

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 17 August 2011

(Extract from book 11)

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. M. Davis, Mr P. R. Davis, Mr Hall, Ms Lovell, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Scheffer.

Procedures Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. M. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney

Legislative Council standing committees

Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

Economy and Infrastructure References Committee — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, *Mr Tarlamis, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Environment and Planning References Committee — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

Legal and Social Issues References Committee — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

* *Inquiry into Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2011*

Participating member

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Holding, Mr McIntosh, Dr Naphine and Mr Walsh.

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Leane, Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Battin and Mr McCurdy.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Peulich. (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess, Mr Foley, Mr Noonan and Mr Shaw.

Education and Training Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elasmr and Ms Tierney. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Ms Miller and Mr Southwick.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis. (*Assembly*): Ms Ryall and Mrs Victoria.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch. (*Assembly*): Mr Bull, Ms Duncan, Mr Pandazopoulos and Ms Wreford.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Coote and Ms Crozier. (*Assembly*): Mrs Bauer, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McGuire and Mr Wakeling.

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

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich. (*Assembly*): Mr Carbines, Ms Garrett, Mr Newton-Brown and Mr Northe.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Ondarchie. (*Assembly*): Ms Graley, Ms Hutchins and Ms McLeish.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Mr P. Davis, Mr O'Brien and Mr Pakula. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Hennessey, Mr Morris and Mr Scott.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elsbury. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr Perera, Mr Tilley and Mr Thompson.

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

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

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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Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

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Wednesday, 17 August 2011

The **PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson)** took the chair at 9.32 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Children: Take a Break program

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that funding for the Take a Break occasional child-care program, which is provided at more than 220 neighbourhood houses and community centres across Victoria, will cease after 31 December 2011.

The Take a Break occasional child-care program allows parents and guardians to participate in activities including employment, study, recreational classes and voluntary community activities while their children socialise and interact with other children in an early learning environment.

Full funding for the program was provided by the previous state Labor government but will not be continued by the Baillieu government beyond December 2011.

The cut to funding will mean that families across Victoria will be unable to access affordable, community-based occasional child care to undertake tasks that benefit the family and allow them to take a break.

The petitioners therefore request that the Baillieu government reinstate funding for the Take a Break occasional child-care program.

By Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan)
(121 signatures).

Laid on table.

Kindergartens: funding

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council:

1. Victoria's current baby boom and the COAG agreement to increase kinder hours for all four-year-olds from 10 to 15 hours will mean that many more kindergarten places will be required; and
2. the Baillieu government's commitment of only \$15 million over four years will be unable to provide the necessary expansion of kindergarten facilities.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria urgently call on the Baillieu government to address this funding shortfall and significantly increase the level of funding available to expand Victoria's kindergartens.

By Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan)
(12 signatures).

Laid on table.

Rail: Laburnum service

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the implications of the new train timetable on the Belgrave-Lilydale line that has dramatically reduced the services at Laburnum station with fewer services to the city from 7.30–9.00 a.m. as more trains run express through the station. This is causing inconvenience to commuters.

The petitioners therefore request the reintroduction of express services that stop at Laburnum station.

By Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan)
(69 signatures).

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Acting Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Biotechnology in Victoria: the Public Sector's Investment, August 2011.

Developing Cycling as a Safe and Appealing Mode of Transport, August 2011.

Municipal Association of Victoria Insurance — Report, 2009–10.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 79.

Surveyor-General — Report on the Administration of the Survey Co-ordination Act 1958, 2010–11.

Victorian Broiler Industry Negotiation Committee — Minister's report of receipt of 2010–11 report.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mrs Peulich having given notice of motion:

The PRESIDENT — Order! I assume the attendant will take away Mrs Peulich's BlackBerry.

Mrs PEULICH — The notice has been emailed to the Acting Clerk, and I assume it is in the process.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I indicate to members that it is important, wherever possible — and I accept that sometimes there are last-minute motions — to give

notices to the Clerk before they are read out to make sure that they conform with the rules of the house. I accept that Mrs Peulich is an experienced member of the house and it is most likely that all the motions of which she gave notice yesterday and today will conform with the requirements for notices, but it is in members' interests that, wherever possible, those notices are lodged with the Clerk so they can be checked.

An honourable member interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Yes, sometimes there are spelling mistakes and all sorts of things.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Daffodil Day: 25th anniversary

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The date 26 August 2011 will mark the 25th anniversary of Daffodil Day in Australia, and I congratulate Cancer Council Australia on its ongoing commitment to this event.

For the past 25 years Daffodil Day has raised money that has been put towards cancer treatment, prevention and support services for both patients and their families. It is the biggest national fundraising event of its type in the Southern Hemisphere, and this year it is expected that up to 10 000 volunteers will staff over 1200 Daffodil Day booths across Australia with the aim of raising \$9.5 million. Cancer is a leading cause of death in Australia, and it is estimated that more than 43 000 people have died from cancer since 2010.

My family is only too aware of the devastating consequences this disease has on people's lives, having just a few weeks ago reached the 20-year mark since my older brother died after fighting a long battle with cancer. I urge everyone in this place to donate generously to Daffodil Day and to encourage their friends, families and supporters to do the same.

Mike Morris

Mr TARLAMIS — On another matter, I would like to add to the comments made by my colleague in this chamber yesterday when paying tribute to Mike Morris who passed away on 25 July at the age of 68.

I first met Mike in 1996 when I was a young electorate officer working for Eddie Micallef, a former member for Springvale, when Mike was writing 'The Snout' column for the former *Dandenong Examiner*. Mike was a passionate advocate for multiculturalism and social

justice who cared deeply for the little people and expected governments of all persuasions to deliver improvements to their lives. Mike had a quick wit which was matched by his fearless writing and impressive general knowledge attained from his love of reading, especially history and the arts.

Mike would regularly pop into the office to trawl for information hoping to pick up a juicy piece of gossip for use in his column, which I too appeared in from time to time. I, like many others, would eagerly await his column each week to find what its contents would hold. Mike was a unique character who left a lasting impression on everyone who knew him.

The PRESIDENT — Time.

Sarah Anderson

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — Imagine you had your first child just a few years ago. She is almost four years old, but she cannot talk, walk or even sit herself up. The doctors are doing their best, but nobody knows exactly what is wrong with her. It could happen to anyone; it happened to Sarah Anderson. Sarah was born in 2007 with a rare genetic metabolic disorder. As a result Sarah has severe hypotonia. She also has severe developmental delay in many areas and suffers from sleep apnoea and uncontrolled epilepsy.

Sarah is the first Australian and only the 27th person in the world to be diagnosed with sepiapterin reductase deficiency. Since this diagnosis was made there have been conflicting test results in the USA and Europe, so Sarah does not have an official diagnosis. What seems certain is that she has a metabolic disorder, and it seems certain that Sarah's condition is a world first. They do not have a name for it yet, and because of this lack of official diagnosis and the rarity of metabolic disorders it has been extremely difficult for her parents to get support. The federal government funding criteria seems to be set up for children who have a diagnosis. If medical science does not have a name for your specific condition, you miss out. There are lots of great charities around the world, but typically they do not help people who do not have a specific diagnosis.

The condition is not curable, but with therapy and the right equipment her parents, Melinda and Neil, could get some help. They could borrow some money, but it is going to strain them. I encourage the federal government to try to help Sarah, and others could do so by going to www.helpsarah.org.

Forests: protection

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — As I rise to speak this morning a group of heroic individuals are walking into a logging coupe in the mountain forests east of Melbourne in an attempt to protect our legacy — the mountain forests of south-eastern Australia, which comprise one of the most carbon-dense ecosystems on earth. This is a scene that has been played out endlessly over a quarter of a century, since woodchipping was introduced into Australia. The vast majority of Australian citizens oppose this and support protection of these forests for their values of water, wood, wildlife and carbon. The logging operation is driven by the provision of woodchips for export and for the Maryvale mill in central Gippsland. That mill already receives 60 per cent of its wood supply from plantations, and the company has flagged a public discussion about its future wood supply needs.

I am calling on all citizens to boycott Reflex paper until such time as the company is willing to set a clear end date for its woodchipping of native forests. These forests also contain our Victorian faunal emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, which is endangered due to loss of habitat driven chiefly by logging and the recent catastrophic bushfires. The government must act to protect this species; it is the government's responsibility to do so.

Geelong: hospitals

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — Geelong is the second most populous city in Victoria, and it is expected to maintain a growth rate of 2.6 per cent over the next two decades. Not only does Geelong have a large population but it also has an ageing population that is significantly older than the average Australian.

In 2031 it is estimated that 26.9 per cent of people in the Geelong region will be over the age of 65. As the population ages it is more difficult for people to accomplish everyday things. Older Victorians become more fragile and require greater assistance in later life. For an elderly man or woman, travelling to Melbourne for medical treatment is difficult not only for them but also for their family members. It becomes physically and emotionally stressful being away for many hours or days from their home, work and loved ones. This is why it is important that our health system adapts to our growing population and a second hospital is created in Geelong.

I heard from a young person living in Barwon Heads that when their family member recently stayed at a

Melbourne hospital for an operation it was incredibly hard for this young person to visit her family member because she was not old enough to have a drivers licence. Not being able to see this loved one going through a hard time only makes a bad situation worse. Not only would Geelong itself benefit from this change but so would the whole region.

I would like to thank my work experience student, Teegan Wilkie, for her assistance in preparing this members statement.

Kolora-Noorat Football Netball Club: achievements

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — During the parliamentary recess I had the pleasure of attending a number of important events in the western region which served to reinforce my belief that western Victoria has a bright future and a strong community spirit.

On 4 August I was honoured to receive an invitation from the Kolora-Noorat Football Netball Club to open its new change rooms at Noorat, near Terang. On this occasion I represented the Minister for Sport and Recreation as the Victorian government had contributed \$60 000 to the project. It was wonderful to see over 300 people drawn from a small community and gathered to celebrate the opening. I congratulate the club's president, Simon Bourke, and the committee on the work they have done to keep their club strong and to cater both for players and for the surrounding community.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate Brad Johnson and David Mills, who have, respectively, won the league's best and fairest awards in the seniors and reserves, and to wish all sides in all football and netball teams in western Victoria the best of luck in the upcoming finals.

Langi Morgala Museum

Mr O'BRIEN — I also had the pleasure of opening the Stan Kelly 100th birthday exhibition at the Langi Morgala Museum in Ararat. Stan Kelly was a highly regarded botanical artist whose work was displayed on the Australian passport released in 2009.

At this event I represented the Premier in his capacity as Minister for the Arts. I was pleased to also open the Goldfields Stories program run through Arts Victoria. The goldfields stories range from the story of Stan Kelly to the stories of Tilly Aston, from Maryborough, who was a founder of Vision Australia, and the Cohen brothers, from Bendigo. I congratulate the hardworking

volunteers from the Langi Morgala Museum, in particular Wayne Field, the president, and Phil Hands, the treasurer, on their continuing efforts in preserving Ararat's history for current and future generations.

Volcano Dreaming exhibition

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — Can you imagine the beauty of an open land, of a region untouched by any buildings or slabs of concrete? I know the Greens believe in such an environment, and I know most members of The Nationals have lived that life. There is an exhibition that is travelling around my electorate called Volcano Dreaming. If members saw it — and it would be amazing to have it in Queen's Hall, even for a short time — they would be stunned.

This production is created from over 3000 digital photos to show the Iramoo plains and beyond, and it is one of the most stunning works that you could ever see about Australia's amazing and spectacular biodiversity: flowers, even amazing orchids that grow in the wild, animals, ponds, rivers and natural grasslands such as existed before concrete came to Melbourne.

I must congratulate the Environment Protection Authority and our former minister, who funded this project, as well as the people from Inherit Earth and Victoria University, among many others, who have put together something very special about the west: the magic of our biodiversity as seen in a large collection of photo panels.

Sheepvention

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I take this opportunity to congratulate the Hamilton Pastoral and Agricultural Society on another fabulous Sheepvention, which was held on 1 and 2 August this year. The weather was much more favourable this year, and that no doubt contributed to the record number of people attending Sheepvention, with a very noticeable increase in patronage on the Monday. Whilst the attendance figures almost always exceed those for the previous year, this year's sheep entries skyrocketed due to renewed confidence in the wool industry.

It was also reported that there were strong attendances at the various industry seminars offered at the new pavilion. Sheepvention committee chairman, Philip Baulch, said approximately 94 per cent of the stock were sold, showing a high demand in the industry. He also said:

Sheepvention went like clockwork this year, and that's due to some very organised staff and volunteers.

Many people stopped at our stall to chat, raise issues, take some information and sign petitions. We have done this now for six years, and we do it because it is a premier event in the region and draws crowds from all over western Victoria. There was also a very overwhelming response to our petition regarding library funding, with many people signing the petition over the two days. Community members were at a loss as to why the Baillieu government would even consider cutting funding for such an important service.

I need to advise the house that community members also raised their disgust at the Baillieu government's decision to cut the Take a Break program. Again I congratulate the Hamilton Pastoral and Agricultural Society on another successful Sheepvention.

City of Hobsons Bay: men's shed

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — During the parliamentary break I had the pleasure of meeting Daniel Kuiper, a volunteer coordinator at the Hobsons Bay men's shed. The shed is not only a place where blokes can muck around with tools; it is also a great social outlet, and gathering around the weekly barbecue is quite an experience. The men's shed assists in teaching basic computer skills and even basic repairs. The men's shed contributes to the community by making jigsaw puzzles that are then sent to East Timor. I look forward to working with this organisation in the future.

Heathdale: neighbourhood renewal project

Mr ELSBURY — I was also pleased to join the people who were involved in the Heathdale neighbourhood renewal project at the final evaluation launch. The evaluation, titled 'Where everybody is somebody', reflects the magnificent journey this neighbourhood has gone through in building a united spirit in a community which has been considered disadvantaged. Through this work the Heathdale wetlands have been cleaned up and transformed into a centrepiece for the community. An annual festival is well attended, with participants from all walks of life getting involved, and the Wyndham council has backed up these efforts with new facilities.

National Tree Day

Mr ELSBURY — I was also pleased to be able to participate in National Tree Day on 31 July. In the morning I joined a myriad of community groups and energetic locals at Fairbairn Park in Ascot Vale West on the banks of the Maribyrnong River, planting trees and shovelling mulch. In the afternoon I joined the

Tarneit North Residents Association in planting in a neglected drain that runs along the aptly named Conservation Drive in Tarneit.

Mental health: Doncaster group

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The issue I raise today is the funding cut of a Doncaster mental health group. Up to 14 men regularly attended the group, which provided outings, lunches, speakers and opportunities to play pool, cook and go on fishing expeditions. I met with some of the members of this group, who were devastated at the loss. They told me of the sense of community, engagement and belonging they felt when they attended these functions. This is a vulnerable group of men, many of whom suffer anxiety, depression and other associated mental health conditions. Without the services of the mental health group there is a risk of these men suffering increased loneliness, social isolation and associated mental health risks.

A new service provider, Neami, has been engaged and is reviewing the services that have been provided. I urge Neami to work with the group and take a compassionate approach to ensure that it provides the services that meet the needs of the community.

GOVERNMENT: PERFORMANCE

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house condemns the Baillieu government for —

- (1) failing to outline plans to secure and create jobs in Victoria; and
- (2) choosing to cut funding for employment programs, support for apprentices, JobWatch, libraries and child care.

I move this motion today because this is a serious issue facing the state of Victoria. We are now entering what many would say is a second global financial crisis. We have watched the European Central Bank, the US Federal Reserve and today's crisis meeting of German Chancellor Merkel and French President Sarkozy.

The world is an unstable place. That is the reality, and it is not the fault of the Baillieu government. However, what we have from this government today is no plan for the future of the state — no plan, and no flexibility. What we have from this government is a rudderless ship. Not only that; there is no imagination being used as to where it is going. I just saw the Government Whip distributing Josephine Cafagna's cheat sheets to members of the government, giving them their lines. I

know what lines the members of the government will mindlessly parrot for the next couple of hours.

Mr Drum — They will.

Mr LENDERS — I take up Mr Drum's interjection, 'They will'. They will mindlessly parrot Josephine Cafagna's lines for the next couple of hours because they are in defence mode about a record that is non-existent.

To go through what happened up to the election last December, we had an opposition that sought to be a small target. It promised all things to all people and had no vision for the future. It said economic strategy was all about manufacturing and agriculture — and I will get to manufacturing, agriculture and the mute voices from the Goulburn Valley.

I see the Minister for Housing — the courageous champion of jobs in the Goulburn Valley — has just walked into the house. Every day when in opposition she raised an adjournment matter about this, but in her first nine months in government she did not once mention the word 'jobs'. It was only after Tim Pallas, the member for Tarneit in the Assembly, spoke outside her electorate office and told WIN TV she had never mentioned jobs that at the first opportunity in this house — her 90-second statement — she mentioned jobs about five times. This is the leadership we get from this government: they think they are in opposition, they react and they move forward.

Hon. W. A. Lovell interjected.

Mr LENDERS — The only enlightening thing I found in being outside Ms Lovell's office was a dead mouse — which had had more policy input than the minister!

Hon. W. A. Lovell interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! I remind the house that there will be ample time for everybody to debate this matter. I ask members to refrain from constant interjection so that I can hear the person who has the call.

Mr LENDERS — We have a total policy vacuum and nothing new from the now government. If we look at what has happened in the last nine months, we see that the government took pride in its budget, saying it had delivered on all its promises. Other than the massively broken promise of a pay rise for 65 000 teachers, which it never delivered, never could deliver and never intended to deliver, the government went through a series of micro-initiatives. If a party has

promised something, it should deliver and put a tick. But the government has not understood that it needs to govern, and since the election the world has changed. Mr Drum, who likes to think he is an advocate for regional Victoria, well knows that the dollar went up almost 20 per cent in value, then went down and then went up. An inflexible policy to try to deal with that does not address the issue. On this side of the house our starting point is that the government has no plan and ought be condemned for having no plan.

What is the role of government? I will take this opportunity to quote the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, Louise Asher. In the last sitting week she made the comment that:

... there is a fundamental point of philosophical difference between the opposition and the government, and that is that the opposition seems to think the government's role is to provide jobs.

The government 'will allow the private sector to create jobs'. On the face of it, that is sound: it is not the government's job to create jobs. The government is 14 per cent of the economy; the other 86 per cent is the private sector, and that is the fastest growing sector. However, what Ms Asher outlined is this government's total head-in-the-sand, ostrich mentality that somehow or other, like King Canute, it can hold up its hands and just assume it has no responsibility. If the philosophy is that there is no role for government in employment, why is Louise Asher drawing a salary as the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business? If there is no role for government in creating jobs, why is Mr Dalla-Riva drawing a salary? If there is no role for government in creating jobs, why do we have so many ministers in chauffeur-driven cars driving around the state doing round tables? The first thing this government needs to do is get its act together and work out whether it has any responsibility.

Since the budget was released more than 1000 manufacturing jobs have gone in Victoria. I am not blaming the government for the decisions of individual companies to downsize their workforce, but I am disappointed that the government does not seem to care. It does not have a plan. Mr Drum scratches his head and grimaces, but in his electorate in the Goulburn Valley, in towns like Girgarre and Mooroopna, jobs are being shed in vast numbers. In Mr Ramsay's electorate National Foods has shed jobs, yet this government's solution is to have the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade drive up in his big white car and have another round table discussion. There is no plan, no action.

If we consider what happened in Shepparton and Mooroopna, we can see it was not rocket science; it was clear to anyone who paid even the scantest attention that Coca-Cola Amatil was going to have a board meeting last week and make decisions on the future of manufacturing in Kyabram, Shepparton and Mooroopna. That was evident even to Mr Drum, Mrs Peulich and the Premier, who could not be bothered to go to Shepparton. They could have driven to Coca-Cola Amatil's headquarters in Hawthorn, which is not even past the end of the tram tracks, to ask the question. I know it is difficult for members of The Nationals to get out to regional Victoria these days because they are so busy in Melbourne, but even if they had bothered to go to Hawthorn to talk to the management of Coca-Cola Amatil, they would have known that these big decisions were being made.

What did the government do? I cannot recall the Minister for Regional and Rural Development even gracing Shepparton with his presence over the last few weeks on this issue. He is busy being a member of the Budget and Expenditure Review Committee in Melbourne; he is busy micromanaging police numbers in individual stations; he is busy getting ready an advertisement for the job of Chief Commissioner of Police, which took him weeks to do; he is busy slugging off people on the bushfire royal commission; and he is busy doing commentaries on what Labor had done and a whole range of other things. But did the Minister for Regional and Rural Development grace the people of Shepparton with a visit? If he did, he was remarkably quiet about it, because I do not recall seeing it reported anywhere in the media.

The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security is a good man; he came through and showed some empathy. The Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade went up and did another round table. We even had the Minister for Small Business saunter up to Shepparton to have a look. But did they do anything? Ms Lovell, one of the two ministers who is a local member, put on the record the terrible tyrannies of federal Labor. Somehow or other it is the carbon tax that is responsible, it is federal Labor that is responsible and it is state Labor that is responsible. Someone is responsible, but not the state government — —

Mr Leane — Not them.

Mr LENDERS — Not the state government, Mr Leane; absolutely not the state government. A series of ministers flocked to Shepparton, but not the Deputy Premier, or if he did, he did it without Josephine Cafagna's spin masters around him. All of that happened.

In the meantime we had the job figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which show that unemployment in Victoria has gone from 4.6 per cent to 5.1 per cent — and we do not yet have a carbon tax. We have seen 28 500 fewer full-time jobs in Victoria, and the state government simply goes out to blame someone else.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — You can have the squattocracy on the government backbenches making class warfare commentary — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I love interjections from squatters; they remind me of why the Labor Party needs to stand up to them. We need action, and that comment does not come from me. I would like to draw the attention of the house to an article in that News Ltd publication and great friend of the Labor Party the *Weekly Times*, of 3 August, which states:

A perfect storm is tearing apart regional Victoria's economy.

To show I am balanced, the *Weekly Times* goes through a few issues which regional Victoria has with the federal government, including uncertainty on the carbon tax, so I am not hiding from any of that. But it goes through a critique and at the end says:

Regional Victoria can't rely on the federal government to help ...

It's time Mr Ryan took on the role of Premier for country Victoria, as his predecessor John Brumby once did.

It says you cannot rely on Liberal members of Parliament either. It is interesting that some Liberal MPs are very loud in this place, but even the *Weekly Times* thinks things should be left up to The Nationals, so I am on Mr Drum's side sometimes.

The important thing about the *Weekly Times* article is that it goes through a critique saying that regional Victoria needs a champion and it is not enough to have a series of ministers swanning around and looking busy and no-one taking any responsibility for fixing the problems.

I was in Shepparton with my colleague the member for Tarneit in the other place a couple of weeks ago, before the Coca-Cola Amatil announcement. It is interesting to note that when I met with the Shepparton council, when I met with businesses in Shepparton and when I met with farmers and a range of others I did not know that there are 80 shops vacant in Shepparton at the moment.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I will take up Mr Ramsay's inane interjection. State Labor invested \$1 billion in stage 1 — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! Mr Ramsay has been constantly interjecting since Mr Lenders started his contribution. I suggest that if he has something to contribute, he should put his name on the speakers list like other members have.

Mr LENDERS — State Labor invested \$1 billion in the food bowl modernisation program. The current government is spruiking its \$1 billion regional fund as if it is something unique and special. On this single project state Labor invested \$1 billion in the Goulburn Valley, yet the best the Liberal Party and The Nationals can do over eight years is promise that amount for the whole of Victoria, including the interface councils. If we are talking about a party that tries to stand up for regional Victoria, we are talking about the Labor Party and we are talking about the legacy of John Brumby. We are not talking about the feeble, overcommitted promises of the coalition.

A single project, which Mr Ramsay likes to mock, involved more capital expenditure in the Goulburn Valley than the entire fund that Mr Ryan, the Deputy Premier, is running around beating his chest about and saying how important and big it is. It is an interesting perspective.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — The next step of that is the next \$900 million from the commonwealth. It is interesting to hear Mr Ramsay's interjection about that. The money was on the table when state Labor lost office. The money is still on the table, but guess what? The coalition will not sign up to \$900 million worth of infrastructure for the Goulburn Valley. Even if the coalition did sign up for \$900 million worth of infrastructure for the Goulburn Valley, the authority would struggle to meet the deadlines and do it because Mr Walsh, the Deputy Leader of The Nationals, has conducted a witch-hunt. He has put the Ombudsman right through that organisation to score political points.

How are the senior management and the rest of that organisation going to plan any works for a \$900 million project when they are being investigated by the Ombudsman on a daily basis? Because of what Mr Walsh has done to score political points by getting back at farmers who dared to stand up to The Nationals,

that project has now slowed down and there are 80 empty shops in Shepparton.

A local member for Northern Victoria Region, Ms Lovell, is silent as a dead mouse outside her electorate office when it comes to jobs until Tim Pallas, the member for Tarneit in the other place, goes into her town, stands outside her office and says that she has not mentioned jobs once. At the first opportunity she comes in here and in a 90-second statement keeps on mentioning that word. Talk about reactive! Talk about responsive! It took Tim Pallas — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LENDERS — She will not take a break, and she will not take it back. It took Tim Pallas standing outside her office and saying to her community that she had not mentioned the word ‘jobs’ once in this house for nine months for her to make a political response that is so typical of this government. She ran into the house and said, ‘Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs!’ — only because Tim Pallas held her to account.

Ms Pulford interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Ms Pulford is correct. There was a dead mouse outside Ms Lovell’s office, and there was more policy on jobs out of that dead mouse than there was out of the Liberal and Nationals parties.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LENDERS — That is right; the dead mouse was taking a break. What you have then is — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I take up the squatter’s interjection about small business. There are 80 shops that are empty in Shepparton now. There is \$900 million in capital works from food bowl 2 ready to go if Peter Walsh will just put his big signature on the letter. That \$900 million for jobs will do more for small business in Shepparton than every single coalition minister circling the town in their white car and consulting. It will do more than that.

I would suggest to Mr Ramsay that before he goes down to the billabong and grabs a sheep, or whatever he wants to do, if Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Ryan — assuming he gets there — the Minister for Local Government, Mrs Powell, Ms Lovell, Mr Rich-Phillips, the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, Ms Asher, and whoever else is in the kitchen trying to stir the broth goes there and holds round tables, he will do more for the 80 empty shops in Shepparton and for

small business by getting the \$900 million of stage 2 of the food bowl project going and getting jobs in town than all of those ministers doing round tables and collectively blaming the federal government. I suggest he take some action. If he thinks the state should be run better than the VFF (Victorian Farmers Federation) was under him in deficit, I suggest he actually go and do something and get his act together.

The *Weekly Times*, not the Labor Party, is making the assessment of what is happening to regional Victoria without a champion. The *Weekly Times* article of 3 August goes on:

Developers have warned regional Victoria will lose out on up to \$4 billion in wind farm investments if the state government persists with a restrictive 2-kilometre setback for turbines from homes.

It is interesting that the coalition loves to slag off on the carbon tax. Everything, probably even the dead mouse outside Ms Lovell’s office, was killed because of the carbon tax. It is responsible for everything bad. But what the coalition forgets — and it is not my job to give a critique of federal Labor’s carbon tax — is that one of the parts of this climate change package is support for solar industry. The *Weekly Times* itself, in its article, says this is one aspect of the commonwealth legislation that will actually create jobs in regional Victoria. By the way, I met with Country Alliance in Shepparton, and it would be a much better place if Country Alliance were here, rather than Mrs Petrovich, I might add. Perhaps the Greens might reflect on her comments on the duck shooting motion before they give her preferences again. But I digress.

It is interesting that the solar energy sector and wind farms are providing jobs in regional Victoria. Again, the *Weekly Times* says:

Victoria needs leadership in the face of so much uncertainty.

But it appears there’s no-one at the helm of the ‘good ship Country Victoria’.

The article goes on:

Some would argue Mr Ryan is overwhelmed with work as Deputy Premier, minister for police, emergency services, bushfire response, regional and rural development.

Ms Pulford — Co-Premier.

Mr LENDERS — Co-Premier; that is right, Ms Pulford. The article says:

There’s no doubt his police portfolio has been ‘challenging’, especially with Premier Ted Baillieu’s office’s unwanted interventions.

But Mr Ryan has managed to hand responsibility for every difficult aspect to someone else. He has given the bushfire response to other ministers; fire planning to Mr Guy; he has given powerlines to the energy minister, Mr O'Brien; and he has given the fire services levy to the Treasurer, Mr Wells. There is no doubt he has got other things to do, but we are talking of coalition heartland here.

Mr Ramsay — Why are you quoting Peter Hunt all the time?

Mr LENDERS — Probably Peter Hunt made some adverse comment about the VFF's red ink when Mr Ramsay was president; that is probably why he does not like Peter Hunt. But this is the *Weekly Times* reporting here. It says:

Mr Ryan has to step in on the debate about the Goulburn Valley's future. He must back his water minister, Peter Walsh, on gaining \$953 million ...

Through you, Acting President, to Mr Ramsay. The *Weekly Times* thinks Peter Ryan should back Peter Walsh on getting that money for stage 2 of the northern Victoria irrigation program.

The theme through all of this is that Victoria needs someone at the helm, and what we are seeing in regional Victoria is no-one at the helm. Mr Ryan is spending more time swanning around Melbourne and around official functions being the co-Premier, and he has forgotten his heartland.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I take up Mr Drum's interjection. Mr Drum thinks he is the Premier, not the co-Premier, so it is the Ryan-Baillieu government now.

What we have here is an extraordinary lack of action. Regional Victoria has some incredibly strong things going for it at the moment. There is more water around than there has probably been in the time that all of us have been here. The storages are basically full, with a few exceptions. Dartmouth is more than two-thirds full, and Eildon and Hume are well over 90 per cent full, so there is reliability. The dryland farmers welcomed the rain over the last few days. There are extraordinary opportunities there. The dollar has come down by 8 or 9 per cent in the last week. There are opportunities going around there, but of course in all of this we need leadership.

Mr Drum — It hasn't come down 8 or 9 per cent at all.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Drum, \$1.11 down to \$1.01 and back again; it has moved around. If you actually read some of these things and opened up something beyond the sports pages, you might work out that it has gone up and down. It is a fact; it has gone up and down by that amount in the last few weeks. You may not wish to read that, but that is a fact. It is called the trade of the Australian dollar. It happens every day. It is there. If you actually look at that, you might notice it.

The dollar is weaker than it was, which is of assistance to farmers, but you cannot just rely on that; you need to act as the government. It is interesting that when the former Premier, John Brumby, was minister for regional development and when Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly, was minister for regional development there was a minister for jobs with whom the buck stopped whether those ministers liked that or did not like that. It was not pleasant for John Brumby or Jacinta Allan to be the minister with whom the buck stopped, but they were. That is what they were paid for. What is the jobs policy of this government? As literally the very first act of this government the first administrative order of Premier Baillieu was to increase the cabinet by 10 per cent. His jobs policy was two more ministers.

Ms Pulford — How does that fit with the whole workforce productivity thing?

Mr LENDERS — It is interesting, Ms Pulford, how it fits with workforce productivity. Then it is all about public sector workers. Even though police and teachers in particular were promised higher wages, that promise was broken instantly. It had as much credibility as that dead mouse outside Ms Lovell's office. We have these extra two ministers, but if we look at who is responsible for jobs in regional Victoria we have Mr Ryan at question time in the Assembly like something out of some pyramid selling convention, where he is in there saying, 'We've got this billion dollars. Isn't it wonderful?', and then he pats on the head very paternally whichever Nationals party member asked him his Dorothy Dixier and says, 'Isn't that person wonderful? We've got a billion dollars out there'. He even praised Mr Drum during one of his answers during question time —

Mr Drum — On a point of order, President, if Mr Lenders is going to copy Mr Ryan, I need to copy Ms Allan and call a point of order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr Drum — He just called me Crazy Mr Drum!

Mr LENDERS — I did not. Check the tape — I said, ‘He praised Mr Drum’.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! I advise Mr Drum that there is no point of order, and I remind him that when he speaks he should do so from his place.

Mr LENDERS — I understand Mr Drum’s concern, but I actually said, ‘He praised Mr Drum’. I know it does not happen very often, but Mr Ryan did praise Mr Drum!

Mr Drum — You couldn’t believe it!

Mr LENDERS — No, I could not believe it; I did double-check. Mr Ryan, the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, got up as if he were at a pyramid selling convention and praised all these people about his \$1 billion, which, for the record, is less over eight years, including the local government infrastructure program, than what Labor provided for a single project — namely, the food bowl. What we have here now — —

Mr Drum — What are we saying — less than what?

Mr LENDERS — It is less than the food bowl, which is in Mr Drum’s electorate. Remember that big infrastructure project for which we waited for 70 years and which Labor delivered in Mr Drum’s electorate? The food bowl; that is what it is. If we look at what is happening now, it is very interesting. Nobody has responsibility. The previous Premier, Mr Brumby, and the previous Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Ms Allan, were responsible. The buck stopped with them. Now we have Mr Ryan spruiking about how wonderful his \$1 billion is all the time as if he is at some pyramid selling convention, but whenever you need it — such as \$1.9 million for the Take a Break program, which actually helps working people get into the workforce — he cannot do it.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I suggest that Mr Ramsay read the *Weekly Times* again, as he might find a nice analysis in it. I think it is on page 7 today — it might be on page 5, I stand corrected — and it describes Take a Break. It reports that the federal government gave Victoria \$20 million for early childhood funding, and Victoria took it. There was a shortage in funding for Take a Break and Labor plugged the hole, as did most other state governments. Now the claim is that it is not a priority. Mr Ryan has \$1 billion, but he cannot find \$1.9 million to help hundreds of working regional

Victorians, predominantly women, get into the workforce with educational child care by being able to apply for jobs. It is interesting that it has been said that it is federal Labor’s fault, but the New South Wales Liberal government does not think it is federal Labor’s fault. The Western Australian Liberal government does not think it is federal Labor’s fault. But Mr Ramsay, in loyally defending Ms Lovell, thinks it is federal Labor’s fault.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! I suggest that if Mr Ramsay has something to contribute, he should put his name on the speakers list. He has been consistently interjecting. I understand that there will be some interjections from time to time, but he has been consistently yelling out during the debate. I ask him to refrain from doing so.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Ryan, despite spruiking his \$1 billion fund endlessly, will not make any of it available for occasional care and he will not make any of it available for all the other projects that would assist with creating jobs in regional Victoria. I give credit to Mr Walsh, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. He has been to Shepparton and he has been trying to talk to some of the farmers and to find solutions, but he has not found them. Mr Dalla-Riva has also been to Shepparton. I guess he is running around doing his job as Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade. I am sure he has met his key performance indicator of having multiple round tables in Shepparton.

The problem with this government is that nobody has responsibility for jobs. In this house if we ask a question of Mr Rich-Phillips, as the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, which is an important job generator, he says, ‘No, it is a question for the Minister for Public Transport’, ‘No, it is a question for the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business’ or ‘No, it is a question for the Minister for So and So’. We have a Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, but if you ask him a question, he ducks and weaves. He never answers a question from the opposition on aviation; it is always for someone else. Aviation is a big generator of jobs in Victoria.

