction in Silverband Road in the Grampians, \$2 million of it on major road reconstruction of the Murray Valley Highway south of Kerang.

So far the government has spent around \$115 million on flood recovery. Sixty-five sections of arterial road and more than 219 municipal roads have been

reopened. Five arterial roads and 45 local roads have remained closed due to flood damage. Ongoing assessment of flood-damaged roads will continue. I believe members on both sides of the house understand that if we were not paying \$1.8 million per day for the Holding charge on the desalination plant, if we did not have to pay for the myki mess that was left behind and if we did not have to find the money for the regional rail link, we could possibly do a lot more out there in relation to roads and road projects.

The 2012–13 budget provides \$35.5 million for construction of the Ballarat West link road. I know the people of Ballarat were talking to industry leaders out there today. They said, 'Boy, you have a lot on your plate in Ballarat'. Yes, we have. If you look at the rail and road projects, we certainly do, because we are also doing a lot of work on the Ballarat-Burrumbeet Road and stage 1 of the Ballarat West link road, as I said. There is also the Ballarat-Buninyong Road, and the list goes on and on, not to mention a whole range of projects in relation to the safer roads infrastructure program funded out of the Transport Accident Commission.

As the member for Mildura would understand, an enormous amount of money is going into roads in regional Victoria and into public transport, particularly here in Ballarat. What a great outcome. We are building new trains here. We have new V/Locity trains being built. Talbot station is opening. There is the Ballan crossing loop. We also have protective services officers on the way. No wonder the Ballarat community is embracing our investment in public transport and will continue to do so.

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I am very pleased to respond to the adjournment matter raised by the member for South Barwon. The member for South Barwon is absolutely right: the coalition government has done an enormous amount to promote the take-up of renewable and low-emission energy in Victoria. We doubled funding from \$41 million to \$82 million for the low-emission energy technology program. We have seen \$6 million go into organic thin-film solar technology. We have seen \$1 million for the RayGen ultra-efficient solar power system. We have seen money go towards wind power at Port Fairy. We have seen money go towards geothermal. We have been putting our money where our mouth is, unlike members opposite.

Members opposite talked big about large-scale solar, saying they were going to support the Mallee TRUenergy Solar Park project but then had no money for it. There were doughnuts in the piggybank when we

got into office. It was another false promise. When the federal government twice failed to support this Victorian project, what did we hear from members opposite? Deathly silence. Labor first, Victorians second. Those opposite would not criticise their federal masters for not supporting a terrific Victorian large-scale solar project.

We are delighted this week to acknowledge that Meridian Energy has announced it is commencing construction of the Mount Mercer wind farm near Ballarat, which will have a capacity of 131 megawatts. There has been a bit of talk about wind energy and why it has not been promoted, so I thought I would look to those companies that are investing in wind energy to give us some real answers. I refer to an article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 18 March 2011, which states:

Investment in wind energy has stalled despite the federal government's ambitious target of securing 20 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2020. The reason for this slump is the market for renewable energy certificates.

...

... The REC market slumped last year, however, because a flood of certificates created from rooftop solar systems, which were given generous subsidies, created a boom in installation.

That has nothing to do with what members opposite claim. The companies themselves are saying it is the federal government's bungling of the renewable energy certificates scheme which has made the market uneconomic. The article goes on to state that even groups like Pacific Hydro — which I am sure is well known to members opposite; it is not exactly known as a coalition-friendly firm:

... had projects that were technically ready to be developed but needed a profitable REC contract to go ahead, general manager Lane Crockett said.

Clearly some of the issues have related to the federal government's bungling.

There is one other issue to refer to in the time allowed, and that is that recently we have seen, as the member for South Barwon knows, a group called Friends of the Earth, which is associated with the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, going out and spreading nonsense in his electorate, telling lies — telling untruths — and I think it is time to nail some of these lies. First of all, let us have a little bit — —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! Members are not to use the word 'lies'.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — A deliberate untruth, Deputy Speaker. First of all, let us look at who these Labor-affiliated unions are associating themselves with.

Friends of the Earth supports —

this is from its website —

... land redistribution to landless and near-landless rural people ...

Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that such a policy would have gone down well in Soviet Russia or maybe Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. This is the sort of organisation that wants to take land off farmers, its members are people that the Labor Party and the unions are associating themselves with. Their most recent claim to fame was that last week they circulated a fake press release, and RMIT University journalism academic Alex Wake said that producing fake press releases was 'despicable'.

What we have is an extremist group that would not know the truth if it ran over it, and it has been aligning itself with the Labor Party and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, feeding this information and spreading deliberate untruths. The people of Victoria need to know when they are being sold a pup; they are being sold a pup, and that is what members opposite are trying to do.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I rise to respond to a matter raised tonight by the member for Gembrook, a hardworking parliamentarian and an active member of his community, who was highlighting the important matter of events in country Victoria.

I am proud to say the Victorian government has delivered a number of significant sporting events right across Victoria, including in Ballarat. The Victorian coalition government has \$2.4 million in this year's budget to assist in delivering significant sporting events right across Victoria. As we know, sport plays a vital role in Victorian communities. That is why we as a government are keen to invest in these types of events to see the best talent and the best facilities and more importantly to inspire other athletes to get involved in sport and recreation.

That is why I am pleased to announce to the member for Gembrook and other members in the Parliament, particularly the members for Ballarat East and Ballarat West, that tonight we will be contributing \$5000 from the significant sporting events funding to the women's National Road Series cycling event, which will be held over three days here in late October. This event

provides another opportunity to showcase not only the local sports facilities but the talent and to get more people inspired in sport and recreation.

This is not the only event we are supporting. We supported with \$5000 the 2012 Oceania badminton championships held in February this year. We provided \$30 000 for the Australian Masters Rowing Championships held in May this year. Ballarat has also just finished hosting the 21/U International Netball Series, which was a fantastic event, with the support of \$60 000 from this government, and the Constellation Cup. We are also supporting the 2014 FISA World Rowing Masters regatta in Ballarat, which will attract 2800 participants from approximately 30 countries. So again we are doing a lot for country Victoria. Right across Victoria we are supporting a lot of these country events.

**Mrs POWELL** (Minister for Local Government) — The member for Mornington has raised with me the need to ensure that all councils in Victoria are informed of the recent Procurement in Practice project, which involves Ballarat City Council as well as the four other neighbouring councils of Ararat, Golden Plains, Hepburn and Pyrenees. Those councils have used this model to gain a huge amount of savings for their communities. The five councils were spending collectively in excess of \$4.6 million annually to reseal their bitumen roads; they are now going to get \$630 000 a year each in savings, which means their communities are now going to have huge savings. Those councils won the national Procurement Australia collaboration and innovation in procurement award.

I will say to the member that the Department of Planning and Community Development, which covers the area of local government, is playing a key role in working with the councils and advertising what they have done and how they have done it. We have templates and guidelines ready to show other councils, and we are putting documentation on our website so other councils can have a look at how those councils are dealing with the issue. We all know it is important in these tough times to make sure that councils are able to reduce their reliance on rates and make it easier for families.

I assure the member for Mornington that the Procurement in Practice project will be highlighted and advertised throughout local government, so that all councils can learn a lot of lessons from these five municipalities. I congratulate Ballarat City Council on being the lead council, and I also congratulate the four neighbouring councils.

### **Ballarat: regional sitting**

**Mr McINTOSH** (Minister for Corrections) (*By leave*) — On behalf of all members of the house I would like to thank all the people who have been involved in this wonderful sitting. It is great to visit Ballarat. For me it has been a very pleasant two days up here, and I am sure I speak on behalf of everybody. I would like to mention specifically the clerks, Hansard staff, attendants and protective services officers, many of whom have come up from Melbourne but some of whom are based locally.

Members of Victoria Police were out there during the course of the day, and I have also seen people from maintenance, IT and other Parliamentary Services units. I also wish to mention specifically Bridget Noonan, Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms, who has done an outstanding job.

I had the opportunity of touring the facility, and on behalf of all members I express my profound thanks to the University of Ballarat and the courteous members of staff who have been very helpful over the last couple days that I have been here.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The house is now adjourned.

**House adjourned 5.02 pm.**



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