

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Wednesday, 1 June 2011

(Extract from book 8)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Cabinet Secretary	Mr D. J. Hodgett, MP

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, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

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

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

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

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

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

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 Napthine 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 Elasmarr 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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Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

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Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

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Mr J. LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Lenders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Northern Victoria	ALP	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pakula, Hon. Martin Philip	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elsbury, Mr Andrew Warren	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Guy, Hon. Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

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Wednesday, 1 June 2011

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

CONDOLENCES

Lance Corporal Andrew Jones and Lieutenant Marcus Case

The PRESIDENT — Order! Members may have noted with a degree of sadness, as indeed I have, the deaths of two Australian soldiers killed in action yesterday in Afghanistan, both of them with strong links to Victoria — indeed both were Victorian born. It is with deep regret that I advise the house of their deaths on 30 May, the two soldiers being Lance Corporal Andrew Gordon Jones and Lieutenant Marcus Sean Case. The soldiers were killed in two separate incidents in Afghanistan.

I ask all members to stand in silence in memory of the service and sacrifice of these two brave Australian soldiers.

Honourable members stood in their places.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS TASKFORCE

Indigenous affairs report 2009–10

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing), by leave, presented report.

Laid on table.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2011–12 (part 1)

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) presented report including appendices, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

In so doing I am cognisant of the current standing orders of this place, under which I have to compress

54 hours of public hearings into 5 minutes of summary. That is an impossible task, and I will not attempt it. There were in fact 48 public hearings in relation to portfolios, including public hearings to which the President and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly were able to contribute in a meaningful way. Before I proceed I should acknowledge the incredible amount of effort made by the presiding officers, the Premier, the Treasurer, the Deputy Premier, the Assistant Treasurer, the Attorney-General and all the other ministers and departmental secretaries and staff who were involved in the public hearings. They all made a great contribution.

These public hearings are an opportunity for the committee to examine in detail some of the aspects of the budget that would not otherwise be accessible to the Parliament and to the public. In the hearings questions can be posed to ministers and comprehensive responses provided. It is not just the responses to those questions which are important, it is also the material that is collated by the committee in its investigation.

This is the first of three parts to the report. Part 1 is essentially a summary of the key points. There will be two further parts of the report tabled at a later date. Part 2 will look specifically at performance measures within the budget papers, and part 3 will explore other themes in the budget, bringing together the information I referred to — the budget papers, the budget estimates hearings, the department's responses to the budget estimates questionnaire and other research.

Those reports are an important part of the transparency process around the budget. Many members of Parliament look forward to receiving part 1 of the estimates report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) so they can use it as a reference for their contribution to the budget debate. The opportunity is there and has been for a little time, because we have this year changed the format and we are not printing transcripts of evidence. Those transcripts are available on the PAEC website, and as a research tool that is probably more usable.

One of the other innovations is that this year the estimates hearings were audiocast, which provided for some moments of interest when we found that the audio was broadcasting a private meeting of the committee, for example. Also as a result of that broadcast we found that there were some problems with access to the audio by unauthorised people, which was then broadcast in the media. We will be working with the presiding officers to ensure that that does not happen in the future.

It is important to note that the report covers some of the key aspects of the budget, and given that we are in the process of the budget debate during this sitting week, I do not intend to make a budget speech now. Some of the highlights that the report identified include the fact that the government has noted the challenge of maintaining the sustainability of Victoria's financial standing and that the budget forecasts an operating surplus of \$140.4 million in the 2011–12 year, which is in line with the fiscal target of a minimum surplus of \$100 million. This forecast is \$731.5 million lower than the initial budget for 2010–11 and \$109 million lower than the latest revised budget for 2010–11.

The government states that the delivery of the government's November 2010 election commitments is a special feature of the budget. Funding was allocated up to 2014–15 for output commitments totalling \$4.4 billion, and \$1.1 billion was allocated for asset commitments. The government has expressed its intention to fully fund the remaining commitments during its current term.

While I am frustrated at not having sufficient time to fully summarise 54 hours of estimates hearings, I thank the house for its attention. I particularly thank members of the committee, including members of the opposition, for their relative cooperation during the estimates process.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I also rise to make some brief comments on part 1 of the budget estimates hearings reports. As the committee chair has pointed out, we had 54 hours of hearings this year, which was occasioned by the fact that we had two additional ministers and a different break-up of portfolios.

It is a good innovation of the committee that we are no longer reproducing great slabs of transcript. A few rainforests will probably appreciate that. The transcript is still perfectly accessible, not just to members but to any member of the public, via the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) website. It has also allowed us to get the part 1 report into the Parliament a little earlier than has previously been the case.

I just want to make a couple of points. I make the point that in terms of the substance of the PAEC reports, I suspect that the committee chair and I will have more to say and we might contest ideas a little more fiercely when the part 2 report is tabled. There was a bit of an issue with some departments being somewhat tardy in their response to the questionnaires. The committee chair made that clear during the hearings. In relation to the audiocast, we had evidence that at least one person

was listening to the audiocast because that person was able to notify the committee during the hearing that we were being heard.

In the 23 seconds that I have left I want to pay tribute to the work of the PAEC secretariat, including Valerie Cheong, Melanie Hondros, Vicky Delgos, Christopher Gribbin and all the other staff of the PAEC secretariat for the amazing work they do, both in preparing the reports and in putting up with the attitudes and occasional histrionics of members of the committee.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's reports on —

Indigenous Education Strategies for Government Schools, June 2011.

Management of Major Road Projects, June 2011.

Office of Police Integrity — Improving Victoria Police discipline and complaint handling systems: A progress report, June 2011.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Country Women's Association of Victoria

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I recently had the pleasure of saying a few words on behalf of the parliamentary Labor Party at the annual general meeting and state conference of the Country Women's Association of Victoria. Most people associate the CWA with its fine baked goods and participation in local agricultural shows, and people may have stumbled upon its fantastic recipe books, but the CWA should be equally famous for the work it does in fundraising and supporting a great deal of community activity right across regional Victoria.

The CWA is the largest women's organisation in Australia, with a membership of around 25 000 people in 1500 branches around the states and territories. Its aim is clear — to improve the conditions for women and children and to make a better life for families, especially those living in rural and remote Australia. It does this in a number of ways. During the recent floods CWA members put together pamper packs of toiletries for those affected. Each year it has a Thanksgiving fund, which has its origins dating back to World War II and is made up of donations and money raised from fundraising activities. It is then given to a chosen

charity. The CWA also has a scholarship fund, particularly for tertiary study opportunities, to assist members with their family's education.

I would like to congratulate Mrs Helen Christie, the outgoing state president, on her two years at the helm, and I send my best wishes to the incoming president, Mrs Carol Clay, on her term as president of the Country Women's Association of Victoria.

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation: manufacturing partnerships

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Last Friday morning the President of the Legislative Council extended an invitation from the CSIRO to all members of this Parliament to attend what was a most informative session at CSIRO in Clayton. The CSIRO is well known around the world and is an icon both within and outside the Australian scientific communities.

During our tour we were given a fascinating insight into some of the work being undertaken by certain divisions of CSIRO and reminded of some of the innovations that have been developed by the organisation, including Aerogard, Softly washing powder, Relenza cold and flu tablets, various forms of cotton and the plastic banknote. Innovations such as these have been exported around the world and have contributed significantly to the Victorian and Australian economies. We were given demonstrations of innovations such as cold spray technology and organic photovoltaics. In developing these innovations CSIRO has had productive working partnerships with both industry and government which assist in enabling it to continue the great work it undertakes.

One such partnership is with Boeing, situated in Fishermans Bend in Port Melbourne. Fishermans Bend is also home to a number of other major companies involved in manufacturing, engineering, education and research, including GM Holden, Toyota Australia and GKN Aerospace Engineering Services, to name a few. Manufacturing is important not only to Southern Metropolitan Region but to Victoria's economy. It produces 15.4 per cent of Victoria's gross state product, and it employs more than 310 000 Victorians.

CSIRO's ongoing relationships with companies such as Boeing are important for future innovations and for the ongoing development of future export opportunities. Innovation and partnerships such as these will be encouraged by the Baillieu government as it continues to support our manufacturing and export industries.

Rail: Seymour service

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — The *Star Wallan, Kilmore, Broadford* newspaper reported on 14 April that the Minister for Public Transport in the Baillieu-Ryan government, Mr Mulder, had promised commuters that he would ask V/Line to investigate whether an extra carriage could be added to one of the Seymour peak services, because the number of commuters using those services has increased over the last six months and many people have to stand for long periods as a result. Yesterday the *Star* newspaper reported that it had asked Mr Mulder whether he had carried out this promise but that it had received no response. Responses from V/Line about the possibility of an extra carriage any time soon were not encouraging.

Meanwhile the *Star* newspaper reported that the member for Seymour in the Assembly, Ms McLeish, had presented a petition from commuters to the Minister for Public Transport and requested that he review the adequacy of services. This, too, is not encouraging for Seymour commuters, who already know that services are not adequate.

The truth is that the Baillieu-Ryan budget failed to deliver any new rail carriages or new regional trains for the V/Line network and that the government has no plans to improve public transport links across Victoria. Once the current rollout of the new V/Locity rail carriages ordered by Labor is complete, no more trains or carriages will be on the tracks. The *Star* newspaper and Seymour commuters deserve an explanation from Mr Mulder and the Premier, Mr Baillieu, about why they are not a priority.