Yesterday Mr Rich-Phillips got up and proudly claimed credit for a project funded and started by Jacinta Allan, the former Minister for Regional and Rural Development. Mr Rich-Phillips was saying what a wonderful thing that project is, and it is. What we have is Mr Rich-Phillips being responsible for nothing, Mr Dalla-Riva being responsible for round tables and

Ms Asher being responsible for the investment support fund, which is no longer linked to Regional Development Victoria. I commend the government for appointing a chief executive of Regional Development Victoria this week, nine months after coming into office.

I doubt that the government is even vaguely serious about finding solutions, and this is where Ms Asher's comment is so prophetic. The government does not care; it is not its responsibility. I said it does not care, but that is unfair; it does not see it as its responsibility, so of course nobody will take any responsibility for it. Ms Asher has responsibility for the industry support fund, not the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, yet how, if there is an international company wanting to invest in the Goulburn Valley and it talks to Melbourne bureaucrats in the Department of Business and Innovation, is it meant to connect with Regional Development Victoria and make a placement? Regional Development Victoria did not even have a chief executive until this week. It does not have a minister who takes responsibility for it, and that is before you even get into what the roles are of the ministers whose electorates cover Shepparton, Jeanette Powell and Wendy Lovell, in trying to find jobs in that great city.

We have 80 empty shops in central Shepparton, we have unemployment going up and we have manufacturers closing down their plants, but we do not have a plan. What makes not having a plan even worse is that, as I said at the start of my remarks, while the government takes great pride in saying it is honouring its election commitments — and I welcome it honouring its micro commitments, but it has blatantly broken its macro promises, like the one on teachers wages — the world has changed, and it needs a plan to go forward. Of Peter Ryan's much-vaunted \$1 billion fund over eight years — of which only half is funded and which is less than what Labor provided for the food bowl by itself — 70 per cent is for election commitments.

It is good to honour commitments, but where is the flexibility for the Goulburn Valley and what will the future hold when this government has straitjacketed itself because it did not think it was going to be elected? It promised all things to all people, and now it is trying to deal with the global financial crisis mark 2, which is affecting real people in real jobs in real places every day. The government needs to have a plan for infrastructure to prosper and to grow, and it needs to have a plan for regional jobs, which means more than Mr Dalla-Riva doing another round table and it means more than just — finally, after nine months —

appointing a chief executive of Regional Development Victoria.

In closing I will also talk about what the government has done to cut off some of the opportunities for job generation. Unlike Ms Asher's view that the government has no role, we believe government can play a role. The government has slashed funding for employment projects. In terms of apprenticeships, the completion bonus is gone. I hope Ms Cafagna has put something in about that in her cheat notes, which government MPs will parrot back in the house, because it is gone. JobWatch has been slashed. There was a fantastic backflip on libraries. They probably got funding because the Premier thought it was a circus for the arts, but the government did a backflip, and I give it credit for that.

The government is a total and absolute disgrace on child care. For families in the Goulburn Valley trying to find new jobs, occasional care is critical to them having the time to apply for those jobs, to do the applications and to go to the interviews. Peter Ryan has \$1 billion which he boasts about at every possible moment, yet there is no money for the fundamental things. Take a Break could become for Wendy Lovell what the Grey Sisters was for former Minister for Health Marie Tehan. It will be one of those symbolic acts of the government, which does not care and slashes programs that assist women. It will become Wendy Lovell's Grey Sisters. It beggars belief that the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, who beats his chest and boasts about his \$1 billion fund, could go to every regional community and Victoria's small country towns and say, 'We cannot assist you with occasional care to look for jobs' — —

Mr Drum — You want us to spend it on child care, do you?

Mr LENDERS — To look for jobs, Mr Drum — that four-letter word 'jobs'. I know Mr Drum does not like hearing the word 'jobs'. Mr Ryan said he has \$1 billion to help Victoria grow. If Mr Drum thinks that anybody in the Labor Party is going to resile from the fact that Take a Break helps women in the Goulburn Valley get jobs, and if Mr Drum thinks for a nanosecond that anybody in the Labor Party will resile from defending the right of women in the Goulburn Valley to have occasional care so they can apply for jobs and recover from the shocks to the city of Shepparton and to places outside Shepparton such as Mooropna and Girgarre, where people have been losing their jobs, then he has rocks in his head. He cannot see the connection involving members of The

Nationals running around saying, 'We've got \$1 billion for regional Victoria'.

The government has removed the infrastructure criteria that Labor put in place and said, 'We will spend it'. I say to Mr Drum that before the election Mr Ryan will have in front of him marginal seats on the interface. This money has to be spent on halls and libraries — —

Mr Drum — You know that's not right.

Mr LENDERS — He will, Mr Drum. I would be happy to put a bet on it with Mr Drum. I bet Mr Drum that by election day Mr Ryan will be spending money from that fund in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, not the bush, because there is a marginal electorate that needs a library, a sporting facility or that little bit of extra money. I say to Mr Drum that his leader will be diverting money from the fund for regional Victoria to the outer suburbs of Melbourne, because his Liberal Party masters have told him to do it. The Liberals' master, Josephine Cafagna, whose notes Mr Drum will slavishly read back to me, will say, 'You need to do that for an outer suburban seat'. That is what will happen. That is what everybody in regional Victoria knows, and that is why regional Victorians are so disappointed that The Nationals have forgotten who they represent and have just become a party for Melbourne and a party of government.

I think I have said enough. The case I have made — —

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Koch may say, 'Dream on', but let me take up his interjection. The Nationals is a party of form. Is it any wonder The Nationals lost all those rural electorates to rural Independents? Every time they are in government they lose them. Is it any wonder they keep on losing their base? What is different about The Nationals when they are in government? The Nationals have white cars. They are swanning around Melbourne at every function they can be at to be near the Governor or Prince William. They hang around Melbourne, they travel overseas and they forget their base.

What are people saying to me in rural Victoria? I have been to regional Victoria 34 times this year, and on many occasions people say to me, 'We just don't see The Nationals anymore now they are in government. They're too busy'.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LENDERS — All power to their arm! I reckon a constituent in Shepparton would get more response

from that dead mouse outside Wendy Lovell's office than they would from the incumbent, because Wendy Lovell is in Melbourne; she is not in Shepparton.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr O'Brien says she is not from The Nationals. I accept that he has standards; I give him credit for that. But the eight ministers who claim to represent rural Victoria are a great disappointment to rural Victoria. That is what their constituents say.

We have a motion before the house today which says:

That this house condemns the Baillieu government for —

(1) failing to outline plans to secure and create jobs ...

That case is established. There is no plan other than that involving Mr Dalla-Riva having a round table, election commitments that were made before the global financial crisis and choosing to cut funding for employment programs, JobWatch, libraries, child care and support for apprentices. The case is made; the government ought to be condemned. Victorians expect more than eight rural ministers driving around in cars while the Goulburn Valley calls for help.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — We have just been berated and entertained — I am not terribly certain what terms to use — by the Leader of the Opposition speaking on the motion before the Chair this morning. I think the motion says much more about the opposition than it says about the government. Mr Lenders said when he started his contribution that the world has changed. The theme of the changing world was a very big part of his contribution to the debate. When they listened to the tirade, members recalled that the world has significantly changed for Mr Lenders. He is no longer in government; he is no longer the Treasurer; he is not even the Minister for Education, which is a job I know he particularly liked.

If Mr Lenders spoke about the white cars once in this chamber, he spoke about them a thousand times.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mrs COOTE — I just remind members that he has not lost his white car; he still has it. He still has a large, white car; he still thinks those cars are an issue. He also referred to some sort of cheat sheet from Josephine Cafagna. I have no idea what the cheat sheet is. What I received while Mr Lenders was on his feet was handed to me by one of the attendants and was about a meeting to do with carbon credits and the land-based sector to be held at Parliament House. It was from the presiding officers. There was no cheat sheet for me from

Josephine Cafagna. Mr Lenders must know more than I do. I can assure members I will not be referring to any cheat sheet put out by Josephine Cafagna or anybody else.

I suggest Mr Lenders's tirade was based on sour grapes. It was entertaining in parts. I think as Mr Ramsay so rightly said, the *Weekly Times* article by Peter Hunt seemed to be the focus of Mr Lenders's entire contribution to the debate this morning: it was one journalist, one paper and one theme. This really is a case of sour grapes and regret. As Mr Lenders gets into his white car this evening to go home to suburban Melbourne I hope he reflects on how lucky he is. As he swans around he should reflect on that white car and jobs — that car is presumably giving a chauffeur a job. Mr Lenders would agree with that; I can see him nodding his head.

This motion gives us an enormous opportunity to put on record some really good work the Baillieu government has achieved in a very short period of time. I am going to go into this matter in great detail because there are many very good stories involving areas right across Victoria, including regional and rural Victoria and metropolitan Victoria.

At the outset I would like to remind Mr Lenders of the plethora of unfunded programs that his government left behind. These were unfunded programs that we did not know about when we came into government last year. There were unfunded programs that were going to be rebadged and put out there under a different theme under the previous Labor government; however, no recurrent expenditure was detailed for some really worthwhile programs that were in place but had no ongoing funding.

When we came to look at our election promises and see what we could do with the budget, we got a significant number of surprises. As Mr Lenders himself and the Labor Party would have to acknowledge, the funding we put into the first budget brought down by the Baillieu government supported our election promises. The electorate knows that. If members ask anyone from any part of Victoria if we have kept our election promises, they will find that every sector, every cohort of people and every organisation will say that that is indeed the case.

Mr Lenders also spoke about broken promises, micro-initiatives and delivering more in the budget. This is all a huge amount of rhetoric. It is his attempt at opposition. As I said in a comment yesterday, this opposition still has its training wheels on, and the training wheels are going to be there for a very long

time. However, when members of this government were in opposition we listened to the people, we dealt with the organisations, we went down to the micro levels, we went down to the people at the coalface and we went out and spoke to people and listened to people right across this state, just as Mr Dalla-Riva is doing currently. The round tables berated by Mr Lenders in his diatribe are actually a way for us to listen to what people are saying, to get feedback from people and to understand what their current issues are.

The former government — the Bracks government and then the Brumby government following it — neglected to listen to the people, and that was one of the major reasons it was thrown out. There is no need to berate the round tables; the round tables are an integral way of understanding what the people of Victoria are currently thinking and what their reactions are to changes in the world financial system and how that is going to impact on them. Minister Dalla-Riva is out there listening very well.

Mr Lenders said there needed to be someone from rural Victoria at the helm. He then spent considerable time berating Mr Peter Ryan, and he did so totally unjustifiably. Mr Ryan has done an excellent job right across Victoria. I remind Mr Lenders that he has a very short memory; it is like a selective history. Mr Lenders's very short memory means he forgets that in the Bracks government there was no-one in a senior leadership position such as the current Deputy Premier who was from the country. I seem to recall that when he was Premier, Mr Bracks had Mr Hulls.

Mr Koch — No cabinet ministers!

Mrs COOTE — As Mr Koch said in his interjection, there were no cabinet ministers from the country either. Then we had Mr Brumby, and Mr Brumby again had as his Deputy Premier Mr Hulls, who is not from the country or a rural area at all. What sort of importance did the last government attach to rural people holding positions in government? It could not even give a leadership position to anyone from rural or regional Victoria. It is on the record. I do not need to say any more, as it is out there for everyone to know.

Another issue that Mr Lenders went on about at length was Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley. I remind the chamber about an excellent contribution made in here yesterday by Ms Lovell during her members statement, and I encourage the chamber to have a look at it. The people of Shepparton understand that the things that are causing the loss of jobs are issues in which the federal government is directly involved — that is, food labelling laws, the threat of increased costs due to the

carbon tax, federal government policies such as the re-regulation of awards through so-called modernisation and the strong Australian dollar — and I acknowledge that Mr Lenders spoke about the strong Australian dollar.

There are other issues at stake, but I now want to go into quite a lot of detail. I hope Mr Lenders will take note of some of the programs I am going to mention, because when he gives us an opportunity to get up and talk about our achievements we will give him another list of things that the Baillieu government has done. We have been in government for a very short time. November last year was not that long ago, and a great deal has been achieved. I would like to start with the jobs in Mr Dalla-Riva's portfolio area.

The statistics speak for themselves, and I would like to reiterate that since the coalition government came into office in Victoria there have been 22 100 new jobs generated in this state. I would like to repeat that. Since the coalition government came to power, with Premier Baillieu and Minister Dalla-Riva, there have been 22 100 new jobs generated in Victoria. Since December 2010 there have been more jobs created in Victoria than in any other state, and Victoria now has the second-lowest unemployment rate of any state other than Western Australia. Let me say this again: Victoria now has the second-lowest unemployment rate of any state other than Western Australia.

The coalition government is focused on generating business and new investment. The task of growing Victoria's economy and creating new jobs will now be far more challenging due to the introduction of Labor's carbon tax. Labor's carbon tax is an indictment of its policies. I am not going to go on at length about the carbon tax and its ramifications, because members only have to pick up any newspaper in this state on any day or listen to any talkback radio or television news at any time to find Australians saying what the ramifications of the carbon tax are going to be.

This government is focused on new investment and creating business growth. We have been in office for a very short time, but we have achieved an enormous amount. I have just spoken about the jobs that have already been generated. I say to Mr Lenders that this is just the beginning. He should just wait and watch this government; he will see the programs and the policies with which we went to the electorate put in place; he will start to see statistics proving that that is exactly the case.

One of the things we will do to secure a strong and successful future for our industries and to generate

well-paid and rewarding work for Victorians — this is what the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations advises me — is ensure that our business is the best and most competitive in our own domestic markets, which is extremely important. We will encourage more and more businesses to equip themselves to compete with global markets. We are a global player, and that is very important.

I would like to start with and talk at length about JobWatch. Labor's ill-informed and alarmist attacks on the funding of JobWatch are full of hypocrisy. I want to refer to notes on this, because it is important for me to get it right and then to put it properly into — —

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mrs COOTE — This is not from Josephine Cafagna. It was the previous government that in 2009 commissioned a report by Professor Susan Campbell into the funding arrangements for JobWatch. It was this review that found that JobWatch would be better served if it sought funding alternatives through the Victorian Department of Justice and the commonwealth community legal services program (CLSP). Labor did not guarantee funding for JobWatch. In truth, Labor allocated no future funding for JobWatch beyond March this year — another lapsing program. The then minister, Mr Pakula, wrote to the organisation in October 2010 saying:

I wish to encourage JobWatch to continue discussions to further explore possible CLSP arrangements ... These two additional payments (of \$220 000 per quarter) are contingent upon your agreement to ongoing consideration by JobWatch and Workforce Victoria of the recommendations set out in Professor Campbell's review of JobWatch operations in December 2009.

Mr Pakula agreed to roll over funding until after the state election. That funding would lapse on 30 March, and he made that funding contingent on JobWatch agreeing to consider Professor Campbell's recommendation. How was this a funding guarantee? It was nothing of the sort.

The Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations gave that commitment after a meeting with the chair and deputy chair of JobWatch to discuss how and what funding arrangements might apply into the future. The Baillieu government has allocated funds to JobWatch, unlike the Labor Party. This was another unfunded program. As I said at the outset, there was a whole host of unfunded programs, and JobWatch was one of them. Funding has now been achieved. JobWatch has been transferred to a new funding arrangement through the Department of Justice from where it will be funded as a community legal service provider.

Minister Dalla-Riva has actually advised me that he will hold the Gillard government to account whenever and wherever we see Labor's workplace laws having a negative impact on jobs and investment in the state. The minister also advised me that under Labor's own legislation the fair work ombudsman has jurisdiction to deal with complaints and grievances against individual workers arising from the operation of Labor's workplace laws.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs COOTE — I take up the interjection from Mr Leane, who talks about the protective services officers (PSOs). He is particularly cynical and scathing about the excellent work that the PSOs do and will do into the future. Citizens of Victoria will be able to go to railway stations and feel confident they can do so in safety. The reality is that Labor's arrogant approach is out of step with the community expectation. Once again it is taking this opportunity to denigrate the excellent work of PSOs.

The first issue mentioned in Mr Lenders's motion is employment programs. I return to dealing with the exact issues in the order that he has put them in his motion. Employment programs are important because we have to help and encourage people to get into work. We need to skill them up. Mr Lenders talked about an article published in the *Weekly Times*. In fact his whole contribution was based on that article. He talked about the lack of job opportunities in rural and regional areas. It is really important for Mr Lenders to understand that in fact the employment programs will operate right across Victoria and that rural and regional Victorians will also benefit from these employment programs.

Under the Employment Start Up program we will continue to fund our youth employment scheme. It will be of benefit if we can skill up our young people and help them get into the workforce. We all know in this day and age that people do not enter the workforce and stay in one particular area. People need to skill and reskill, and in fact the latest statistics show that people change occupations probably three or four times in their lifetime. In poor Mr Lenders's changing world, he has changed his job as well. This is another career change for Mr Lenders. At the end of the year it will be interesting to see whether he has changed his job again.

We have an excellent indigenous program in place. Even Mr Lenders would be interested to know that the minister has had extensive discussions with Rumbalara, which is doing an excellent job in the Goulburn Valley. Even Mr Lenders would have to acknowledge that. I am pleased to see him nodding his head in agreement.

This is an excellent program which helps indigenous youth to obtain skills to enable them to participate in the workforce. It is another excellent program that is under the auspice of the minister's department.

The Bridge project is another. It is a community project run by the YMCA, and once again operates throughout Victoria. It is designed to break the cycle of youth reoffending by providing strong mentoring support, training and employment. It is important to understand the success of this particular program and the fact that it has recorded a recidivist rate of less than 3 per cent as opposed to a rate of 66 per cent in the broader community. All politics aside, the entire chamber would be pleased to know this is in fact trending upwards. It is a very pleasing trajectory.

There are other programs too. There is the White Lion and the great work of Rumbalara and the Dean Rioli Aboriginal Employment Service in supporting employment programs for indigenous youth. Attracting skilled migrants is another excellent Baillieu government investment, followed through and supported by Minister Mr Dalla-Riva. Once again I go back to poor Mr Lenders referring to the *Weekly Times* article by Peter Hunt — it was the only thing he could draw upon in his contribution. However, the work Minister Dalla-Riva has done with skilled migration can be seen throughout Victoria.

Over the next four years the Victorian government will invest \$8.8 million to refocus Victoria's skilled and business migration program. State sponsorship and employer sponsorship of migrants will be redesigned to ensure the best fit with industry needs. Plus we have committed an additional \$400 000 to a cultural and linguistically diverse job bank registry. We have honoured another election promise to establish a job bank registry for skilled workers who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This election commitment will make it easier for potential employers to tap into professional skills available in our diverse multicultural communities. It is vital that not only migrants to this country but also employers understand the involvement, skills, knowledge and depth of understanding that new skilled migrants have.

I am particularly disappointed to see that Mr Lenders has left the chamber. It is his motion after all. He is the one who should be listening to what is being said. He is the one who has cast aspersions on the Baillieu government. It is he who has said there are not jobs. I am only a short way into my contribution; I have only just begun. He obviously cannot cope with the heat in the kitchen, and he has left the chamber.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mrs COOTE — As Mr Ondarchie rightly says, Mr Lenders has spent 11 years running away from responsibility. Here we are seeing him skulk away once again.

Also on the issue of jobs, I would like to concentrate on some of the achievements of Minister Hall, who has done an excellent job in his portfolio of higher education and skills, particularly looking into opportunities for training for jobs right across Victoria. I remind the chamber that Mr Hall is a country member. He understands what the job necessities are for rural and regional Victoria. He understands what needs to be done. He understands the youth and the opportunities for education, and he has put in place some very good ongoing programs.

In the very short time that we have been in government, Minister Hall, together with the Baillieu government, has reintroduced concession places for health-care card holders aged between 16 and 24 to reduce diploma and advanced diploma fees from \$2000 to \$100. Providing opportunities for people to gain a qualification helps them to get jobs. As Mr Hall mentioned yesterday during question time, over 7000 people have already taken advantage of these places. This is a cohort of people who need significant help — the health-care card holders — and it is important that we help them get skills. We want to break the cycle of poverty and the downhill spiral of disadvantage. It is a very real issue, and 7000 people in just over nine months have taken up this opportunity. The proof is in the statistics.

Last month, regarding the best new cities for business, the well-respected Fortune Global 500 highlighted Melbourne, Victoria, as one of the top 15 best places in the world to invest, primarily because of our smart labour, not because of any jobs plan that Mr Lenders alluded to. I remind the chamber again that it is a skilled and talented workforce that attracts investment to a region. The Baillieu government has developed *Skilling the Valley* and *Skilling the Bay*, which will connect industry with research and training providers to ensure that these regions undergo structural change and that the workforce creates an incentive for new businesses to invest in these areas.

It is no wonder Mr Lenders left the chamber. He was embarrassed. He could not cope with the fact that Peter Hunt had not said something in his *Weekly Times* article, so Mr Lenders was not able to quote anything on these issues. He is probably very embarrassed that he was not able to pick up on these excellent points.

It is vitally important that apprentices learn skills on the job and combine firsthand work in their chosen industries with an educational component. In this year's state budget the Victorian Baillieu government committed \$55 million over the next four years for the apprenticeship training completion bonus scheme. The funding is expected to benefit the employers of more than 20 000 current Victorian apprentices and trainees who commenced prior to 30 June 2011 and will complete over the next four years.

Mr Lenders said there were no plans for Victorian jobs into the future. It is an enormous pity that he is not here in the chamber, because I am certain that even Mr Lenders himself would have to grudgingly say he respects the fact that we are training more than 20 000 Victorian apprentices, with \$55 million put into the apprenticeship training completion bonus scheme. These are the jobs, the skills and the people for the future, and by upskilling our workforce we will be competitive in the global market. Minister Hall is certainly to be commended.

Mr Lenders then went on to libraries. I am particularly pleased to talk about libraries. The Premier has been a huge supporter of libraries and, for a significant time, a huge supporter of the State Library of Victoria, as was the Kennett government. I remind the chamber of the huge commitment the Kennett government made to the state library. In fact, you could say Jeff Kennett put the state library on the map and encouraged the funding to build it into the significant institution that it is now. I commend the president of the Library Board of Victoria, the Honourable John Cain, a former Premier. I know of the commitment he has had to the state library, and I put on record my admiration for the work he has done.

This is the beginning of the library scenario with us as a Liberal government. I commend Minister Powell, the Minister for Local Government, for the attitude she has taken to libraries. The coalition government has reversed Labor's cuts and has reinstated recurrent funding. On 4 August Jeanette Powell announced a \$6.5 million injection of funding for libraries over the next three years. As a result, no council will receive less library funding this year than they did last year. The coalition has also announced a landmark review of the bipartisan libraries ministerial advisory council (MAC) to examine the role, services and funding of libraries. The sector called on the previous government to undertake this review, but the Labor government did not want the scrutiny, did not want to have a look at it and certainly did not want to answer any recommendations that were put to the government. We

saw this suggestion sit in someone's in-tray, presumably.

Minister Powell also has a ministerial advisory committee, and the proposed members are as follows. David Morris, the Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government and member for Mornington in the Assembly, will be the chairman. Joanne Duncan, the member for Macedon in the Assembly, who is a former chair of the libraries MAC, will be representing the opposition. She knows a lot about libraries because she was a librarian. Peter Crisp, the member for Mildura in the Assembly, will once again be representing rural and regional Victoria. The state librarian from the state library will be there. There will be two representatives from the Public Libraries Victoria Network, one of whom will be a member of Swift. There will be a representative from the Melbourne regional library service, a representative from a metropolitan single council library service and a representative from a regional area regional library service — regional libraries again.

I suggest Mr Lenders contact Peter Hunt and tell him. There will be a representative from a regional area single council library service and a representative from the Department of Planning and Community Development. It is a very comprehensive committee, which I know will do some significant work with a very well-rounded approach to the excellent work that libraries do in this state.

I remind the chamber of the importance of our public library system. In Victoria we have 261 library branches and 26 mobile libraries. These are the communication hubs of our communities, and it is important to fund them well and also to understand their ongoing needs. Libraries are being challenged by the international media, by the global community and by current technology, and it is important that Victoria's libraries are ahead of the rest of the country as far as information technology and the sharing of excellent information are concerned.

I would like to put on record the excellent work that the parliamentary library staff do. They are some of the unsung heroes of Parliament, and they do a phenomenal job. Not only do they help and support all of us with the information we need; they give training to our staff and are only too willing to help and support us at any time. I would like to commend each and every one of the library staff at the parliamentary library for the excellent work they do and, personally, for the support they give me.

The relationships between councils and libraries, the state library and the local municipal libraries are quite complicated, but the Minister for Local Government, Jeanette Powell, another Baillieu government minister from rural and regional Victoria, has a strong commitment to and depth of knowledge about local councils. She has worked in local government and has a keen knowledge of the area. I am confident that under her leadership and guidance we will see the Baillieu government lift the ability of these wonderful local resources into the future, once again helping people in rural and regional Victoria and elsewhere to visit libraries, learn and gain skills. We have talked about apprentices and job skills opportunities. People of all ages, races, religions and genders visit libraries and gain access to good information there. Libraries are a wonderful tool. I commend all Victorian libraries.

Let me say this again: on 4 August the Minister for Local Government announced an injection of \$6.5 million into library funding over the next three years. Even Mr Lenders grudgingly acknowledged that was the case.

This motion represents a litany of sour grapes. It is an expression of Mr Lenders's personal disappointment at not being the Treasurer anymore. He can be reassured that he still has his white car, although probably only temporarily. He seems to think white cars are important because he talked about them in his contribution many times. He spoke about swanning about in white cars, but from what we can gather he swans about in a white car all around Victoria. However, perhaps he is looking at changes in his job. Someone said earlier it was about a tree change or a sea change; perhaps that is what he is looking for. In any case it was a courageous contribution by Mr Lenders. He was doing his best. He was trying hard to put a brave face on the fact that life has changed.

Mr Lenders started his contribution by saying that the world is a different place and, as I said before, it is a very different place for Mr Lenders and his colleagues. He is in opposition, and he will be for a significant time. In that period he will have an opportunity to look at the coalition's programs and policies and to see the responsible budgetary approach the coalition takes in government. We have been in office for a very short time. I have already had the opportunity this morning to tell this chamber about the employment opportunities, the growth in jobs and the programs that have been implemented, and about the fact that libraries have been funded and recognised. It is just the beginning in terms of where this government intends to go.

I just saw the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, Gordon Rich-Phillips, enter the chamber. He has funded another election promise — an initiative to provide a train line to Avalon Airport. I remind this chamber that the opposition has berated the government for this in scathing terms. It only takes a trip down to Geelong along the Princes Freeway to see the huge growth in that entire corridor. Minister Gordon Rich-Phillips has taken a far-sighted approach and realised that we are going to need a train line to that airport so that in the future it can be an important part of transport in this state.

I remind people of the criticism faced by former Premier Henry Bolte when he identified Tullamarine as the site for an airport in the 1960s. I do not have those news articles at my fingertips, but I suggest they were vehemently opposed to the plan. People were extremely critical of Tullamarine as an airport site, saying it was never going to happen, it was out in the sticks and it was a ridiculous waste of money. Where are those critics now that Melbourne Airport is one of the most important transport hubs and airports in the country? Avalon airport will become an important transport hub, just as Minister Gordon Rich-Phillips has identified. Under the jurisdiction of the Baillieu government we will see the airport go from strength to strength and people from that huge growth area will have access to fast and efficient transport to get there.

The last part of the motion, this litany from Mr Lenders, mentions child care. We have seen the petitions on the Take a Break program. We have listened to the questions to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, in question time. We have seen the attempts of the Labor opposition to detract from the fact that the Take a Break program was funded by the federal government. We should make it crystal clear that the lack of funding should be sheeted home to the federal Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare, Kate Ellis. Kate Ellis has let down the children of Victoria and their parents. Kate Ellis and her lack of funding has disappointed all these people. I commend Minister Lovell, who has funded Take a Break for a period of time to enable other arrangements to be made. She made it abundantly clear that this program was not going to be the responsibility of the state government but that it is a federal government issue. However, clutching at straws — any straw will do — Mr Lenders once again brought out this tired old debate.

I want to put on the record some of the issues around the Take a Break program, and I am very pleased to have this timeslot in which to do it. The state government has committed to reinstating the Victorian

funding for Take a Break if the federal government reinstates its funding; however, the program is not sustainable on state government funding alone. This commitment is out there in the public domain. If in fact members of the opposition feel so strongly about this matter, why are they not taking their petitions to the Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare, Kate Ellis? Why are they not taking their petitions and saying to their federal colleagues, 'You are the ones responsible for this; you should be fixing this; it is on your heads.'?

The only person without an offer on the table at the moment is the one person responsible for child care, the federal minister for child care, Kate Ellis. The shadow minister assisting the leader on children and young adults, Jenny Mikakos, admitted in state Parliament that she tried and failed to get Ms Ellis to reinstate the funding. Under the scenario put by Mr Lenders you can see that not only has Mr Lenders lost his own job and been left with a sour grapes feeling because his party lost its position in the state, but his party has no standing with its federal colleagues either. He is losing on every level; he is not getting a win. On the one hand Jenny Mikakos admitted in this very chamber that she tried and failed to get Ms Ellis to reinstate the funding. On the other hand Minister Lovell is continuing to lobby Kate Ellis firmly to put back the money the commonwealth has withdrawn from occasional care. Ms Lovell has been advocating strongly on this issue to Kate Ellis in the federal Labor government.

The issue highlights a lack of child care in regional areas, which is an issue yet again for the federal minister. She should be addressing this issue but is ignoring it. When Mr Lenders goes back to Peter Hunt from the *Weekly Times* to tell him yet again to write another article, he had better make certain that he points out that rural funding for child care is the responsibility of Kate Ellis. Mr Lenders himself should lead another deputation, include Jenny Mikakos, and go and see Kate Ellis to talk about the benefits of the Take a Break program and the responsibility of the commonwealth government to fund this excellent program.

Once again I would like to remind this chamber of the way it happened. The funding of child care is a federal government responsibility. The Take a Break program was an example of the state and federal governments working together to deliver a practical solution for parents who did not need full-time care. This is very important to understand, and Mr Lenders got that right when he spoke about the advantages for families availing themselves of the Take a Break program. The program was initially funded 70 per cent by the commonwealth and 30 per cent by the state

government. In May 2010 the federal government withdrew funding from the program in its budget. That would have seen the program close, displacing children and carers in just a few weeks. There was no forward announcement. There was no time for preparation. Everything was going to close down very quickly.

The then state government — that is, the Brumby state government — stepped in to fund the program for one year, and one year only. The former state government funded the program by bringing forward the state funding for 2011–12 to cover the cost in the 2010–11 financial year. When the coalition government came into power we extended the funding until 31 December, when it was realised that families and services had not had an opportunity to make alternative arrangements. The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, wrote to the federal child-care minister, Kate Ellis, in February this year, asking her to reinstate the federal funding.

At the beginning of this contribution I pointed out to the chamber that when the coalition went into the budgetary process it found many unfunded and lapsing programs throughout everyone's portfolio areas; there is a litany of unfunded liabilities from the former Brumby government, and this is yet another one. While acknowledging that this is a federal issue, we have addressed it and given people an opportunity to make other arrangements. However, Ms Ellis did not give the minister the courtesy of a reply until June this year — and I again remind the house that Ms Lovell asked her in February. We know that this is a federal issue, and Ms Lovell is continuing to urge the federal government to rethink the way it funds the child-care benefit and the child-care rebate. It is a very important issue that needs to be clarified. The federal government must develop a sustainable child-care model for regional communities and also extend child-care benefits and the child-care rebate to occasional care.

There are many coalition members of Parliament who want to speak on this motion today, and each one of them will have a very good story, because the Baillieu government has committed to funding its election promises and fixed up many of the lapsing programs left behind by the Brumby government, and it is forging ahead with putting into place programs and efficiencies right across the spectrum, including in rural and regional Victoria, which we take great pride in being strong representatives of. The round tables that Mr Dalla-Riva is conducting right across rural and regional Victoria have been a great success.

We are continuing to listen to what the people want us to hear. Under the Baillieu leadership we have already

seen great innovation right across the state. Mr Lenders said there is no direction and that the government is hollow and shallow. The terms he used included 'policy vacuum', 'defence mode', 'broken promises' and 'micro-initiatives'. But it is the micro-initiatives — coupled with long-term planning initiatives, the upskilling of our workforce, the introduction of the skilled migration scheme and understanding what it is that people want in this state — that are important to people's lives.

Mr Lenders said the Baillieu government had its head in the sand, and for some reason he brought King Canute into the sentence; I am not certain what he meant. He said there were no jobs under the Baillieu government. We are proving him wrong, with 22 100 new jobs since we have been in government. This is just the beginning. Mr Lenders started his contribution by saying, quite rightly, that the world has changed, but his theme is a shallow one. His contribution was more about the Labor Party, its position in Victoria and his position within the Labor Party. That is what has changed. The Baillieu government will accept and embrace the changes that the world brings to us. The world has changed. The Baillieu government is in power, and we will be looking out for jobs in the state. We will not be supporting the motion.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion. At its heart is a concern that the phenomenal success that has been the Victorian economy over the last decade or so is at risk because the government seems to have vacated the field in terms of strategic thinking and playing a role in making sure that the Victorian economy keeps on growing.

Members will recall that over the last 10 or so years, as a non-resource state, Victoria has led the way in terms of jobs growth, innovation, building construction and manufacturing. The government will tell you that just happened by accident, that you can vacate the field and not have a plan or strategy and that by magic these things will continue, but that is not the case.

If you look at the last decade or so, you see the growth that has occurred in the Victorian economy has been the result of a deliberate strategy and the hard work of the Victorian community, the Victorian business sector and the previous Victorian government. There was a very deliberate strategy based around manufacturing. We saw things like the channel deepening and the Holden engine plant, which was the government working with the community and the business sector to make sure

that we drove the innovation and the ideas to generate jobs.

If you have a look at the tourism and major events sector, you again see that government, the community and business were driving job generation in that sector. If you look at the investment the government put into the MCG redevelopment, you see it was an important contributor to make sure that we stayed internationally competitive as an events capital. We can look at the work the government did around the pharmaceutical industry, medical sciences and the science community, and the investment it put into the Australian synchrotron to make sure that we set Victoria up as a beacon for investment in this sector internationally.

Victoria does not have the mineral wealth of Western Australia or Queensland, and we rely upon the ideas, investment and strategic thinking of business, government and the community. It seems this government does not understand that. That is why it does not have a plan for manufacturing, it does not have a plan for the science industries and it does not have a plan for jobs. That is really at the heart of the concern that this motion seeks to address.

The evidence is clear. In relation to planning, the government says Melbourne 2030 is dead, but it does not have a planning policy to replace it. In fact it says there will be no planning policy, nothing in this space, for two years. For two years there is going to be drift. Communities will not know what is happening, the business community will not know what is happening and no-one will know what the parameters are. It is that uncertainty, the utter confusion, which is frightening communities, frankly, in terms of the development that may occur and the appropriateness of that development. It is also creating uncertainty in terms of employment and investment. Why would you invest when you are in this policy vacuum? Why would you invest when you do not know what is going to hit you in two years time? The government's own figures that are coming through the Building Commission in terms of the building community are bearing that out.