St Andrew's Parish Primary School, Clayton South: parliamentary visit

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to take the opportunity to welcome to the Victorian Parliament students from Clayton's St Andrew's Parish Primary School who are involved in observing our democracy in action in two groups and will be enjoying a nice morning tea in the gardens of Parliament House. What a wonderful opportunity this is for them to see in action a government that has their educational future in its hands — a future which is being well prepared for through a range of initiatives that have been announced as a part of the recent budget, including a commitment of additional initiatives in maths and science to the tune of \$29.7 million, the introduction of maths and science specialists to the tune of \$24.3 million, science graduates scholarship

programs costing \$5 million and an investment of \$16.6 million in languages education.

For Clayton students, who come from a very multicultural community, this will mean that various community language schools will be able to continue because they will be getting \$16.3 million of additional funding in order to continue their programs. There will also be a range of other boosts to education, such as \$82.3 million in funding for special and autism schools, programs costing \$156 million for students with a disability, a pilot program to address disengaged students and the restarting of the School Start bonus at a cost of \$50.9 million. These students have a bright future in education.

West Gate punt: service

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — Last Monday there was a party, which I organised, to celebrate the return of the punt service from Scienceworks to Fishermans Bend. I have been involved in the punt campaign since I was elected in 2006, but others have worked on it for much longer, such as the punters, Rob Horner, who runs the bicycle punt, and bicycle groups from across the region. This year it was fantastic to see funding secured from the Baillieu government to operate a seven-day-a-week West Gate punt service — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — Hear, hear, Mr Mulder!

Ms HARTLAND — Yes, it is good that we got one small thing in the western suburbs; we would like trains as well.

This greatly opens up cycling opportunities for the west — for the people of Yarraville, Williamstown, Spotswood, Newport and Altona and even further afield if they are keen cyclists. This will help people to choose to leave their cars at home and ride to the city for recreation or as a daily commute. The West Gate punt will make cycling a realistic option for a lot more people. More people will be able to leave their cars at home and avoid congestion, petrol prices and carbon emissions. Cyclists will be able to avoid problematic roads in the west, many of which are major trucking routes. More people will be able to choose not to take the Metro train risk, and more people will be able to reap the great health and wellbeing benefits that come from cycling. If members of the community had not gotten together over many years, this would not have been possible.

Aunty Melva Johnson

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I rise to congratulate Yorta Yorta-Wemba Wemba elder Aunty Melva Johnson on becoming the first indigenous leader to receive the prestigious Bishop Noel Daly award for outstanding service to leadership in Catholic education. Aunty Melva has contributed to Catholic education across the Sandhurst diocese and the broader community for the past 36 years. She became involved in Koori education in 1974 as a member of the Echuca Aboriginal Co-operative before taking up the position of administrator, which she held for eight years. Aunty Melva is passionate about education and employment for young people as she received no formal education as a child.

Michelle Bootes

Ms DARVENIZA — On another matter, Euroa teacher Michelle Bootes is travelling to New York to study after being awarded the Lindsay Thompson fellowship at the Victorian education excellence awards. The Euroa Secondary College maths teacher developed a new teaching method for struggling students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The system involves 10 minutes of fluency time at the start of each year 7 and year 8 maths lesson. She will use the fellowship funds to investigate inequity in the classroom as well as the language of mathematics and how students interpret it. I wish Ms Bootes well in her research and study tour, and I congratulate her on being awarded the Lindsay Thompson fellowship.

Bob Davis

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — Only a week ago I was privileged to attend Bob Davis's funeral — what a champion! The Geelong Cats have had many remarkable players and supporters, be it Cargi Greaves on field, Alex Popescu off field or Bobby Davis in both arenas. Blokes like Bob come along but rarely. His greatest success and devotion was playing football. Bobby was a natural, a giant among men. He played in Geelong's 1951 and 1952 premierships, winning the Cargi Greaves best and fairest medal in 1957 and coaching the Cats 1963 premiership team. In business he succeeded in both the motor industry and hospitality. Always a club stalwart, Bobby travelled the country as a talent scout in his early days, and in his later years he was a great club promoter and ambassador. None of this should have been a surprise to anyone after his success on radio and television with the legendary Lou Richards and Jack Dyer's groundbreaking *World of Sport* program.

Like the club's benefactor Alex Popescu, Bob Davis was honoured at a large funeral, which took place last Tuesday and was attended by family members and in excess of 1000 mourners. Eulogies by Bob's son, Guy, former Geelong Cats president, Frank Costa, and the Coodabeen Champions' Ian Cover certainly highlighted Bob's time in football, the respect the Geelong community had for him and Bob's love of family. The Geelong Cats hold a very special place in Geelong, and the committee, administrators, players and supporters will long remember Bobby Davis for his fair dinkum, unbelievable contributions for over 60 years to the Cats' outstanding and ongoing success.

Broadmeadows Special Developmental School: facilities

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I wish to report to the house my visit to the Broadmeadows Special Developmental School on Friday, 27 May, for its footy colours day. The past few years have seen the school rapidly expand from around 40 students to its current population of 101 students. This growth has created the need for larger and more modernised facilities to bring the school into the 21st century. It has been let go for too long. On behalf of the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, I was delighted to announce to the school community that the school had been allocated \$4 million as part of the state budget funding to upgrade its facilities. I wish to congratulate school principal Susanne Wirth, assistant principal Megan and the rest of the school staff and council on the great environment they have created.

My visit to the school was a positive one, which allowed me to see firsthand the sense of spirit, the beautiful children and the support within the school community. As part of their school assembly the students put on a display of skipping, and quite frankly it was inspiring. Some skipped rope in the usual fashion, some did it while cartwheeling, another skipped while blindfolded, others skipped in pairs and others took turns to turn the rope. It made this MP very emotional. This is one of the great parts of this job — visiting kids, chatting with them and observing their development. Bless them! I am also very grateful to the many parents and staff who chatted with me and thanked me for my visit.

The funding is part of the Broadmeadows schools regeneration project, which I announced two weeks ago. This funding will also go to the Hume Valley School and the Northern School for Autism. This is a huge step forward for education in the north, which is my region. It is a great region — a region in which I was born, in which I live and in which I have raised my

family. I congratulate the school community and look forward to my return visit when, as promised, the students and teachers will teach this MP how to skip.

Lance Corporal Andrew Jones and Lieutenant Marcus Case

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — As someone who was raised in a defence force family it is always sad to hear of the passing of our defence force men and women. I would like to pay my respects to Lieutenant Marcus Case and Lance Corporal Andrew Jones. Lieutenant Case was an army aviator. He had only recently arrived in Afghanistan, a month after assisting with the efforts to help flood victims in Queensland. Lance Corporal Jones was a cook in the 9th Force Support Battalion. He was killed by a member of the Afghani security forces while he was on sentry duty. We pay our deepest respects to both of these men.

La Comunità di Filadelfia

Mr ELSBURY — On a lighter note I was pleased to join with the Italian community group La Comunità di Filadelfia in Bulla last Saturday night. The Filadelfia township is in the region of Calabria in the south of Italy, and it was great to see the vibrancy of the people of this community, which was celebrating a great number of its traditions and its culture.

Republic of Cyprus: presidential visit

Mr ELSBURY — I was also pleased to be able to join with various members of Parliament to welcome the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, last Friday night when he visited Victoria.

Children: Take a Break program

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My issue this morning relates to the Take a Break occasional child-care program. This is a federally funded program, or at least it used to be.

Ms Broad — And it had state funding.

Mr DRUM — I remind Ms Broad that federal funding for this program has been pulled by her good friend Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Federal government funding for this program stopped in June 2010, and the previous Labor state government picked up the funding for another 12 months.

Ms Broad — Why won't you?

Mr DRUM — The previous Labor government thought it might give the sector time to adjust. In order to keep the program going the state government continued funding until 30 June this year. Members of the opposition should acknowledge that at that stage the extension was only for 12 months.

Upon coming to government the coalition further extended this program until the end of this calendar year. The state government cannot be expected to fund areas of federal government responsibility. In the words of the former Treasurer, Mr John Lenders, it is about time some members of the Labor Party in this house picked up the phone and rang their Labor Party colleagues. Kate Ellis, the federal Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare, is the responsible minister. She has not bothered returning correspondence from our Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, so why is it that the members of the Labor Party in this house, especially Jenny Mikakos, will not pick up the phone and call their Canberra colleagues, Labor to Labor, like we were instructed to do, and get this funding reinstated?

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Debate resumed from 6 April; motion of Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria):

That this house congratulates the Liberal-National coalition parties on their election to government and calls on the Leader of the Government to —

- (1) give a commitment to the house that the government will honour all of its election commitments in full;
- (2) make available to the house the full cost of each election commitment made by the coalition as advised by the Department of Treasury and Finance; and
- (3) advise the house the means by which these costs will be met including:
 - (a) any proposed revenue-raising measures;
 - (b) any program and service cuts.

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — Given the time that has elapsed since the house last considered this question it is worth taking a moment to remind members of the full text of the motion that is now back before the house. The motion moved by Mr Viney is:

That this house congratulates the Liberal-National coalition parties on their election to government and calls on the Leader of the Government to —

- (1) give a commitment to the house that the government will honour all of its election commitments in full;

- (2) make available to the house the full cost of each election commitment made by the coalition as advised by the Department of Treasury and Finance; and
- (3) advise the house the means by which these costs will be met including:
 - (a) any proposed revenue-raising measures;
 - (b) any program and service cuts.

That was moved on 6 April 2011 prior to the state budget. Members of the Labor opposition acknowledge in this motion that we accept that the Liberal-Nationals coalition is now in government, and it is our job to hold the government to account for the commitments it made to all Victorians at last year's election. It is a task that we have taken up with alacrity.

We believe the government needs to deliver on and honour all its election commitments in full. Members may recall that at the time of the state election the Liberal and National parties refused to make available to Victorians the costings by the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Liberal and National parties instead obtained costings from a firm with which they were on very good terms and declined to make the details of those costings available either.

Following the election the Liberal-Nationals coalition government declined to make available the costings that Treasury and Finance always prepares in advance of an election which outline the cost of implementing the policies taken to the election by the parties. To that end Victorians were well and truly in the dark as to what the costings revealed. For that reason the Labor opposition, through this motion, calls for the government, in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability to the Parliament and to Victorians, to bring forward that information, which to this day the Liberal and National parties refuse to make available. In speaking to the motion moved by Mr Viney I reiterate calls from the Labor opposition for that information to be made available to the Parliament and to all Victorians.

The motion also requires the Liberal-Nationals coalition government to advise the house of the means by which the costs of implementing its election commitments will be met, including proposed revenue-raising measures and any program and service cuts.

It is challenging indeed to assess that information against the costings of election commitments when the government continues to refuse to make that information available. Nonetheless, since the election some things have become clear regardless of the fact that the government refuses to make that information

available. Some of that information has become available as a result of the state budget, some of it has become available as a result of the questioning of ministers at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and some of it has become available as a result of statements made to the media by the government over the six months it has been in office.

In terms of the example of education, it has become clear through these information sources that there is some \$480 million in cuts to education by the Baillieu-Ryan government. This is certainly not information that was put to electors prior to the state election last year. It is certainly not information that has been revealed in any statements provided by the government since the election. It comes through costings advised by the Department of Treasury and Finance, but the opposition does not have access to that information. From information provided at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee it has been possible for the opposition to calculate that that is the magnitude of cuts to education. What does it mean for schools, including schools in Northern Victoria Region, the region I represent in the upper house? It is a region that covers almost half of Victoria, and it includes a great many schools that are to be affected by these cuts to the education budget.

Prior to the election the Labor Party had embarked on a state schools plan that would have seen every school across Victoria either replaced or upgraded, and Labor had made great inroads in implementing that plan. On the strength of that plan many school communities — parents, teachers and students — in good faith had embarked on improvements to schools that involved detailed consultations with school communities about reorganising their schools to ensure that parents, teachers and students had access to the very best educational opportunities and the jobs that come with a quality education, which can only be delivered through quality education facilities; facilities which, of course, make it possible for teachers to deliver the very best education to students in schools.

Schools in a whole range of locations have embarked on major reorganisations on the strength of commitments which were given by the previous government. There is plenty of precedent to indicate that when there is a change of government, or even when there is a change of minister and a government continues, commitments that have been entered into will be honoured by subsequent ministers and governments. I think that was a very reasonable assumption for schools — parents, teachers and students — to have made. I can certainly recall coming to office as a minister in 1999 and being provided by

public servants, who are not in any way politically aligned, with lists of commitments made by the former government and by its ministers, and there was no doubt that those commitments were going to be honoured. But it seems to be the case that these conventions and these commitments are not ones that the Liberal-Nationals government feels bound by.

Let me be really clear about this: these are not election promises. These are commitments which were entered into by the former government, and on the strength of that communities have gone out and done a great deal of work and invested a great deal of time, teachers have gone away and undertaken training, and schools have moved whole groups of students in order to progress those improvements to their schools.

Let me also be clear that these are not schools in Labor electorates that the Liberals and The Nationals might feel they owe some lesser commitment to, because these are electorates that do not vote for a Labor member. These are electorates which vote for Liberal-Nationals members on the other side of this house and in the lower house. These include schools like those affected by the Merbein school regeneration project, including primary schools and the secondary college up to year 10. They include schools like Chaffey College in Mildura, the years 7 to 10 college. They include schools like the schools in Ouyen which have also embarked on a reorganisation to deliver better quality education to students. They include schools in Robinvale.

This list includes a school in Wodonga. Wodonga had one of the very first clusters of schools to embark — without any commitments of government funding at the outset, apart from planning funding — on a major reorganisation of schools in order to ensure that students would be provided with the very best education opportunities into the future in order to provide them with the very best job opportunities beyond their schooling.

I now turn to the health area. There are a whole range of health facilities which are in the dark as to where they stand in relation to future funding: they include hospitals like the Swan Hill hospital, they include funding for chemotherapy chairs at Seymour and they include funding for the Goulburn Valley base hospital in Shepparton.

It is very difficult for facilities like these to plan when information which should have been made available at the time of the election, should have been made available following the election and should have been made available in the budget is just not made available,

and the government is continuing to refuse to provide information about program and service funding to allow these services to make informed judgements about where they may or may not stand in relation to decisions by the government to fund them.

Most recently there have been cuts to the Take a Break occasional child-care program, and the government has put on notice neighbourhood houses and other services that deliver that program. We have heard how members of the government want to go over the history of this program in terms of federal and state funding. However, the fact is that this is a program that was funded by the former state Labor government, and at the time of the election in November last year the Liberal Party and The Nationals neither went to the election saying that they would not continue funding this program nor did they make available their costings revealing that this is something they were intent on doing.

They also did not make information available through costings by the Department of Treasury and Finance that would have made this transparent to Victorians who are affected. I have been contacted by electors in my region who are deeply affected by this decision by the government not to continue funding this program. Some electors are going to have to stop working and close businesses. They are simply not going to be able to continue to participate in small business, which members opposite like to stand up and say that they are the great champions of.

The fact of the matter is that a great many small business operators are being affected by this decision, which was not made transparent when it certainly should have been at the time of the election and in the costing documents that the Labor Party called for prior to the election, at the time of the election and since the election. We have called for those documents because we believe in transparency, and we intend to hold the government to account for its commitments. This information is vital to ensure that the opposition is able to do that. I would have thought the information was vital for the government if it does not want to be embroiled in constant arguments about what was or was not contained in information which only it has access to, because it continues to be secret information. I commend Mr Viney's motion to the house.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak on this particular motion. At the outset I thank Mr Viney for welcoming the new government so warmly — I am sure it was done with a great deal of genuine feeling. I am sure other members of the opposition would feel some

enthusiasm about the new government. I can say that I am pleased that he is pleased that there is a new government, and I know for a fact that an overwhelming majority of Victorians are also very pleased there has been a change of government in Victoria. However, I have to wonder when exactly this motion was written, because it does seem a tad out of date. It seems that this motion may well have been written in January or February this year — maybe even December last year.

Mr Koch — Late November.

Mr FINN — Do you think about 28 November, Mr Koch?

Mr Koch — That is right.

Mr FINN — Fair enough! Clearly since this motion was written there have been significant changes in the political landscape in Australia. When Mr Viney calls upon the government to honour all its election commitments in full it is obvious that the situation has changed significantly from when this motion was written. Since then we have had a budget presented to the Parliament. I would hazard a guess and say that the budget presented to the Parliament this year by the Baillieu government has fulfilled more election promises than any budget I can ever recall.

It is a budget that we on this side of the house are particularly proud of. We went out of our way to ensure that the promises we made leading up to the election of 27 November were kept in that budget. If Mr Viney or any members of the Labor Party wish to go through the budget line by line, they will see that we have kept a good many, in fact almost all, election promises in that document alone — just in the budget. We on this side of the house should all be very proud of this. Once again I congratulate the Premier and the Treasurer on having produced a budget which is good for the overwhelming majority of Victorians and which delivers on the promises we put forward in the lead-up to 27 November last year.

It is a good budget for Victoria, and we have met our commitments in that budget. But just in case Mr Viney, Mr Lenders or anybody else is still in any doubt about where we on this side of the house stand on fulfilling our election commitments, perhaps we could go through some of the legislation that has been passed into law since the election of this government. A quick browse will produce the following. The Civil Procedure and Legal Profession Amendment Act 2011 implements an election commitment to remove mandatory prelitigation procedures in certain civil

cases, and also streamlines the renewal of practising certificates for legal practitioners. The Country Fire Authority Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Act 2011 implements an election commitment to provide a charter for volunteer firefighters. The Education and Training Reform Amendment (School Safety) Act 2011 implements an election commitment — I hope members opposite are listening — to provide for principals, or teachers authorised by principals, to search students' lockers and ask them to turn out their pockets or check their cars on a teacher-supervised activity if they are reasonably suspected of possessing stipulated dangerous weapons.

The Justice Legislation Amendment Act 2011 implements yet another election commitment to strengthen the powers of holders of liquor licences to bar drunk persons from their premises and sets higher penalties for failing to leave premises when drunk, violent or quarrelsome. The Liquor Control Reform Amendment Act 2011 implements another election commitment to make the supply of liquor to minors in a private residence without parental consent an offence. The Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 implements an election commitment to restructure and strengthen the multicultural affairs portfolio by ensuring that the Victorian Multicultural Commission is independent of ministerial control. It also establishes eight regional councils. I am sure that you, Acting President, would particularly welcome that reform.

The Police Regulation Amendment (Protective Services Officers) Act 2011 fulfils what is probably the best known of the election commitments of the Baillieu government. The purpose of the bill is to provide that protective services officers may be deployed for the general protection of the public — for example, at railway stations. We will see evidence of this very soon on our railway stations around the state. The Regional Growth Fund Act 2011 implements an election commitment to establish the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund to invigorate the economies of regional Victoria and support new job opportunities.