If you look at this year's budget, you see there is no acknowledgement that Victoria is in a very difficult position. Victoria is being buffeted by a high Australian dollar, which is impacting on our manufacturing industry, tourism and our ability to be competitive internationally. Without that mineral base we are in real difficulty going forward. In this year's budget there was no investment in jobs or in the sort of strategic thinking that is required so that Victoria can continue to be positioned as the lead non-resource state. Across the border, the Premier of New South Wales says he is

going to make New South Wales the lead state. Victoria is very much at risk, and that risk is only enhanced when you look at the lack of any strategic direction, focus, ideas or vision coming out of the budget. In fact, as we now know, the word 'budget' never occurred to the Treasurer as he delivered his budget.

The impact that is having can be seen if you look at the government's own figures in the building industry: building permit approvals have gone backwards. Every month since this government has been in power the number of building approvals has gone backwards. For June this year the figure is worse than for June last year, and for May this year it is worse than for May the year before. Because there is no plan, because of the high Australian dollar and because there is no sense of momentum, the lack of confidence is starting to impact on jobs, as Mr Lenders put it so eloquently, and we are seeing those going backwards.

Things are also going backwards in the area of planning, which I have a particular interest in, in terms of the number of building permits that have been issued. The problem with that is that building permits move to become building commencements, and building commencements involve jobs. We are seeing a real risk that the number of commencements will come down because the number of permits have come down. Employment in this crucial sector is going to follow that in the manufacturing sector and come down, and it is all because this government does not acknowledge the reality of the high Australian dollar. It does not acknowledge the fact that the Victorian economy is struggling because of the exports generated by the mineral wealth economies, which are ratcheting up the Australian dollar. Victoria is very much collateral damage in that sense.

What you would hope is that you would have a Victorian government that would understand that and have a vision for going forward, a vision that would bring together the Victorian community and the business community to make sure we maintained our international competitiveness, to make sure that we continued to be the ideas capital and to be the clever country, rather than it being just Queensland and Western Australia, which are very much the lucky country because they have that wealth. We do not have that; we only have our ideas. We need to be the clever country, but instead of investing in the science community this government is cutting back and threatening the very survival of the synchrotron.

We hear the government talk about inner urban renewal and we hear it talk about Fishermans Bend, but when you look at the budget and look to see whether it walks

the walk you find there is no funding, there is nothing to get Fishermans Bend off the ground. There is nothing to support the building industry. There is no funding to get any of those urban renewal projects off the ground. This government's only hope is that somehow these things will occur by magic or by luck. The same thinking is motivating this government in the manufacturing sector and in the tourism sector.

The concern at the heart of this motion is that there is no vision for a way forward. That means that the future for the Victorian economy is dire as we continue to see the impact of the high Australian dollar on our manufacturing, on our tourism and on those pillars that provided growth for us over the last 10 years. The concern is that the effects will not be felt today, but they certainly will tomorrow, the next day or the next year. That lack of action, that lack of strategic thinking, that lack of vision today will come back to haunt the Victorian economy.

We are now starting to see the warning signs every day around the building figures and the loss of manufacturing jobs. It really is a wake-up call to this government. It cannot keep dithering; it cannot keep hoping for the best, hoping for some magical solution, because that is just not how it works. It needs to roll up its sleeves and start working with the community and business to deliver a better outcome and a better future. Having no plan means having no jobs; it means Victoria will go backwards; it means manufacturing will go backwards; it means we will be closing down industries — and we have already seen that this government is committed to closing down the wind farm industry in regional Victoria. That will be the tip of the iceberg unless there is some progress to ensure that Victoria has a way forward.

I urge the government to take heed, to recognise the reality we face and to do some work to deliver the sort of planning and strategic thinking that Victorians deserve.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I start by putting on record the astonishment of members on this side of the chamber that here it is, opposition day in the house, and we have only one lone member of the opposition in the chamber being riveted by the argument, and that is the member speaking on the motion. I suppose Mr Leane will soon leave the chamber and someone else will come in to awaken the opposition's interest in this matter.

This is a very important matter. It is quite ludicrous that the opposition has seriously put this matter on the table to somehow or another try to place the blame for some

of the things that have recently taken place in relation to job losses at the feet of this government. Mr Lenders's contribution was quite ridiculous when you go through some of the issues he put on the table. He claimed that the first thing this government did was to add two new ministers. I think he will find that the first thing the Baillieu government did was to honour a pledge to cut the number of ministerial advisers by 25 per cent — that is what we did. We still have some 50 fewer ministerial advisers employed in this government —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr DRUM — In this government, Mr Leane. We have 50 fewer ministerial advisers, but members of the opposition do not like to hear that because the Labor way of doing things is through big government, big taxing, big spending and big waste.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DRUM — Thank you very much, Mr O'Brien — big waste. The first thing this government did, and it was a pledge we made while in opposition, was to minimise the number of advisers. Mr Lenders spoke ad nauseam about the white cars that the ministers drive. Does Mr Lenders think everyone has forgotten he was a minister and that he continues today to drive around in the nice white car. Members of the Labor Party have a sour grapes attitude. They do not want anyone else to be paid a minister's salary; they do not want anyone else to have a minister's car; they do not want anyone else to have the benefits of being a minister, because they think it is their right to run this country and this state. It is not their right. You get judged by the people of Victoria, and Mr Lenders has to understand that.

Mr Viney, to his credit, has a golden saying: come election day, the people always get it right. The people got it right. Therefore we have to ask, 'What are we doing?'. We understand that there have been job losses. There have been job losses in the Latrobe Valley, and this government acted immediately. This government put in place the Latrobe Valley working party. I have been a chair of that group, as have two local and well-respected Legislative Assembly members, Russell Northe, the member for Morwell, and Gary Blackwood, the member for Narracan.

As representatives of the Minister for Regional and Rural Development we met with a whole range of stakeholders from the Latrobe Valley, along with representatives of Regional Development Victoria. We met with all the local councils and people from some of the industries that have the potential to offer

employment growth and job creation. We met with the unions to see how we can assist. We met with the workforce agencies to see what types of workers are needed and how we can skill people up within the Latrobe Valley. The Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, has already acted upon that as well. It is quite astonishing that the opposition is oblivious to the amount of work the government is doing to assist these communities that are going through some pretty tough times.

The former Treasurer took aim at our having these ministerial round tables, and I do not quite understand that. In one breath he criticised that we are not out there in the community or regional centres as a government, and in the next breath he criticised that we are having these ministerial round tables and that the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Mr Dalla-Riva, is out there meeting with those in the manufacturing industry.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Are you going to them?

Mr DRUM — Am I going to them? I find that staggering.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I am just asking if you attend.

Mr DRUM — I have already been to one of Minister Dalla-Riva's round tables in Geelong. It was well received. The peak manufacturing association within Geelong and all its members were absolutely delighted that Minister Dalla-Riva was there giving them his time. It was an opportunity for them to put on the table some of the challenges they are facing. It gave Geelong industries and manufacturers an opportunity to tell the minister what the government can do to assist them. Their major challenge at the moment is, obviously, the high Australian dollar.

I inform Mr Pakula that the second thing that came out of their mouths pertained to the uncertainty surrounding the carbon tax. That is fact. If he wants to put his head in the sand and pretend it is not a problem or issue, he is quite welcome to do that, but he should not make out as though this is not going to have a negative impact on our manufacturers in that city and in this state.

The opposition talks about there being no plan. I struggle to understand how opposition members can so readily forget that, when in government, they were two years late in producing what was referred to then as the manufacturing statement — the strategic paper that was being promised by the then minister, Mr Theophanous. It was not just a few months late, nor just 6 or 12 months late; it was two years late. The then opposition spokesperson, Mr Dalla-Riva, started asking

the government, day after day, when it was going to produce a manufacturing statement paper so that the manufacturing sector would have some sort of security or comfort in knowing that the government actually had a plan. That fell on deaf ears, and there was no action. The plan was two years late. When it was finally dribbled out it was a pathetic response.

I am sometimes amazed by the hypocrisy that comes from those opposite when they start telling the government that it does not have a manufacturing plan, that it is not out there in Victoria but that it is doing too many round tables. Which is it? Mr Pakula asked me if I was getting involved. Mr Lenders says when he goes into the regions the word is that The Nationals are not out there. In recent months a whole series of Regional Development Australia business forums have taken place in regional Victoria.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — That would be the federal body.

Mr DRUM — No, it is state.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Regional Development Australia?

Mr DRUM — Regional Development Australia is a shared organisation, and the committees are shared. What we tend to do is work collaboratively with our federal colleagues so that we can get the best outcome. If Mr Pakula would like me to explain how it all works, I would be happy to spend some time with him privately.

The Deputy Premier, Minister Ryan, has said that we are going to support the regional strategic plans that are being developed by the respective communities, but we are going to make sure that our strategic plans have had an opportunity to be tested by the business sector. We have run a series of business forums across the state, and we have been to Sale, Yarragon, Shepparton, Wodonga, Geelong, Horsham, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Portland, Bendigo, Mildura and Swan Hill. In each of those regional centres we sat down with members of the business community. We have had people from government departments, Regional Development Victoria and the Regional Development Australia committee chairs stand up and speak to the regional strategic plans at each of those forums.

We have been able to state our government's targeted response to the question of how we are going to invest in regional Victoria to create jobs. We are going to put that on the table, and we have been able to ask the business sector what it thinks about our plans to invest

in regional Victoria. We have been able to engage the business sector in these discussions.

The comments that are coming back clearly indicate what those in business want and how they think this government can help them go about their job of producing wealth and export goods and creating employment. Those issues are simply about wanting access to a skilled workforce. The thing they most want is access to a skilled workforce.

Mr Hall, as minister, has put some \$80 million of investment back into the training sector to ensure that the carnage that was caused by the previous government's Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Ms Allan, is remedied. The additional 7000 enrolments that have come about because of the initiatives of Minister Hall in making courses such as certificates and diplomas available to people will no longer cost \$2000 or \$3000 a year but maybe \$100 and \$200 a year because they have access to a health-care card. This is something that has been warmly welcomed by the entire training sector. Nobody can deny the impact that this is having in producing a more skilled community and giving employers greater access to a skilled workforce. That is their no. 1 request — that the government assist in giving them access to a skilled workforce.

Hot on the heels of that request is the request for investment in infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure. Transport infrastructure investment will be spread evenly across road infrastructure and rail infrastructure and also across freight rail and passenger rail. People who work in our businesses want to be able to commute to our capital city, but they also have a strong need to get their produce to market in a timely fashion and at an affordable rate. Certainly our transport system is in a pretty dire state at the moment.

We have put on the table a \$160 million package over four years. It will be delivered straight to local government to assist with local roads in order to enable producers to get their products to market more readily, reliably and cheaply without the need for maintenance and the fixing of damage being done to their own vehicles along the way. That \$160 million will be warmly welcomed by all local councils, and everyone in the chamber would know this if they had taken the time to go out and talk to regional councils, which simply have not had the money to maintain their asset base in a proper fashion. It may be used for a swimming pool, for example, but more importantly it will be used for our roads.

For years we talked to local councils, and this policy is targeted at the 40 smallest councils in the state. The \$1 million a year will be warmly received as it will enable councils to produce a road network that is likely to resemble the type of network you need in a first-class country that is a major exporter to the world market. That is something the business sector has been requesting of the government, and we are listening and providing the skills. We have a lot of work to do in improving our rail network. We need to make sure we can find the money to further invest in improving our freight lines. The damage — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Unlike the abomination of the PN lease that you left behind and we had to fix.

Mr DRUM — Mr Pakula is suddenly calling the Pacific National lease our 'abomination'. What we have at the moment is an opposition whose members were in government for 11 years but did not address the freight lines throughout regional Victoria at all. When we were looking at a bumper harvest last year — pushing up to in the order of 12 million tonnes of grain — coming through the northern sector down towards the southern ports, we did not have the rolling stock to be able to carry that load. We could have run our train sets 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and we would only have been able to move 2 to 3 million tonnes. That is the state that 12 years of drought left our train sets in. The inability of any government over the last 80 years to standardise our system to enable some of those train sets to be moved back into Victoria is causing us considerable angst. However, it does not do anybody any good to start blaming others for the fact that we cannot move our grain harvest in the manner and in the time in which we want to.

The challenges are there, but when things go wrong in this state the last thing we need from the former Treasurer is for him to have the attitude of an ambulance chaser heading off to work every day. 'What are you going to do today, darling?'. 'I am going to park down on the corner and hope the state has an almighty crash. If there are some job losses in Shepparton, I am going to be there — don't worry. If there are some job losses in the Goulburn Valley or if the road falls away in the valley, I am going to be there — don't worry'.

We have a former Treasurer who just cannot wait for something bad to happen in this state. He thrives on it. He cannot wait for some jobs to be lost in Shepparton. We have a Leader of the Opposition in this house who cannot wait to get to Shepparton or Girgarre to talk about job losses. We are talking about families who have felt the impact of by job losses.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Which you are not doing anything about — you just blame the feds!

Mr DRUM — I have spent the last 20 minutes telling Mr Pakula what we are doing. We are a government that is committed to working hard — harder than the previous government ever worked — to ensure that we do the best thing for our people. We are a government that is absolutely committed to increasing the skill sets of the people of Victoria to ensure that when businesses need access to a skilled workforce those businesses will have the greatest opportunity to get access to those skilled workers.

When it comes to investing in our infrastructure, specifically our transport infrastructure, we have the Regional Growth Fund to hang onto. The Regional Growth Fund, by the way, happens to be just short of twice the amount of investment that the previous government had on the table as it ran towards the last election. It can say whatever it likes, but the Regional Growth Fund is just short of double the amount of money that the Labor Party had on the table for regional development as it ran towards the last election. It can criticise the Regional Growth Fund all it likes, but the fact is that it is just about double.

When the former Treasurer, Mr Lenders, stands up in here and says we are going to spend the bulk of the Regional Growth Fund on interface councils, he knows that to be an out-and-out lie. He knows we have dealt with the interface councils in legislation: firstly, to avoid discrimination against a worthwhile project that may happen to sit across the road from another local government area; and secondly, because when we run projects like natural gas extensions and the like we need to take them through an interface council before we can enter regional Victoria. The former Treasurer and the former Minister for Regional and Rural Development have hooked onto this little fact and have tried to make something out of it that they know to be totally incorrect and non-factual.

It is a fantastic credit to the Deputy Premier, Mr Ryan, who is also the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, that we have this \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. It is double the investment that the Labor Party had on the table as it went to the last election. We are very proud that we are going to do it.

We are doing things in terms of regional development; we are doing things in the city. We have just pulled off an achievement; True Foods is moving to Maryborough and will employ up to 200 people in its factory on the old Nestlé site. I am sure Ms Pulford is aware of that site. She would have been there a number of times

representing the people of Maryborough. I am sure Ms Tierney is well associated with the Nestlé site. True Foods will be employing up to 200 local people from some of our lowest socioeconomic areas, and that will be another tick for the work Regional Development Victoria is doing in conjunction with Mr Ryan and the work we are doing to assist every Victorian to fulfil their right to have a job. We will be assisting all towns that have had job losses. We will assist with skill packages, getting more investment into industrial estates and having more industries and businesses which have the ability to further increase job opportunities in those areas. If we can assist with job creation, then we will be helping as much as we possibly can.

Any member who puts a motion in front of the Chair that implies the question ‘Where is your plan?’ is totally out of sync, because we are already working and producing in a far better way than the previous government ever did.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ambulance services: response times

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. Is the minister aware that on the night of Monday, 15 August, and into the early hours of Tuesday, 16 August, approximately 70 of Melbourne’s ambulances were unavailable to be dispatched to emergencies across Melbourne, primarily due to the ramping and waiting periods throughout Melbourne’s hospital network?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question, and I note that ramping is an issue in our hospitals. This has been an issue that has existed in our hospitals for some time and which got far worse under the previous government. Under the stewardship of Daniel Andrews, the former Minister for Health who is now the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I have got to say he hid the data. He would not release the ramping data. The ramping data has now been released, and it is released regularly. It will take some time to repair the damage left by 11 years of Labor. There is no question that in our system the interface between hospitals and our ambulance system is a significant concern. There is no question it will take a long time to deal with it. It will

take a long time to deal with the problems that have been left by the administration of Mr Jennings and Daniel Andrews.

It is true that the Auditor-General looked at our ambulance service, and he identified a number of the problems with ramping. He identified the developing problem that has been left by the unsophisticated merger of the ambulance services. The 11 years of damage done by Labor to our ambulance service will take some time to repair. There is no question it will take some time to repair the 11 years of damage done by Daniel Andrews.

I say to Mr Jennings that I am aware that this week there have been a number of instances of ramping in our system. They are being addressed, and they need to be addressed. I make the point that this government inherited a system in which the details of ramping were hidden by the last government. Daniel Andrews would not release ramping data; he refused point blank to release ramping data, so the right of the opposition to point the finger or criticise is simply not there.

Supplementary question

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — It sounded to me as if the minister was doing his best to acknowledge that there were 70 ambulances unavailable on Monday night, but he tried to blame the government which has not been in charge of the system since November of last year. As he is the minister responsible for the service this year, and as he is the minister who has been responsible for nine months, can he confirm that 30 emergency calls were not responded to by the ambulance service on Monday night because of the unavailability of those 70 ambulances?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I can confirm that the state of the ambulance service left by Daniel Andrews was terrible. I can confirm that the failed merger of the ambulance services has left damage that will take some time to deal with. I indicate the government is carefully working with Ambulance Victoria through the difficulties and challenges that have been left to us. It is true that this week has been a challenging week for the ambulance service. It is true that ramping is an ongoing problem. I make the point that this government is the first government to regularly declare the ramping statistics. We will continue to do that, and that will help each of our health services and Ambulance Victoria to deal with the challenge of ramping.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ageing. I ask: can the minister inform the house what impact the commonwealth government's carbon tax will have on Victorian health services and whether there is any compensation being offered?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question. It is clear that the proposed commonwealth government carbon tax will have a significant impact on the health sector. Whether you are opposed to a carbon tax or in favour of a carbon tax, there ought to be compensation for Victoria. Victoria is going to be hit hardest; it is going to be hit earliest.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Pakula is Labor first and Victorian second. It is time he stood up.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I say to members on my left that that is just too noisy. I am not sure how Hansard staff can cope with that sort of a barrage. The minister to continue.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — There will be a significant impact of the proposed carbon tax on Victorian hospitals and the health-care system. It is important that Victorians are prepared to advocate to the federal government to say, 'Look, if you are going to introduce this carbon tax, you need to compensate Victorian hospitals; you need to make sure that surgeries are not cancelled'.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — What about the direct action model?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — You are Labor first and Victorian second. It is about time you stood up and indicated that Victoria deserves compensation.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, the Leader of the Government knows well that he should be directing his response through the Chair and should not point aggressively across to this side of the chamber.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — On the point of order, President, I was clearly being provoked and I was responding directly to interjections. It is true that Mr Pakula is Labor first and Victorian second.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! If Mr Pakula wishes to be with us for the remainder of question time, he might take into account when I am standing on my feet, as might other members.

To start with, interjections are unruly and are not technically within the bounds of the parliamentary proceedings. Whilst they are tolerated, I do not encourage the minister to respond directly to those interjections. Mr Leane is correct in saying that proceedings should be directed through the Chair. There are good reasons for that, as we all know. The minister's answer was otherwise consistent with the way he was being challenged in some of those interjections. The minister to continue, but members of the chamber might be mindful that these proceedings are being televised.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The member's question is a fair question, and a carbon tax will have a heavy impact on key hospitals. Costs would increase by more than \$257 000 at Box Hill Hospital, by \$136 000 at Casey Hospital, by \$171 000 at Maroondah Hospital, by at least \$428 000 at the Royal Children's Hospital, by \$758 000 at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and by \$1.228 million at the Austin Hospital. These are significant impacts of the direct cost, which is to say nothing of the indirect costs through increased supply costs and the increased costs of services and goods that come to those hospitals.

I have to say it is about time that people understood there is going to be a significant impact on our health sector, on Victorian hospitals and on Victorian health care in general, yet there is no compensation offered by the commonwealth government. The Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and the Labor Party have not been prepared to stand up for our hospitals. There will be less opportunity to deal with the problems that patients present with if hospitals have to pay the costs without compensation for the additional carbon tax impost. This is a tax on health.

When John Howard introduced the GST, he made health care GST free; people could claim back the rebates. But when it comes to the carbon tax proposed by the commonwealth, it is not carbon-tax free; health will have a carbon tax imposed on it. Every health-care provider will pay more and every health-care provider will push up their costs to the community. Public hospitals will not be compensated unless we find additional sources of revenue. The commonwealth is planning to impose this tax. If the commonwealth imposes this additional tax on the community, it will need to think of ways to compensate the health-care sector.

The Austin will be paying more than \$1.2 million in extra costs for electricity and gas, and that is just the direct costs at the Austin. The indirect costs will push that up even more. The compensation from Julia Gillard is zero, and the silence from Daniel Andrews and Labor is deafening.

Shire of Nillumbik: land rezoning

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy. Earlier I provided Mr Guy with a copy of a petition that has been put to Nillumbik Shire Council relating to the rezoning of 679 acres of land in an area east of Diamond Creek. Can the minister tell me if he is familiar with this proposal, and whether he has received any representations on it himself?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I note that some weeks ago Mr Barber himself presented a petition to this Parliament which was in favour of a rezoning of land, something quite strange for the Australian Greens. I have not received any notification of this petition, and I suspect that people are fully entitled to petition their council. If the Nillumbik Shire Council wishes to make any decision in relation to the zoning of the land, it will.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — On that issue, the minister has established a process detailed in his 'Putting the facts straight on planning process' media release of Saturday, 30 July, whereby councils can seek from him the establishment of an advisory committee where other areas of green wedge land could be put up for rezoning. In that the minister stated that no land parcels will be directed for inclusion by the minister or any external party. I gather then that the minister can make a commitment to me — and no doubt to Nillumbik council, which will be interested — that if it rejects this petition, which it seems almost certain to do, he will not then override the council and put this parcel forward for rezoning through any other process.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I restate for Mr Barber's clarity and for the clarity of the Australian Greens — —

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I will get Mr Lenders a box of tissues next week if he is that pent up and crying. I say to Mr Barber that the only people who can make a change or suggestion to a growth boundary outside a growth area are the councils.

Carbon tax: manufacturing industry

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations. Can the minister outline to the house what impact a carbon tax will have on manufacturing in Victoria?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I thank the member for his ongoing interest in this issue. Victoria will be hit first and hardest under the Gillard government's plan to introduce a carbon tax on the manufacturing sector. Victoria's manufacturers, who are facing multiple challenges in a tough global environment, are entitled to ask why the federal government is proposing to make life harder for us than it already is. We know manufacturing is facing intense overseas competition, a high Australian dollar and high domestic interest rates. What is the Prime Minister's answer? It is to add a further impost on business by introducing another tax. As the Premier has said, the task of growing Victoria's economy and creating new jobs is being made far more challenging by the introduction of the carbon tax.

Why is the Prime Minister not listening to the concerns of business? We know that just last week the managing director of AME Systems, an automotive industry manufacturer in Ararat, said the carbon tax was the sort of charge against a business from which it cannot recover. BHP Billiton's chief has said the Gillard government's carbon tax is a tax on exports that could affect investment and is a tax that competing jurisdictions do not have.

Let us just jump on to the retailers for a moment. The Australian Retailers Association said the carbon tax would add insult to retail injury and that retailers are expecting consumers to spend less —

Ms Pulford — On a point of order, President, the member's question was about manufacturing, not retail. I would urge the minister to answer the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! As I indicated yesterday, I am obviously not in a position to tell ministers exactly how to answer their questions. My concern regarding some of the comments that might be made in answers is if the minister is developing a theme that is running counter to what the question was, but it is perfectly okay in my view for Mr Dalla-Riva to refer to the retail industry as part of an answer that is obviously also focusing on manufacturing. In my view there is a significant nexus between retailing and the manufacturing industry, as the supplier to the retail

industry, so from that point of view the minister's answer is within court at this stage.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — That point of order just demonstrates the lack of understanding by Labor members that when you manufacture something, some of it goes into retail shops. But they would not know that!

Can I just say that even Labor's traditional blue-collar base is far from happy with the lack of common sense shown by the federal government towards key industry sectors such as manufacturing. The leader of the New South Wales Labor Party, John Robertson, told colleagues on 9 August that they will never hear him publicly support a carbon tax, but of course that was before the factional heavyweights put him on the rack. Do we see any sign of a similar breakout of democracy or policy integrity on the Labor benches here in Victoria? No! Whatever they may think privately of this poorly conceived and badly timed tax, none of those opposite have the courage to speak out against the Prime Minister's stubborn refusal to reconsider or to speak up for the interests of Victoria or its vital industries.

Mr Lenders — President, the point of order I raise is that of relevance and the minister's administrative responsibility. He received a question on government administration, which in itself has a question mark attached to it, seeing that he has responsibility for very few acts. But more to the point on relevance to Victoria, he is now running a commentary on what an opposition in another state thinks of a hypothetical piece of commonwealth legislation. What I ask you, President, is to hold the minister to talking about Victorian government administration and not debating what an opposition leader in another state may or may not think of federal administration. I ask you to hold him to Victorian government administration.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I uphold the point of order to the extent that I believe the minister had entered into debate on this matter. I am not going to judge the content specifically raised by the Leader of the Opposition, but it did occur to me that the minister was debating his answer rather than perhaps providing an answer which I regarded as relevant to the question that was asked. The minister to continue, and he might reflect on those comments.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — With respect for your ruling, President, I also understand that this morning we have been hearing from Mr Lenders that he believes we have been going to too many round table meetings. We have been listening to business concerns,

yet he stands up and says, 'We do not want you to listen to what businesses are saying'. I will tell the house what they are saying. Businesses are saying the carbon tax as proposed by the Gillard government is not helpful to business confidence. It is especially not helpful in the trade competing sectors of the economy.

We know the manufacturing sector here in Victoria is suffering because of this carbon tax impost. The feedback I am getting, which Mr Lenders should be listening to and Mr Somyurek should be understanding, is that this will be an added impost on business. In the dairy industry, for example, it has been said there will be a loss of 17 per cent of annual income as a result of the tax. The most common complaint that I hear from business is Labor's lack of understanding about the sector; it just does not understand the impact that this will have.

Ambulance services: response times

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I take it that his answer to my first question today confirms that approximately 70 per cent of Melbourne's ambulance services were unavailable to respond to emergencies on Monday night of this week. Does he have anything to say to Victorian patients about the actions he will be taking to decrease the strain on the hospital system which saw the Alfred, Austin, Cabrini and Dandenong Valley hospitals being on bypass on Monday of this week? What does he say to the patients about the actions he will be taking about them spending many hours in ambulances waiting to be admitted to emergency departments in Melbourne metropolitan hospitals this week?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — The member is right to point to ramping as a serious problem in the Victorian health system. There is no question that the impact of hospital-ambulance interface issues is significant, and there is no doubt that there have been some significant challenges for Ambulance Victoria this week. Equally the history of this is that the previous government left Ambulance Victoria in a terrible state. The deterioration — —

An honourable member — What are you going to do about it?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — It is important to provide the background to this in responding to the precise question that the member has asked.

Mr Jennings — It is a nine-month background.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I take up the point of the interjection. After 11 years of Labor, a botched merger in 2008 by the then Minister for Health, Daniel Andrews, the effects of which we are still feeling, the massive deficits that Ambulance Victoria faced, the massive impact on the workforce and the massive problems that were left in ambulance response times, we have put in place a \$151 million ambulance package through the budget this year — —

Mr Jennings — How much of that is spent?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — A lot of it is being spent year by year over the next four years. The money was allocated as per our election promises to deal with the problem, to lift the number of paramedics, to deal with the workforce issues in Ambulance Victoria, to support ambulance paramedics and to support Ambulance Victoria. As part of that process we have put in place an honest declaration of the amount of ramping so that instead of having hidden data — secrets that were left by the previous minister, who would not honestly say how many ambulances were ramped, would not indicate the impact and tried to hide the facts — we will declare the data. It is up there on the website now, and you can see which ambulances — —

Mr Jennings — Not on Monday.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Quarterly data comes through on ambulance ramping. It is up on the website in the regular way. There is real-time data about ambulance bypass of emergency departments — —

Mr Jennings — Is it real time?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — It is real time. If you look now, you can see which emergency department is on bypass and which is on the hospital early warning system. This was also data that was not declared by the previous government, which sought to hide that data. This government is now working with Ambulance Victoria and hospitals on the challenges at the interface between them. It is working to support the ambulance workforce, it is working to support our qualified paramedics and it is working to get the best result possible.

I am not pretending for 1 minute that it will be easy to undo 11 years of damage, including the botched merger left by Daniel Andrews. He should understand, and the community should fully understand, the challenges that this government has inherited. It will take time to repair the damage. We have brought the money forward in the budget this year. The programs are being implemented. We are supporting the ambulance service, we are supporting the highly qualified paramedics who have

such an important role, and we are working with our hospitals, but nobody should be under any illusion about the challenges and difficulties facing our ambulance service, given the mess left by Daniel Andrews.

Supplementary question

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The minister is doing his best to indicate that he is concerned, and he is doing his best to indicate that there is in fact a problem. What he has not identified on one occasion in his answers to the questions I have asked him up until now — but I invite him to — is what action he is taking, when he will take that action and when resources will get to Ambulance Victoria and into hospitals to deal with this interface issue that causes the blockage that means patients are not receiving care in real time in Victoria this week.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Let me be clear with the member and with the community: we have inherited a significant problem. We have brought forward money in this year's budget, including additional resources for hospitals and for Ambulance Victoria. The \$151 million ambulance package that was brought forward, the additional mobile intensive care ambulance support that was promised and is being — —

Mr Jennings — What does 'bringing forward' mean?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — What it means is that the budget brings forward money. Mr Jennings has been a minister, so I think he understands this. Over time, each year we bring it forward — —

Mr Jennings — The question relates to when you will spend it, where you will spend it, how you will spend it and who knows you are spending it.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Ambulance Victoria understands that it has additional resources this year. It is working through the bringing forward of additional — —

Mr Jennings interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I think Mr Jennings understands very well that it takes time to train paramedics, it takes time to do the work and it takes time to work on the interface with hospitals. After 11 years of damage, and since the botched merger in 2008, Daniel Andrews has left a terrible legacy, and we are repairing it.

Housing: affordability

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Matthew Guy, and I ask: can the minister inform the house of how the Baillieu government is acting to cut red tape in planning, which will have a direct impact on Melbourne's housing affordability crisis, and are there any other threats to Melbourne's housing affordability?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I begin by thanking my good friend and colleague Mr Ondarchie for his poignant question in relation to housing affordability in Melbourne. On this side of the house we take housing affordability seriously, and we take solving the housing affordability crisis left to us by the previous government very seriously. That is why I recently moved to act on housing lots under 300 square metres to remove the need for permit applications under a range of circumstances in order to bring forward those homes on smaller lots in growth areas sooner. It is complementary to a range of initiatives that this government has put in place in just nine months.

We have established a housing affordability unit, reduced stamp duty and brought forward land releases across the metropolitan area. We have a process in place that is independent of logical inclusions, supported by, I might add, the member for Monbulk in the Assembly, a member of Labor's shadow cabinet. We have work-in-kind agreements in place, in law, so that we can negotiate infrastructure sooner in growth areas than would necessarily have been realised under the previous government, a program opposed by the Labor member for Brighton — or I should say Broadmeadows — in the Assembly, who has no idea about why the necessity for infrastructure is important for the outer suburbs.

One year ago this week the Prime Minister said, 'There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead'. It was a year ago this week that the federal Treasurer, Mr Swan, said, 'Certainly what we reject is the hysterical allegation that somehow we are moving towards a carbon tax'. A year, let alone a week, is a long time in politics. One year later we now have studies — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, President, the minister is clearly debating the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not sure I would accept that it is a debate yet, but Mr Leane is right in that if the minister continues along this train and

develops this theme without referring directly back to the question that was asked, and presumably the cost impacts on housing affordability, then the minister would be debating the question. But I am sure the minister is about to return to that particular information.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Thank you, President, for that guidance. I would like to inform the chamber of the whopping great impact that a carbon tax will have on affordability in Melbourne, because it is extremely important. This government is doing everything it can to combat a housing affordability crisis left by a government which had its head in the sand for the last 11 years around housing affordability. The HIA (Housing Industry Association) has forecast that the carbon tax proposed by the federal government will add \$7000 to the cost of the average home. For the 17 500 dwellings that were built in Melbourne last year, that would take over \$120 million out of the pockets of average working families in this city — \$120 million!

The Australian Labor Party could not care less. It has a top-down, big government, Soviet-style approach to planning, an idea that it knows best about planning, which is to tax the living hell out of you, to tax the life out of you and destroy people's dreams of housing affordability, while the state government is doing everything it can to combat this crisis and get people into homes. We have a Prime Minister who has misled the Australian people. Twelve months ago she said there would be no carbon tax, and now we are getting \$120 million worth of it!

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, I put to you, President, that the minister is in direct breach of your advice. He is now talking about the formulation or non-formulation of policy by a party a year ago, which has nothing to do with government administration or legislation. What he is referring to in his debate are things that may or may not have persuaded a party to form a view. It has nothing to do with government administration. I ask you, President, to bring him back to government administration. This is not a history lesson.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am concerned about some of the background noise that occurs when Mr Guy speaks. I worry about his voice and his blood pressure, and I have to say that background noise sometimes makes it difficult for me to have a proper understanding of some of his comments, and I am sure other members of the chamber are also at a disadvantage because of that noise. Some of the matters that Mr Guy has been canvassing in respect of his answer, particularly the references to the HIA, are obviously directly relevant to the question asked and

are part of his policy administration. The nexus he drew between the decisions that are being made by the federal government and their impact in the state were not too far wide of the mark. Nevertheless, I know Mr Guy does push the boundaries a bit, and I suggest that in continuing his answer for the next 22 seconds he focus mostly on the cost impacts.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Thank you for that ruling, President, and the charitable commentary you gave along with it. As I said, in just nine months this government has got runs on the board in combating housing affordability problems. All the federal Labor government and the Labor Party have to show is a tax that will hurt homebuyers and destroy housing affordability.

Hospitals: bed numbers

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Health. With reports coming in from a number of hospitals across Victoria of bed closures, what process and accounting method will the minister use to guarantee that the delivery of new beds this year, which his government has committed to, are in addition to the capacity of the hospital system that his government assumed responsibility for in November 2010?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Actually it was December.

Mr Jennings — The people said November.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The Governor swore ministers in on 2 December; I thought I would just make that small point. The fact is the new government inherited a health system that needs a lot of assistance. We have in place a number of election commitments to work and deliver on to improve the system. We will work hard to do that. We have brought forward many of the policies in this year's budget, including policies to provide additional beds in the system. I think I know where Mr Jennings is going, but the fact is those — —

Mr Jennings — No-one knows where the beds are going.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I make the point that there will be additional resources this year — in fact a 6.7 per cent increase in the acute health output group and a 5.9 per cent increase in the budget to provide \$13 billion towards a strong health system. We will provide additional resources to deliver on our election commitments for additional beds. We indicated that we would provide an additional 100 beds in the period of this financial year, and we will do so.