Mr Viney, I hope you are listening to this. You are not going for a walk, are you? You are listening to this, because this motion cuts to the very fabric — —

Mr Viney — Through the Chair.

Mr FINN — Through the Chair, Mr Viney. These bills cut to the very fabric of what this motion is all about. Come back! Come back to the chamber! You have got to wonder, Acting President, about a member who moves a motion and then, when somebody gets up and points out that they are basically wrong and that the

whole premise of the motion is wrong, flees from the chamber. You have got to wonder about their motives, do you not? You have got to wonder about that. It is very sad indeed.

As I was saying about the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011, the bill implements an election commitment to establish a \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund to invigorate the economies of regional Victoria, because we care about country people and support new job opportunities for them. We also passed the Sentencing Further Amendment Bill 2010. That bill implemented an election commitment by abolishing suspended sentences for certain serious crimes. That is important. Another election commitment was met by the passing of the Shop Trading Reform Amendment (Easter Sunday) Act 2011, and it is a pity Mr Somyurek is not in the house to hear about this one. That was an election commitment that we met by removing Easter Sunday trading restrictions on shops employing more than 20 employees.

I could go on about the legislation that has been passed by this government since the sitting of Parliament last year.

Mr Leane — Because you were here when it happened.

Mr FINN — I was here when it happened. My word, Mr Leane, I was. As I understand it, so were you. Perhaps you were just occupying a body or something at the time; I do not know. As a government we have a very clear record of meeting our election commitments. I do not know why Mr Viney or anybody else would be putting up a motion calling on the government to meet its election commitments when we already have. What does he want for nothing? What more could he possibly ask for when we have already done what this motion is calling for? It is a very strange activity for any member of Parliament to indulge in. It certainly makes me understand a little better why they are sitting on that side of the house. Clearly, without being disrespectful — —

Mr Leane — Good luck!

Mr FINN — I would never be disrespectful to you, Mr Leane, or to Mr Viney. These people are delusional. These people are off with the fairies. They have got no idea what is going on in the real world. Where have they been for the last six months while we have been passing all this legislation? Where have they been for the last six months while we have been debating the budget, which of course we are about to pass? Where have they been, you have got to ask.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr FINN — Perhaps, Mr Lenders, you were in the same place that you and your colleagues have been in for the last 11 years — missing in action, or missing in inaction might be a better way of putting it. There is one thing you have got to say about members of the Labor Party, and Mr Lenders is a classic example of this: they have got more front than Myer and more gall than all of France. They come into this place and point the finger at us for not keeping our election commitments, when we clearly have, for all the world to see. It is there to see.

Mr Lenders — What about your teacher wages? How much are you paying teachers?

Mr FINN — It is there for all the world to see, Mr Lenders. I remember back to the time after the 1999 election. Mr Lenders might have some difficulty remembering this, but I remember that after the 1999 election those of us in the west of Melbourne could lay claim to being victims of the first broken promise of the Bracks government.

Remember the promise that was made prior to the 1999 election by the then opposition leader, Steve Bracks, of a railway link to Melbourne Airport? That was a definite goer. That promise was broken before he got back from the swearing-in at Government House. That promise was out the window, and it is only now with the election of the Baillieu government that we are revisiting the possibility of a railway link to Melbourne Airport. That has to be a major plus for those of us who have been long-term supporters of Melbourne Airport, and I am certainly in that category. We are very excited at the prospect of having a rail link to and from Melbourne Airport. We have seen a similar thing in Sydney and in Brisbane. It works very well. We will be having a look at that very soon here in Melbourne as well.

Mr Lenders — Like the 1958 promise for a railway station to Monash.

Mr FINN — Mr Lenders is getting very excited. I have not seen him so animated for some time. It is good to see that he is still with us. I am very pleased, because I have had my doubts a couple of times. I thought he might have left us there a couple of times, but he is still here and that is a very good thing.

I go back to 1999 once again. As the member for Tullamarine I was haunted by a dancing bear. Of the promises that were thrown at me during the course of that campaign, more than a couple of them — and a couple of very big ones — were not fulfilled. I am sure

Mr Lenders will remember that very well, because there was the promise of a new and expanded day hospital for Sunbury made at that time back in 1999. The 2002 election came, and there was no day hospital. The 2006 election came along, and there was no Sunbury day hospital.

The 2010 election came along, and it was starting to look good. Now it is finally up and running 10 years later — 10 years after it should have been completed. You have got to remember that the Kennett government had promised the people of Sunbury that they would have a day hospital, with an oncology unit and with day surgery. Added to that a little later was the promise of a 24-hour emergency centre. I still believe that is necessary for that part of north-western Melbourne. That was promised to the people of that region by the Kennett government and by me as the member for Tullamarine at the time, prior to the 1996 election. The commitment was that it would be built by 2001. Here we are, and it has finally got up and running under a Liberal-Nationals government. It has been finished under a Liberal-Nationals government, but it is 10 years too late.

What do members reckon the people of that part of north-western Melbourne have been doing for health care over the last decade? It is clear that the Labor Party could not care less what they have been doing for health care over the last 10 years. Labor members do not care about people who are ill and their families. They are the least of their worries, as long as they can get away with it and play their little games. Time and again they are quite happy with that.

There was the other promise that I am sure Ms Broad will jump on as well — that is, the promise that the people of Sunbury would be allowed to vote on whether Sunbury would stay within the city of Hume. This was a promise — again a bear delivered — prior to the 1999 election. It did not happen after the 1999 election, it did not happen after the 2002 election, it did not happen after the 2006 election and it did not happen after the 2010 election — in fact it still has not happened 12 years later. The people of that area are still waiting on a promise that was made to them in writing by Steve Bracks prior to the 1999 election. These people come in here telling us that we have to keep our promises. We have kept our promises. That crowd over there had 11 years when they were in government, but they did not keep their promises. On the other side of town — and I will move forward just a couple of years to when I was working for the then federal member for Aston, Chris Pearce — —

Mr Elsbury — A good man!

Mr FINN — Yes, he is a good man. At that time, prior to the 2002 election, we had quite an issue in an area of the eastern suburbs in relation to the Scoresby freeway. I am sure members may possibly know where I am going with this one. The Scoresby freeway had been promised. It had been dangled in front of voters for many years. With the defeat of the Kennett government in 1999 a lot of people were concerned that it would not happen.

Prior to the 2002 election Steve Bracks, the then Premier, wrote to many thousands of voters throughout the eastern suburbs of Melbourne — and Mr Leane would be interested in this, I am sure — promising that there would be a Scoresby freeway. Not only did he promise there would be a Scoresby freeway but he also promised it would be on time and on budget. He then went on to say there would be no tolls. Prior to the 2002 election the then Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks, gave a promise in writing to thousands of people throughout the eastern suburbs of Melbourne that there would be no tolls on the Scoresby freeway.

The Scoresby freeway eventually became EastLink, and we all know that EastLink is a tollway. It was a huge broken promise. It has to be said that it is not quite up there with the promise that there would be no carbon tax under any government that Prime Minister Gillard led. It is not quite up there, but it was certainly a good start. In terms of Labor lies it was a good start — a foundation on which to build bigger and more extravagant lies in years to come. The Labor Party has done that very successfully.

Prior to the 2006 election the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Baillieu, proposed a modest desalination plant, certainly considerably more modest than the monstrosity we have at Wonthaggi now. That was to cover ourselves in times of drought, which is not an unreasonable proposition given the sort and size of the project that Mr Baillieu had proposed. What did the Labor Party say before the 2006 election? What did then Premier Bracks and his Deputy Premier — whatever happened to him? where did he get to? — say? Mr Bracks went on radio and said, ‘The whole idea of a desal plant is a hoax’.

He was right, but he was talking about the wrong desal plant. He was talking about Labor’s desal plant. He was talking about the backflip Labor did after the election. It was an impressive backflip, it has to be said — one of Olympic standard. The Labor Party not only withdrew its opposition to a desal plant but it went on to build one — and it is still being built — that was somewhere in the vicinity of three to four times bigger than the one we had originally proposed. As a result of Labor’s

broken promise prior to the 2006 election every Victorian will pay for that over the next 30 years. We are looking at the state having to pay somewhere in the vicinity of \$570 million a year over the next 30 years because Labor could not get it right.

Labor was not honest about its intentions. Perhaps it was not aware of its intentions; that might be the charitable way to view it. As a result of what Labor did prior to the 2006 election in terms of not keeping its election commitment and not maintaining its opposition to a desal plant, we are now stuck with a monstrosity down at Wonthaggi. We must keep in mind that it is way behind schedule. Why is it way behind schedule? Because it kept flooding! Only the Labor Party would build a desalination plant on a floodplain. What geniuses they are! They should all be wearing capes and frolicking around universities.

Mr Jennings looks at me quizzically, but I do not know why because he was sitting at the cabinet table when all of this occurred, so the responsibility for that \$570 million over the next 30 years is very much on his shoulders. He might think it is amusing, but I do not think it is amusing — nor will my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren, who will probably still be paying the thing off when the rest of us are long gone.

We remember the famous night of the 1999 election when, sadly, Steve Bracks looked like he had won. He bounced in and looked a very cheery chap. If I had not known better, I would have said he had perhaps had a spot of moselle. He was a very cheery chap indeed. He jumped to the microphone on election night and said, ‘We are going to return democracy to Victoria’. That was the commitment he gave on election night. What did Labor give us? It promised democracy, but what did it give us? It gave us the Brimbank City Council.