Supplementary question

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am going to change my supplementary question. Does the minister know how many beds there are in Victorian hospitals so that he can measure the additional beds, and how can the Victorian community not assume that a winter warm ward closure will end up being a bed opening in spring?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — As the member well knows, our health system is managed by independent boards and by individual health services across the state. They are provided with resources, which are negotiated with them through a statement of priorities process under the funding guidelines, as he well understands. The annual reports of each hospital provide the number of beds and the arrangements that are in place. That process will continue. It is an accountable process which will be provided annually. The data will also be provided to the Institute of Health and Welfare in the normal way.

Carbon tax: housing

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Housing. Can the minister inform the house of future cost pressures on Victorian public housing arising from the commonwealth's proposed carbon tax?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing interest in the impact of the carbon tax on vulnerable Victorians. The carbon tax the Gillard government is intending to introduce is going to drive up the cost of living for all Australians. It will also drive up the cost of providing government services. The Gillard government's carbon tax will drive prices higher, which will impact on some of the most vulnerable Victorians. This is a tax that is bad for Victoria, bad for Victorians and particularly bad for the most vulnerable Victorians.

In the housing portfolio the carbon tax will increase the cost of construction and the delivery of utilities such as electricity, water and gas. It will drive up the cost of maintenance and cleaning contracts, and it will also drive up the cost of rates. The Municipal Association of Victoria has said that rates will increase by at least 3 per cent. If you multiply that across 65 000 public housing properties, you will see it is a tremendous increase and a burden on the housing budget that will prevent us from investing money in new housing to house more vulnerable Victorians. All of these extra costs are expected to have a significant impact on the housing budget. Increasing the cost of construction will threaten

our ability to house those who are on the waiting list, and it will threaten the future of vulnerable Victorians.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — I note that Ms Pulford and Mr Pakula do not take this tax seriously. They do not care about vulnerable Victorians. They are only interested in protecting their commonwealth mates. This is a tax that will impact on Victoria's most vulnerable.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — The former Treasurer is obviously very poorly informed. The Office of Housing does pay rates. This will drive up the cost to our budget of the provision of rates and impact on our ability to deliver more public housing in this state. The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, should be ashamed of introducing this tax and of the impact it will have on vulnerable Victorians.

The Victorian government is standing up for Victorians. With international economic uncertainty impacting on the Australian economy so harshly, now is not the time to introduce the cost burden of another tax. Why is the Leader of the Opposition in the other house not standing up for Victorians? Why is Mr Lenders also not standing up for vulnerable Victorians? Why are not all Labor members ringing Julia Gillard and telling her that this is a bad tax? It is bad for Australia, it is bad for Victoria and it is particularly bad for vulnerable Victorians. They are not saying it because, as always, they are putting Labor first and Victoria second.

Hospitals: funding

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister guarantee that the funding he will make available to each and every hospital in Victoria through the service agreement for 2011–12, which he agreed to in his last answer as the statement of priorities, is more in dollar terms than for the agreement in 2010–11?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — What I can say to the member is that the government has allocated more money through the budget to provide for health services. It is true that negotiations will go on with each health service, and I am not going to presage the individual negotiations, but we will be working to see increases in funding for health services across the state.

I want to make the point to the member that in the framing of the budget we faced a number of difficulties, and he will be aware —

Mr Jennings — Carbon tax?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — No. The carbon tax will impact later. During the framing of this year's budget the commonwealth withdrew \$2.5 billion, and it withdrew another \$1.6 billion in activity level through the GST. I do not blame the commonwealth directly for that, but the impact of the \$2.5 billion reflects its decision to penalise Victoria and to land a hit on the state. It means that Victoria will have less funding by \$4.1 billion over the forward estimates period. I make the point that that will mean health service budgets will grow by a lesser amount than many would have wished to see. Health service budgets will grow by a lesser amount than every Victorian and every member of this house would have liked to have seen.

The government is determined to ensure that health services get the best possible result. The opposition ought be prepared to criticise the federal government and to support the state government in its attempts to make sure we get a fairer deal on the GST so Victorians are not penalised. The fact is that the state government's budget this year has seen an increase in the acute health output group of 6.7 per cent. It has actually seen a significant increase in resources, but it could have been even greater if we had not had the unilateral withdrawal of money by the commonwealth government, which will impact on the state's budget over the forward estimates period.

Supplementary question

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I notice that the minister did not guarantee that each and every health service across Victoria will receive an increase in actual dollar terms from last year to next year. Can he guarantee that no Victorian hospital service will be forced to conclude an agreement which will mean it is funded to perform fewer treatments in 2011–12 than it was funded to perform in 2010–11?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — As the member well understands, these are negotiations with health services about budget and outcome, and we will work through that process with each and every health service across the state. The department will work that through with each and every health service. What is clear is that we will seek more activity from each health service. I make the point that there is more money being provided through the budget this year. We will seek additional funding for health services and put in

place a regime that will see a greater level of activity across the state.

Carbon tax: aviation industry

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, Mr Rich-Phillips. I ask: can the minister inform the house of the aviation industry's concerns regarding the commonwealth government's carbon tax?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry) — I thank Mr O'Donohue for his question and for his interest in this issue. There is no doubt that the aviation industry will be heavily impacted upon by the Gillard government's carbon tax. It is an industry which has always operated on very narrow margins, and the impost from the commonwealth threatens to further undermine the viability of those businesses. We have already seen Qantas announce that the annual impact of the carbon tax on its operations will be of the order of \$110 million to \$115 million. Qantas has indicated that it will have to pass on those costs to its customers. We have seen Virgin Australia indicate that the cost of the carbon tax on its operations will be of the order of \$45 million annually, which will also be passed on to its customers.

The Prime Minister in announcing her package indicated that the carbon tax package would be targeted at the 500 largest polluters, but the reality for the aviation industry is quite different. What the commonwealth is proposing for the aviation industry is a new fuel levy which will see a substantial increase, a near doubling, in the level of commonwealth excise on jet fuel and avgas, which will have a major impact on the operating efficiencies of companies in that sector.

We have seen a number of representations from the smaller end of the industry raising concerns about this. The Regional Aviation Association of Australia has said in relation to the fuel impost:

These costs will then be passed on to regional communities and will also threaten marginal regional routes, possibly jeopardising the air services to some towns.

Encouraging people to jump in their cars and drive long distances instead of using one of the regional operators seems a very poor environmental outcome.

The Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia has also expressed concern about the impact of the carbon tax on the aerial agricultural industry. It notes in its statement:

The aviation carbon tax cannot result in behaviour change as the industry is already using the most fuel-efficient engines in the most effective manner possible and there are no certified biofuels or alternative certified engines available.

The point is that the industry is already operating efficiently. The carbon tax impost will not allow the industry to operate any more efficiently, and this will be a major direct cost impact on the industry. Despite the Prime Minister's commitments around the carbon tax being imposed on the 500 largest polluters, the reality is that the mechanism being used to impose the carbon tax on the aviation industry is going to flow through to the smallest flying school operator, the smallest charter operator and the smallest aerial agricultural operator. It is even going to impact on such things as aerial firefighting operations.

This is a bad package for the Victorian economy, it is a bad package for the Australian economy and it is a bad package for the aviation industry.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — In relation to question 675, which I first lodged on 3 May and directed to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change — it is in relation to the issue of permits to destroy wildlife — I am seeking the assistance of the Leader of the Government to expedite the answer. I also seek his assistance in relation to question 718 for the Premier, which is about the funding provided to non-government parties in the Parliament, and question 728 to the Minister for Energy and Resources, via Mr Hall, the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, which relates to the budget for energy efficiency rebates for low-income homes. This has been topical in question time today, but no information is forthcoming from the government when I ask questions about it.

Likewise I seek answers to: question 729, also to the Minister for Energy and Resources, in relation to water-efficiency rebates for low-income home owners; question 731, to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change relating to the commitment of money to the Alpine National Park, an issue of great interest to all of us; and question 733 to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change about the government's intention to proclaim the climate change act and introduce regulations under that act — again this is very topical, but I am not able to get any information from the government on what it might be doing about it.

I also require an answer to question 734 — as of 30 June these questions were all unanswered and we have seen no more come through today — to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change about funding for Parks Victoria, and all members have an interest in that. Question 735 to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security re harvest and haulage contracts for VicForests has not been answered, and nor has question 741 to the Minister for Finance via the Assistant Treasurer, Mr Rich-Phillips, in relation to budget provision for the review of state finances. Question 746 to the Minister for Public Transport, which is about funding allocated to new stations, and question 747 to the Minister for Public Transport, which is about new and extended local bus routes for regional towns, also remain unanswered.

Question 749 was directed to the Minister for Public Transport via the Minister for Planning, who has disappeared momentarily, and asks about the allocation of additional public transport services in the budget. Other questions include question 751, which was again directed to the Minister for Public Transport and is about station upgrades. Question 752 asks about some funding which has been put aside for the Doncaster area rapid transit system; I would like some information about how that is to be spent. At this point we are not even up to the questions that we lodged in May which we have not received answers to yet either.

Question 755 is for the Minister for Public Transport and is about tram and bus shelter funding that was allocated in the budget. I want to know how these shelters will be rolled out, as do many of our constituents, I am sure. Question 756 is for the Minister for Public Transport and is about the feasibility studies for the Melbourne Airport rail link and the Lara to Avalon Airport rail link. I am asking if there will be public consultation associated with those.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr BARBER — I understand Mr Drum finds this tiresome, but it is also tiresome that the business of Parliament continues without us being able to get information.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Barber should ignore the interjections.

Mr BARBER — Question 757 is for the Minister for Public Transport and is about the establishment of a public transport development authority, which was a major initiative of the Greens and coalition parties at the last state election that we are yet to hear about. I

believe my colleagues Ms Pennicuik and Ms Hartland also have some outstanding questions.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President — and mine is a serious point of order — we are still in question time and two ministers have left the house. A number of the issues raised by Mr Barber were for those ministers. The point of order is on the appropriateness of ministers leaving the house during question time.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not in a position to determine what the attendance in the house might be of any member. Ministers obviously need to give consideration to showing courtesy to the house in respect of proceedings, particularly relating to question time. No doubt in further sessions that courtesy may well be considered by ministers.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I am happy to follow these questions through again for the member. I will do so.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — In response to two questions, 728 and 729, which were asked of the Minister for Energy and Resources through me, I give an assurance that I will contact the minister and seek some responses as soon as possible.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I also have a list of questions that are unanswered. They are questions 677 from 5 May for Mr Mulder; 235 from 24 March for Mr Mulder; 678 from 5 March for Mr Mulder; 599, 600 and 793 from 14 June for Mr Mulder; 855 from 14 June for Mr Mulder — —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms HARTLAND — Yes, he does not like to answer any questions of mine. Question 789 from 14 June is for the Attorney-General and question 855 from 16 June is for Mr Mulder. I still have not had any of those questions answered.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Likewise, I will follow those through for the member.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to raise the issue of 17 outstanding questions to which I am still waiting for answers. I remind the house that the latest number of questions on notice on the notice paper is 2942. The earliest ones that I am still looking for answers to are questions 139 and 140 to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. They date back to March, as do questions 167, 170, 172, 173 and 175, which are questions to the Minister for Agriculture

and Food Security regarding aerial baiting and duck shooting.

I am also looking for answers to questions 684, 685 and 688, and they are questions to the Minister for Corrections regarding sentencing, which is an issue coming up for debate in the Parliament. I would like some answers to those questions before those debates commence. Question 692 is a question to the Minister for Crime Prevention regarding figures on crime prevention in the state of Victoria. Questions 703, 704 and 705 are for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. There is a question for the Minister for Youth Affairs regarding funding for the FReeZA program. I note the Premier was out last week launching his live music report and talking about the FReeZA program, which seems to be lacking funding, so I would like an answer to that question and also to questions 710, 711 and 714.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Likewise, I will follow up on those questions.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — Yesterday I again raised questions 108 and 114 from 1 March. I asked yesterday whether Mr Davis would perhaps provide me with a response today. I am just getting to my feet to find out whether Mr Davis has an update for me on questions 108 and 114 from 1 March.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have communicated with the relevant ministers. I have followed that through. I will follow it through further, but I do make the point that no. 351 in the last Parliament was put on the notice paper on 23 May 2007 for the then Minister for Public Transport, Mr Pakula. That is more than three years and he chose not to answer.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I was not minister in May 2007.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — But the member was a minister for a long period.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In respect of a point of order raised by Mr Lenders, I have indicated that whilst I cannot direct members on their attendance in the house I believe that ministers should remain until the end of question time as a courtesy to the house. Further to the remarks I made in response to that point of order, I point out that paragraph (1) of standing order 8.11, which refers to the procedure when answers to questions on notice are not provided, suggests that ministers should remain in the chamber for this part of the process. As Mr Lenders rightly said, questions in respect of answers that have not been provided are part

of question time procedure. Under the standing order it is anticipated that ministers will be in attendance. It states:

- (1) If a minister does not furnish an answer to a question on notice within 30 days of the asking of that question and does not, within that period, provide to the member who asked the question an explanation satisfactory to that member as to why the answer has not been provided —
 - (a) at the conclusion of the normal time for answering questions on notice on any day after that period the member may ask the relevant minister for an explanation —

that obviously anticipates that the ministers would still be in attendance in the house at that point —

- (b) at the conclusion of any such explanation the member may move, without notice, ‘That the Council take note of the explanation’.

Under that standing order, notwithstanding that I am not in a position to direct members on their attendance in the house, there is certainly an expectation that ministers will be in the house for this part of the proceedings. It is an extension of the question time period.

Sitting suspended 1.05 p.m. until 2.08 p.m.

GOVERNMENT: PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate on motion 138 moved by Mr Lenders. I will urge members to support the motion.

Mr Lenders gave a comprehensive contribution about the failure of the government —

Hon. D. M. Davis — I thought it was patchy and incomplete, actually.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — He gave a comprehensive contribution about the failure of the government to outline plans for jobs in the state. Mr David Davis is a hit and run merchant — he interjects then leaves.

Hon. D. M. Davis — I will come back.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — No, you are welcome to leave, Mr Davis. It was a comprehensive contribution which also outlined the government’s failings in regional Victoria. I think the form of the government on the question of jobs was apparent very early in its term of government. Its families statement did not contain

anything about jobs; in the state budget there was no mention of jobs. Ms Asher, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, said in her contribution when responding to a question from the opposition that it is not the responsibility of the government to create jobs.

We saw more of the government’s form, I have to say, during question time today. We saw the setting up of one of the greatest blame-shifting exercises we are likely to see in this state in a very long time — a massive abdication of responsibility. Before the election we saw all of those glossy photos of the now Premier under the banners ‘Fixing the problems’ and ‘Ted Baillieu will fix the problems’. We have not heard that much about fixing the problems since the election. What we are hearing now from the government is, ‘It’s not our fault’. The message before the election was ‘Fixing the problems’; now the message is ‘It’s not our fault’. The first thing we heard from the government after the election was, ‘There are all of these black holes’. All of those black holes are bogus. Then at budget time, we heard all about lapsing programs, as though they are some new creation, that the new government will never have a lapsing program and that every program this government funds will be funded in perpetuity. We had that big —

Mr P. Davis — Take ownership, be accountable, be responsible and accept responsibility.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Acting President, I am being roundly provoked by my colleague on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, the chair, Mr Davis.

Mr Lenders — Just give him some free firewood, and he will be fine.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Indeed, Mr Lenders, with some free firewood he may be able to build himself a fire, put his Explorer socks up in front of it and calm down.

After the election it was the bogus black holes, then it was the newfangled lapsing programs and now it is all about carbon tax. This government jumps from excuse to excuse about why it has either not delivered on promises or why we ought not blame it if it does not deliver on promises. This government has been in power for only nine months, and already it is setting up the greatest justification that I have seen as to why it might not deliver.

We heard from Mr Guy, ‘We might bring down housing affordability, but if we don’t, it’s not my fault; it’s the fault of the carbon tax’. We heard from

Mr David Davis that he is going to improve health services, but he says, 'If I don't, it's not my fault; it's the fault of the carbon tax'. We heard from Mr Rich-Phillips, who said, 'If our promises on aviation are not delivered, it's not my fault; it's the fault of the carbon tax'. We heard from Mr Dalla-Riva on jobs, not just today but in his response —

Mr Finn interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — We hear from him, not just today, Mr Finn, but in his response to every question from opposition members about jobs, saying, 'It's not my fault; it's the carbon tax'.

Mr Finn interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Never mind the fact that right now there is no carbon tax. It is very difficult to understand how the carbon tax can be at fault for job losses at SPC Ardmona, how a carbon tax can be at fault for job losses at Heinz or how a carbon tax can be at fault for all these things on which the government is not delivering, when there is no carbon tax.

It seems the government's slogan has gone from 'Fix the problems' to 'We'll try to fix the problems, but if we don't, it's not our fault'. That is an unbelievable abdication of responsibility, and I have to say that if it is the government's position with regard to housing, aviation, manufacturing and health that there is nothing we can do because of the carbon tax, it might as well give up and let us go back over there. We reckon there is a role for state government, and we do not just throw up our hands and say federal government policy is preventing us from reaching our goals.

State government has a role to play, and yesterday in this place we were treated to a series of notices of motion from Mrs Peulich about what influence the trade union movement might have on policy development. Far be it from me to anticipate debate, so I will not go to the substance of Mrs Peulich's motions. I am sure those motions will be brought on for debate at a time in the not-too-distant future so that we can debate them fulsomely. However, as part of the narrative around those notices of motion there was a suggestion that a number of us on this side of the house are members of trade unions, as if that is somehow meant to be a badge of shame that we should wear and that we ought to be embarrassed about.

Mr P. Davis — I was a member of the Australian Workers Union and proud of it.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Good for you, Mr Davis. I am sure that in your cattle-wrangling days you would have been a member of the Australian Workers Union.

Mr Ramsay — Where do you sit on the Electrical Trades Union elections, Mr Pakula?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Ramsay asked me where I sit on the Electrical Trades Union elections. I am inclined not to be diverted, but frankly it is not a matter I have given any attention to. It is a matter for members of the ETU, of which I am not one.

The general query that was raised by Mrs Peulich in the narrative around her notices of motion was in relation to what influence unions had on Labor Party policy. Unions are not associated entities, they are actually affiliates of the Labor Party. One of the things that unions expect of Labor governments is that we will create jobs. It is one of the things that unions, on behalf of their members, make clear to us — that is, they think that one of the great responsibilities of Labor governments is to create jobs in the food manufacturing and heavy manufacturing sectors, in the child-care sector, in education and in health. It is one of the reasons we responded so quickly to the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008.

I have heard speakers from the government talk about the fact that Minister Theophanous's manufacturing plan was late. The fact of the matter is that when the GFC hit in 2008 not only was the manufacturing statement in place but it was also swung into action with extraordinary expedition.

Mr Finn — Two and a half years later!

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — The GFC hit in 2008, and the manufacturing statement had been released at that time. Some of the things that the manufacturing statement contained were the Industry Transition Fund, the Victorian industry participation policy, all manner of industry support packages and the transport infrastructure manufacturing scheme, which was in the budget as well. What those things meant was that the government of the day was able to respond aggressively with industry assistance for the car industry, for Ford at Geelong and for component manufacturers. We were able to use the Industry Transition Fund, in collaboration with the Australian Industry Group and the unions, to ensure that jobs were protected.

In relation to the influence of the trade union movement during that time, it would have been good if some members of the then opposition could have sat around the table of the Victorian Industry Manufacturing Council or at the Industry Capability Network, where

unions and employers worked together both to lobby me and to work with me to ensure that targeted industry assistance was provided to the manufacturing sector to get it through GFC no. 1. That is how we were able, through the Industry Transition Fund, to support jobs in the car industry. This was happening at the same time that Liberal Party luminaries like Tim Wilson and Jeff Kennett were writing newspaper articles saying that we should let the car industry go, stop pumping money into the industry and let it stand or fall on its own two feet.

Mr Finn — The carbon tax will kill it.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — That is your party's form on the automotive industry, Mr Finn.

Mr Finn — The carbon tax will kill it anyway. Do you support it?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Finn, you really are a one-trick pony. You are a reflection of your federal leader, Mr Abbott, for whom every issue, every problem and every question can be answered by just repeating, like a parrot, that the carbon tax is the answer.

Mr Finn — Do you support it?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I am talking about action that the former government took on jobs, which stands in stark contrast to the attitude and activities of this government. Rather than taking action on jobs this government uses the carbon tax as a cloak under which to hide and to excuse its inaction.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I ask that comments be directed through the Chair and that interjections, which are disorderly, be kept to a minimum. I am mindful that there was robust debate before lunch when the roles were reversed. I know there are competent members on all sides who can handle themselves appropriately. I ask that all comments be through the Chair.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I thank the Acting President for his vote of confidence, and for my part I undertake to direct my comments through the Chair.

Apart from the Industry Transition Fund, which was used by the previous government to support jobs in the automotive sector and in the supply chain, thousands of defence jobs were protected and created through the use of targeted industry support. We saw the situation where jobs were going to go at BAE Systems Australia in Williamstown, but our government saved and

secured them, not just through financial support but through aggressive lobbying of a federal government that at one point wanted to send those jobs somewhere else. We had the local content procurement requirements, which we enhanced through the manufacturing statement. That allowed us to get an outcome on the tram procurement of 50 per cent local manufacturing content at Bombardier.

These were all aggressive actions that were taken by the previous government to actively support manufacturing and other jobs in our community through an incredibly difficult economic time. We did not just wash our hands of it and say it was not our fault but the fault of the global financial crisis, which is what this government is now doing with the carbon tax. It says it is not its fault; it is because of the carbon tax. We saw that we had a global financial crisis and that we had to deal with it. We were not prepared to just allow ourselves to be the victims of circumstance. We were not prepared to simply say it was all about the feds. We understood there were things that we could do at a state level, and we went and did them. We were open at the time about the fact that the things that we did were not going to be the be-all and end-all, that they were not going to be the panacea and that they were not going to immunise us from the impact of the global financial crisis. Nevertheless, we saw that there were things we could do as a state government to make the situation better than it otherwise would have been, and that is what we went and did.

In government we worked with the Victorian Freight and Logistics Council to improve the options and the ability to ship grain and other products from country ports to the port of Melbourne and other ports. We brought in the subsidy for the carriage of bulk grain that allowed organisations like Ken Wakefield's terminal in Merbein to still be operating today. It would have been closed up two years ago if our government had not aggressively intervened. I acknowledge the fact that those subsidies have been retained.

It is absolutely incorrect for Mr Drum to say our government allowed rail freight infrastructure to rot. Our government repaired all the gold lines and all the silver lines in accordance with the recommendations of Tim Fischer's review, and that was after we had to fix the damage of the Pacific National lease where there was no maintenance requirement for 15 years and we had to buy back the rail. We went on to upgrade the gold and silver lines. The point of all that is that there is a role for targeted government intervention in times of economic difficulty. We are not market fundamentalists like some of those opposite.

Mr P. Davis — You do not believe in the market?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I said we are not market fundamentalists. Mr Davis would have been one of those that I would have actually given a pass to. I would not have believed him to be a market fundamentalist. I know our friends in The Nationals, the agrarian socialists, are not market fundamentalists. They are all for targeted intervention, so long as it benefits their particular constituencies — and they are more than keen to socialise the losses where necessary.

However, what now exists is in absolute contrast to the actions of the previous government. It was acknowledged universally, certainly by the commonwealth and by all other states and territories, that the former government's submissions to Infrastructure Australia were the most comprehensive, shovel-ready and professionally created submissions that Infrastructure Australia had had in front of it over the last couple of years. That is why we got \$40 million up-front for Melbourne Metro 1. I do not expect we will ever see that from this government. The reason we got the commonwealth to fund the majority of the regional rail link was the quality of the submissions that Infrastructure Australia received from our government.

Mr Drum said in his contribution that when he speaks to businesses they say what they want is infrastructure construction. Too right they do! That is why our government was always ahead of the curve in making sure it had its submissions and its requests for support from the commonwealth in order in a way that enabled it to get more than its fair share of commonwealth support. What do we see now? Infrastructure Australia says it has nothing from the coalition — not a thing, not a single submission. What was the excuse given by the Deputy Premier? He said Infrastructure Australia has run out of dough. Someone needs to tell him that it never had any dough.

Infrastructure Australia is an advisory group that makes recommendations to the commonwealth about which projects ought to be supported. It is not a funding body. It is an advisory body, and people like Mark Birrell, a former member of this place, are members of it. I would have thought members of this government would know that. Members do not need to take my word of for it; it is contained in an article written by Josh Gordon dated 7 July and headed 'Time for inert Baillieu government to get its act together over major projects', which states:

Actually, Infrastructure Australia never had any 'dough' to run out of. Ryan is either poorly informed, or has deliberately misrepresented Infrastructure Australia's role to squirm out of a tight spot.

The Deputy Premier of this state must fundamentally misunderstand Infrastructure Australia's role. To fail to present projects to Infrastructure Australia because you think it has run out of money, when it is not a funding body, is either unbelievably inept or just fundamentally dishonest.

We will not see too many jobs created while the Victorian government allows the New South Wales government to steal a march on it. That is exactly what has happened. I refer to the editorial in the *Age* of 6 July, which states:

The 59 proposals Infrastructure Australia has received this year come from every other —

that is, other than Victoria —

state and territory. Nine are from NSW, where the two-month-old O'Farrell government is supporting submissions by the former Keneally government and is, by comparison with the Baillieu government, immersed in frenetic activity. What is holding Victoria back?

Again, I do not know what the Victorian government is going to say about that. Is it going to say it is the carbon tax holding us back? Is it going to say that lapsing programs are holding us back? Or is it simply the case that the government just has not got its act together?

A situation seems to be emerging where the government is not only inactive but seems to be trying to make a virtue of that inactivity. The narrative coming from government members is that we will not see Ted Baillieu on TV all the time and we will not see them pushing themselves before the cameras, with shovels in the dirt. This is not about the nightly news; it is about actually doing things. For a government that is now nine months old to make a virtue of doing — I cannot use the term I want to use — very little might be fine from a political point of view. It might be that the Liberal Party polling is telling it that what the public wants is to see less of its political leaders, but it is not good enough to have a government that is out of your face but not doing much in an environment where jobs are disappearing and the global economy is teetering on the edge of a second GFC — and let us all hope it does not go there. We have all seen what is going on in Greece, we know what is going on in Spain and Italy, and we know what will happen if the eurozone needs to bail out a few more big economies.

The government needs to understand that its role is to actively get involved, not look for excuses about why it has not fixed the problems or, what is worse, look for excuses about why it may not fix the problems in the years ahead. That is not governing; that is just politicking. The difference between governing and

politicking is that government is about getting in and trying to fix the problems you see before you, trying to anticipate the problems you see coming and putting in place policies to deal with them. I see a government that is more interested in setting up scapegoats and creating an environment in which if things go wrong it has somebody else to blame.

Mr Koch interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Koch asks, ‘Who did we learn from?’. I wonder whether that is an admission from the whip that that is exactly what the government is doing.

I could say much more. The government’s focus needs to be on doing what it said it would do before the election, which was fix the problems, not on spending all its time saying, ‘We haven’t fixed them yet because it was your fault, and we might not fix them in the future because it’ll be someone else’s fault — namely, the federal government’. Certainly there are things the federal government does that influence the ability of the state government to do its job. There are things in the global economy that influence the ability of the state government to deliver on its promises. However, none of that is an excuse for inaction, none of that allows the state government to abdicate its role and none of that should allow the state government to think there are not still strong, meaningful interventions it can make to acquit its responsibilities and make sure it is doing everything it can to do what it said it would do, which was fix the problems, rather than looking for someone to blame for its own inaction.

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — What a delight it is to have the opportunity this afternoon to respond to Mr Pakula, a member for Western Metropolitan Region. I have listened intently to all the contributions during the course of this debate. I thought I should turn to the motion and try to understand what the debate is actually about, because only two speakers I heard today addressed the questions that are raised in the motion. The three speakers from the Labor opposition completely failed to address the motion which the opposition placed on the notice paper, so I remind the house of what it is. The motion reads:

That this house condemns the Baillieu government for —

- (1) failing to outline plans to secure and create jobs in Victoria ...

I will address that substantively in a moment. In addition the motion goes on to list five separate additional matters:

- (2) choosing to cut funding for employment programs, support for apprentices, JobWatch, libraries and child care.

I did not hear any of the speakers from the opposition address part (2) of the motion and the matters of child care, libraries, JobWatch, support for apprentices and employment programs. I heard Mrs Coote, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region, address the question quite substantially. I doubt I could do as much justice to it as she did in responding, but I will get to that in a moment. What I did hear were three contributions from the opposition that were simply Wednesday rants. I recall the criticism I heard from Mr Pakula amongst others who were then in government when opposition motions were put in this house, suggesting that they may have lacked coherence or substance. What I have heard today has frankly been pathetic and a little sad, particularly from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lenders. I say that with all sincerity, and I want to say it on the public record.

In my view the Leader of the Opposition, the former Treasurer and Leader of the Government in this place, is experiencing some difficulty in adjusting to opposition. I relate to that because I have been through that process. The fact is that moving, as Mr Lenders has, from being a government member for all of his parliamentary career until the election in 2010, and having been, as Treasurer, one of the most significant people in the state of Victoria, to being in opposition has been a very difficult transition. I genuinely feel for him because I know how difficult it is to give up the capacity to influence events in government. Having said that, I think Mr Pakula, who is also a little diminished by the fact that he does not have a white car — which Mr Lenders still does, even though he is complaining about government ministers being driven around the state to attend to their duties — is showing some of the same anger. I suggest that those members would make a much better contribution to the Parliament if they got over it.

Mr Lenders and Mr Pakula have invited me to make a contribution that I did not intend to make when the motion was listed. I anticipated that I would be speaking directly to the matters raised in the motion. However, as Mr Pakula particularly, and Mr Lenders also, failed to address those matters, in my contribution I need to respond. This is a debate after all. It is a debate about matters that are being raised by the opposition. Mr Pakula wanted to question my view about the market. I say to Mr Pakula that it is a great indication of the difference in philosophical positions between this side of politics and this side — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — If you want to admit to being a fundamentalist, go for it!

Mr P. DAVIS — I will admit that I believe in something that the Labor Party has clearly totally abandoned. Julia Gillard as Prime Minister has made it quite clear that she has moved back to where she came from, the hard left, in bed with the Greens, who want to socialise the economic levers of Australia. The biggest transformation in the national economy for more than a generation is now occurring under the stewardship of the Labor Party in Canberra, being pushed by the Greens, to which Mr Pakula has signed up — that is, a redistribution of wealth of a magnitude that we cannot comprehend. The transfer of wealth that is going to occur from superannuation investments — from Mr Pakula's superannuation investments, if he has any private investments — and from the investments of people in small business through a new tax that Mr Pakula has signed up to is huge. Mr Pakula has signed up to a new tax that has a starting point of \$450 a year for every taxpayer in Victoria, something of the order of \$2.5 billion from Victoria in the next year and infinitely rising. It will be a redistribution and pork-barrelling like we have never seen before. It is beyond comprehension.

Yes, I believe in the power of the marketplace because, after all, it is what has created the wealth in this country and in Western civilisation. It would be useful for us to be reminded that the first significant thesis on the capitalist system, on the derivation of wealth, on the creation of jobs and employment and on improved incomes was from Adam Smith, as I think we in here would all understand, who in 1776 wrote his great volume *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. That was informed by the great crash of 1772, after which all but 3 of the 30 private banks in Edinburgh failed.

I want to go to something that I happened to see yesterday. It was pointed out to me that I appeared to be a little distracted during question time, and the reason I was distracted was that I was referring to a volume called *The Enlightened Economy* by Joel Mokyr, who has written a thesis on Britain and the Industrial Revolution from 1700 to 1850. In light of Mr Pakula's remarks and in light of the argument that was posited earlier today by the Leader of the Opposition, it would do us well to consider the following summation, which I found interesting:

For much of recorded history, the arch-enemy of economic growth was not population pressure so much as predators, pirates and parasites, often known euphemistically by economists as 'rent seekers', who found it easier to pillage and plunder the work of others than to engage in

economically productive activities themselves. Whether they were the king's or the bishop's tax collectors, highwaymen, corrupt officials, greedy local monopolists, guilds that tightly controlled entry and production, or invading neighbouring armies, aggressive rent seeking often led to the end of the economic activity that brought about growth. In this way growth, in truly dialectical fashion, created the conditions that led to its own demise.

I read that to remind the house that in terms of today's debate about the capacity, role and responsibility of government, it is not the government — the rent seeker — that creates jobs and employment; it is those in the private sector, by making judgements about where they allocate resources. It is their intuitive risk-taking that determines the allocation and reallocation of private resources, and they are best equipped to make decisions about where there will be growth in the economy. It is the capacity of government to distort the economy by imposing a tax on the wealth creators — the people who are creating jobs and employment in the private sector — that will do most harm.

Mr Pakula has criticised the government for inaction — and I will come to that point in a moment, because I can see evidence of a lot of action; all you have to do is see where ministers have been and the announcements they have made — and argued that it should be taking a lead role and somehow creating jobs all over the place from a magic pudding. The reality is that employment growth will come out of the private sector investing and taking risks.

Julia Gillard and Mr Pakula's mob in Canberra, with his support in Victoria, will redistribute wealth in a way that will depress the Australian economy for a generation. I know Mr Pakula has been overseas recently, as have I. All you have to do is get on a plane and fly back to Australia to know just how well off we are. They have made a mess of it in Europe and the United States. Australia is in a strong position comparatively, but in the global climate of economic uncertainty any unnecessary policy decisions made by the federal government in particular, which has the weight in this area, will distort the marketplace to such an extent that we will not be talking about whether we create a few jobs here or there as a collective society but about how many jobs we can save out of the catastrophe that Mr Pakula's lot in Canberra is about to create. The transfer of wealth that we are about to see when the federal Parliament formally passes the legislation will be spoken about for aeons.

I come back to the mover of the motion for a moment. I alluded to the fact that Mr Lenders has been highly critical of the role of the coalition government in

relation to regional Victoria. I cannot understand what the threat of that is. What I know is that the Labor Party's view is that jobs in the Latrobe Valley are dispensable. Those jobs depend on the utilisation of our resource base. Some would argue that Victoria has limited natural resources; I argue that our natural resources are virtually unlimited, but they are constrained by the intervention of government. In this case they will be constrained by the intervention of a carbon tax, which will in effect stifle Victoria's economic activity. As Mr Pakula, who had a former responsibility for this, would know, the Victorian manufacturing industry has survived on the basis of the comparatively cheap cost of electricity derived almost entirely from the Latrobe Valley brown coal resource. That brown coal resource is now at serious risk as a result of federal government policy, which Mr Pakula, who has now left the chamber, has signed up to. He has signed up to that carbon tax, so — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I am still here.

Mr P. DAVIS — He has come back in; I have enticed him to come back in. The motor car manufacturing industry, which Mr Pakula is so keen to protect by transferring any amount of financial support to it — I think that is what he has been implying — is at risk, because it will be difficult to provide and sustain a proper electricity infrastructure base, which is important to manufacturing.

As a minister Mr Pakula had the benefit of enjoying the opportunities to travel around Victoria in a white car, as Mr Lenders did and still does. I cannot understand why Mr Lenders's most substantive argument in the debate today was something to do with motor car envy — is somebody's motor car bigger than his? The question is: is his car not as big as somebody else's? Is it motor car envy? Is there some euphemism here that we should know about? All I can say is that Mr Lenders should get over having lost office and do the job that he is here for — that is, to hold the government to account. I welcome the opposition holding the government to account.

An honourable member — Mr Pakula will get a car soon; he will get it soon.

Mr P. DAVIS — We know there is a message in the wind — come on down! A little bird told me he might not have the right factional support, so he might have to change feet. I do not know how that all works, but I wish Mr Pakula good luck.

In terms of addressing the motion, I do not believe a case in support of this motion has been made by

opposition members in the debate. I thought I might confirm that by addressing some of the matters specifically set out in the text of the motion.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Can I go now?

Mr P. DAVIS — I might throw another bone out! Mr Pakula is provoking me. I want to address one thing: it was implied that ministers had not been attending to their duties. I thought that was a little unfair, because frankly I cannot keep up with the ministers who are coming through my electorate and region. I should probably publicly and privately apologise to Mr Hall. I keep getting notices from him about events where he is making significant government announcements, and I have been unable to get to any of them. I know he has been very busy because I continue to be advised of all of those activities. I am aware of a lot of initiatives in regional Victoria — and I am not going to immediately address matters relating to Melbourne — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — I will take the interjection from Mr Barber, the Leader of the Greens in the Victorian Parliament. By the way, does Mr Barber get a white car? No, he does not; the Greens are not a party. There are only three of them, and to be recognised as a party you need 11 members. Mr Barber probably does not get a motor car, so I am sorry about that! Perhaps he could borrow Mr Lender's white car. Apparently Mr Lenders does not want his chauffeur-driven white car, because he is complaining about ministers having that support.

There have been a number of issues about the forestry industry which are worth commenting on.

Mr Barber — Is that the make-work scheme you have got going down there, digging holes and filling them in?

Mr P. DAVIS — As Mr Barber is interjecting, on 30 June the coalition government announced that it would save Gippsland forestry jobs. The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh, announced that the government would provide \$1.27 million to VicForests to manage a forest restoration and improvement program in East Gippsland from 1 July 2011. That funding is a result of the consequences of government policy that have been introduced over the last decade — —

Mr Barber — Suffering from market forces.

Mr P. DAVIS — No, Mr Barber, it is because of government intervention: progressively removing from

the commercial forestry estate areas that were available for forestry. Therefore the resource base has been so contracted that the estimates by the previous government as to the resource availability were wrong. They were wrong, wrong, wrong. In relation to that, the capacity of the industry to continue to operate was limited because so much of the forest estate was transferred into reserves, therefore becoming unavailable for harvesting. I am pleased to say that with the good work of the member for Narracan in the Assembly, the Parliamentary Secretary for Forestry and Fisheries; the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security; and the government as a whole, steps are being taken to secure the long-term future of the forestry industry in Victoria.

Ministers have been busy all around the state. On 27 June the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Richard Dalla-Riva, formally opened the \$50 million plywood mill in Myrtleford. On Friday, 24 June, the Deputy Premier, the Honourable Peter Ryan, who is also the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, was in the Kiewa Valley to officially open the new Danone Murray Goulburn manufacturing plant at Tangambalanga. That is a \$40 million investment creating up to 100 jobs. On 11 August, Dennis Napthine, the Minister for Regional Cities, announced 30 new jobs for the V/Line maintenance facility in Ballarat. We have had other announcements from regional developments in relation to flood funding which will also boost the creation of jobs.

There is a large degree of activity, but the area I have been most impressed with — and I alluded to Mr Hall's busy schedule earlier — is the active engagement by Mr Hall to ensure that we have a proper skill base in Victoria. I wish to acknowledge and congratulate him for that work. Mr Hall understands, as does the government, that the opportunity for government to assist the private sector in creating employment is in the area of intellectual property — that is, the skills of the people who live in the state. The private sector needs to recruit to support its economic endeavours. To that end, there have been a number of announcements made over recent times by Mr Hall. I wish to formally acknowledge that, and I encourage Mr Hall to make further announcements that will assist with that skill set that we value so highly.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — Thank you very much. I want to very quickly talk to the issue of funding for child care, which is on the list that up to this point no Labor member has thought important enough to address, even though it is part of the substantive motion. It is

something we have heard a lot about in this chamber, and I suspect we might hear a bit more. In short, the chronology of the issue which the motion alludes to is funding of the Take a Break program. We know that funding of child care is a federal government responsibility, and the Take a Break program was an example of state and federal governments working together to deliver practical solutions for parents who did not need full-time care.

Initially, the program was funded 70 per cent by the commonwealth and 30 per cent by the state government. The federal government withdrew its funding from the program in the May 2010 budget. The program would then have closed, which would have displaced children and carers just weeks later. To give some credit where it is due, the then state government stepped in to fund the program for one year, but for one year only — in other words, I think, it was to get past the state election. There was probably more of a political motive than a policy motive in that. In effect the former state government brought forward some state funding to cover the cost in the 2010–2011 financial year.

The Victorian coalition government extended funding until 31 December 2010 when it was realised that families and services had not made alternative arrangements. In February the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development wrote to the federal Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare, Kate Ellis, asking her to reinstate the federal funding. Ms Ellis did not reply until June and has refused to reinstate any funding.

The state government has committed to reinstate Victorian funding for the Take a Break program if the federal government reinstates its funding, because in practical terms it is impossible for the state's share of the funding alone to sustain the program. The federal coalition has also committed to reinstate the funding if it wins government and, therefore, the only element now missing is a response from the federal minister, Kate Ellis, who is still refusing to make a commitment. It is noted that the shadow minister assisting the leader on children and young adults, Ms Mikakos, who is a member of this house, has admitted that she has tried and failed to get Ms Ellis to reinstate funding.

My view is that the Victorian government has behaved entirely appropriately in this matter, and I support the action taken by Ms Lovell in trying to ensure a good policy outcome. It is disappointing that the ALP would move a motion in this house raising the issue of child care, not speaking to it and leaving the matter on record as an implicit criticism of the Baillieu government,

when the responsibility for the failure of this child-care program is entirely at the feet of the federal Labor government. I need say no more on that.

The question of library funding is similarly addressed in the motion. It is implicit in the motion that the Baillieu government has failed in library funding when in fact the failure is entirely a matter of the former state Labor government. The implementation of a funding cut to libraries was a matter for the previous state government, and the net result of discussions between the library sector and the state government has been to reinstate that funding in its entirety, so that this year libraries will be in exactly the same financial position as they were in previous years. I congratulate the Minister for Local Government, who has responsibility in this area, on taking that excellence initiative. In fact, she has gone further than just reinstating the funding to ensure library services can be maintained; she has established a process to review library funding arrangements in the longer term and to re-establish what the Labor Party disestablished.

Mr Somyurek — Is that a word?

Mr P. DAVIS — Yes, it is actually. A bipartisan libraries committee will have engagement from — —

Mr Barber — Bipartisan?

Mr P. DAVIS — In fact it is tripartisan, because I think The Nationals, the Liberal Party and the Labor Party are participating. But I do not think the Greens were actively involved in this debate.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — I am so cut, Mr Barber. Yes, I do only look at the pictures on the front of books.

Mr Barber — That was a pretty thick book you were waving around just before.

Mr P. DAVIS — I am lost for words. I could say a good deal more about libraries, but I do not think I need to.

I do not have a good deal more to say. Given that this is general business and there are no time limits on debate, I wanted to address all the great initiatives implemented by the Baillieu government since it came to office and to remind people of the fact that in this year's budget — the first Baillieu government budget — we funded something like 98 per cent of all our election commitments; the remainder will be funded over this term of Parliament. I am excited about the fact that, notwithstanding the legacy that we have been left with

by the failed and discredited Brumby-Lenders economic management, the Baillieu government has been able to fund its election promises. I do not think we can have anything other than great admiration for the Treasurer, the Premier and the Deputy Premier for ensuring that outcome.

In the context of this debate I wanted to focus particularly on the very long list I have in front of me of the cost overruns for all the Labor projects over the last decade.

Mr Somyurek — You have been wound up!

Mr P. DAVIS — Mr Somyurek is encouraging me to wind up because he does not want me to read out this list, which is a humiliation. It is not an embarrassment; it is a humiliation with billions of dollars of cost overruns. But I will not say any more, because there will be another opportunity for that on another day. I thank members for listening to me.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

LARGE-SCALE INTEGRATED DRYING GASIFICATION AND COMBINED CYCLE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That there be laid before this house an edited copy of an agreement of Victorian government funding for the large-scale integrated drying gasification and combined cycle demonstration project.

I have brought this motion so I can table before the house a document that the government completely failed to deliver. Back in February I sought, through a parliamentary motion, a copy of the agreement between the state of Victoria and HRL for its purported clean coal plant. The government used its numbers to shut down debate and to prevent that document from being tabled in this place. Since that time I have obtained a partial copy of the document over which the government threw a blanket of secrecy, and I am delivering it here today for the interest of members. I obtained it under freedom of information from the Department of Primary Industries.

I have to say, though, that there are some important features of the document that are missing in my copy. However, I fully intend to appeal the government's partial release under the FOI mechanism, and I expect to win. Then I will bring back the rest of the document

and table it to illustrate that nothing has changed since the members of the now government switched sides — and I am sure it will be illustrated many more times over the next four years. I would like to know what magical transformation occurred when they moved 15 feet from the opposition benches to the government benches. Suddenly, when the Parliament requests a document, the government closes ranks, just like the last government used to, to prevent the tabling of important information.

It is not as if government members did not take a strong stance on transparency when they were in opposition. On more than 150 different occasions they came into this place when they were in opposition and talked about transparency. Mr David Davis and Mr Philip Davis together clocked up 74 different mentions of transparency; Mr Drum made 4; and Mr Finn only 2. Mr Guy on 27 occasions talked about transparency. Mr Koch, Ms Lovell and Mr O'Donohue made transparency a regular theme of their speeches when they were in opposition, and let us not forget Mrs Petrovich. On matters relating to gambling, the north-south pipeline, stamp duty, local government, energy retailing, ambulances, roads, school closures, the fire services levy and police statistics, Mrs Petrovich, when in opposition, called for more transparency.

Some people get them confused, but Mrs Peulich was even more vociferous in calling for transparency through this Parliament while in opposition. She did so on the subject of political advertising, in relation to hazardous waste and landfill, smart meters, overseas travel, planning, the casino, growth areas and the desalination plant. In the last four years when she was in opposition Mrs Peulich called for more transparency, but through some miraculous process when they moved from that side of the chamber to the government benches members of the then opposition completely changed their minds. Now they are prepared to use their numbers in this house to shut down a parliamentary request for a document — a document which in any case we ended up getting a copy of through the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr BARBER — For the benefit of the President, Mrs Peulich is saying 'Well done' and 'Good on you'.

Mrs Peulich — It means the system works.

Mr BARBER — Mrs Peulich says it means the system works; a system where a government so recently in opposition and made up of champions of

transparency uses its numbers to shut down a parliamentary motion requesting a document. Then we get the document anyway under a statutory process — or at least in part.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr BARBER — I am 100 per cent with Mrs Peulich on that point. This government is no better than the previous government. I have absolutely no faith that the previous government would have handed over this document either, so in that respect the performance of the Lib-Lab party, currently dominated by the Lib faction that is running the government, is no different. That alone is worth understanding so early in the life of this Parliament — just nine months into this Parliament. It was back in May when government members first closed ranks to shut us down on this document.

This is an important document because it relates to the provision of \$50 million of state public funding, matched by \$100 million of federal funding, for a so-called clean coal power plant in the Latrobe Valley. This clean coal of course is the great white hope of people like Mr Davis, who represents the Latrobe Valley, and many other members, including the Labor members who previously championed clean coal when they were in government. In fact \$150 million of public funding that was originally committed under the Howard and Bracks governments is now being pushed forward under the Baillieu and Gillard governments. But the project itself is not really moving along very fast. The money is there, but we have not seen any significant steps — at least none that we have heard about — whereby the magical formula for clean coal will emerge and start solving the climate change problem.

There is perhaps heavy punctuation that Hansard might be able to use to indicate sarcasm there, but I am not a believer in alchemy. I like the laws of physics, and I do not believe the purported future of clean coal is coming any time soon, yet there is \$150 million sitting there waiting for it.

The \$150 million, including the \$50 million from the state government, comes with milestones. The company is meant to achieve a series of commercial milestones before the money will flow, but we have been denied any information about what those milestones are; we effectively do not know what we are getting for our \$150 million in taxpayers funds. But we did learn a few things from the partial release of the document courtesy of a statutory process called the FOI act, which even members of this government prefer to

water down or take a weaker stance on, whereas not so long ago they were over there championing advanced levels of transparency.

We learnt that there are some reporting requirements, including an annual project plan; we learnt something about what is meant to be in that project plan; we learnt that we wear the risk on any GST in relation to the elements of the grant; and we learnt that there will be a final report, although the trigger for the final report is hidden. We learnt at section 6.3 that the company is required to maintain the assets that are provided. Given that the assets are effectively a full commercial-scale coal-fired power station, that is quite an interesting proposition.

We also learnt that the state government has the right to inspect documents from the recipient of the grant in order to conduct its own audit. That is an important point, because this question of who is able to audit the public dollar has come up before. One of the difficulties we have with the desalination plant, and it clearly exists in relation to this grant, is that the government has rights to audit where the public dollar goes, but the Auditor-General does not necessarily have that right. The Acting President will understand from her involvement in the review of the Audit Act 1994 that that is an extremely important distinction. The Auditor-General can audit public bodies, but he cannot necessarily follow the public dollar, whereas here, through an ad hoc arrangement, effectively grant by grant, agreement by agreement, the state government may have entered into an agreement — in this case it has — to allow it to audit where the public dollar goes using an auditor of its choice.

This government is not in such a hurry. It has not moved with alacrity to fix that section of the audit act to ensure that the Auditor-General can follow the public dollar, but it is happy to sign up to agreements in which the state government reports to its own Auditor-General, effectively. It sounds to me like the privatisation of the Auditor-General. It sounds to me like we have been here before.

There is also, very importantly, a get-out clause for the state government, whereby under certain circumstances it would not have to proceed with providing funds to this company. At section 17.1 it notes that if the recipient company's financial circumstances were to deteriorate, the state government could pull out. Likewise, if the commonwealth government was to pull its funding out, the state government would be able to pull out. That is quite important, because this project is by no means certain at the moment; in fact the project is making little progress and is falling into contention.

Commercial partners seem to have come and gone. The scope of the project seems to be changing. The company itself applied for a licence for a 600-megawatt power station and was granted by the EPA (Environment Protection Authority) a 300-megawatt licence. That licence decision is being contested by not only the company but also environment groups that believe it would give a poor environmental outcome.

We come back to the reason we wanted to see this material originally and the original question, which is: what exactly are we getting for our \$150 million? Are we getting the magic formula for clean coal, or are we just getting another fairly polluting power station?

I go back to some of the comments that were made in an earlier debate today and ask: what is holding up this project? Is it the lack of a carbon price or signal that is preventing this plant from going ahead? After all, it is still fairly polluting — it is about as polluting as black coal. The great alchemy here, if there is one, is to convert brown coal so it is only about as polluting as black coal. I do not know whether \$150 million of our money should be put into that proposition when there are so many better ways to cut greenhouse emissions. In the licence application to the EPA we found out that this proposal will produce about 0.8 tonnes, or slightly more, for every megawatt hour of power. But that is not due to the company's amazing proprietary secret recipe for clean coal; it is simply because it now runs a natural gas plant alongside it and sort of shandies the two fuels together at different times to produce a somewhat less polluting plant. Why do we want to pay \$150 million to them so they can do that and compete in the market?

The generation side of the electricity market — and I wish Mr David Davis was here to hear this — is, after all, a highly competitive and freely operating market. Almost anybody can enter into the market for electricity. In fact, at a certain level, I can. If I put solar panels on my roof, for example, I can feed electrons into the grid. Anybody who wants to feed electrons into the grid just needs to meet a certain number of technical standards and they are entering into this free market for electrons. These characters — let us call them HRL, but the name of the company was redacted when I was given the document, even though everybody knows who it is — are getting subsidised to enter the free market for electricity. I honestly cannot understand it.

I think it is quite likely that the lack of a carbon signal is impacting on this company's ability to go ahead and deliver what it originally promised to the taxpayers. It is quite possible that with a carbon signal it would still fail, because this is not mature technology; this is clean coal. This is some blue-sky sort of technology out there.

Maybe 10, 20 or 30 years from now it might happen, or it might not. We are giving them \$150 million to give it a bit of a go, even though there are on-the-shelf technologies that are ready to go, like photovoltaics and wind. These are all mature technologies — not to mention the energy efficiency technologies which can create megawatts of power by helping us save power.

I have to reflect back on some earlier comments that were made in the debate before this one. Mr David Davis said that the carbon pricing package was the biggest transformation in a decade of the economy. I think that simply reflects on the lack of interest the Howard government had in economic transformation over that decade. To say it is bigger than anything that the Howard government did is not to say very much at all. Mr David Davis also said that the level of taxation and money that would be churned through by this carbon tax was so big that it could not be comprehended. In fact it is about \$8 billion a year for three years. It is not a very big tax. Mr Baillieu gets \$1 billion a year just out of the pokies. This is only eight times the size of that. It is actually a pretty small tax, if you want to talk about it. It is just highly targeted, and it relates to the pollution potential of your particular form of generation. It encourages people to shift capital from one sort of electricity generation to the other. That is all it does. The carbon tax is not meant to be miraculous; it is not meant to solve all the problems. It is not even meant to make the complete transformation we need to make deep cuts to our emissions.

Mr Ondarchie — How will it change behaviour when it is being subsidised?

Mr BARBER — It is not meant to change my behaviour at my household.

Mr Ondarchie — Really?

Mr BARBER — I had better just divert and do a bit of Economics 101. People have pretty big electricity bills now. They have many opportunities to reduce those electricity bills, yet they do not deploy the full range of technologies that they could in their homes, such as light bulbs, more efficient appliances, solar panels, roof insulation, draught-stopping and all those things that are actually so cheap that they pay for themselves in about six months. People do not do that despite having very large and rapidly increasing electricity bills.

A carbon tax that, after all, is only going to increase the average electricity bill by around 7 per cent is not going to add much more when you think about how much our electricity bills have been increasing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BARBER — When we propose a carbon tax those opposite say, ‘You are going to hurt struggling families’. When we propose massive compensation they say, ‘It is wealth redistribution; it is socialism’. Those opposite need to work out which argument it is that they are mounting, because it cannot be both, and then let us know and we will debate that one. But right now we are debating — —

Mrs Peulich — Tell us why people need to be compensated.

Mr BARBER — In order to neutralise the effect of the carbon tax on lower income families, which the compensation package very effectively does — end of story. That brings us back to what the carbon tax is meant to do: it is meant to change the behaviour of investors in electricity generation. That is all it is meant to do. I did not know I would have to go back to the Garnaut report of 2008 and fill in the gaps for these guys before we got to the proposition that we have.

Mr Philip Davis then talked about the power of the marketplace and accused anybody speaking against the power of the marketplace of attempting to socialise the economy. What we are really doing is saying we own the atmosphere; you do not have to be socialised. The atmosphere is a public good, and if people want to put their stuff in it, we will charge them a tipping fee. It is like someone wanting to run a restaurant and throw their rubbish at the end of the street at the end of the night. We have fees for that kind of thing. It is the exact opposite of what Philip Davis was trying to say, but his point is a good one. We are trying to unlock the power of the marketplace by allowing investors and innovators to find the best and cheapest way to cut greenhouse emissions. You do not need to be an economic rationalist. I went to business school and bought a little bit about what they told me about the free market. Nobody has ever accused Ross Garnaut of being a wet, let alone a socialist. He is simply saying that we should create a market for something that is currently being treated as a free gift from God — that is, the atmosphere — and charge people for putting their CO₂ into it.

Mrs Peulich — But you don’t believe in God, do you?

Mr BARBER — Too many issues to attach to this one, Mrs Peulich. I cannot go all theological on it. If we charge people for putting pollution into the atmosphere, there will be a market mechanism to allow those who are the best innovators and the best entrepreneurs to

find the best way to do it at the lowest possible cost. At section 23.2 of the partially released agreement we find in relation to intellectual property something we did not know about HRL Ltd and the government: they seem to be in some sort of partnership over the intellectual property involved in clean coal. That is interesting, because I asked the former Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr Batchelor, about this in my first ever outing on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in 2006, and he said, 'No way'. Section 23.2 states:

The company grants to the state a permanent, irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide, non-exclusive licence (including a right to sublicense) to do any acts in relation to the grant agreement material —

and then it goes blank. I cannot tell you what it says next, Acting President, because my copy, as provided to me by Richard Bolt of the Department of Primary Industries, has a great big sticker over it so I do not know what the next bit is, but I am keen to know whether the state government is in bed on this deal and whether there are upside and downside risks associated with the intellectual property. I think we ought to know what we are getting for our \$150 million.

But I have saved the best bit till last. For any members who have not been following the debate up until now I will remind them that when we requested this document in February and in the earlier part of this year the government refused to give us the document and used its numbers to block any further motions. At the time the government refused to release the document it provided a letter from mum — an excuse explaining why it was not handing in its homework. It was a letter from the company, HRL, saying, 'Actually we would rather not see this material in the public domain'. So Mr O'Brien, the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the Attorney-General said, 'Okay then. If the company does not want it to be released, we will not release it'. But now it has been released in part. Under the heading 'Confidentiality', section 28.2 states:

The department may only disclose confidential information of the company (all such information must be clearly designated by the company as 'confidential'):

...

- (d) for public accountability reasons, including (without limitation) a request for information by Parliament or a parliamentary committee;

Your silence speaks volumes, Acting President. The government would not hand it over because the company did not want it to be handed over, but the company signed an agreement that said it would hand it over if Parliament asked for it. The government had a

let-out clause, and all it needed to do was show the company 28.2(d) and say, 'Tough luck. Parliament has asked for it, and we had to give it to the Parliament'. But, no, the government preferred to pick up the Brumby cloak of invisibility, the informational black hole which means no information will come out of the government, least of all when it is important, least of all when there are big bucks at stake, least of all when there is huge public interest, least of all when there is controversy and least of all when there are court matters pertaining to it. This government is no different to the last government, because you only really know when a real test comes along. Sure, it gives out the easy information that nobody cares about, but when it is tough and when it might create questions that the government would have to answer, it does not give information or it delays it or it partially releases it.

The most important part of this document has not been released to me. It contains the actual milestones that the company is meant to achieve in return for its \$150 million public subsidy to increase pollution. I can indicate to you, Acting President, some of the blank pages that were released to me as well as a table of reporting requirements with the relevant milestones blacked out. A big black hole of accountability and information from this government has manifested itself brutally in its first nine months. I could go on to the Deloitte report on myki. I could go on to a whole range of outstanding questions on notice or questions that were answered half-heartedly, all of which pertain to the business of this Parliament — —

Mr Ramsay — But you are not going to, are you?

Mr BARBER — Mr Ramsay said I am not going to. No, I am saving them up. There will be many sitting weeks just like this one, Mr Ramsay, where you will use your numbers — through you, Acting President — to shut down transparency, and I will take you to court and win and embarrass you. I assure you my legal advisers in the area of FOI are as busy as they ever were under the Bracks and Brumby governments. They are still receiving regular retainers from me. FOI requests are still being delayed. Spurious reasons are still being given. Junior woodchuck FOI officers are simply finding the most likely grounds and seemingly less preposterous grounds for refusing information and then sending my letters back. And I appeal them again, and then we wait six weeks and we get a mention at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I have about three different matters at VCAT at the moment. Questions do not get answered even though we are debating legislation. We know the outcome of every vote in this Parliament for the next four years. The government knows it has the numbers in both houses;

we are not getting excited about that, but we are still here to do our jobs.

For four years we stand in the shoes of the voters, and we hold the government accountable for its performance, but we cannot do that if the government refuses to provide information. To continue to refuse to provide important information about matters the Parliament is dealing with means the government is simply snubbing its nose at the Parliament. That means it is snubbing its nose at the more than 40 per cent of voters who voted for non-government parties. The government ought to have learnt what happens when a government does that from the previous government.

For that reason, I have moved this motion today to table this document. I hope members are interested in reading it. I will keep members updated as to how I am going at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal with my FOI request on this issue and other documents the government has refused to table. Hopefully we will all learn a lot more about government activities one way or another, notwithstanding the good record of Mr Guy who promised 24 hours ago that in 48 hours he would let me know about a particular FOI request to his department.

Mrs Peulich — He has still got another 24 hours.

Mr BARBER — He has still got another 20 hours, which is less than 24 hours, to let me know whether he will override his department and release information anyway. After all, an exemption to the FOI act, which says material does not have to be released, is not a requirement that information must not be released. Material can be found to be exempt under the FOI act, but the government can still decide to release the information anyway. The government can release cabinet reports if it wants to; the government can hold back those reports if it wants to. But like the Deloitte myki report, if the government wanted to release the information, it could have. We will see on that one. I look forward to further debate on this issue.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to speak on behalf of the government in relation to notice of motion 137, moved by Mr Barber, which says:

That there be laid before this house an edited copy of an agreement of the Victorian government funding for the large-scale integrated drying gasification and combined cycle demonstration project.

I cannot commence my substantive contribution without responding to some of Mr Barber's comments. Mr Barber referred to 'Lib-Labs'. Presumably he

includes in his definition of 'Lib-Labs' The Nationals, our coalition colleagues, and the Labor Party as though they were one entity. It is interesting to hear Mr Barber talk about that, given his leader, Bob Brown, a federal Greens Senator for Tasmania, is in coalition government with the Labor Party in Canberra. He talked about Lib-Labs, which is not new, but the term 'Lib-Labs' does not have quite the currency it may have had at one stage given the current arrangements in Canberra involving the Leader of the Greens calling the shots of the federal government.

Mr Barber made reference to government revenue coming from pokies, and I cannot help but pick up that point. I refer with sadness to the way Mr Lenders, Mr Andrews, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, and others from the previous government absolutely botched the auction of the pokies licences and sold Victorian taxpayers down the river. It is an absolute disgrace of an order of magnitude that we have rarely seen in Victoria before. Victorian taxpayers will bear the consequences of that in the forthcoming decade. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I will give Mr Barber the government's position in due course. Mr Barber's motion is all about the government being so evil and secretive that it will not provide information to him. In his half hour contribution, Mr Barber quoted slabs of a document that he claims the evil government did not give to him. There is an absolute inconsistency in the proposition Mr Barber put forward about the government's attitude to producing documents for the community, the Greens political party or the opposition. Mr Barber quoted from a document that is the subject of this motion. That that document has been released to Mr Barber under freedom of information laws demonstrates the absolute inconsistency of his approach.

I will go through the history of this matter for the benefit of members in the house and to provide some clarity to some of Mr Barber's contribution. This matter was first considered by the house on 9 February. Mr Hall at that time outlined the government's approach to the production of documents. The motion in relation to this was passed by the house. That approach to the production of documents has been consistent since that time.

On 28 February the Attorney-General wrote to the Clerk of the Legislative Council in relation to this matter and said:

The government acknowledges and respects the right of the Legislative Council to require the government to provide documents to the Council, subject to only limited exceptions.

In this case, I wish to draw to the Legislative Council's attention that the documents sought contain sensitive financial and commercial information and proprietary intellectual property. HRL considers, and the government agrees, that the public release of this information would materially damage the interests of HRL, including by prejudicing its position in ongoing funding negotiations with the commonwealth government.

The letter continues. Mr Barber referred to the letter dated 25 February from HRL and addressed to the Minister for Energy and Resources, Michael O'Brien. Mr Barber referred to this letter as being a 'letter from mum'. Mr Barber may think this is a flippant matter. He may have certain views on these sorts of commercial negotiations and about these significant projects. But regardless of one's view of these projects, to treat such significant investments and decisions in such a flippant way as to describe it as a 'letter from mum' demonstrates his lack of understanding. It is disappointing. The letter of 25 February 2011 states:

HRL and related companies are party to agreements that may fall within the scope of the motion.

That refers to Mr Barber's motion. The letter goes on:

The terms of these agreements have not previously been made public.

These documents contain sensitive financial and commercial information and proprietary intellectual property of the company, which was provided on the basis that it would be kept confidential.

The public release of this information, particularly at this time, would materially damage the interests of the company, including by prejudicing its position in current negotiations with a number of parties including the commonwealth government (in conjunction with the Victorian government).

Mr Barber then brought a motion to the house on 23 March calling on Mr Davis as Leader of the Government to produce the documents sought. The Council did not support Mr Barber's motion. Mr Barber then sought production of the document through the FOI process, and as I said in my opening remarks Mr Barber has the document in his hand. The FOI process has produced to Mr Barber the document that the supposedly secretive government refuses to produce.

Mr Ondarchie — So he has got it now?

Mr O'DONOHUE — Mr Ondarchie, Mr Barber has the document in his hand. As I say, Mr Barber was quoting extensively from the document in his

contribution, so there is an absolute inconsistency in Mr Barber's proposition.

The government's position is that it will be opposing Mr Barber's motion, though not on the basis of the document itself. Mr Barber has the document in his possession, and what he does with the document is a matter for him. If he so chose, he could upload it to his website, he could give it to his friends, he could distribute it to his email contacts, or he could make the document public — and he may already have done so. The tabling of the document in this house does not in and of itself have any relevance to the document being a public document. That is a matter for Mr Barber.

The reason the government will be opposing Mr Barber's motion in this situation is that it is highly unusual for a member of the house to seek to table a document in the house, save and except for ministers. It has only happened on a rare number of occasions. One example I am aware of occurred during the previous Parliament when, after a motion of the house, a document was tabled by some members of the Dispute Resolution Committee. For those reasons the government will not be supporting Mr Barber's motion.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition has no issue with supporting this particular motion. The government has said it opposes it because it is an unusual event. There have been previous occasions — at least while I have been in this chamber — when people have requested the incorporation of pictures or photographs into *Hansard*. Members regularly, and not unusually, table petitions and all sorts of documents, and there should not by any means be an issue for anyone in this chamber as far as the tabling of the document Mr Barber has acquired, if he thinks it is relevant to the Parliament and the public interest of the people we represent in this state.

I do want to touch on one thing that Mr Barber stated in his contribution. He said there is no difference between the previous government and this government in relation to the production of documents. The previous government handed over thousands and thousands of documents that were requested of it during the same sort of process that we are having today. We stated that we believed there would be an issue about handing over cabinet documents or commercial-in-confidence documents. Other than that, the previous government handed over thousands of documents. The difference between the members of the new government and the previous government is that only nine months ago, when they were over here, sitting 15 steps across the chamber, they were passionately resolute in their view that in this Parliament they had the right to call for

documents and all documents should be handed over. That was their position, to the point that they moved motions to eject ministers from the chamber for extended periods of time and were successful in doing that.

I question whether the opposition would support a similar motion in that vein if government ministers and members could prove that documents were withheld for the reasons we stated before. I dispute Mr Barber's statement that there is no difference between this government and the previous government when it comes to the production of documents.

Mr Barber — Time will tell.

Mr LEANE — Time will tell, Mr Barber, but we have a consistent position in relation to cabinet in confidence and privilege.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the motion in relation to the government's position. I support Mr O'Donohue's and the government's position in opposing Mr Barber's motion 137:

That there be laid before this house an edited copy of an agreement of Victorian government funding for the large-scale integrated drying gasification and combined cycle demonstration project.

Mr Barber raised some points in his contribution — which I thought was rather long-winded — in relation to this government shutting down debate and preventing a number of documents from being tabled. He spoke of the previous government and referred to a number of members in this chamber, highlighting a number of issues that were brought forward under the previous government in relation to shutting down debate. I think he mentioned stamp duty, ambulance services, fire services, police statistics, political advertising, smart meters, planning and the desalination plant. I would like to bring to his attention that we had that debate in question time today, with Mr Jennings talking about data and the transparency of government. I am pleased that real-time hospital data is available, as the Minister for Health highlighted this morning. That is a direct example of openness and transparency in relation to what this government is doing.

Mr Barber talked about the desalination plant, and it gives me a great opportunity to remind the house — —

Mr Barber — Are you going to release that secret desalination contract?

Ms CROZIER — We know it is costing Victorians just under \$2 million each and every day. That is the

final cost that Victorians have to pay, and I think it should be noted that it was not possible to get the previous government's full costings but that this government has been able to do that. Mr Barber has referred to the desalination plant on a number of occasions. I am glad to say it has finally rained and we have plenty of water, but it is just a reminder of the true cost to Victorians. It is an outrage that we have to pay that amount each and every day.

This government is following processes in a number of areas. Mr O'Donohue rightly pointed out that investments and decisions were made in relation to various organisations, and in many instances the details of those are commercial in confidence, which is important to doing business. The government's position on this aspect was summed up very succinctly by Mr O'Donohue in his earlier contribution.

I would also like to refer to Mr Barber's comment about the coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley. On the release of the Gillard government's carbon tax package he tweeted, 'Bye, bye brown coal'. He is interested in shutting down the Latrobe Valley, and that is not good for the Victorian economy. It is certainly not good for those people who are working in those industries in Victoria. As most economies around the globe know, energy security and food security are two of the most important things, and they are at the forefront in very uncertain times.

Along with Mr O'Donohue, I will be taking the government position and opposing Mr Barber's motion. Mr O'Donohue has already stated succinctly the reasons why we will be taking that position.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I think Ms Crozier has been used as a patsy today, because the position the government is taking is vastly different from the position that the coalition took some 10 or 12 months ago. The absurdity of what the government is proposing to do in opposing Mr Barber's motion is quite breathtaking and extremely bizarre. As I understand it the government has released documents under the Freedom of Information Act 1982, and it is now saying that those documents, which it had been prepared to release under FOI, cannot be laid before a house of the Parliament.

That is the position the government is proposing: that certain documents can be released under FOI in an edited form because presumably they do not conflict with the principles of executive privilege, commercial in confidence and all the other elements that would have been laid over the top of those documents before they were released under FOI. This is, by the way,

absolutely consistent with what the previous government was doing. The inconsistency here is that the previous government made the test for the house's requests for documents precisely the same as the test under FOI. In other words, if a document was able to be released under FOI, it would be released to the Legislative Council on request for such a document.

This government is now applying two different tests: a test under FOI that says these documents can be released; and a different test for the Legislative Council — that is, for the Parliament of Victoria — that restricts it in receiving documents that can be obtained by any citizen under FOI. It is just bewildering that the government would adopt the position that what it is prepared to release in edited form under FOI — because it is compatible with the principles of executive privilege, commercial-in-confidence and cabinet-in-confidence requirements — cannot be put before the house and therefore cannot be considered by the Parliament of Victoria. This is absurd. This is politics gone nuts. It is just crazy.