When you hear Labor members talking about democracy, people’s rights and people having a say and being respected, just remember who gave us Brimbank. Everybody who was involved — every con man and every shyster who was involved in the Brimbank debacle — was a member of the Australian Labor Party. I do not want to go through the Brimbank saga in depth; I will leave that for another time. I promise members that will happen at another time. If members ever see that clip of Steve Bracks bouncing around and saying, ‘We will return democracy to Victoria’, just remember one word: Brimbank. That will put everything into context. It is quite extraordinary.

The bottom line is that the Labor Party had 11 years to do so much. It did not do very much at all, and what it

did do, it stuffed up. Need we talk about the myki card? Do we really need to go there? That is an appalling indictment of the Labor government if ever there was one. The Labor Party had 11 years to do all the things that opposition members are screaming about. After six months they are expecting the Liberal-Nationals government — the Baillieu government — to fix all the problems that they created. But, as I said — and it is good to see Mr Viney back — during the 11 years that they were in government they did not do any of the things that we needed them to do.

The Labor government did not fix the Duncans Road interchange at Werribee. It said before the last election that it was going to do it, but if it really wanted to do it, it would have already been done.

Mr Elsbury — Who was the member?

Mr FINN — The member for Tarneit in the Assembly is a little bloke — Mr Pallas. He was the Minister for Roads and Ports. For those members who do not know, Duncans Road, Werribee, is in the electorate of Tarneit. Given Mr Pallas is the member for Tarneit and the former roads minister, one would have thought he would have found some money to do it in that time. Prior to him being roads minister, he was the chief of staff for the Premier. One would have thought that if — —

Mr Elsbury interjected.

Mr FINN — He was worried about Williamstown. He is still ensconced in Williamstown. In fact that sod turning Mr Elsbury and I attended with Mr Guy a couple of weeks ago was such a big event that Mr Pallas visited the Tarneit electorate for it. That is a rarity in itself. It was good to see him there. But if the Labor Party had wanted that Duncans Road interchange fixed, it would already be fixed.

We move on to Cottrell Street, Werribee, which is just a little bit further down the road. The Labor Party had been promising to fix Cottrell Street for as long as anybody can remember, going back to before 1999, as I understand it. Before every budget there was the added promise that yes, the money will be in the budget to fix Cottrell Street, which is the major traffic hassle for the people of Werribee and beyond. It is a disaster zone every morning and every night. The Labor Party dutifully promised it would fix it. But let me tell members that Cottrell Street is now a bigger mess than it ever was before. The Labor Party had 11 years to fix it; it did not do a thing. It did exactly what we have come to expect from the Labor Party.

The next scenario is particularly close to my heart — that is, the St Albans railway crossing. Back in 1998–99 the Kennett government was preparing to fix this crossing. It is a very dangerous crossing. Deaths have occurred and there have been many near misses at the crossing — I have been almost a near miss myself a couple of times. It is a very scary crossing. If you get caught in the wrong place, it is not a lot of fun. Throughout 1998 and 1999, as the only government member in the western suburbs at that time, I was involved in getting the Premier, the Minister for Roads and Ports and the Minister for Transport interested in fixing the Main Road, St Albans, crossing. We were ready to go; we were going to do it. After all the years of waiting, the people of St Albans were going to be able to get from one side of the railway line to the other again, because the Kennett Liberal-National government was going to do this wonderful thing for St Albans.

Mr Viney — You were gonna.

Mr FINN — I will tell Mr Viney what happened. We lost the election in 1999, much to the disgust of a few people, predominantly the traders in St Albans. During the 11 years after that election the Labor government completely ignored the situation in St Albans. Even with George Seitz — and I understand he is the incoming mayor of Brimbank, which is something we can all look forward to — representing the area as the member for Keilor in the Assembly, Labor spent 11 years doing nothing. The Labor Party ignored the problem of Main Road, St Albans, for 11 long, miserable years. What did the Labor Party do when it heard the Baillieu government had put this project on its priority list? It screamed blue murder. Opposition members say, ‘You are telling lies; you are having a lend of us’. What did they do for 11 years? They sat on their hands and did absolutely nothing.

One has to say the government that we disposed of last year really was an ‘in’ government. It was inactive, it was inept and it was incompetent — very much an ‘in’ government. But now the Victorian people have spoken. We have certainly heard them, because we have come to Spring Street to govern for all Victorians, and that is exactly what we are doing. We have met most if not all of our commitments, and those that perhaps are not met as yet will be very shortly. It is a great pity that Mr Viney, who walked out of the chamber a little earlier, and his colleagues do not want to listen to what the Victorian people have said. This government is meeting its commitments. This motion is a nonsense, because this government is giving Victorians what they need and what they deserve.

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the Chair for the opportunity to speak on this motion, which is about the undertakings that the government took to the people of Victoria at the last election, its ability to deliver on them and its commitment to deliver on them — —

Mr Finn — This will be a very short speech, then.

Mr JENNINGS — Mr Finn's performance over the last half hour was just like a voluble three-ring circus. He is demonstrating one of the criticisms the opposition has of the government, a criticism that gets some coverage in the media. It is a criticism that is going to develop momentum within the Victorian community — that is, that this government is living in denial of the fact that it was elected. By its actions it demonstrates that it still has the mindset of an opposition. If Mr Finn's contribution to this debate was not a clear demonstration of that, I do not know what is.

Mr Finn was given the opportunity to speak for a long time this morning, but he used that time to trawl over any random issue he could possibly think of. He trawled up any ancient history he could find to suit his view of the failings of the previous Labor administration rather than taking the opportunity to speak fulsomely and with pride about the commitments of his government. He could have outlined to the house what was in the budget delivered by the Premier and Treasurer last month. He could have outlined in detail any of the ways in which this government is delivering on its commitments. He fundamentally resisted that opportunity and in a flurry of hyperbole, anger and bile took the opportunity to relive the history of the Labor administration and its shortcomings.

Not for one minute did he take the opportunity to say with any degree of pride what this government is delivering on. At no stage did he take the opportunity to outline what is supposed to be the strength of this government, that it has brought down a budget that delivers on its commitments. I have heard the phrase that it is delivering on its commitments and has kept all its promises. I will be able to demonstrate in the next few minutes of my contribution, in the area of health alone, where that clearly is a lie that has been perpetrated time and again by members of the government who dare to speak about the budget and who dare to speak about election commitments. If they open their mouths, they are condemned by the evidence that is available to them about what has been delivered in this budget.

Mr Finn — You tell us about it.

Mr JENNINGS — Thank you for the opportunity, Mr Finn. I will outline in the next few minutes a range of commitments the Liberal Party took to the last election. There is a range of projects, including the Bendigo hospital, the Box Hill Hospital, the Monash children's centre, the Geelong Hospital expansion, the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, the Ballarat helipad, radiotherapy in the south-west coast region, the Seymour hospital, the Kilmore hospital, the Castlemaine hospital and the second hospital for Geelong — projects that total \$761 million on the basis of the best estimates of their costs.

How much expenditure was committed for all those projects in this year's budget by the Liberal government at its first opportunity? Out of \$761 million, the amount that is going to be acquitted this year is \$6.9 million. According to Mr Finn in his rhetorical flourish, this government has delivered on all of its commitments, but this year it is delivering \$6.9 million for projects it has committed to spending \$761 million on for the Victorian people. The government pretends it has delivered on its commitments.

Let us look at only the projects I have listed — there were even more promises made by the Liberal Party at the last election — and how much the government is going to spend on those projects worth a total of \$761 million over four years. Even giving the government four years to deliver on those promises, how much will be spent in the next four years? On the day the budget was published the government committed \$56.8 million, and within 24 hours the Premier had found an additional \$51.5 million out of nowhere for the Monash children's centre. Let us give the government the benefit of the doubt and assume that, with the Premier's sleight of hand in relation to finding \$51.5 million not published in the budget papers but announced within 24 hours of the budget being delivered, it has now identified \$108.3 million to spend in the next four years on a range of projects worth \$761 million.

How on earth can Mr Finn or any other government member who is going to be using the Parliament like Polyfilla — a one-size-fits-all Polyfilla that could be used on any debate at any time — come in here time and again and fill our time with an absolute diatribe and revert to ancient history rather than dealing with the expectations of the Parliament and the Victorian people by satisfying the commitments that were made to the Victorian people on 28 November 2010, the day the coalition was elected to govern? It was elected to deliver the undertakings it had made to the people, but there has been no demonstrable commitment by this government to confirm the costings that it took to the

people and to confirm the time frame in which those projects will be delivered. They are in the never-never.

The biggest item among the commitments that have been made on the projects that I have listed — and I could repeat those projects many times over — is the Bendigo commitment. When does that \$20 million get acquitted? That \$20 million, which is the biggest single item of health expenditure that appears in this budget, is lined up to be spent in 2014–15. This government is clearly getting on with the job of delivering its health commitments, isn't it! No, that was an ironic statement.

This government is clearly not committed to delivering those projects. It is clearly relying on the people of Victoria to accept the spin and hyperbole we hear time and again from government members. Government members are relying on the people of Victoria giving them the benefit of the doubt that they will eventually get around to satisfying those undertakings and delivering on their rhetoric. Their rhetoric was very clear: they will improve the situation and deliver better outcomes for people.

If they are not prepared to bring forward expenditure, more resources and more support for the health sector alone, how on earth can they expect those outcomes to be delivered? Page 112 of budget paper 3 outlines the new output initiatives for the health portfolio this year. If we look at the table on that page and look at how much new money has come into the health budget, which is the area I am concentrating on in my contribution today, we see that the election commitments that will be funded by the government in this financial year total \$74 million. If we look at the savings figure that is going to be introduced in the health portfolio by this government this year, we see that the savings are \$115.3 million.

In its budget the government is crowing about the fact that the savings figure in health this year will be \$115.3 million in total, but the election commitments that it is funding total only \$74 million. The government's rhetoric is that more resources are coming into the health portfolio and that the government is prepared to support its commitments and deliver better outcomes, but how on earth does the government expect any Victorian citizen to believe, after comparing these budget papers to the rhetoric, that pulling out \$40 million more in savings than the government puts into its election commitments is going to deliver better health outcomes for the people of Victoria?

It is not surprising that the Victorian Minister for Health has this week been on a personal jihad to try to prevent

the commonwealth introducing greater accountability structures for health administration across Australia. The Australian government invests significantly in health and has high expectations of better service delivery and better patient outcomes, which is something that rhetorically the Victorian government agrees with. The Victorian government was very happy to come back to Victoria after signing the national health agreement and immediately crow about what a great deal it was. There are many ways in which it was a good deal. In fact I have joined others across Victoria in affording my congratulations on a good outcome, and I have very high expectations about the potential for those outcomes to bring about better quality care for Victorian patients.

The extraordinary thing about it, however, is that ever since the Victorian government representatives came back and crowed about their successes in terms of being great negotiators, they have been crying poor and shifting the blame and responsibility to the commonwealth for the failings of the health system. They are now trying to wriggle out of the accountability frameworks the commonwealth is going to establish. Why might this be the case? The extraordinary truth has not been refuted by the Minister for Health at either the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing or in this chamber. On a number of occasions he has been asked the simple question of whether Victoria spends all the money that comes to it from the commonwealth that is intended for health portfolio spending, and the health minister has not denied the assertion implied in that question. In fact in his actions he has confirmed that assertion.

When asked at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing the question of whether Victoria spends all the money the commonwealth gives it for health on health, the Minister for Health said he could not guarantee that but that he was an advocate for it. Talk about being condemned by your own words and your own inability to deliver better outcomes for the health system and health patients in Victoria! It is not surprising then that the minister chooses to complain about the accountability requirements of the commonwealth and engage in a misdirection in terms of public commentary about the establishment of a commonwealth health bureaucracy rather than confront the fundamental truth that Victoria does not spend on health all the money the commonwealth allocates to it for health purposes. That is very clear and is patently obvious to us. It comes off the back of this budget. The government is taking more savings out of the health portfolio than the value of the election commitments that were made.

This comes at a time when the health projects are as I have listed them. There are \$761 million of health projects across the breadth of Victoria, including important projects such as the Bendigo, Box Hill, Monash children's and Geelong hospitals and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital in East Melbourne; the Ballarat helipad; the radiotherapy centre on the south-west coast; the Seymour, Kilmore and Castlemaine hospitals; and the second hospital for Geelong and the Bellarine. The extraordinary situation is that there are three-quarters of a billion dollars of projects outlined there, yet this year the government is going to spend \$6.9 million on them.

Mr Drum — So?

Mr JENNINGS — I advise Mr Drum that this resolution is about the government funding its election commitments, and it is clearly not.

Mr Drum — I'm afraid it is.

Mr JENNINGS — Mr Drum may choose to join his colleagues in living in denial. However, the fundamental truth from which he cannot escape is that anybody who looks at the budget expenditure outlined in this budget and the time frames in which its commitments are going to be met — anybody who analyses those or knows the pressures in the health system or expects this government to deliver on its undertakings to the people and satisfy relevant expectations by providing support and additional resources and funding those projects in a timely way — will clearly know this government has failed to take up that opportunity up until now. The big challenge for the government is to have a good look at itself and stop trying to tell some sort of misdirected story and to confuse the community about the challenges.

There are challenges. Of course there are challenges in health. It is a major consumer of resources, people and talent, and the demands up until now have continued to be almost insatiable; they are very difficult to meet. However, this government gave the people of Victoria an expectation it was going to do a better job than the job Labor would have done with its commitments. It set the benchmark for itself extremely high. The question is how on earth it is going to acquit that expectation by not committing adequate funding and support for those projects and election commitments in this term. By the end of this term the government will be seeing adverse outcomes and deteriorating results within the health sector, and politically government members will realise they have in part created those difficulties for themselves.

I do not put into the category of a lie the story the incoming government gave about increasing bed numbers and how that would create better outcomes for Victorian patients, but the Victorian people may start to worry about that and have reason, by the end of this term — unless some drastic action is taken — to come to see it as one. The expectation that 800 new beds will arrive does not marry with the money that has been allocated to the health portfolio. When the Minister for Health was asked at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing to identify the recurrent costs of introducing new beds to the health system, he refused to do so.

The rostering arrangements that apply to Victorian hospitals indicate that, in order to add to our hospital capacity, for every 100 beds added to the Victorian public hospital system, somewhere in the order of 130 new nurses are required to complete the rosters and enable those beds to be filled by Victorian patients. That is for nurses alone, let alone the doctors, other health professionals and support staff that are required. The cost of staffing arrangements, rostering arrangements and the provision of new staff alone is in excess of the budget allocation. It has been a bit like extracting teeth from the Minister for Health to find out what new money has been allocated, but his best guess and my best guess from the PAEC hearings is that it is \$112 million.

Unless there is a significant injection of financial support to the health portfolio in the next four years, there is no way that the expectation this government has created for itself to deliver in health will be realised. At the very least, if the government has not lied to the Victorian people up until now — and there are many reasons to believe that it has — and if it is going to pull itself out of this precarious situation, it needs to come clean with the Victorian people and the commonwealth in relation to acquitting the commonwealth money that has come into Victoria and to seriously reconsider its management of the major projects across Victoria that I have listed on two occasions in my contribution — important services that the government has given the Victorian people every reason to expect would be delivered.

None of the projects that I have listed will be completed during the course of this term, according to current projections. The only projects that this government has committed to, that it will fund and that it will complete within this term are the Kerang and Echuca redevelopments. Mr Drum may be very proud of those, and they are important, but can he or any other member of the government kid themselves that that is a rebuilding of the health system? Who on earth, when

they get beyond the extravagant arm waving, bluster and aggression of government members such as Mr Finn — —

Mr Elsbury interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — Mr Elsbury is just itching for his opportunity to have another go. Who but the ignorant would believe it? The government is relying on the ignorance of its audience, because no-one who calmly considers these matters would believe it. The government might have a bit of joy, fun and bluster in what happens here — —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — Excellent, no problems. Government members might have a bit of fun. They might think they have intimidated members of the opposition and made us grieve for opportunities lost and feel as if we are being punished and they might like that, but ultimately at the end of the day it is the government's responsibility to deliver. It is the government's responsibility to fund what it commits to doing, support the services it was elected to support, put this support in the budget and make it happen. That is not happening in Victoria. Anybody in the government who kids themselves that this is happening does not understand budgets and election commitments and certainly does not understand how to deliver better outcomes for the Victorian people.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — If you think that and you are comfortable with your position, you will learn many lessons about government very quickly.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is with a considerable amount of passion that I join my colleagues on the government side to make some comments on Mr Viney's motion. I am a proud member of the Baillieu government. It put together a responsible budget in extremely difficult times — a budget that had a large element of its core ripped out of it by the savaging of the Gillard federal government when it withheld \$4.1 billion. To recast a responsible budget after what Labor has done is genius. This budget is the result of a strategic attempt to honour election promises and commitments. In stark contrast to the former Labor government, the Baillieu government has the capacity and the wherewithal to actually deliver, to continue to deliver, to know what it is doing and to make intelligent, erudite, well-thought-out and carefully managed decisions.

The narrowcast contribution we have just heard from Mr Jennings said it all. Firstly, he was not prepared to make statements outside of his particular area of focus or comfort zone. One might say that that represents the general indolence and lacklustre performance of the opposition that we have seen over the last six months. It characterises its approach. I have some sympathy for members of the opposition, because the cadaverous demeanours they have adopted clearly show that their guts have been ripped out. They are despondent because in the last six months of reflection they have realised just how out of their depth they were.

The contrast between their performance for the last 11 years and what we have been able to achieve in the last six months, the turnaround in terms of what we have been able to deliver and what we will deliver in the future, is stark. We are living up to our promises and our pledges to the Victorian people, and we will continue to do that. We will be able to look the Victorian people in the eye and say, 'We respect you. We will honour you, and we will deliver everything we have pledged to you'. We will use all of our wit and ability to make sure that we do not cheat, defraud, disappoint or alienate the people of Victoria.

Mr Viney has been talking about how he wants us to honour all our election commitments. He wants evidence that they will actually manifest. A budget lies before us that was delivered on 3 May, and it has received much recognition and support and many accolades. That continues to resonate not only in the state of Victoria but also throughout the Australian economy, and it sets new standards for other states. I am proud of the Baillieu government.

Furthermore, as we heard from my colleague Mr Philip Davis in the chamber earlier this morning, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee has completed its budget hearings. A series of reports will come out of those hearings, and as we know one was tabled today. I have before me part 1 of the budget estimates report for 2011–12, which includes an analysis of the key aspects of the 2011–12 budget, including a number of recommendations; an index of key matters raised at the budget estimates hearings; and details of further information to be provided and questions on notice for each portfolio.