Members of the government ought to think very seriously when they vote on this matter today, because what they are being asked to do is to vote in a way that says the house cannot have laid before it documents that the government has released to a member of the house under FOI. It is staggering and bewildering. I suggest to Ms Crozier it was extremely unfair of the government to ask her, as a new member of this Parliament, to get up and defend this position.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — Mr O'Donohue knows full well the history of this matter because he sat through the last Parliament. He knows full well the history of the practice of releasing documents. It was unfair of the government to use Ms Crozier in this way. It is illogical, completely inconsistent and in my view quite improper for a government to release a set of documents to a member of the house but refuse to allow that member to lay those documents before the house. I have never heard of anything so stupid.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Standing order 9.04 states:

The Council may give leave for a member to present a paper which is not being tabled under the authority of an act.

It is that standing order that I am availing myself of today. Mr Viney said the government move was bizarre, but I disagree that is inconsistent. The government is trying to be consistent here. It used its numbers to prevent this document being tabled when I

first requested it, and today it will use its numbers again to prevent it being tabled even after I took another course and got the document from Richard Bolt.

This debate has shown up some differences between the Greens and the other parties in this Parliament. The first difference is that the Greens are prepared to come in here and argue the case for a carbon tax, whereas Labor really is not. The second difference is that we believe in openness and transparency, and the new government has changed its spots on this ever since it came into power.

Also, for the edification of Ms Crozier, who brought me back to the desalination contract, I point out that before the election her party proposed to release the desalination contract. The vast majority of the desalination contract has always been available except for one or two key numbers, which in the public version are blacked out. Those are the bits you want. It is always the bits that you want that are blacked out. The bits we want are the details of how much it is going to cost us to run that desalination plant year after year, regardless of how much water we are looking for.

When it was in opposition the coalition promised to release that contract, and it has not done so. What it released was a consultant's review of what the contract says we have to pay, but it never released the contract. I, for one, like to go back to primary sources. Under the previous government I initiated an inquiry into the desalination plant to try to get to the bottom of it. I am not going to get to the bottom of it under this government either.

It is bizarre but consistent that the government used its numbers to shut down my request, via this place, to receive a document that is of great interest to all those engaged in the climate change debate. Even though, despite itself, the government had to partially release it under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1982, it wants to prevent its release again — for what purpose I cannot imagine. This matter is ultimately headed for the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and we may very well obtain the information that Mr O'Donohue just passionately argued we should never see — that is, information about the amazing commercial milestones associated with how our \$150 million is going to be spent.

We also have on the notice paper, as a little curtain-raiser, a motion seeking the government consultant's report into myki. The Liberal Party in opposition promised to blow this wide open, but I am guessing that we will not get to see that Deloitte report on myki. However, we will continue asking because it

is our job as non-government parties. We will not sit down quietly just because the government tells us to. It is our job for the next four years to stand in the shoes of the voters and ask questions of the powerful government, with its majority in both houses — to try to keep it honest and keep the public a bit better informed about where our millions are going.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr BARBER — As Mrs Peulich would concede, when the government is able to spend hundreds of millions or billions of dollars without transparency, we will go broke before we know it.

Motion agreed to.

Laid on table.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 30 August 2011, a copy of the arrangement and/or contract between the Department of Justice and the *Herald Sun* newspaper to conduct the online sentencing survey.

I move this motion because it appears that there is a commercial arrangement between the Department of Justice and the *Herald Sun* regarding the conduct of an online survey on sentencing in the courts. I believe the public has a right to know if there are any costs to them as taxpayers associated with the conduct of this survey and how it works. The documents I am seeking to have tabled in Parliament are any documents that have been signed by the Department of Justice or its representatives or the Attorney-General or his representatives and the *Herald Sun* or its representatives regarding the conduct of the survey.

Yesterday I also lodged two questions for the Attorney-General in regard to the total number of Department of Justice staff working on the survey and the total cost of the project to the Department of Justice. The Attorney-General wants things to be open and transparent, so it is important that those documents should be released to the public in the same vein.

On 31 May the Attorney-General announced what he said could prove to be the biggest sentencing survey ever undertaken in this state — that is, an online survey through the Department of Justice and the *Herald Sun*. I remarked at the time that I did not think it was the best way to go in terms of the independence of the

Department of Justice and even the independence of the *Herald Sun* to put together that government department and newspaper to conduct a joint project. The Attorney-General flagged that one of the issues he would seek the views of the public on was what he called baseline sentences, and others call mandatory sentences, which he is looking to introduce during the course of this Parliament.

Researching this motion brought back memories. We are going back to the future with this survey. We have gone back 15 years.

Mrs Peulich — Jan Wade.

Ms PENNICUIK — Indeed, Mrs Peulich, we have gone back 15 years to a similar initiative by former Attorney-General Jan Wade. In 1996 Mrs Wade initiated a survey with the same partner, the *Herald Sun*. The survey was called ‘Crime and punishment — your say your verdict’ and was described as:

... believed to be a world first, the Victorian government is directly asking you what you think of the way our laws and courts deal with crime.

It is totally back to the future, although if you think back to 1996, you realise we could not have run an online survey then because people were not on the internet. What people had to do was cut out the survey from the *Herald Sun* — remember those days? — fill it in and pop it in the reply-paid envelope. That is how it was run.

Mrs Peulich — Did you fill one out then?

Ms PENNICUIK — I did not, Mrs Peulich. The process was very similar, although I suggest that at the time the then Attorney-General, Mrs Wade, and the *Herald Sun* did provide the public with more information about the sentencing options and the system of justice et cetera in the 1996 survey than has been provided in the current survey, but in terms of the hypothetical case studies and examples there is not much difference. Murder, manslaughter, obtaining property by deception, burglary, armed robbery, rape, culpable driving, aggravated burglary, recklessly causing serious injury, and sexual penetration of a child between 10 and 16 years were the case study examples presented in the 1996 survey. Interestingly, it was reported that 40 000 Victorians, mainly from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, responded to the survey.

Mrs Peulich — How many?

Ms PENNICUIK — It says 40 000. A random selection of around 3000 of those respondents were used to represent what was said by the public. As

expected in surveys of this kind, with the flaws that are at their heart, the respondents said that people should be subjected to higher penalties than the average applied for those sorts of crimes in the courts in the years before 1996. One thing about that survey is that the way the examples were presented provided a little bit more circumstantial evidence than is the case with the current survey being conducted by the *Herald Sun*.

At the time, people did raise concerns about the conduct of these sorts of surveys. For a start, the respondents are people who read a particular newspaper, and the problem with this sort of survey is that it is not scientific because it is not a random selection of the population as a whole. It starts out with one section of the community: people who read the *Herald Sun*. Then it narrows down to those people who are very interested in this subject and have strong views on it, and then it narrows down again to those particular people who feel strongly enough or can be bothered to actually respond to the survey.

Comments were made at the time about the survey respondents not being randomly selected. Pollsters said the survey's margin of error could be as high as 50 per cent, magistrates at the time described it as 'dangerous' and the legal world said it was 'absurd and inappropriate, a cynical and unusual exercise'. Professor Arie Freiberg, who is currently chair of the Sentencing Advisory Council, said he would not want to be involved in an unscientific survey such as the one undertaken in 1996.

We are back to the future, with a similar survey being run through the Department of Justice and the *Herald Sun*. I have a copy of the survey.

Mr Elsbury — Did you fill it in?

Ms PENNICUIK — Mr Elsbury asked me if I filled it in. Before I had the hard copy I thought that in researching it I should go online. You cannot progress through the survey unless you fill it in; it will not let you go to the next scenario. One of the other basic problems with a survey like this is you could fill it in in 5 minutes or you could take a bit longer, but when a court is looking at a crime and an offender before it, it could take days, weeks or months to hear all the evidence and circumstances surrounding that particular offence. Either a magistrate or a jury would then deliberate, and again they could take days or weeks to do so. Then after a guilty or not guilty finding, the sentencing judge may take a while weighing up all the factors of the case as to what sentence should be applied. That is why we leave sentencing to the courts. I

am concerned that the Attorney-General said in a media release that:

Discussions about sentencing tend to be dominated by experts and interest groups ...

I do not know what interest groups he is talking about, and that is why we leave it to the courts to decide on sentences.

The current survey takes people through some 17 case studies, and in all of them only a paragraph or two describe the hypothetical crime that has occurred. The survey participant is asked to fill in whether or not the person should receive a fine, a community correction order or a term of imprisonment. There are little boxes to tick for sentencing a person up to a year, one to two years, two to five years and up to 25 years or life. They also tick a box in terms of a non-parole period. Unlike the earlier survey, it does not talk about any other circumstances relating to those particular hypothetical cases, so you could go all the way through those cases and decide what sentence you would impose according to the one or two paragraphs you have read about the offence, without having any other extenuating or aggravating circumstances put before you.

Later the survey takes you through a whole lot of different things that could apply. It only asks you to say, for example, if an offender was aged between 18 and 21 years, whether you would generally impose a much lower, a somewhat lower, a little lower, no change, a little higher, somewhat higher or a much higher sentence. But it does not ask you to apply it to a hypothetical case; it is just in a general sense.

Another fundamental problem with the survey is that it asks you generally about particular extenuating or aggravating circumstances, but it does not apply it to the case studies in the survey about which you have already filled in data. Mr Elsbury asked me if I had filled out the survey. I did make my way through it and imposed a sentence just so I could get to the next hypothetical case, and at the end I just logged off. I did not complete the survey, but I did see how it worked.

I am very concerned about the use of this survey. I note that Justice David Harper of the Supreme Court is reported in the *Age* of 31 July as saying that he sees it as 'deficient' and 'open to abuse'. He said what I mentioned before — that is, it is likely to attract those who have strong views and not reflect the views of those who are not inclined to respond to the survey. It is only a certain section of the community that even reads that newspaper and who will be directed to the Department of Justice's online survey. It then only goes

to people who feel strongly and who will respond to the survey.

Contrast that with more scientific and random surveys that have been published lately — for example:

A Tasmanian study in February found 90 per cent of jurors informed of the sentencing reasons in particular cases thought the judge's sentence was very or fairly appropriate.

I have mentioned before in this house other scientific studies that have been done by the Australian Institute of Criminology — for example:

From 2004–2006, in a Melbourne University study, more than 450 people from across Victoria were surveyed on actual sentencing cases involving serious crimes. Members of the public were given the same information about the crime and the defendant that sentencing judges had.

In half the cases, the average sentence given by members of the public was lower than that given by judges. In the other cases, the sentences were much the same. In no case was the actual sentence given by the judge lenient compared with the average sentence of the public. The average sentences given by the public also emphasised treatment programs in sentencing to a greater extent than judges.

There are any number of properly conducted scientific surveys that point to what happens when the public actually knows the full circumstances and are not just presented with a paragraph. A campaign is being run by this government and by the *Herald Sun* suggesting that the courts are not imposing appropriate sentencing, that crime is rising et cetera and that in that case you are going to get a skewed result. I do not think that is what our Department of Justice should be involved in. It should be involved in proper evidence-based research and not in what is basically an online opinion poll where people give their opinions based on a very small amount of information about a hypothetical case.

I refer to the last thing I will say on this particular issue:

A Sentencing Advisory Council survey of 300 Victorians asked to consider prison overcrowding found that only one in four people supported the building of more prisons.

Further it states that:

Almost three-quarters of Victorians support increasing the use of community work and other sentencing options to building more prisons ...

...

More than 90 per cent of those surveyed said mentally ill offenders should be treated in mental health facilities, while more than 88 per cent backed programs that taught young offenders job skills, values and self-esteem. More than 83 per cent said drug-addicted offenders should be rehabilitated and counselled rather than jailed.

Like people all over the world, when Victorians are presented with the full range of facts they make the right decisions. These sorts of surveys cost the public money and are not going to provide the sorts of evidence-based information on which the Department of Justice, the government or anyone else can make a sensible decision about sentencing. I urge the house to support my motion in relation to any documents that are held by the Department of Justice regarding any arrangement with the *Herald Sun* about the online survey.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I rise to confirm the Baillieu-Ryan government's continuing commitment to open and transparent democracy in this state. I advise the house that the government will not be opposing this motion. However, we will respond to some of the comments made by Ms Pennicuik, and in doing so the first thing I would like to do is thank her for the extensive research she has done in preparing her contribution.

In my short reply the essential point to make is that where we are at odds with Ms Pennicuik is in her implied assumption that the survey, which is the subject of the motion, will be the only thing that the government has regard to in the continuing implementation of its very important law and order and sentencing policies. The other survey material that Ms Pennicuik has identified and the views of the community, which were clearly communicated in the results of the last state election, as well as the views of experts and expert bodies such as the Sentencing Advisory Council, local members of Parliament and the Victorian community, will all be taken into consideration by this government and the Attorney-General. That is the essential part of what we would like to say.

We would like to defend the role that the Attorney-General has played in empowering the Victorian community by giving it the opportunity to participate in a very thorough and constructive survey. It is interesting to note that in her research Ms Pennicuik identified a similar survey that was conducted by a former Attorney-General in the last coalition government, Jan Wade, who I would also like to congratulate. It is interesting to note that in the interim period there has been in the community a concern about the law and order issues that have so prominently featured as the no. 1 issue of concern in terms of safety and security that our whole-of-government approach is committed to delivering.

I congratulate the work of the Leader of The Nationals, who is also the Deputy Premier, who was subjected to an unmeritorious attack earlier this morning in relation to the delivery of his portfolios. He has worked extremely hard and with great judgement, dedication and balance in the administration of all of his portfolios, including bushfire response, emergency services, police and, most importantly to The Nationals, regional development with the delivery of his Regional Growth Fund. Having put that matter on the record, I will return to the motion.

I want to talk about the importance of sentencing issues. What is sentencing? Sentencing is an important part of the criminal justice system. It is an extremely difficult and multifaceted task. In my former life I was a member of the legal profession. I knew some judges personally and appeared before others, and I know the great pain with which our judiciary grapples with its difficult and often lonely task of sentencing offenders in our community. The range of considerations in the Sentencing Act 1991 are well known to practitioners, and they cover many of the factors that have been identified in the policy debate and that may be exhibited by an individual who stands before a particular judge.

I do not wish to comment on any particular case, and I do not cast any aspersions about the way the judiciary is presently conducting itself in relation to the discharge of those duties. I would say, however, that the role of the government as legislators is to respond to what it considers to be and what it promotes as its policies on community standards and issues of law and order, including the consideration of appropriate sentences. That is why the coalition government formulated a detailed law and order policy to take to the November election, part of which included conducting the sentencing survey. Some parts of the policy have already been implemented, including the passage of legislation on the abolition of suspended sentences for the most serious offences early in the last session of Parliament. That act carried with it another important reform that made some minor but important changes to the Sentencing Advisory Council, which I do not recall being opposed by either of the opposition parties. It incorporated input to the Sentencing Advisory Council from representatives of Victoria Police and Victims of Crime.

I briefly turn to a report published by the Sentencing Advisory Council in order to pick up some of the points made by Ms Pennicuik which highlight that the difficulty with all surveys is that it is virtually impossible to canvass the community's view in a scientific way that will not be prone to some of the

criticisms that have been made by Ms Pennicuik and by others. It was suggested that polling is a more scientific method, but it also has its limitations. I need go no further than page 5 of the Sentencing Advisory Council's report of March 2011. Under the heading 'Data collection' there is mention of:

The data collection involved a survey of 300 Victorians using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology in October 2009, representing the second survey in the longitudinal research design. The respondents were randomly selected from a pool of 1200 people who had completed the first survey on perceptions of sentencing and the criminal justice system.

I will skip a bit, but I ask members to read the detailed study. I hope I am not selectively quoting, but the section I draw the house's attention to is the part that says:

Despite being a random sample of the Victorian population, the survey sample is not directly representative of the Victorian population from which it was drawn. Two differences of note are found in the sample's age and education status.

That is the limitation that is to be found in the sort of telephone polling survey which Ms Pennicuik and the academics and researchers she cited prefer. These will all be matters which will be considered when the policies in relation to baseline sentencing are fully considered by the Attorney-General and the government and implemented through the course of this government's term.

This survey allows appropriate dialogue between the Department of Justice and the Victorian community in a fairly informative way, but it is not as detailed as the sentencing of a person in an individual case where all the circumstances of a particular offence and all the experience of a judge is before the court. Nevertheless, the opening message from the Attorney-General at the beginning of the survey outlines the government's key policy objectives in relation to sentencing law, including abolishing suspended sentences for all crimes, ending home detention, introducing a new community corrections order which will restore truth in sentencing, setting a four-year statutory minimum sentence for offences involving gross violence, and specifying in legislation the non-parole periods to be served for typical or median cases of serious crimes.

In relation to the questions asked in the survey, the Attorney-General goes on to say:

I encourage you to spend time considering the facts of each case study before deciding on what you consider to be the most appropriate sentence for the crime.

Looking at some of the case studies in the survey, and I will refer to one as an example, they confront the member of the community with a glimpse or a snapshot of some of the difficulties that a sentencing judge would face. The survey covers much more than the usual discussions in the media because it forces respondents to go through some of the facts and then consider the very specific response they would need to make as a sentencing judge. Obviously the survey does not cover the full range of criteria that would be considered, but it contains much more than you would see in many of the other types of responses that have been used to gauge community concern. I will go to one example that is listed in relation to case 3, an armed robbery. It says:

Barry planned to commit an armed robbery on a hotel. He watched the premises for some days. On the day of the armed robbery he took a sawn-off shotgun and bought a balaclava. He arranged for a friend to wait outside in a car.

He entered the hotel wearing the balaclava and brandishing the shotgun. He shouted at everyone to, 'Get down, or you'll get hurt'. He then threatened the bartender with the shotgun, and made the bartender put money in a bag. Barry left the hotel with \$7000 in cash.

No-one was physically hurt, but all those in the hotel were very frightened. The bartender could not continue to work, and needed ongoing treatment for post-traumatic stress.

This case study has limitations in that it does not set out the full background and circumstances. It does not have anything from the witnesses and it does not have the two, three or four days of evidence that a judge would hear, but it outlines some of the considerations that are relevant to the sentencing. It goes on to ask:

The current maximum sentence for armed robbery is 25 years' imprisonment. What sentence would you give Barry? If you would sentence Barry to a period of imprisonment, what non-parole period would you set, if any?

It lists the choices of a fine, a community correction order or imprisonment, with all the options of up to 1 year, 1 to 2 years, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, 15 to 20 years, up to 25 years or life. It goes on to give a choice of non-parole periods of up to 1 year, 1 to 2 years, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, 15 to 20 years, up to 25 years or no parole.

The bit that is difficult — and I confess I have not done this myself yet, but I have thought about it — is when you have to tick one of those boxes, even given the limited circumstances, because it forces you to confront some of the decisions that are faced by the courts, in a minute, snapshot type of way but much more than you experience in other push poll surveys where they just ask your opinion about something.

That is an example of the sorts of thing the survey does. Importantly it has two extra parts on the back which encourage you to talk about factors involved in sentencing. There are descriptions of the usual criteria that are taken into account, including the age of the offender, criminal record, the victim's injuries, whether the offender was abused or neglected as a child, genuine remorse for the offence, planning, IQ, sole support for children, armoury, drunkenness and whether the offender was high on drugs. I am skipping some for the sake of time, but I would encourage all members to have a look at those factors. They do not fully encapsulate all the sentencing act's criteria, but they set out some of them.

The most important part of the survey, given the figure cited by Ms Pennicuik of 40 000 people filling in the 2006 survey and 15 000 people to date having filled in this survey, is part 3, which requests feedback. It asks, 'How do you think sentencing could be improved in Victoria?'. It is blank, undirected and capable of receiving community input in a direct way. In that regard the survey allows the community, as is done in many other forums, to send its message directly to government in a very convenient way about whether sentences should be increased, altered or reviewed in any way.

This debate, including the debate we are having today, raises this issue for the community and gives the community an opportunity to consider these important factors. I thank Ms Pennicuik for again drawing this important survey to the attention of the house. I note that the government's commitment to openness and transparency in relation to document release on appropriate occasions will permit this document to be released unopposed. I am of the understanding that there is no particular commercial arrangement in any unusual sense between the government and the *Herald Sun*. The document is obviously on the Department of Justice website, and people can access it directly without going via the medium of the *Herald Sun*. I encourage members of the Victorian community to participate however they see fit in various aspects of the survey or the debate. On behalf of the people of Victoria I congratulate the Attorney-General on his work in continuing to administer this very important part of the law and order policy of the Baillieu-Ryan coalition government.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — We in opposition support this call for documents. I think it is actually quite a simple motion. I am not too sure if we need to get into the merits of the *Herald Sun* survey on sentencing, but I do want to touch a little bit on this particular aspect, because this is all part of something

we have been through in the last few years when The Nationals and the Liberal Party were in opposition and spoke about law and order as if it was a war zone out there and everyone should be scared because it was a terrible place. They said, 'Turn to us; turn to a conservative government. We are the only ones who are going to make you safe, and we are the only ones who are going to treat criminals the way they should be treated. We will make it safe'.

I pose the question that I have posed in this chamber before: when will the new government declare it is safe? Those in government are the people who said it was unsafe. They are the ones who went around saying, 'It's all terrible. Vote for us; we'll make you safe'. When will there be a declaration? When the surveys are done and when the protective services officers are out there? When will there be a declaration from members of this government that, in their minds, it is safe out there in comparison to the recent years we have spent hearing about what a terrible a society we live in?

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I just have a few remarks to make in response. I thank the two speakers who have spoken in support of my motion for release of the documents that I am requesting of the government. Mr O'Brien said that I implied that the government would only take note of this online survey. I did not imply that. I would be expecting that the government would take note of the views of the judiciary and the Sentencing Advisory Council that has been put in place to advise the government and the community of Victoria on sentencing. What I was trying to encourage the government to do was not to give this survey too much weight at all.

When I mentioned pollsters making comments about the 1996 survey I was not saying that polling was in itself a scientific activity but that this survey was only an online opinion poll of a certain select group of people who then further self-select. In comparison to that, large polling companies at least make an attempt to have a random selection of people and not a self-selected group of people. Once there is a self-selected group of people it reduces the credibility of the survey markedly. What I am saying is that this survey does not have much credibility because, no matter how many people fill it in, it is not random; it is self-selecting.

Mr O'Brien also pointed out and read from the Attorney-General's remarks at the start of the survey concerning what the government was doing in terms of moving to strengthen key aspects of sentencing law. Mr O'Brien went through what the government is doing, including abolishing suspended sentences,

ending home detention and introducing in legislation community correction orders, four-year statutory minimum sentences and non-parole periods. What the government is doing is reinforcing what I am saying.

The government in its presentation of the survey in the *Herald Sun* of 27 July was setting the scene to suggest that we need to strengthen the sentencing regime because somehow it is not appropriate. What I am saying is that there is no evidence that the sentencing regime needs to be strengthened. As Mr Leane said, there is no evidence that people going about their daily business in the state of Victoria need to be afraid. Obviously we know that crimes are being committed, but it is not as if everybody going about their daily business needs to be afraid in the state of Victoria. That is not the case.

Mr O'Brien also read out one of the case studies — case study 3, involving the armed robbery — and suggested that it presented to respondents, who were encouraged to then impose a sentence, enough information for them to form an opinion. They can form an opinion, but it will not be an informed opinion that is comparable to what would be determined in a court or what was determined in the context of those other studies that I mentioned have been carried out by the Sentencing Advisory Council, the Australian Institute of Criminology and the University of Melbourne, which are properly conducted studies in terms of gathering the evidence about what sentences people would impose if they were actually given the full information.

I quickly went through the case studies in the survey, and I noticed that the longest one gives respondents 12 lines. It is not even 12 full lines, it is 12 half-lines of the newspaper. There is no way that that is enough information for people to make an informed opinion. Yes, they will come to an opinion, but it will probably be an opinion based on what they already believe. I make the point that the factors that are presented at the end — the mitigating or aggravating factors that affect the sentence — are not actually tied to the particular case studies; they are just general factors. That further weakens the whole scenario that we have in front of us.

I agree with the chairman of the Criminal Bar Association, Greg Lyon, who was reported in the *Age* of 31 July as saying that this whole debate is more complex than a simple assertion that the courts are 'soft on crime'. This survey is a re-run of the 1996 survey, but it does not even supply members of the public with as much information as that survey did. They are both fundamentally flawed, and they should not be relied upon by the government as a credible basis on which to

make decisions about sentencing in the state of Victoria.

Sentencing is a very important issue because it affects the whole community as well as the life of the offender in terms of whether they are able to be rehabilitated. We need to take it seriously, and there is enough evidence out there that mandatory sentencing does not work. That is what is partly behind this, and that is why the Attorney-General phrased his introduction to the survey in the way he did, which was to lead people into thinking a certain way before they completed the survey. All of these things are unscientific, and they are not evidence based. When you are looking at an important issue like sentencing, you need to be looking at proper evidence-based research. I thank the house for supporting this motion.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN: BEAUTY PAGEANTS

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house calls on the Minister for Community Services to seek advice from the Victorian child safety commissioner on the need for the regulation of child beauty pageants.

In this debate I would like to focus on the central issue, which is whether we want the child safety commissioner to advise the Minister for Community Services on whether competitions that pitch children against each other based on their physical beauty should be regulated in some way. I am not going to enter into a debate about whether these competitions sexualise children, whether fake tan is toxic sludge or what the age of consent for waxing should be. This motion is just about beauty competitions for children.

I will start by asking members of the chamber a question: would any MP in this house stand their two daughters in a room together and tell them that one of them is more beautiful than the other? I doubt it. Would any of us judge two of our nieces against each other based on who is the prettiest? Would we give one of them a prize and explain to the other one that she was less pretty? Of course none of us would do that. That would be mean, and it would clearly be harmful to both children. That is what this motion is all about.

Beauty pageants are competitions based on what kids look like, as judged by adults. I do not care whether they do a little dance; it is still a beauty competition. It is not a team sport, and it does not encourage cooperation or problem-solving. There are no lessons or

developmental opportunities. It is a whole world away from the role-play of children ransacking a dress-up box and putting on a show. It has nothing in common with the group and individual opportunities provided by school shows.

This motion was prompted by the recent American-based beauty pageant which took place in Melbourne soon after the airing of the TV show *Toddlers and Tiaras*. If anyone has not watched it, I would encourage them to do so. It turns your stomach; it is so horrible. I especially encourage anybody who has small children to watch it.

I have been inspired and encouraged by the intelligence and hard work of Catherine Manning of Pull the Pin, who brought this matter to my attention. It was Catherine who had the sensible suggestion that if we were going to protest about the pageant, we should not do it anywhere near the venue, because that would upset the children. Instead we went to the Fairies Tree at the Fitzroy Gardens.

We all know that that particular beauty competition turned into a bit of a shemozzle. Who would have guessed that a company that sees children as a commodity would turn out to be unethical in its dealings with parents and children? Who would have guessed that it would rent out one child to competing media organisations for money? But of course it would have done so. I was horrified, along with many other people. It is not only this company and not only that pageant; Australian companies are now coming out of the woodwork and advertising new events with prizes for the child with the prettiest eyes, the most photogenic child, the most beautiful child and so on.

Whether or not these contests promote the excesses of fakery and enhancement that horrified me just a few weeks ago, they are about kids being pitted against each other in a beauty competition judged by adults. I do not have children, but I have many children in my life — my nieces and nephews and my friends' children — and I know enough about the world to know that kids are already under intense pressure about how they appear. I am not saying that comes only from beauty pageants, because we know it comes from everywhere else as well. Society's obsession with appearances is not limited to children but is bleeding out into the world of children.

We should not be feeding this problem by having beauty competitions; we should be doing the opposite — that is, encouraging girls to get away from the bathroom mirror to take their place amongst decision-makers in our society. I need to remind

members of the house that we are not talking about teenagers; we are talking about four-year-olds, five-year-olds and six-year-olds; we are talking about really small children. These children have so much more to contribute than just being decorations; they should be encouraged to contribute their thoughts and ideas. There is real potential. We should be listening to them, talking to them and not looking at them from a distance and judging them.

I was encouraged when Minister Lovell sent the child safety commissioner to the most recent competition, but I would be concerned if this were used as an excuse not to support a proper reference to the commissioner. The commissioner has reported to the minister, but at this stage the minister has not made that report public. I call upon Minister Lovell to table the report and also publish it on the website of the child safety commissioner.

At the particular pageant I am talking about, it would have only been possible for the commissioner to look at any child abuse over and above the competition activity. Yesterday the minister quoted from a report in which the commissioner said:

... we should remain vigilant around children's pageants, simply because they are based on a perception of competitive beauty and personal appearance.

A reference to the commissioner would enable him to report on whether child beauty competitions, absent from any other factors, represented significant potential harm and whether some regulation is in order and if so, what kinds of regulations are needed. This would make more sense than sending him off just to examine one individual pageant. The commissioner might ask for expert opinion, such as that from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, which recently put out a statement saying that beauty competitions for children can have significant mental health and developmental consequences that impact detrimentally on the identity, self-esteem and body perception of children.

The minister has stated that parents know best. That is a fine sentiment, and I would think that a great deal of the time parents probably do know best, but a policy of trusting parents to know best can peacefully coexist with child safety laws. We have a range of child safety laws and regulations in this state such as booster seats in cars and sending children to school. I am sure that the minister is not suggesting there is no need for any of those things and that we can simply trust parents to make their own decisions on such things.

There are issues such as smoking in cars that contain children. I remember last year we had quite a debate in this chamber when Mr Drum, quite rightly, introduced a private members bill about smoking in cars containing children. In that case we were not trusting parents to make decisions; we were saying that it was dangerous to smoke in cars that contain children. These practices are common. We need the relevant minister to be able to give guidance.

Parents would be shocked to think that previous generations used to think that such practices were okay. After all, parents assume that when something is not regulated, it must be safe. We are not showing a lack of trust in parents by creating child safety regulations. If that were the case, we would have no need for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development at all or for a child safety commissioner. At the very least we owe it to parents to provide them with some guidance from the child safety commissioner when they are faced with a novel activity that is outside the usual decision-making parameters of parents and has the potential for harm.

I urge members of the chamber to look at the child commissioner's website, because he has written a number of excellent reports and advice for both parents and grandparents, and for staff at kindergartens and child-care centres. I cannot see why the commissioner would not be called upon to do this kind of work.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to speak and make a contribution to this debate. I thank Ms Hartland for moving this motion. The state Labor opposition will be supporting it. We believe it is necessary to regulate these types of child beauty pageants. It would be appropriate to see a code of conduct developed to ensure that parents are given some appropriate guidance and beauty pageant organisers are given some appropriate guidance as to how these pageants should be conducted in the future.

When I heard that a beauty pageant organised by the Texas-based Universal Royalty Beauty Pageant was going to be held in my electorate at the Northcote town hall, I was appalled. I know many members of the community have also expressed their considerable concern about this pageant in the lead-up to it and afterwards. I was pleased to join with Ms Hartland at a rally organised by Pull the Pin. I particularly acknowledge and congratulate Ms Catherine Manning for her efforts in highlighting this important issue in the community.

We need to focus on what is in the best interests of the child at all times. That is what we should be focusing on during the course of this debate today. At a time when we see more young girls experiencing self-esteem issues and eating disorders, I am concerned that a US-styled beauty pageant was held here in Melbourne and that it was completely unregulated. The event sought to have very young girls compete with each other on the basis of their appearance. Their appearance did not resemble what a young girl should look like.

I am sure many members saw the photographs of the young six-year-old Eden Wood who was the star of the pageant. She is based in America. I was quite disturbed by the digitally altered photographs of her which were published in newspapers. I was looking at a six-year-old, but I thought I was looking at a 36-year old. I do not think we should be promoting this type of beauty as something young girls aged four, five or six years of age should be aspiring to.

Like Ms Hartland I also viewed an episode of the US program *Toddlers and Tiaras* on which this pageant is modelled, and I was very disturbed by what I saw. I was disturbed by the images of young girls caked in make-up and reports of five-year-olds having waxing done, as well as spray tans and fake teeth. I know some members are astounded, but that is what was occurring. There was a five-year-old screaming, 'Mummy, Mummy, no, no', because her eyebrows were being waxed. I think that is preposterous, and this is why there has been such concern expressed about this pageant. This is why I urge members of the government to go and have a look at the program themselves and make up their own minds about whether we want this kind of pageant to come back to Victoria next year or to be run here in the future. I am very disturbed by it, and I would urge members to have a look at that program and have a discussion with Minister Lovell about the appropriateness of this kind of thing coming back to our state.

This event is seeking to judge very young children on the basis of beauty. There is no denying that little girls are being entered in these contests and judged solely on their outward appearance. That is why we support the regulation of beauty pageants and think it is appropriate that, for example, guidance be given to organisers and parents about what is appropriate in terms of a child's appearance and whether the alteration of digital photos should be allowed. I hope they would not permit that, because you could have a six-year-old being made to look like an adult, and that is really not the right message to be sending young children about what they should aspire to.

I believe all children are beautiful as they are and they should not be encouraged to look like adults. Little girls who have lost their front teeth having false teeth put in so that they have a perfect smile I find really disturbing. I know there have been many people who have expressed concerns about the impact that this may have on young children. I do not want to quote it in full, but a very good article published in the *Australian* on 2 August quotes adolescent and child psychotherapist Ms Collett Smart, who expressed concerns about these types of pageants, as saying:

I spent 2½ hours inside the venue ... enough to get a good look, and I didn't change my mind at all ...

I kept getting told, no, it's also about skill. And I spent time actively looking for that skill, and there is no skill. They [the children] walk on, and give a wave, and blow a kiss, and give a twirl, and all are judged on how they looked, until one is left standing there.

She goes on to say:

Body image is the no. 1 problem of young girls. So these children [in pageants] are absolutely being put in harm's way, and we can't just watch a train wreck about to happen. And it's cruel to judge little girls on their appearance. To say to a young girl, no, you're not pretty enough. So we're setting them up for plastic surgery and Botox injections and as a society, we must not sit by and let that happen.

Whilst I am happy to see young people compete in talent quests, I believe this style of competitive beauty pageant is completely alien to the Australian way of life. The difference between talent quests, which are based on skill and talent, and these types of beauty pageants, is the focus on the sexualisation of the children, the over-the-top glitz added to the appearance of the children and what they are being encouraged to aspire to. I do not want to see young children being dressed up like Lady Gaga or Madonna.

I was very concerned when I saw the YouTube video of little American Eden Wood singing about her booty, gyrating her hips and shaking her bum at the audience. We are talking about a six-year-old here. The state Labor opposition expressed its concerns about this pageant in Parliament well before it was held. Ms Pulford and I both asked Minister Lovell and Minister Dalla-Riva questions about these pageants and about whether state regulations in relation to working-with-children checks and regulations in relation to child employment had been complied with, and I believe it was really only our concerns and the furore created by the media interest in the pageant that forced the minister to pretend to do something.

That the child safety commissioner, Bernie Geary, attended the event is a welcome first step. I am very

happy that the child safety commissioner attended the event, but I do not believe it is a satisfactory response for the minister to say that that finishes the issue. I think the government should move to safeguard the interests of these children. In the answer that the minister gave to a Dorothy Dixier question about the issue yesterday, Minister Lovell confirmed that she plans to do nothing about these types of beauty pageants in the future. I was interested in the fact that she quoted from advice she has received from the child safety commissioner that:

... we should remain vigilant around children's pageants, simply because they are based on a perception of competitive beauty and personal appearance.