Shortly we will receive part 2, which will be developed on the basis of an examination of departmental performance measures. I think that is an interesting notion to underscore at this point — the idea of performance measures and departments being accountable. It is interesting to look at the idea of seeking that departments be more productive instead of

having a situation where some sort of ephemeral performance is covered up with spin and glamour images and where the substance of delivery is avoided. We in government are seeking a quality return on the investment of taxpayers dollars for the delivery of services in the state.

Part 2 will examine performance measures with possible recommendations for improvements. That examination will include a review of the performance measures the government has proposed discontinuing or substantially altering in the 2011–12 budget. We anticipate that part 3 will provide a detailed analysis, including recommendations relating to the budget estimates 2011–12 and the forward estimates. The analysis will be based on the budget papers; the budget estimates hearings; departments' responses to questionnaires from the committee; ministers' responses to questions on notice, requests for further details and unasked questions; and any other relevant material.

The people of Victoria can rest assured. Unlike members of the Labor government, who are now languishing in opposition and are yet to show any sort of spirited performance in this chamber, we on this side will be a government of openness and transparency, and importantly a government of capability. I refer to the ability to deliver on deliverables and deliver on and live up to our commitments. I am really proud of some of the elements that we have brought into this budget.

As I said, the budget is the embodiment of a number of our commitments. I remind Mr Jennings that we are talking about a four-year budget program, and what was delivered in this, the first year of the Baillieu government, was delivered in spite of the savage attack by the Gillard government in its \$4.1 billion cut to our GST revenue. Interestingly while the narrow response of Mr Jennings was focused on matters to do with health funding, let me say — I rejoice in saying this and I hope it resonates with the people of Victoria — how important it was for us to have ourselves unplugged from the health agreement for which the hapless former Labor government, in a fawning, obsequious way, actually sold Victoria down the line by surrendering 30 per cent of incoming receipts from GST that this state had relied on.

The former Labor government supported the poor performance of the federal government, which cannot deliver anything, by allowing it access to what we need. We need that river of gold from the GST here in Victoria so that it can be managed in a competent manner by the Baillieu government. The less the

Gillard government can have its hands on, the better, as far as I am concerned.

From the former government we have seen a series of black holes that total some \$2 billion. So far as I can recall nobody has made these points in the debate thus far. All those landmines and snakes under the rocks — every time you turn a rock you find a snake or a scorpion ready to rise up and bite you or a landmine ready to explode — are manifested by the \$2 billion in black holes.

How dare members of the opposition stand up and say, 'You are not funding this, that or the other thing', when their funding regime came to a screaming halt in July this year. What were they going to fund? With all their hyperbole, what rabbits were they going to pull out of the hat to actually fund all those things? What were they going to do? We all know they built up expectations in the community that certain things would have recurrent funding and then that funding was found not to be there. All that was found were the landmines, snakes and scorpions under the rocks and the black holes that our skilful people are having to adroitly address.

The coalition government has already been able to fund some of the former government's black holes in health services, funding that is going not only directly to health services but also to major capital works and things that just were not on the horizon, such as \$55 million for nurses' holiday pay. Mr Jennings did not mention that. Who was going to pay for the nurses after 1 July?

One of my favourite things to note when I examine Labor's performance over time is its gormlessness when it came to the design, implementation and commissioning of any information technology system at all. It had no capacity to provide oversight or project manage such projects. It was absolutely snowed by third-party providers. It had no capacity to actually ask a question, project manage anything or even know what to do with the answer. Thank goodness that area is now in our domain. We have been able to fund the IT system for the Royal Children's Hospital and bring that back into reality — \$24.9 million has been allocated for that.

The Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre is very dear to my heart, because most days I see it; it is on the campus of the Austin Hospital. We have provided \$45 million for the centre. What the former government did with that centre was an outrage. This is one of its all-time greatest scandals and an example of its spin and deceit. The former government left nothing

but a curved concrete exoskeleton, a superstructure that had to be filled in, with strands of blue plastic sheeting blowing in the wind as the monument to its commitment to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. We had to find the money to make it into an operational building. Members of the previous Labor government should hang their heads in shame — especially John Lenders, who presided over this malfeasance and sleight of hand.

Some of the things for which we have provided in this budget go to the core of the things that touch me deeply. One of those things I struggle to find the words to describe because I find it so moving is the suffering of the disabled and the acute anxiety of their families and carers. Many stories have been shared with me over the last four and a half years. At last this government has provided some real relief with a \$200 million package to support the disabled, their families and carers.

On that measure alone I say to this government, God bless you for allocating that amount of money to this area of need where there is so much suffering and so many people falling through the cracks. People are so trapped in their environments looking after the disabled that they can hardly get out to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. They are despondent and desperate. We have reached out to them with this package. I am extraordinarily moved by that.

In my contribution to the euthanasia debate in 2008 one of the things I stressed was the fact that we needed to recognise palliative care and properly fund it. I am absolutely delighted to see in this term of government a \$34 million package to ensure the delivery of palliative care services.

The issue of mental health in this state was completely glossed over by Mr Jennings in his contribution, focusing as he did on capital works programs. He failed to mention service delivery or the 11 years of suffering perpetrated by the former Labor government. This government has set aside an additional \$88 million package to address the longstanding neglect in the mental health sector.

There is one final thing that needs to resonate with the previous government. I hope members opposite continue their period of reflection, as they are not really an opposition yet. In our Westminster parliamentary system it behoves an opposition to be a strong and capable one, one whose members all show up to the chamber. I can see two members of the Labor opposition in the chamber at the moment. There have been continual quorum calls for their attendance. These

calls are required not because government members are not in the chamber, but because opposition members are absent. Opposition members seem to have given up the fight already as they scurry out of the chamber. The things we say are hitting home.

In its period of reflection and inaction over the last six months the Labor opposition has come up with limp ways of filling up the time for opposition business on Wednesdays, manifested in this redundant and outdated motion of Mr Viney. I can see that opposition members are gutted; they are probably counting the days until they reach a particular milestone in their political careers so they can then go off into the never-never —

Mr Ondarchie — And fade away.

Mrs KRONBERG — And fade away. The state opposition is fading to black in lots of ways. It is just fading away. Opposition members are disparate, disillusioned, disappointing, limp, cadaverous and losing relevance at a very rapid rate. Are they even competing with the momentum of the contributions on Wednesdays from the Greens? Opposition members are sitting there now, having a little chat, looking like they have some sort of strategic alliance, just like members of the federal government. I think Labor has lost it. Yes, we know we kicked them in the guts, but you have to dust yourself off in this game. We did.

I am really proud of the job we are doing; it is one we will continue to do. I applaud all the members of the cabinet, especially those who contributed to the budget, including the Assistant Treasurer, Gordon Rich-Phillips, who is sitting in this chamber, and the Treasurer, Kim Wells, the member for Scoresby in the other place, for a successful and resoundingly well-received, comforting, responsible budget delivered in tough times in spite of 11 years of Labor's malfeasance, maladministration and black holes, and the savaging by the Gillard government.

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to support Mr Viney's motion. My contribution will be brief and devoid of the sort of hyperbole we have just heard. This motion simply calls on the government to honour its election commitments. It gives members of the chamber an opportunity to identify individual commitments, talk about them and identify what the government has promised and whether it is delivering on those promises.

I will limit my comments to three items. I am delighted the Acting President is in the chair because it gives me the opportunity to reflect on his contribution. He is in

the delightful position of being able to listen to me judiciously. I will do it in a most deferential manner, of course.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I am very happy to listen to Mr Lenders so long as he refrains from reflecting on the Chair as distinct from reflecting on the contribution.

Mr LENDERS — Acting President, I would never reflect on the Chair, but I will reflect on the contribution from a certain member for Western Metropolitan Region, Mr Finn, earlier this morning.

The comments I will make are really about promises. I was born on 1 October 1958, and one of the things one does when one is a student at Monash University and bored is look at the newspapers to see what happened on the day you were born. Lo and behold! I found that on the day before I was born, 30 September 1958, Sir Henry Bolte announced that Monash University was to be formed, and as part of a package for this second university for Victoria he announced that a railway station would be built there. Back on 30 September 1958 the then Leader of the Liberal Party made a solemn promise to build a railway station at Monash University.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Yes, Mr Leane, that is correct. In fact I was at Monash University just last Saturday, and I did not see the railway station. The first thing I raise relates to promises of a Rowville railway line and a station at Monash University, and the fact that on 30 September 1958 Liberal leader Sir Henry Bolte promised the railway station at Monash University for the first time. I suspect that — without verballing him — the late Sir Rupert Hamer promised it as well. I suspect that the late Lindsay Thompson promised it, and I suspect that Mr Kennett also promised it. Now, lo and behold, the Premier, Mr Baillieu, has promised a railway station at Monash University.

It is 52 years since the Liberal Party first promised a railway station at Monash University, so you will excuse my scepticism, Acting President, in suspecting whether this promise has as much validity as the others. The member for Western Metropolitan Region who I referred to before said there would be some study done and that it would be looked into. *Melbourne Times Weekly* of a couple of weeks ago asked, 'Who's the pretty guy who's looking into it?', as I recall. *Melbourne Times Weekly* reflected on ministers doing that. So firstly I have referred to promises that have been made and promises that will be delivered.

The second item I will refer to in relation to keeping promises is my quite vivid recollection that during discussions on the teacher's EBA (enterprise bargaining agreement) at the start of 2007 the now Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession got up in this house and moved a motion calling for Victoria's teachers to be the highest paid in Australia.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Zimbabwean dollars, probably, on your part.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I say to Mr Leane and members on my right that if they wish to have a conversation, they might like to have it elsewhere. The chamber is not the right spot to have it.