I welcome the fact that the child safety commissioner is saying that the government should remain vigilant. I believe it should remain vigilant, but it should go further than that. It should ask the child safety commissioner to do a proper review around these beauty pageants and move to regulate them in future. It is possible that we could see the same organisers come back to Victoria next year, and I do not think the Baillieu government should stand back and do nothing, just as it is doing in relation to so many child-care issues. It is time that the Baillieu government took some real action to regulate these types of pageants, and we will be supporting this motion.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also rise to speak on what is a very important issue. It is a paramount, universal right of children that we act in their best interests. That is something that motivated my entry into politics, and no doubt many other members on all sides of this house share that commitment. That means we protect the best interests of children and make sure that they, our most vulnerable citizens, are not subjected to exploitation and abuse. Every civilised society needs to do that.

I must place it on the record that I am not the mother of a daughter; however, I am the mother of a son. I will relate an experience of when I made a decision to do something — I will not call it lapsed judgement, because I think it was a developmental thing. Parenting skills are not something one is necessarily born with; it is a matter of on-the-job training. You obviously learn a lot from your own parents and other significant family members, as I did. Although I had studied psychology and I was a teacher by profession, being a mother was a novel experience. I did at one stage enrol my son — I am almost ashamed to say so — in a beauty contest. I cannot recall exactly how old he was, but he may have been between one and two years of age. I went along quite naively, and it felt weird. It felt odd. He came third, and I was devastated. I cried.

I looked at every single baby in that room, and I could not see an ugly baby. When my son was born he was not a picture of beauty. I can say that now, but at that time I thought he was just the most magical thing I had ever seen. He is a beautiful person, because that is how I have raised him and how my family has raised him. We are very proud of who he is. What I am trying to say, to come back to my story, is that I looked around at the competitors, of whom there were many of both sexes, and I could not see an ugly baby. And never since that time have I seen an ugly baby. The baby may have cauliflower ears or it may have other distinguishing features, but I think there is a beauty in all of them — and no doubt each mother and father and each family would see them as beautiful creations.

Excesses can be seen in the way that parents raise their children in myriad activities. As a teacher I have seen that. Some parents see the folly of their ways and change, as I did. I would never again have put my child through that experience. Nonetheless I recognise the fact that there are other competitions and activities where children are pushed to their limits. Whether it is a protégé tennis player who spends hours on end being coached to become a champion tennis player and forfeits the opportunity of being involved in other activities that children probably deserve to be able to engage in or whether it is a protégé musician such as Mozart — who I understand was tied to the piano by his father for hours on end to practise — anything to excess, irrespective of the outcome, is regrettable.

The raising of children is a very important thing, and we as parents acquire skills on the job. Unfortunately you do not need a licence to be a parent. We all know there are a lot of parents who are really not up to the mark — sometimes through lack of skills and at other times through lack of care. Unfortunately at other times it can be through the accidents of life. You may have the best of intentions, but you never know what the impact will be on that child.

Like previous speakers I also share concerns about the premature sexualisation of children, in particular little girls, whether it is through advertisements, clothing or popular music. As a mother I look at that and I think it is excessive. Even so I remember getting into my mother's lingerie as a little girl and pretending to be a princess. As a little girl of four or five years of age I used to get into her lingerie and parade around the house. My castle was the dining room table, and I would wear her high heels and her lipstick.

Ms Hartland — The fun stuff.

Mrs PEULICH — The fun stuff. I would be reprimanded often, but nonetheless it was something that attracted me. It was role-play. Kids grow through role-play, and a lot of the time they play out adult roles, trying them on to see how they fit. That is a part of development. One of the very important things we need to teach our children is emotional intelligence, and often that requires fairly skilled parenting and the presence of fairly skilled significant others in the lives of children.

We need to consider whether legislation or regulation is the answer to some of these excesses. Obviously there are some clear examples of exploitation and abuse, such as child prostitution. We as a society obviously need to come down very hard on these matters. When it comes to regulating pageants and like activities it is sometimes very difficult to draw the line between some of the pageants and the other activities that parents can be overzealous about. Often it is a reflection of the parenting rather than the activity itself. Whether it is callisthenics, jazz ballet, acting, dancing or any other activity, anything that is done to excess, often driven by overzealous parents, should be of concern.

When the Texas-based company Universal Royalty Beauty Pageant announced its Australian event in early 2011, which was to be held in Melbourne, following initial inquiries as to the date and location of the event — details of which were kept confidential by the company, apparently for fear of protest actions and disturbances — and following the media interest the event had aroused as it was framed around the *Toddlers and Tiaras* reality TV program on the American children's pageant circuit, which obviously appears to be focused on the extremes of industry, I was pleased to learn that the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, had directed her department to hold a meeting with the event organisers along with representatives from the departments of justice and business and innovation as well as the Victorian child safety commissioner. That was a wise, proactive move.

At this meeting, the organisers assured government officials that they were complying with all government regulations in regard to working-with-children checks and child employment. As was mentioned earlier, the minister also asked the child safety commissioner to attend the event, which he did as a guest of the organisers, and report back to her. That was a positive move on behalf of both the organisers, if they wished themselves to be seen as good citizens, and the child safety commissioner as well as the minister herself.

The report based on the observations of the child safety commissioner is contained in a letter to the minister dated 1 August. I will read parts of that:

Re: your request that I provide you with my impressions as a result of attending 'children's' beauty pageant at Northcote town hall, Saturday, 30 July 2011.

I attended the 'pageant', and spent 2½ hours observing from the audience.

There were about 150 people in attendance. The audience seemed to comprise of children and families and friends of participants. Children paraded before judges in aged groups from toddlers to adolescents.

Whilst I was present, my overall impression was one of people having fun. Whilst many of the children (95 per cent females) seemed a bit overawed, some even bewildered, there was no dynamic of unsafe or coercive practice.

I spoke to members of the audience, parents, kids and others, and they all seem pretty happy and enthusiastic. Whilst entrance fees, I'm told, are almost \$300 per child —

which I think is a pretty big fee —

nobody complained. Costumes and dresses were extraordinarily 'glitzy' and looked like they would be costly, a few mothers told me they make them or have them made within the group.

The overriding commercial aspect of the event was typified through stalls at the back of the hall, merchandising 'glitzy' paraphernalia.

I get concerned not just with this but also with the sale of paraphernalia generally, whether it is associated with films or other products, and the manner in which it is displayed to obviously make it attractive to children, who are often very good drivers of the purchasing behaviour of their parents. I continue quoting from the letter:

Parents were supporting their charges, as parents do at many children's competitions and displays that I have witnessed as a parent, grandparent, and in my role as child safety commissioner.

Whilst personally, I found the pageant to be not of my personal taste, I saw nothing sinister, unsafe or degrading during my visit.

Minister, in my opinion we should remain vigilant around children's pageants, simply because they are based on a perception of competitive beauty and personal appearance.

If future events become more intense and more competitive, I would be concerned about children's long-term self-worth being dependent upon how attractive they were judged to be.

Happy to meet with you for further conversation.

It is heartening to know that that particular event did not appear to go to the extremes that would require a more strident and decisive course of action. However, I

think the minister's words, as well as those of the commissioner, underscore the importance of maintaining a very close watch — a vigilance — on these pageants to ensure that they remain a safe form of activity.

That is not to say that we do not already place too much emphasis on inappropriate body image. We have problems with young children under the age of 10, for example, dieting and becoming bulimic or anorexic — boys and girls — and the emphasis needs to be on healthy eating and healthy activity. Being glued to social media for too many hours of the day at the expense of outdoor activity compounds those problems in the young. As Ms Hartland rightly said, problems surrounding children, their physical wellbeing and any sorts of body image perceptions, sexual stereotyping and so forth are a reflection of a broader problem in our community and our society about which we all need to be extremely vigilant.

In my view education is the answer. It is absolutely crucial that we educate parents. In my naivety, even though I was not exactly a young mum, I took my son to a child pageant. That for me was a lesson, and I will never repeat that activity again. I think education is crucial.

It is important that we seek to develop in children an emotional intelligence that holds them in good stead for making good decisions for themselves in future life. Sometimes parents are not in a good position to teach those skills, and as a government the responsibility is ours to see how we can deliver that sort of skill set to support families that are not in a position to impart it to their children. That is a real challenge, and I am a fan of those types of initiatives. Whether it is done through maternal and child health, through other types of children's services, through education in schools or whatever, it is obviously a matter for those who are responsible for delivering those programs. I promised to speak very briefly —

Mr Leane — And you always keep your promises.

Mrs PEULICH — Exactly. The commissioner noted:

... in my opinion we should remain vigilant around children's pageants, simply because they are based on a perception of competitive beauty and personal appearance.

As a broader society we need to factor that into everything that impacts upon children. The government's position is that it acknowledges that children's pageants are not to everyone's taste, and the minister is on the record as saying that she personally

would not enter a child in one. As a general principle it is important that we trust parents to make the right decisions for their children until the reverse occurs. That does not mean that we turn a blind eye, sit on our hands and do nothing; that would be negligent. It means that we keep watch and make sure that children are not placed in danger.

Based on the child safety commissioner's reports to date, there is no evidence to suggest that children have been abused or degraded during the course of any event held in Victoria. Obviously continued monitoring will ensure that this continues. Under the former government, when a similar event occurred, the Labor Party basically accepted children's pageants as a legal activity and chose not to impose any sort of ban or regulation on them. The government will continue to monitor these events and take advice from the child safety commissioner and, if necessary, from the Victorian Children's Council, of which the commissioner is a member.

In 2010 the Labor government shied away from taking action, and now opposition members are calling on us to either ban or regulate children's pageants, so their position is a little inconsistent. However, they are important issues, as I said, and there is agreement across the board that we need to make sure these experiences do not expose children to sexualisation, abuse and the like and that those types of excesses, which I think inspired Ms Hartland to bring this motion, are minimised and monitored by the responsible agencies. On behalf of the government, I say that that is an important course of action to make sure that our children are protected.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to thank both speakers. They raised a number of important issues and reconfirmed for me why it was that I moved this motion today. I am somewhat disappointed that, even though the government says it will support the motion, it is not clear how that monitoring will occur or whether the Minister for Community Services will write to Mr Geary to ask him to do more research on this issue into whether there needs to be ongoing regulation. I am not sure how you can monitor the situation when you have no regulation mechanism around pageants. Because of that I feel that I have no choice but to personally write to the child safety commissioner tomorrow and ask him to do more research. After reading his website today I believe that he has the ability to do self-referrals, and that is what I will ask for.

It sends a bad message from government when government members say it is very important, it is very

disturbing and they do not like these types of beauty competitions but then just sit back and let it happen. I do not think that is good enough, so I feel that I have no choice but to take action on behalf of children in Victoria so that we get serious advice from the person who can give us that advice, and that is the child safety commissioner. During question time tomorrow I will ask the minister why, whether and when she will write to the child safety commissioner. I will also ask her to lay on the table the report she has already received from the child safety commissioner.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Ombudsman: corrupt conduct by public officers in procurement

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I take a great deal of pleasure in rising to talk about the Victorian Ombudsman's *Corrupt Conduct by Public Officers in Procurement* report of 2011. It is incorrect for me to say I am delighted; I am truly horrified by this report — more than I could possibly say. The systemic rorting of the public system that is detailed in this report goes to the heart of what all of us want to feel we are achieving in this place. The Labor Party has just come out of government and the coalition has just come into government, but we all rely on our public servants to do the very best they can. We want the public to feel confident about the work we do, to know that it is transparent and honest and that the money taxpayers pay to keep these departments going is distributed in an equitable, open and honest way.

The recommendations of the report go to the heart of cheating — basic cheating by individuals. These individuals said in their responses to the Ombudsman's questions, 'Oh, we did not actually think about that. We didn't think those would be the ramifications, we just thought that came with it'. If that is the culture in these organisations, there is something very wrong with them. I am pleased to know that we as a government are going to do something about it, particularly in the arts.

I remind the chamber that on 16 September last year the Ombudsman notified the Minister for Corrections, the Secretary of the Department of Justice, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Minister for Education that he would investigate the procurement of various government contracts. It is quite extraordinary that this did not come out of Victoria but out of an obscure

reference from a Western Australian report, which alerted us to the fact that a government body — in this instance, Arts Victoria — was rorting the system to an enormous extent over the procurement of toner cartridges.

I have previously gone into the detail of what the Arts Victoria officers were doing, but I would like to look at some of the commentary from people in some of the other government bodies, because my concern is about the systemic nature of the acceptance of goods in recompense for procuring huge contracts. This is seriously unacceptable. There is also a problem with people not understanding what the appropriate procedures are, and this comes through the report very clearly. It shows that many people do not know where the boundaries are, which is a great problem.

I am sad to say that 5 minutes to speak on the report is a very short time, given there is so much detail in it. I cannot understand that some of the people questioned did not see that it was wrong to receive the goods they did — for example, page 19 reports that a project officer received \$8300 in Coles Myer vouchers and prepaid Visa cards from the company that was supplying the toner. Surely people must understand that this is wrong.

I commend the report because it highlights what has been happening. It is not just in Arts Victoria, but many other organisations. A school principal said he received an MP3 player and he did not realise that was wrong. Admittedly he said he just put it in the bottom drawer, but he accepted it. Another example was someone who received a Samsung camera. She said she used it personally, that it was at home. She also used gift vouchers to purchase food for her family. This is absolutely unacceptable. If people are using these vouchers to buy food for their families, there is something seriously wrong in our public service.

It is disturbing to read the allegations in the report. I am pleased that the Baillieu government is addressing these issues. We await some change in the guidelines. The report has alerted the directors of these bodies to this rorting.

Gordon TAFE: report 2010

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a statement on the Gordon TAFE annual report of 2010. When people think of Geelong, they often think of its icons — the Geelong Football Club, Deakin University and the Geelong Ford plant — but along with these important icons we have the Gordon TAFE, which is very high on that list.

Last year was the Gordon TAFE's 123rd year of existence. It has grown from its original existence as a mechanical institute and night school for tradespeople to the largest regional stand-alone TAFE in the state. It now offers more than 400 nationally accredited and specialist courses across its three campuses in the Geelong CBD, East Geelong and Colac, as well as programs at Barwon prison and various Geelong workplaces. In the reporting period it enrolled around 25 000 students and employed approximately 800 staff. In terms of its presence, purpose, participation and place in Geelong, it is not only an important training provider but also a critical component in our region in delivering that connection between training, jobs and our ability to manage and deliver growth.

The reporting period also included the third and final stage of the Gordon 1–10 plan, which is the vision for the institute. The plan has four major objectives: to be recognised as a leader in education and training, embracing new technologies and learning strategies; to be the training provider of choice; to be a key player in proactively assisting the region's economy in transition and community needs, particularly those in disadvantaged areas; and to be an employer of choice.

It gives me great pleasure to inform the house that in September last year the institute was named Victorian large training provider of the year at the state training awards. It was a stunning achievement born out of the dedication to the Gordon 1–10 plan and the sheer hard work of all involved, so I congratulate everyone.

While I am congratulating people, it is absolutely fitting that I mention Grant Sutherland, the CEO of the Gordon. Grant was also awarded CEO of the Year at the Australian Human Resources Institute National Awards. On presenting Mr Sutherland with the award, the judges remarked that Grant's impact on the Gordon had been outstanding, with notable improvements on performance indicators and a well-articulated business vision.

During the reporting phase we also saw the completion of significant building works: the \$7.8 million redevelopment of the Constructing Futures facility at the East Geelong campus — for anyone who goes past it, it is hard not to be impressed with that new facility. There was also \$2.3 million for the Wireless Broadband Connectivity and Boiler Replacement project and the official opening of the redeveloped library at the East Geelong campus. Each of these projects attracted state and federal Labor government funding, which will assist in the Gordon's enduring vision to be the no. 1 TAFE institute in regional Victoria.

With Geelong's ongoing appeal for manufacturing due to its prime position for rail, road, sea and air transportation as well as significant growth in the area requiring substantial numbers of tradespeople, it is important that our education services keep up with that demand. On reading this report I have full confidence that the people of Geelong and the region have access to first class education services provided by what is recognised as the best large training provider in the state. I commend the report to the house.

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise today to make a statement on the Auditor-General's report on the allocation of electronic gaming machine entitlements of June 2011. That report was tabled in this Parliament on 29 June 2011. What did it say? It said there were 27 300 ten-year gaming licences issued for \$980 million. But the Victorian Auditor-General's Office estimates that the true value of those licences was somewhere between \$3.7 billion and \$4.5 billion, so the Victorian taxpayer was short-changed \$3 billion by this process. Why? There was an extremely low reserve price even though 61 per cent of the bidders for these gaming licences expected to pay more for them.

The government of the day, the Brumby Labor government, was clearly suffering from premature closure; it prematurely closed the bidding process. It had an auction model based on the uniform pricing model where the bids made were not necessarily the price the participants paid. The lowest price paid, 72 per cent of club entitlements, was sold at a reserve price of \$5500. The next lowest bid was \$9100, and the average bid was \$42 000.

Who ran this process? The chair of the gaming review committee was the then Premier, John Brumby. The then Treasurer, John Lenders, was also on the committee, as was the current Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, who was Minister for Gaming. What is he doing right now? Rob Hulls, the member for Niddrie in the Assembly, was on the committee as Minister for Racing, as was Lily D'Ambrosio, the member for Mill Park in the Assembly, as Minister for Community Development. They were responsible for short-changing Victorians \$3 billion. Interestingly enough in a press release of 20 May 2010 titled 'Opposition hypocrites on gaming auction revenue' Mr Lenders said:

... the opposition's claim the auction raised insufficient revenue was shown to be another desperate story ...

Hardly a desperate story in hindsight, Mr Lenders, when Victorians were short-changed \$3 billion. In *Hansard* of 24 June 2010 Mr Lenders was reported as having said:

This government has undertaken a comprehensive review of Victoria's gambling industry to deliver the best outcomes for future generations of Victorians ...

The best outcomes? Future generations could have done a lot with that \$3 billion. I now understand why the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre could not be finished. I understand why many other projects and future infrastructure projects were not able to be funded, because the former government short-changed the Victorian taxpayer by \$3 billion.

The conduct of the auction was bizarre. Bidders wanted to pay more, and the government of the day said, 'No, we're not taking any more bids. We're not letting you pay any more'. The bidders said, 'But hang on, I want to pay more', and the government said, 'No, we are not accepting any more bids'. 'But I want to pay much more than you are already being paid', said the bidders, and the Brumby Labor government said, 'We are not taking any more bids. We know you want to give more money to Victorians, but we are not taking it'. Nothing surprises me about the lack of financial acumen of the previous government.

That is just one of the many problems that was delivered to Victorian taxpayers by the Brumby Labor government. The myki ticketing system had a \$857 million overrun; the HealthSMART project, \$104 million; the mobile radio network, \$99 million; the ultranet project, \$21 million; and Project Rosetta, an \$11 million overrun. The electronic conveyancing online project that purported to save Victorian communities \$100 million a year when it was launched in 2004 is non-operational. It was a flawed project costing \$50 million. The law enforcement assistance program database is \$20 million over budget; the train radio system, \$17 million over budget; and the desalination plant and EastLink tollway projects together tied up \$5 billion.

The regional fast rail project has incurred \$839 million in costs; the South Morang rail extension, which is already 12 years late, is \$642 million over budget; and the list goes on. The Royal Children's Hospital is \$250 million over budget, the Austin Health redevelopment is \$221 million over budget, the M1 tollway West Gate Freeway upgrade is \$367 million over budget. It is getting ridiculous, but this is what Victorians have had to deal with since the fall of the Brumby Labor government.

Mr Lenders has talked about accountability. It is time for him to be accountable. He should stand up for the mistakes of his stewardship of the former government, and I call on him to do the right thing by Victorians and resign.

Auditor General: Local Community Transport Services — The Transport Connections Program

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Local Community Transport Services report of 2011 by the Victorian Auditor-General. Local community transport is critical for the survival and the growth of a community but often far more so in an area such as my electorate where members of the community have far lower incomes and far greater health and travel needs. Without adequate local transport systems the community struggles in all the important areas — in keeping in touch with other family members, especially the aged, the infirm and the disabled; in doing the shopping for household essentials, food, clothes and so forth; and in visiting health practitioners, even though the only local funding was provided by the former Labor government.

To quote directly from page 1 of the report would effectively be to repeat what I have just stated, and it is something which I would argue is very obvious. But I am not yet convinced that the minister is so aware, as the new government has been dragged screaming to support commitments that we made in government for better transport options across Western Metropolitan Region and in rural areas, compared to his swift and ready commitment to the southern and eastern suburbs.

This report is more about rural and regional areas. It is about Geelong, Ballarat and the shires of Macedon Ranges and Wellington. It refers to funding in Melton and Wyndham as well as in a long list of other areas across the state, all of which benefited under the years of Labor in government, because we never discriminated and we never played favourites. By extrapolation this report is then also about other regional and rural areas across the state that adjoin those listed within it. This government must make a clear-cut commitment to serve the best interests of all Victorians and not just those who qualify for membership of the Liberal Party.

I wish to raise a few notable achievements for which the former Labor government can be justifiably proud. The Gippsland East Aboriginal driver education program aims to reduce disadvantage to young Aboriginal drivers. The Castlemaine to Maldon bus service allows residents to access local services and events, and visitors to access the two prisons. Such a

service never existed previously. Page 41 of the report says that the Bellarine community access program:

... helped to reduce social isolation experienced by mobility impaired residents ...

That program is now being extended to adjoining areas. The inner Melbourne hospital map and guide was designed for people in rural communities who may need to travel to Melbourne and who may need some help in finding our city-based hospitals. Of course this map is useful and available to anyone, without discrimination, even though its original purpose was to help the 50 000-plus people who travel from country areas to the hospitals every year.

In part it was for the latter reason that the Brumby Labor government, with the now Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, who was then Minister for Health, placed considerable government investment in other hospitals such as the Sunshine Hospital. The truth is that all people deserve better access to the best health care and to the best transport to achieve this health care, not just those in a few select areas. I am deeply proud of the role that we on this side of the house played in government to improve health care, to improve transport, to support communities across the entire state and to help those who live in our distant rural communities to reduce a small portion of the disadvantage they suffer due to the tyranny of distance and to provide quality services to those with the greatest needs whilst also doing our very best to balance the books, just as the Premier, Ted Baillieu, acknowledged of the former Premier, John Brumby, shortly after he assumed the premiership. I commend the report to all honourable members.

Auditor-General: *Municipal Solid Waste Management*

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to make a few remarks on the Victorian Auditor-General's Office audit of municipal solid waste management, a report released on the findings of an audit examining the effectiveness and efficiency of waste management and resource recovery related to Victoria's Towards Zero Waste strategy. The report reviews activities undertaken by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Sustainability Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority and the Metropolitan Waste Management Group, one regional waste management group and four municipal councils.

It makes a number of recommendations in relation to the municipal solid waste sector, which has obviously been slow. Unfortunately waste generation continues to exceed expectations and minimal improvement in

reducing this rate of increase is envisaged over the remainder of the life of the strategy. The report makes a number of recommendations, which I am very pleased to read have been well received and accepted by the authorities, the agencies and the departments, which can be seen in the letters appended at the end of the report, including one from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, which states:

I would like to thank you for undertaking the municipal solid waste management audit.

It goes on to say:

I accept the recommendations in the report, and commit the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and portfolio agencies to addressing the report's findings ...

Over the last six months DSE has been focusing on strengthening portfolio collaboration between the department and its agencies (Sustainability Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority of Victoria (EPA), the Metropolitan Waste Management Group (MWMG) and regional waste management groups).

DSE commissioned a capacity and capability review of MWMG in April 2011 to determine the core resources required to deliver its statutory responsibilities.

...

Following direction from the minister, a review of Sustainability Victoria commenced on 5 May, with a report due to be completed on 31 August 2011.

It states that the recommendations are a useful input to the review and that:

The EPA has completed a significant reform process and DSE will continue to support EPA's regulatory functions and continued improvement.

It goes on to address the key issue of the report that:

Establishing clear roles and responsibilities for portfolio agencies and delivering waste policy is a clear priority for the department.

It concludes by saying:

I would like to reiterate that my department, and portfolio agencies, are committed to improvement in the delivery of efficient and effective waste management policy, programs and regulation.

The letter is signed by Greg Wilson, who is the secretary of the department. Other agencies have also responded.

The management of waste is a very important and challenging issue, and it is certainly one that is very relevant and important to the wellbeing of South Eastern Metropolitan Region, which is home to a number of tips, many of which impact on the amenity

of local residents. Unfortunately in many instances that amenity is impacted by pits which have only old technology; it is certainly not the sort of technology that is required now. The heavy rainfall, the growth in foliage and the amount of green waste in particular that is being generated and its eventual decomposition — and of course in many instances the blockages arising from heavy rainfall affect the systems which deal with gas extraction and so forth — have contributed to some very significant issues.

I would like to use this opportunity to commend the head of the Environment Protection Authority, Mr Merritt, who I think has made some significant inroads in addressing some of the dysfunctions of the EPA that were exposed under the former government as perhaps one of the least effective agencies that had been audited by the Auditor-General insofar as it had nine different and fragmented databases and lacked a capacity to identify permits, let alone enforce, them or their conditions. We need sites for dealing with municipal waste and other waste, but what we also need is agencies that take their responsibilities seriously and that enforce the permit conditions to protect the amenity of residents.

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — In referring to the Auditor-General's report on the allocation of electronic gaming machine entitlements, I think it is appropriate to pay due credit to some members of the then opposition, now government, and the role they played in framing the legislative and regulatory framework that was in place at the time of the electronic gaming machine (EGM) auction in Victoria.

Mr Michael O'Brien, then the shadow Minister for Gaming, issued a press release on 5 June 2009, which, if I recall correctly, was the day the legislation passed in this place to establish the rules for the gaming auction. It was headed 'Coalition delivers lifeline for community clubs on gaming', and it states:

The Brumby government has been forced to back down on its gaming legislation which would have seen many community clubs driven to the wall.

Under amendments secured by the Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition, clubs will be offered the opportunity to purchase 100 per cent of their existing gaming machine entitlements (up to a maximum of 40 machines) ...

Mr O'Brien is quoted as saying:

Under the amendments demanded by the coalition, all clubs across Victoria will have the opportunity to secure some or all of their current gaming machines at a known price, which will

give community clubs the certainty and confidence they need to plan for the future ...

He goes on further to say:

The future of many community clubs ... is now brighter thanks to these amendments ...

On the same day Mr Delahunty, The Nationals member for Lowan in the Assembly, was similarly excited about the amendments that had been negotiated through this place. He said the deal was a great outcome for clubs and had been achieved as a result of an extensive lobbying campaign by Clubs Victoria and Liberal-Nationals coalition MPs. Clubs Victoria ran a most effective and very vigorous campaign around how their members hoped this process would be shaped.

On 11 November 2009 there was again a great deal of legislation governing these matters debated in Parliament. In the Assembly Mr O'Brien, in providing a bit of history, spoke about the pre-auction offer of gaming machine entitlements and again gave credit to the actions of the then opposition parties in the Parliament, particularly in the Legislative Council. In his contribution to the debate on the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Racing Club Venue Operator Licences) Bill 2009, Mr O'Brien said:

It seemed to us on this side of the house to be too great an imposition on many small clubs to force them to go to an auction process, particularly those clubs that are located in areas where there are caps on the number of gaming machines.

There were a great many different requirements in place at the time of the auction. In fact in the Auditor-General's report one of the major reasons given for the difference in the price paid for entitlements and their estimated fair market value referring to the first dot point on page xii of the audit summary section of the report was:

the prior allocation of entitlements to clubs through PACO and the regulatory restrictions on the industry reduced demand for the entitlements at auction ...

The extent of the pre-auction process was significant. Of the 247 club venue operators that were eligible, 236 — or 96 per cent — took up the offer, buying 63 per cent of the 13 750 entitlements available to clubs. There are many other elements to the regulatory framework referred to in the Auditor-General's report, including a maximum number of EGMs permitted in pubs and clubs, a 50-50 rule splitting those entitlements between clubs and pubs, an 80-20 rule that determined caps on regional areas as distinct from metropolitan areas, the density of EGMs per head of population and a maximum number that a licensed club venue operator

can hold. There were a great deal of rules governing the auction process.

The Auditor-General's report also indicates that the Department of Treasury and Finance carried out economic modelling over the period from December 2007 to May 2009. That modelling produced a range from \$504 million at the low end to \$4.2 billion at the high end, but the report says that the most detailed estimate was a figure of \$964 million in 2008. I think credit needs to be given to all those who participated in framing the regulations.

On a final note I draw to members' attention a wonderful article published in the *Wimmera Mail-Times* about a number of community grants. These are the kinds of grants that people are so keen to see continue, and they include some \$80 000 in sponsorship from the Horsham Sports and Community Club to 66 clubs in Mr Delahunty's electorate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Eideh) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Office of Police Integrity: investigative process following death associated with police contact

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to make some remarks on the *Review of the Investigative Process Following a Death Associated with Police Contact*, which was released by the Office of Police Integrity (OPI) in June. The director of the Office of Police Integrity said in his overview of the report that the review was undertaken in the context of the death of Tyler Cassidy, who was fatally shot by police on 11 December 2008, noting:

Following Tyler's death, concerns were raised by the Cassidy family and community legal groups about the involvement of Victoria Police in the coronial investigation. In particular it was argued that Victoria Police had a conflict of interest in conducting the investigation, as there was a prima facie breach of the right to life obligations imposed on the state by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

I welcome this report, even though its findings are rather modest, because it is the first formal report I have seen in here that addresses the need to look at how deaths associated with police contact are handled in the state of Victoria. I commend the report to members to read because it goes through all the issues involved. It describes the methodology that the OPI went through in terms of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, as you might call them. The OPI makes four recommendations, including:

1. That the Victorian government acknowledges a death associated with police contact is a unique incident that requires a special response by the state.
2. That relevant Victorian government departments adopt the working definition of 'death associated with police contact' set out in this report to assist with the identification of deaths associated with police contact that require a special response by the state.
3. That the Victorian government consults with key stakeholders regarding an optimal legislative framework for the investigation and oversight of deaths associated with police contact in Victoria.
4. That the state coroner, the Department of Justice and Victoria Police have regard to the improvements to current processes suggested in this report.

The major finding of the report is that as a result of the review Victoria Police has adopted, according to the OPI, a more consistent procedure for the investigation of deaths associated with police contact. The OPI has also established clear policies and procedures that enable, where appropriate and necessary, consistent and active independent oversight. The OPI director says in the executive summary that there is still more to be done and makes the comment that the ongoing cooperation of everyone is critical to the successful implementation of the recommendations of the report.

The fourth recommendation that the government needs to look at, establishing an independent process, is most important. In particular the OPI raised the issue of media statements made by some police shortly following a death associated with police contact that undermine public confidence in the integrity of the investigation that had only just commenced. Since this report was released there have been three shootings by police, and in every one of those cases I have heard a member of the police media unit or a senior police officer make comments to the media about the particular incident to the effect that the officers involved acted in a proper way. I think the OPI is making it very clear in this report that that should not be done and that it should be left up to the investigation to work out whether officers acted in an appropriate way or not.

One of the other concerns that is raised in this report is the treatment of next of kin, the family of people who die as a result of police contact. From my time spent trying to help the family of Tyler Cassidy, including his mother, Shani, his stepfather, Greg, his brother, Blake, and their extended family and friends through the trauma that they have been involved in, I know that is a very important issue that needs to be addressed and has not been fully addressed up until now.

It was just over a year ago, on 28 July last year, that I moved a motion in the Parliament that the government set up an independent body to investigate deaths associated with police contact. It is good that the OPI has released this report recommending the same thing, and I hope the government will act on it.

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I stand here in response to the Auditor-General's report on the allocation of electronic gaming machine entitlements. I do so not on the basis that I have any great love of gaming machines but to highlight another glaring example of mismanagement, poor governance and waste by the former Brumby government, including a \$3 billion loss to the taxpayer and to my electorate of Western Victoria Region. What we could have done with \$3 billion to upgrade roads, rail and the school buildings neglected over 11 years! I could go on and on. I waded through the Auditor-General's report this morning. I was well aware of many failures of the previous government, and I would like to quickly identify a few.

On page xiv of the audit summary the report says:

More revenue could have been raised at auction had it been allowed to continue ...

On page xv it is stated that there were shortcomings in information provided to the industry to prepare for the allocation process; on page xvi, that specialist advice was problematic and on page xviii that:

There was insufficient control over the project costs.

Page 27 of the report states there was insufficient competition on page 55, that the steering committee 'did not have a sufficiently broad range of expertise' and that 'there was insufficient oversight of costs'.

On page viii of the audit summary the report states:

... the project failed to achieve a satisfactory financial outcome and there were serious shortcomings in the project management.

The revenue obtained from the sale of the entitlements was around \$3 billion less than the assessed fair market value of these assets ... Large venue operators, rather than the community, are the beneficiaries of this windfall gain.

The audit summary goes on at page ix to state:

DPC and DTF appropriately raised concerns on the merits of proceeding with the auction with their respective ministers. However, no formal review was undertaken.

On page 27 the report says:

The basis of the reserve price was not robust. The low reserve combined with low demand at auction meant that the entitlements were, on the whole, sold for prices that were unrepresentative of the return that could be generated by venue operators over the 10-year life of the entitlements.

On page 32 the report goes on:

DTF recommended to government that, if clubs were allocated entitlements outside the auction process, the decision to auction the remaining entitlements should be reconsidered because this was likely to adversely affect the ability of the allocation to capture supernormal profits. No review was undertaken.

On page 40:

... the auction did not provide value for money for taxpayers.

And page 43:

More revenue could have been raised from the allocation.

I could go on and on, but I would rather not. I went back to see who was responsible for this mess. Surprise, surprise! Who was on the cabinet's gaming review committee? They were former Premier John Brumby; former Treasurer John Lenders; former ministers for gaming Tony Robinson and Daniel Andrews, the current Leader of the Opposition; Rob Hulls, the member for Niddrie in the Assembly and former Minister for Racing; and Peter Batchelor, former Minister for Community Development. Why would I be surprised?

This brings me back to Mr Lenders. This morning he read us almost full chapter and verse from the *Weekly Times*, just as if he were reading his children a goodnight story. He did the same as one would do if one were a parent reading to children; he sent us to sleep. What Mr Lenders did not do was provide any real substance in that hour-long monologue this morning. What he did was refer to my management of the Victorian Farmers Federation. What he did not refer to was his mismanagement as former Minister for WorkCover and the TAC when he lost hundreds of millions of dollars in the same circumstances as those that saw the share market affect the Victorian Farmers Federation at the time. It was just a cheap shot by Mr Lenders.

What he also did not mention was anything about the impact on regional Victoria of the carbon tax. He did not talk about the hurt food producers will experience as a result of this tax or about the reduction of over 25 per cent of profit that will affect farmers right across regional Victoria. He did not talk about the processors that will wear the cost. The carbon tax will impose a

\$30 million tax on our industry in rural Victoria. It will cost the industry \$5687 per dairy farm. It will impose a cost of \$30 000 on every single large-scale, non-irrigator farmer in regional Victoria.

This is a disgrace. It is a disgrace that John Lenders did not mention that when he was talking about the so-called support the previous government gave regional Victoria. I can say to Mr Lenders that he missed out the most important things this morning when he bored us ad nauseam by reading the *Weekly Times* word for word. He obviously cannot think for himself. The carbon tax will be the killer of regional Victoria.

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I am pleased to join my colleagues Mr Ondarchie and Mr Ramsay in speaking on the Victorian Auditor-General's performance audit on the allocation of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) under the previous Labor government, which found the process fell short of the potential value of the licences by \$3 billion. The results of this audit have left me wondering if the former government was serious about anything it put its hand to. Since coming to office the coalition has been uncovering budget black holes in almost every project undertaken by those opposite. The West Gate Bridge project, regional rail, the desalination plant, the Royal Children's Hospital redevelopment, the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and the absence of Christmas holiday pay for doctors and nurses are a few of the examples that come to mind.

What we have with this report is proof not just of a black hole but of a singularity the size of which many future projects cannot escape. The money needed to fund these projects no longer exists. It has been consumed by the universe, never to see the light of day again. This is \$3 billion which cannot now be allocated to health, education, public transport, roads, the arts, reducing taxes, assisting businesses or initiatives to reduce the road toll. After 11 years of mismanagement this is the Labor Party's parting gift — \$3 billion of undervalued gaming machine licences. This is a bigger financial hit to Victoria than a combination of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, the sale of the State Bank of Victoria and the Tricontinental disasters of the Cain and Kirner governments.

The Auditor-General's report clearly states in the first paragraph of its conclusion:

The allocation of the EGM entitlements was achieved within very tight time lines. However, the project failed to achieve a

satisfactory financial outcome and there were serious shortcomings in the project management.

Right about now members might think that there are some poor backbenchers or a former parliamentary secretary who will be sweating about such a comment on a project they were given to guide through to completion. However, on inspection we find that it was the cabinet ministers of the former government who were entrusted with the stewardship of the allocation of these lucrative licences. In fact right at the top, Premier John Brumby was chair of the gaming review committee of cabinet. Members might recognise some of the other names on the list as well. The leader of the Labor Party in this house, the former Treasurer, John Lenders, also makes an appearance. In a press release dated 20 May last year Mr Lenders said:

The opposition's complaints that this government raised less than we expected from the auction are untrue.

The Auditor-General begs to differ. The report states:

The revenue obtained from the sale of the entitlements was around \$3 billion less than the assessed fair market value of these assets ... Large venue operators, rather than the community, are the beneficiaries of this windfall gain.

The decision to establish the gaming licences review was taken in 2007 by Daniel Andrews, who was the gaming minister at the time. The man with the plan who started this botched process has conspicuously been elevated to the position of Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, although some members in this chamber might consider that being placed in such a position is just punishment. Rob Hulls makes up the trifecta of those from Labor's current leadership team who were there when the process was devised and approved as an adequate way of selling important state assets.

The execution of the auction leaves much to be desired, and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria would cringe if one of its members were to run a clandestine operation such as the one inflicted with the attempt to sell Victoria's electronic gaming machine licences. In April and May 2010 the reserve price for the club and hotel entitlements was set at \$5500, based on the lowest price for a club entitlement paid at the pre-auction club offer. The auction used a uniform pricing model, which meant that the total value of the bids reached \$835 million.

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Auditor-General: *Facilitating Renewable Energy Development*

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I would like to make some comments this evening on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Facilitating Renewable Energy Development*. Although it is stated on the notice paper that it was tabled in June, it was actually tabled in April. The importance of this report is that it highlights the failure of the previous government's strategy in relation to increasing investment in renewable energy, which was predicted by the then opposition at the time that the policy initiatives were rolled out. As I recall, there was some debate in relation to the Victorian renewable energy target on the point that there would be a transfer payment from consumers to wind farm developers, in the main, of the order of \$2.5 billion. The opposition was criticised for opposing that legislation at that time. The emus have come home to roost, because clearly the Auditor-General has a view that the previous government's renewable energy policies essentially have been poorly implemented and have failed.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — Solar and the renewable energy target as well. The Auditor-General is a little more generous about solar. Around 3.9 per cent of electricity generation comes from renewable resources, including wind, biomass, hydro and solar. I am interested in the conclusion of this report, which states:

Neither the setting of the renewable energy targets, nor the establishment of investment incentives, has delivered expected results. The volume of renewable energy presently generated falls well short of expectations and growth in the state's capacity to generate renewable energy is not on track to meet future targets.

The Auditor-General goes on to compare these strategies to the then government's failure in terms of implementing the rollout of smart meters, which he addressed in a November 2009 report. In making comments on this, the Auditor-General highlights the incapacity of the then government to implement the commitments it made. What he does highlight is that there was not much of a strategy in place to conduct a targeted approach to ensuring that benchmarks were achieved.

In his presentation to members of Parliament when this report was tabled the Auditor-General highlighted a number of aspects in particular that were in his conclusion. He said that the renewable energy research and development projects have been well managed — tick 1; the volume of renewable energy currently

generated falls well short of expectations and is not on track to deliver future targets; and the achievement of targets has been undermined by poor planning. When you are dealing with public policy that has such a profound impact on the economy of the state and therefore the individual cost to taxpayers, it is important that there be a higher degree of investment in implementation.

I am disappointed that the opposition of the day should have been proven correct, but I guess that is why we are now the government and the former government is now the opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr P. DAVIS — There is some noise pollution on my right in the chamber, but unfortunately I cannot pick up the interjections. I cannot hear what they are — it is a constant babble. I will just ignore them.

The findings of the Auditor-General included that there was no clear plan on how to increase renewable energy consumption and, with the exception of solar energy, Victoria has no renewable energy targets.

The PRESIDENT — Time!

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Firewood: collection permits

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the Leader of the Government for giving me this opportunity under the bright light of scrutiny to raise a matter for the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, Louise Asher. The matter I raise is in relation to conditions being put on small businesses, particularly in East Gippsland, by the potential implementation of a policy of the new government that has been announced. In the chamber last night I referred to Ms Lovell's press release of 3 November which was about the coalition's plan to abolish firewood permits. I raised this last night as an issue for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change regarding the provision of free firewood to people who could not access natural gas — something that Ms Lovell said would happen if the coalition was elected. That has not been delivered.

The matter I raise tonight is in relation to the same press release, but I raise the matter with a different minister,

the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, because of the consequences of Ms Lovell's promise, which was made in a Liberal-Nationals coalition press release of 3 November entitled 'Coalition to abolish firewood permits'. That is the policy. If the coalition wishes to do that, it can, because this is a democracy and it should deliver on its promise.

It is not just the issue I raised last night for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change that causes complexity in terms of this ill-thought-out policy. It also has extraordinary implications for small businesses across regional Victoria — for example, if a person wishes to buy a firewood permit for \$10, there is a commission that is paid to the business. That commission is usually of the order of 1 per cent to 2 per cent of the cost of that permit. That can come to thousands of dollars a year for a small business in regional Victoria. Business and store owners tell me that on average a customer coming in to buy a permit will buy between \$5 and \$10 worth of goods at that store or business. If you have a business that sells firewood permits, you get a commission from selling the permits, and in addition you get a customer flow that comes into your business because of the permits being sold.

The matter I raise for the attention of the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business is about the government's response to small businesses if Ms Lovell's election commitment to abolish firewood permits in regional Victoria in areas where there is no natural gas is delivered.

Mr P. Davis interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Philip Davis gets excited about free firewood, so I am not surprised that he is excited about this. But Mr Philip Davis would understand that in every small town in his electorate of Eastern Victoria Region where firewood permits are sold the business gets a commission of 1 to 2 per cent. Every customer who comes into a store to buy a permit buys \$5 to \$10 worth of goods. The man who cries about the carbon tax is now saying to small businesses that not \$50, \$100 or \$200 — —

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ageing. It concerns the impact of the proposed commonwealth carbon tax on state public hospitals within my

electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region, in particular the Austin Hospital, which is part of Austin Health, and the Northern Hospital, which is part of Northern Health. My information suggests that direct energy cost increases in relation to electricity and gas will be substantial — it will be at least \$1 220 967 annually at the Austin Hospital and \$242 513 at the Northern Hospital. These are just the direct costs; there will be additional costs because of increased costs of goods and services supplied to the Austin Hospital. This will likely increase pressure on the Austin Hospital, result in fewer services and directly impact on waiting times on waiting lists, which will clearly disadvantage my constituents.

Can the minister inform me of the number of cases that will be cancelled due to the impact of the commonwealth government's carbon tax on the Austin Hospital? I seek his action in advocating for compensation for the Austin Hospital from the commonwealth government.

Disability services: national insurance scheme

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — Recently the Australian Productivity Commission completed its inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme and presented its report to the Australian government. More than 1000 individuals and organisations made submissions to the inquiry, including many Victorians, and I congratulate them on their hard work.

The Gillard Labor government asked the Productivity Commission to examine the options for reform of disability support services, because Labor believes that the system we have today is not delivering the kind of care and support Australians expect for people with a disability. In particular, the care and support available to people who are born with a disability and have not acquired a disability at work or from a motor vehicle accident is a long way short of what we would all want for ourselves and our loved ones.

Care and support should be based on people's needs and not be a lottery of the kind of disability they have, how they acquired it or where they live. For these reasons I welcome the response of the Gillard government to the Productivity Commission's report. In its response the Gillard government announced it will start work immediately with states and territories on measures that will build the foundations for a national disability insurance scheme to provide care and support to more than 400 000 people with significant disabilities. The government has said it supports the Productivity Commission's vision for a system that

provides individuals with the support they need over the course of their lifetime and that it wants a reform of disability services that is financially sustainable.

The action I seek from the Premier is that he take up this opportunity on behalf of all Victorians who have a disability and all Victorians who may acquire a disability in the future so they can have the care and support they need. I ask the Premier not to be sidelined by those who would subvert this opportunity in order to score short-term political points in relation to arguing for the rights of states instead of the rights and lifelong support needs of people with disabilities. A national disability insurance scheme is an idea whose time has come, and it most certainly deserves bipartisan support.

Finally, on a personal note, I wish to acknowledge the contributions to the development of a national disability insurance scheme by John Della Bosca, national campaign director for Every Australian Counts, and Rhonda Galbally, chair of the National People with Disabilities and Carers Council and a lifetime activist for people with disabilities, as well as everyone who contributed to the Productivity Commission's report. This reform of disability services is going to require years of work, and it will require investment from all levels of government.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health. I am very concerned about the impact the commonwealth government's proposed carbon tax may have on hospitals in my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region. In particular I bring to the minister's attention the Latrobe Regional Hospital, which is part of the Latrobe health service. I understand that the anticipated costs of the carbon tax could be in the order of \$176 000 in increased utility charges. I am very concerned about the impact of this cost on the delivery of front-line services by that health service.

I ask the minister whether he can provide me with advice as to exactly what the impact may be on the delivery of front-line services by this excellent service. If the carbon tax proceeds and becomes law, I also ask that he vigorously advocate for appropriate compensation from the Gillard-Brown government.

Government: procurement policy

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Treasurer concerning the wasteful and costly dumping of thousands of metres of Victorian taxpayer owned and

Victorian-produced blue material used by Australian manufacturers for the production of Victoria Police shirts. For some incomprehensible reason this Victorian-manufactured fabric, although paid for by the Victorian government and costing the Victorian taxpayer thousands of dollars, was dumped by the government, and instead the government will now fully import police shirts from China. Furthermore this contract was awarded without a tender process. Given that the Victorian-manufactured fabric is sitting in a warehouse somewhere, this is a shocking waste, particularly as the Baillieu-Ryan government has decided to dump it and fully import the shirts from China.

Our police uniforms are iconic. The Baillieu government is sending a terrible message that it is content to see Victorian jobs being exported to China. This short-sighted decision means that there is now a dagger hanging over the Victorian textile industry and its future. This is not about global competition; it is about whether the Baillieu-Ryan government sees a future for Victorian manufacturing.

Given the potentially serious ramifications for the textile industry of the decision by the government to fully import police shirts from China and given that no tender process was engaged in by the government in the procurement of Chinese-made police shirts, I request that the Treasurer launch an inquiry into the decision-making processes which led to this curious decision.

Coal seam gas: exploration licences

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Energy and Resources, Michael O'Brien. Across western Victoria not only are communities having to deal with the plethora of wind farm planning permits issued by the previous government without thought or respect for the rights of individuals, which has successfully pitted land-holder against land-holder, we now find that the failed energy policies of the Green Gillard government, rather than the Brown one, have prompted a plethora of mining companies to apply for exploration licences, mainly to capture clean gas to export to China and India, leaving us to pick up the carbon tax costs domestically while losing our food-producing land, without land-holders' rights, obligations and consultation with mining companies being fully acknowledged.

Mantle Mining, with an application for an exploratory licence on 500 square kilometres for coal mining, took on a small community at Deans Marsh, near where I live, and such was the concern, passion and opposition

to the application that the board of Mantle Mining, out of respect to that community, withdrew its application. But other applications for coal seam gas exploration in the Colac area have only just been uncovered.

Mecrus has made five applications for exploration for mineral extraction covering 480 square kilometres in my electorate, and it has recently withdrawn its application for coal mining only. On 16 December 2010 ECI International was also granted an exploratory licence which covers the shire of Colac Otway, but little is known of its activities or planned activities. I am not suggesting that we should stop coal or coal seam gas exploration or mining, but with the Otway Basin, which runs from Melbourne to the South Australian border and which has an estimated 15.5 billion tonnes of in-situ brown coal, most of which is in the Parwan sub-basin, the western Victoria region will be seen as a valuable source of minerals ready for extraction. My plea to the minister and this government is that we have open and clear land access agreements that ensure that land-holders are aware of their rights and have greater negotiation power when faced with mining companies seeking exploration and mining licences.

I refer the house to an agreement reached between the Minerals Council of Australia and me as former president of the Victorian Farmers Federation which identifies the law which extends the rights of protection to private land-holders below the area of ownership down to a depth of 100 metres. Mining companies have an obligation to agreed compensation before the miner can commence operations, and this is the area of support to land-holders that is required, regardless of the law of the right to mine.

In closing, the larger picture is the moral policy of having land use change from traditional food production to mining and the long-term impacts on regional communities, with which all governments will have to grapple.

Public transport: Armstrong Creek

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it is in relation to public transport availability in Geelong's new suburb, Armstrong Creek. At the beginning of August current and potential landowners in Armstrong Creek were informed by the member for South Barwon in the Assembly, Andrew Katos, that they will not have access to bus services when they move into their homes. Mr Katos indicated that bus services would be made available after the first stage of development has been completed. I simply do not think this is good enough.

Appropriate public transport connections must be available right from the beginning to foster sustainable living at Armstrong Creek and to ensure connectivity. To do otherwise is to deny the community the ability to form habits and routines that are in keeping with sustainable living in Armstrong Creek and to undermine the very essence of why we created Armstrong Creek in the first place. With no access to bus services, families in Armstrong Creek will be fully reliant on their cars for travel to work and school. This means mums and dads must drive their children to and from school each day as well as having to drive to their workplaces and find parking spaces there. For those residents commuting to Melbourne by train, the lack of bus services means they must drive to Marshall, South Geelong or the Geelong main station to park at one of the stations, which have limited spaces.

Armstrong Creek has been designed as a sustainable development, yet there is nothing sustainable about the decision to deny its residents access to public transport. I want to bring to the minister's attention a report by Sustainability Victoria called *A Compelling Business Case for Sustainable Development*, which, under the heading 'Public transport initiatives to create a greener, healthier lifestyle', states:

A key objective for the Armstrong Creek development is to maximise the use of —

public —

... transport by providing good public transport options ...

It also states:

In order to achieve the accelerated rate for land sales and house construction and settlement, it is essential that an effective public transport service be available from the commencement of the development.

I ask the minister to read this report and provide all the residents of Armstrong Creek, from the very first resident who moves in to the very last, access to a bus service and to other forms of public transport.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health, and it concerns a significant impost arising in relation to one of my local hospitals. Regrettably we know that as a result of federal government initiatives the Greens-Labor Marxist government in Canberra, which wants to redistribute all the wealth in this country, is introducing a carbon tax, which will have a profound effect on all Victorians. That effect in my electorate of

Eastern Victoria Region will be significant in terms of the delivery of services at public hospitals.

A calculation that has been made in relation to the Central Gippsland Health Service, in particular the Sale hospital campus of that health service, shows that there will be a direct cost in increased electricity and gas prices that will draw an additional \$135 770 from that budget annually. I know that the hospital budget is operating in deficit already and that there are challenges for the board of the hospital or health service in trying to make ends meet.

Unfortunately these direct costs will mean that there will be a reduction in services. I would be interested to know exactly what impact that will have in terms of waiting times and waiting lists which will disadvantage my constituents. I would be grateful if the Minister for Health could advise me of the number of cases that will be cancelled due to the impact of the federal government's carbon tax, and I am interested to know what the minister will do in relation to making representations to the commonwealth on behalf of the Sale hospital.

My Future My Choice: funding

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Services, and it relates to a program called My Future My Choice. This program has been very successful in moving young individuals with disabilities such as brain impairments from aged-care facilities into purpose-built facilities. I have received correspondence from constituents who have been critical of or concerned about the government's decision not to continue to fund this program. I will briefly refer to extracts from those two letters. I have not asked whether I can identify the authors so I will not do so, but I will read from the letters briefly. The first one says:

In the short time this initiative has been running, many young people requiring full-time care have been brought out of aged-care facilities and placed in purpose-built residences.

It goes on to say:

Many hopes have been built up as the program gained momentum. Now those hopes have been dashed. We cannot understand why the government has been so cruel to have taken this action. It angers us. Has the government no heart or compassion?

We implore you to ask the government to reconsider this funding cut, and quickly.

The second letter is in much the same vein, and I quote:

To our dismay, we recently learnt that the program has been discontinued.

It is often said that a community is judged by the way it treats those most in need. I ask that the discontinuation of the My Future My Choice program be reconsidered.

Most of us are so fortunate and I am so saddened by this decision. I know the constraints of budgeting but this does not seem to me an area where cuts should be made. I can only try to imagine how the families who could see a glimmer of hope must feel.

Again, I respectfully ask that the government reconsider this program.

My request to the minister is that she do as these two constituents have so eloquently asked — that is, reconsider the funding to this program, which has obviously made a significant difference to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing. It concerns the not-inconsiderable impact of the proposed Gillard-Brown carbon tax on state public hospitals in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. In particular I refer to the Footscray and Sunshine hospitals, both part of Western Health. It has to be said that after 11 years of neglect by Labor they need every cent — every dollar, in fact — that they can get. They certainly do not need Canberra stealing precious funds from their coffers.

The information I have suggests that direct energy cost increases for gas and electricity alone will be substantial — at least \$330 803 at Footscray and \$321 781 at Sunshine — and that will be on an annual basis. These are just the direct costs. There will be additional costs faced as a result of increases in the costs of goods and services supplied to Western Health. That cannot be good for Western Health, and it cannot be good for people in the west of Melbourne. There will be increased pressure on Western Health that will result in fewer services, and it will impact directly on waiting times and waiting lists, clearly disadvantaging my constituents in the west of Melbourne.

I ask the minister to inform me of the number of cases that will have to be cancelled due to the impact of the commonwealth government's carbon tax on Western Health. I seek the minister's action in urgently advocating for compensation for Western Health from the commonwealth government. As things stand at the moment, the people of the west will continue to suffer and will suffer more as a result of this particular tax.

Increased health costs will merely add to the misery of the people of Melbourne's west as a result of this great big tax on everything that will achieve precisely nothing for the environment.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is also for the attention of my colleague the Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing, the Honourable David Davis. It concerns the impact of the proposed commonwealth carbon tax on state public hospitals within my electorate of Western Victoria Region. In particular, on behalf of the Geelong community I remain concerned about Geelong Hospital, which is part of Barwon Health. My information suggests the direct energy cost increases for gas and electricity alone will be substantial — something in the order of \$541 855 annually — and that is just the initial suggestion. Where will this go over time? That is anyone's guess, but we know it will be on an upward trajectory. These are just the direct costs; there will be additional increases in the cost of goods and services supplied to the Geelong Hospital and Barwon Health.

This will likely increase pressure on Geelong Hospital and result in fewer services being delivered, which will impact directly on waiting times and waiting lists, clearly disadvantaging my constituents in Geelong. Will the minister inform me of the number of cases that will be cancelled due to the direct impact of the commonwealth's carbon tax on Geelong Hospital? I seek the minister's action in advocating for compensation for Geelong Hospital from the federal Gillard-Brown coalition government. There is little doubt that this tax will haunt my electorate, like it will haunt electorates statewide, when it is introduced.

Carbon tax: health sector

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is also for the attention of the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis. Like my colleagues in the chamber, I am concerned about the impact of the commonwealth's proposed carbon tax on a number of state public hospitals within my electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region. I draw his attention to Monash Medical Centre, Clayton, which is part of Southern Health and which services a number of my constituents in Southern Metropolitan Region.

My information suggests that the hospital's direct energy cost increases for gas and electricity will be substantial, at least \$660 000 each and every year. These are just the direct costs; as other members have

already highlighted, there will be additional costs through increases in the cost of goods and services supplied to the Monash hospital. This will likely increase pressure on Monash Medical Centre and result in fewer services, which will impact directly on waiting times and waiting lists, clearly disadvantaging many of my constituents in Southern Metropolitan Region and indeed many Victorians who seek to use the services of Monash Medical Centre. I am only too well aware of the challenges and constraints that many public hospitals already face on a daily basis —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Leane is not in his place, and conversation across the chamber is simply not on. The member to continue without assistance.

Ms CROZIER — I ask the minister if he could inform me of the number of cases that will be cancelled due to the impact of the commonwealth's carbon tax on Monash Medical Centre? In addition I seek the minister's action in advocating for compensation for Monash Medical Centre from the commonwealth government.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I notice that here in the chamber tonight are several members representing Southern Metropolitan Region. My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, who is also a member for Southern Metropolitan Region. In fact the only member for Southern Metropolitan Region who is not here is the Greens representative. I have to say that she, like the rest of us, is listening to our community and knows the huge angst and anguish of people in our electorate who are so concerned about the carbon tax. It is on everybody's lips as you go out there and speak to them. They are really concerned about it at every level. People in Southern Metropolitan Region are concerned about the impost the carbon tax will place on every aspect of their lives. It is therefore of great concern to hear that the impact — —

Mr Leane interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Leane is geographically challenged; he is not in his seat. I ask him to desist from interjecting.

Mrs COOTE — It is therefore a particular concern when people look at the Alfred hospital and the ramifications for it of the carbon tax. There will be a huge increase in costs; in fact it is estimated it will be at least \$715 958 annually. Just think of the constituents in Southern Metropolitan Region and beyond who could

be helped through programs at the Alfred hospital if it were not for the money that will be stripped from the hospital by this iniquitous carbon tax. It will put huge pressure on the Alfred hospital and result in far fewer services being provided. The Alfred hospital is renowned for the excellent services it provides.

I seek the minister's action in advocating for compensation for the Alfred hospital from the commonwealth government and urge him to keep up the excellent work he is doing on behalf of Victoria.

Responses

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have written responses to adjournment matters raised by Mrs Petrovich on 24 May, Mr Lenders on 14 June and Mr Elsbury on 16 June.

A series of matters have been raised tonight. Mr Lenders raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business relating to small businesses in East Gippsland and firewood permits. Given that he played a senior role in a government that made it difficult for country people to access firewood, I find it extraordinary that he has raised that matter, but I will refer it for the attention of my colleague.

Ms Broad raised a matter for the attention of the Premier. It concerns long-term disability support schemes and in particular the Productivity Commission's recent report. I am pleased to inform her that the Premier, Ted Baillieu, took the lead at the Council of Australian Governments meeting in February. I was at the meeting, so I can directly report that he sought to put that matter on the agenda for the COAG meeting that will occur this week. Our Premier has taken the lead. There has been great cooperation from Victoria concerning the long-term disability arrangements. I know the Minister for Community Services is also a strong advocate for a more comprehensive approach that will provide better support for people with long-term disabilities across a range of situations.

The Productivity Commission report has been welcomed, and I know the government is prepared to work constructively with the commonwealth on these matters. We have taken the lead on that. I compliment the Premier and the Minister for Community Services on their actions. I look forward to the bipartisan support that in effect Ms Broad presaged by her adjournment matter tonight. We look forward to undertaking work with the commonwealth on the long-term disability scheme. I make the point that it is a complex

arrangement; there is no question of that, and I know that the Premier and the Minister for Community Services are very aware of those particular complexities. I will pass the matter on to the Premier.

Mr Somyurek raised a matter for the Treasurer concerning a particular contract for police shirts. He made a number of comments. I will pass his inquiry on to the Treasurer. However, I note that in terms of protecting the manufacturing industry it might be much more constructive for him to stand up and indicate his concerns about the carbon tax and the impact it will have on the manufacturing industry. He needs to be prepared to be Victorian first and Labor second and tackle his federal Labor colleagues, because they appear not to be going to give the Victorian manufacturing industry any compensation for the impact of the carbon tax.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, President, my understanding of the standing orders is that the minister's opportunity to provide a summary of the adjournment debate is not an opportunity for him to debate the responses.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I agree with Mr Leane that the adjournment debate is not one which invites ministers to debate matters, but it is an opportunity for ministers, where they have an ability to do so, to dispatch matters by providing the relevant information to members. In that context what Mr Davis has said, whilst it might have taken a tangent away from the issue that Mr Somyurek specifically raised, is nevertheless apposite to manufacturing as an issue. Therefore Mr Davis is quite entitled to make that comment. But clearly Mr Leane is right; if Mr Davis were to continue debating the matter and developing that theme, I would also share some of Mr Leane's concern.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I note that I was providing some alternative avenues for the member in order to assist manufacturing in Victoria. As I said, I will pass that matter on.

Mr Ramsay raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr O'Brien, concerning wind farms and matters surrounding exploration on farmland. I will pass that matter on to the relevant minister.

Ms Tierney raised a matter about public transport at Armstrong Creek. I am familiar with some of the matters there. She indicated the advocacy of Mr Katos, the member for South Barwon in the Assembly, for public bus services and public transport in general in the area. I know him to be a fierce advocate for his local

area, and I welcome his ongoing advocacy. I will pass the matter of issues around sustainability on to the Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder. I agree in general with the points made about greater and more sustainable access to public transport. I note that when the former government was in power it did not provide that transport into the region. Nonetheless, I will pass this matter on to the Minister for Public Transport.

Mr Tee raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Services concerning a disability program that has some considerable significance. I will take on board the matters he has raised and raise them with the relevant minister. I look forward to Mr Tee providing the relevant correspondence, which I will also bring to the attention of the minister.

A number of members raised matters with me concerning the impact of the carbon tax. Mr Ondarchie raised the matter of the Austin Hospital and Melbourne Health, and there is no doubt that the carbon tax will have a significant impact on those health services — for example, at the Austin the impact will be of the order of \$1.228 million annually. At Northern Health, which he also raised, the impact will be at least \$242 000 annually.

The point that Mr Ondarchie made about the indirect costs is also correct. The costs I listed are simply the direct costs, and they will have a significant impact on the hospital. In terms of patient services, I will come back to him with particular figure work about the direct impact of the tax. This will be a straight hit to the bottom line. There is no question; it will impact directly on patients and services in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

I note the matter raised for my attention by Mr O'Donohue concerning the Latrobe Regional Hospital, a very important health service which I visited quite recently. It is a more modern building than some of the other health services around the state. I make the point that initial calculations show that \$176 684 — —

Mr Finn — On a point of order, President, I note that the minister is far from concluding his summation of the adjournment matters this evening and surely there are members of the opposition who raised matters on the adjournment. But I note there are no opposition members in the house to receive the words of wisdom from the minister. I am not sure if that is appropriate or indeed if that is covered by the standing orders, but it seems to me that if we have a situation where there is not even one member of the opposition in the house, then that is surely in breach of the standards of this place.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — On the point of order, President, I am not sure there actually is a point of order, but I think it is disrespectful for a political party to vacate the chamber. I am not sure; it may be that these issues around the carbon tax and their extreme sensitivity — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The Leader of the Government knows these matters are not to be debated. A point of order must be a point of order in terms of the proceedings of the Parliament; it is not an opportunity to debate or to take a shot at someone. The fact is that Mr Finn does not have a point of order. While members might form views about the courtesy shown to the house by all members of the opposition being absent at this time, under standing orders there is no requirement for members of the opposition to attend the Parliament. It is always incumbent upon the government to form a quorum in the house, and we are thankful when the opposition contributes to the quorum but it is not actually required to do so. In terms of words of wisdom, I think it is always a matter of one's personal perspective. The adjournment matters raised by members of the opposition have all been acquitted by the Leader of the Government, which is probably why they have trotted off to prepare themselves for committee meetings later this evening.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I reinforce Mr Finn's point that it is unusual for the opposition to flee the chamber. I am not sure whether its members are especially sensitive about the matters around the carbon tax and its impact on public hospitals.

Mr O'Donohue raised the matter of the Latrobe Regional Health Service and the direct impacts — and there will be further impacts beyond the direct impacts he mentioned — on waiting times and waiting lists, and I will come back to him with some estimates on the impact there. I also note his request that I advocate to the commonwealth government, and I will certainly do that. I will raise these matters with the commonwealth and make sure we have some response. This tax which is proposed to be imposed by the commonwealth will directly hit services in this state. It will hit this state earlier and harder because of our reliance on brown coal, which generates more carbon dioxide, so the carbon tax will differentially clobber Victorian hospitals.

Mr Davis raised a matter for me concerning Central Gippsland Health Service and the Sale hospital. An initial analysis suggests that gas and electricity costs could easily increase by \$135 770 annually in direct costs. That does not include the impact of indirect costs

through the supply chain of goods and services that the hospital needs to purchase as part of its activities.

It is interesting to note that health was exempted when the GST was introduced in 1998. Health services and providers paid GST on their input costs, but they did not levy it at the final point and they were able to claim the input costs back from the tax office. No such arrangement is proposed for health services under the current carbon tax arrangements. Former Prime Minister John Howard was prepared to have a health system that was exempt from GST, but Prime Minister Julia Gillard is clearly prepared to put a tax on health care and a tax on health providers, including public health services, without compensation.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Indeed. She went to the people saying she would not introduce a carbon tax, and now she is proceeding to introduce one. Whatever you think about a carbon tax — whether you are for or against it — she certainly does not have a democratic mandate to do this.

Mr Finn — Elected on a lie.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Indeed, Mr Finn. Furthermore, not only does she not have a democratic mandate to do this but there is no compensation of any kind envisaged for health providers.

Mr Finn raised a matter for me in relation to the impact of the proposed commonwealth carbon tax on hospitals in Western Metropolitan Region, specifically at the Footscray and Sunshine hospitals. The direct energy costs are calculated at \$330 803 at Footscray and \$321 781 at Sunshine. I make the point that these are simply the direct costs. There will be other costs generated by the indirect costs as goods and supplies are purchased that have carbon tax costs embedded in them. This will push the costs out much further. I will come back to Mr Finn with some specific figures, but I am also prepared to advocate on behalf of the western side of the city to make sure that Julia Gillard's carbon tax does not unfairly disadvantage the people there.

Mr Koch raised for me the matter of the impact of the carbon tax on Geelong Hospital. Barwon Health is our largest regional health service, and Geelong Hospital is the largest component of it. The calculations suggest that the impact on Barwon would be \$541 855, and those would just be the direct costs. There would also be massive indirect costs generated as the costs feed through the system and push up the costs of goods and services.

I am certainly prepared to come back to Mr Koch with some more detailed figures about the impact on waiting times and waiting lists and the disadvantage that this could potentially create for people on the Bellarine Peninsula and in greater Geelong. I am also very prepared to advocate with the commonwealth on matters surrounding compensation for Barwon Health. Victoria's second-largest city, Geelong, will be hit very hard by this carbon tax. It is not just manufacturing and cement but also the Ford factory and a whole series — —

Mr Finn — Oil.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Oil indeed; I could go on. This is a bit beyond the remit of the adjournment item, but it is true to say that the impact on the Geelong region will be much greater than in some other regions. In a previous role I had as shadow minister for the environment I worked closely with Mr Koch on some of the direct impacts of carbon pricing on the Geelong region and I met with the G21 and with other groups in and around Geelong. I am not sure whether at that time people fully understood the impact of carbon pricing on both public and private health care in the Geelong region.

This carbon impost will impact on private providers — it might be a private dentist or a private optometrist — in Geelong. They will all pay increased costs in terms of the carbon tax. Increases will feed through in direct costs and in indirect costs, and, as I said earlier, unlike with the GST there will be no credit provided. It will just mean higher costs, in an area like Geelong, for private health services — —

Mr Koch — St John of God.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — St John of God will certainly pay the additional costs as well. The initial estimates in terms of the direct impact on Geelong Hospital and Barwon Health are very significant.

Ms Crozier raised a matter for me about Monash Medical Centre and the costs that would be generated through the carbon tax proposed by the commonwealth government. I will take on notice the request for details of the impact on waiting lists and waiting times, but there will certainly be a significant impact on waiting lists and waiting times. I am prepared to advocate very strongly. Monash is one of the key hospitals in south-eastern metropolitan Melbourne, and Southern Health is our largest health provider. Ms Crozier has only asked me about Monash, but I know there will also be an impact on Casey and on Dandenong.

Southern Health will be hit very hard by the significant cost increases that the carbon tax will impose through direct costs, but there will also be indirect costs, which are harder to quantify. Work needs to be done to quantify those costs, and Monash and all of the south-eastern suburbs will be hit very hard. People will be faced with longer waiting lists and longer waiting times because of the carbon tax unless clear compensation is provided. We will need some compensation from the commonwealth for the tax it is imposing on public health care in south-eastern Melbourne if it pushes forward with the proposed carbon tax in its current form.

I make the point also that Mrs Coote raised with me the matter of the Alfred hospital. Alfred Health is one of our very important services and it will be hit to the tune of \$715 598 through increased gas and electricity charges. They are the immediate direct costs to Alfred Health. Areas like the inner south of Melbourne will suffer from the impost of this carbon tax on health care. It is going to hit some of those who are in need in that area and seeking access to health care. Waiting lists and the waiting times will increase at Alfred Health if there is no compensation for the financial impact that Julia Gillard's carbon tax will impose.

I will come back to Mrs Coote with some details about the impact on waiting lists and waiting times and some work that might indicate the indirect impact on Alfred Health. But it is very clear that even on the most straightforward examination of the direct costs, Alfred Health will take a direct hit. Some compensation needs to be provided by the commonwealth to protect Victoria's public health services as the commonwealth government pushes hard to bring its carbon tax into operation.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In regard to the adjournment debate I will correct one thing, if I may. It is my understanding that Mr Ramsay's request did not refer to wind farms but was about agreements in respect of exploration of gas deposits and related exploration in a bid to limit land-use conflicts. As I understand it, that is the matter he wishes to have pursued.

The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7.03 p.m.