Mr LENDERS — I recall quite vividly, if my recollection is correct, that back in the first half of 2007 when the last teacher's EBA was being negotiated Mr Hall moved a motion in this place, that all but five of those opposite voted for, which was to insist that Victoria's teachers be the highest paid in Australia. That is a fantastic aspiration. Of course it was one that Mr Baillieu reiterated during the election campaign.

One of the first acts of this government was the Premier and the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession reaffirming in both houses that they would honour that commitment, but they then backed off at a rate of knots. To be the highest paid teachers in Australia would require them to receive an 8 per cent pay rise, but suddenly they are getting only a 2.5 per cent pay rise. I refer to that as a clear and unequivocal broken promise that applies not only to 45 000 state school teachers but also to 20 000 non-government school teachers whose EBA always flows on from the state system, certainly for those in the Catholic system and in most of the independent schools. So I touch on that in talking about honouring election commitments.

In relation to the third issue I will touch on I refer to an advertisement that appeared in a number of papers, but the one I have in front of me is on page 9 of the *Mountain Views Mail* of 9 November 2010. This was an advertisement placed by four characters — Brad Battin, Christine Fyffe, Matt Mills and Cindy McLeish, and three of the four of those people were elected to the lower house of the state Parliament at the election. These individuals made a solemn pledge. In their advertisement, among other things, under the heading 'A strong economy' they said they were going to keep utility bills down and supermarket prices down. The advertisement says that if you elect a Liberal government, these four people — and three are now

members of the parliamentary Liberal Party — will bring down utility prices and bring down supermarket prices.

This is what I find interesting about keeping election promises. We have three Liberal Party members of Parliament — and this advertisement was authorised by the now director of the cabinet office, Mr Tony Nutt, so you would think it would be a tad authentic — and this impartial public servant who is in charge of the cabinet office, who have put a document in the newspapers saying, ‘Under a Liberal government watch utility prices come down and watch grocery prices come down’. Those are fantastic aspirations. It is a bit like the teaching profession aspiration, but what we are talking about here is keeping a promise.

When is a promise a promise? Three Liberal lower house members of Parliament — Mr Battin, the member for Gembrook; Mrs Fyffe, the member for Evelyn; and Ms McLeish, the member for Seymour — have gone out to their constituents and said, ‘Elect us, and we will bring down utility prices’.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Let us look at what this actually means, Mr Drum. Let us look at Ms McLeish, for example, who ran around her electorate opposing a north–south pipeline while most of her electors had higher water bills because water that Melbourne Water users had paid for was not being delivered. Ms McLeish said to her constituents, ‘You’ve paid \$300 million for the right to water. You’ve paid \$900 million for a pipe, but you’re not getting it’. In the same breath she said, ‘We’re going to bring down your utility prices’. Her electors are not going to get something they paid for. Let us just think that through.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Drum gets very excited about this, and fair enough. He is advocating for some of his electors in the north of the state, which is a good thing, and I congratulate him for that, but Mr Drum is also condemning electors in the south of his electorate to higher water prices.

Mr Drum — No, I am not.

Mr LENDERS — I say to Mr Drum that he should go through the Macedon Ranges and explain to his constituents why they are not going to get the water they have paid for.

Mr Drum — It is still dearer.

Mr LENDERS — What I would say to Mr Drum is that the water has been paid for. If Mr Drum thinks that is an issue, and if he thinks pumping water costs money, I can tell him that it takes the same amount of energy and cost to pump it from the Thomson Reservoir as it does from the Eildon Reservoir.

Mr Drum — I don’t think it does.

Mr LENDERS — I suggest that Mr Drum checks the cost of pumping water from Eildon or from the Thomson. I think he will find that he is saying to the constituents in the southern half of his electorate, ‘Pay more for your water, because my Minister for Water has an ideological obsession which means that 4 million Victorians have to pay more for their water’.

The second thing I will say to Mr Drum and to the house — and let me make myself very clear on this — is that if we are keeping the prices of groceries down, we cannot be all things to all people. I happen to support the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr Walsh, when he urges people to buy Australian and to buy local. I support him because it will assist us with jobs in the north of the state. I support Mr Walsh when he says, ‘Buy local’. What I ask Mr Drum and the house is: how can government members come in here as a party and say they will do everything they possibly can to bring grocery prices down and then in the same breath condemn any company that tries to bring cheaper prices in? That is the contradiction in promising to be all things to all people.

I support Mr Walsh when he says, ‘Buy Australian’, but what we have here is a group of people who go out there and say, ‘We will keep grocery prices down and do everything we can to keep them down — trust us, we are Liberal politicians’. Then they condemn any supermarket that tries to bring prices down and take action to put up the price of water. It is interesting.

My point is not that this aspiration is not good; it is good. My point is that this mob has promised to be all things to all people. They promise whatever it takes to get a vote and to get elected, and then they come in here and rant and rave, like Mrs Kronberg, about all sorts of hypothetical issues. In the end a government is elected to deliver on promises, and it delivers on what it has. Mrs Kronberg might rant about the fact that the Australian economy has contracted, which is a third of the reason why the GST has gone down. She might rant about the fact that the Commonwealth Grants Commission, under a formula set in place by her factional mate Peter Costello, a former federal Treasurer, has put in place a formula that in the short

term has disadvantaged Victoria — no question. No-one disputes that.

However, for anyone to make an excuse for not delivering on every election promise, when they are serious, as one hopes Mr Wells is, about how they are going to construct a budget, they would have to know that GST revenue goes up and down. If they are serious about finding someone to blame, they should get stuck into who the big beneficiaries of this are — and that happens to be New South Wales and Western Australia. But Mrs Kronberg will not have a go at her Liberal mates, nor will Mr Baillieu or Mr Wells, by saying ‘Take the money from Western Australia or New South Wales’. No, they will not do that. They will try to blame a federal government that is administering a grants commission formula that is actually a legacy of Peter Costello.

The grants commission is what the grants commission is, and if the government wishes to do something about what the grants commission is, there are ways — —

Mr Drum — You know that is not true.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Drum, let me suggest to you that if you think you are going to come into this place and say that you understand the grants commission formula, you are courageous. If you are saying that, let me say in the absolute of *Yes, Minister* terms, that you are courageous if you think you understand the grants commission formula. If you say to me that that is not something that was inherited, that the grants commission has been in place since tariffs were abolished at the end of the first decade of this federation and that most of the iterations on this grants commission formula are a legacy — —

Mr Drum — Who just altered the model?

Mr LENDERS — Mr Drum, the grants commissioners were appointed by Peter Costello. They have come up with this formula — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Drum gets very excited in his place.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I ask Mr Drum to come to order.

Mr LENDERS — Despite Mr Drum’s excitement, the grants commission is what the grants commission is, and it is truly amazing that those opposite suddenly find the grants commission is a reason to slash their commitments. They do not say boo about the fact that

circumstances have changed since Western Australia’s budget adventure. They do not mention that. Their rhetoric is about blaming somebody else. They blame the weather, they — —

Hon. M. J. Guy interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Guy, I was certainly happy to do a Moscow on the Molonglo, and you held me to account for it. We are having an exciting debate in this place.

In my concluding remarks I would say that Mr Viney’s motion seeks to hold the government to account on its promises. The promise of the Monash University railway station was made 52 years ago and has as much credibility as any other promise that has been repeated many times by the Liberal Party and never delivered. In relation to the spin that comes from four Liberal candidates saying that they are going to keep utility bills and grocery prices down, their actions do not reflect their words at all. That is incredibly disappointing, and on that I would say that to think they can control grocery prices and go and solemnly promise that to their constituents is false. To say that they can keep utility bills down but then take every action to put utility bills up is false.

I am very supportive of Mr Viney’s motion because it holds the government to account. I conclude on the final promise, which I will reiterate. To go out in 2007 and 2010 and say that they are going to make Victoria’s teachers the highest paid in the country when they have no intention whatsoever of delivering on that is a broken promise, a cruel promise, a hoax and something that I think 60 000 to 70 000 teachers will hold this government to account for. It will be something that will damage, to quote Mr Guy, the ‘Liberal brand’ — do not believe a word that people say — and it will come to haunt them at every juncture in every school, as every teacher feels absolutely and completely betrayed by a promise that was never deliverable. There was never any intention of delivering on that promise. It was a cruel hoax to win votes, and now, given that they have won, they are saying, ‘How do we get out of this undeliverable, insincere promise that was never going to happen?’. With that, I urge the house to support this very good motion of my colleague Mr Viney.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Rail: level crossings

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the minister representing the Premier. The names of Ronaldo Antonio, Lilia Antonio and Sandra Muaremi are probably unknown to most people in this house. They are all dead. Their families are my constituents. Tragically their lives were lost due to a terrible accident on the Furlong Road railway crossing. I ask the minister: how does the government determine the order in which railway level crossings, like the one at Furlong Road in St Albans, are funded for upgrading?

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, Mr Eideh has addressed his question to the minister representing the Premier. I would have thought it was more a question for the minister representing the Minister for Public Transport.

Mr Lenders — On the point of order, President, I raised a very similar point of order two sitting weeks ago when Mr David Davis had a question from Mrs Petrovich. In that case I raised a point of order saying that the question was more appropriate for the minister representing the Attorney-General, and you ruled that the Leader of the Government, as the minister representing the Premier, could essentially take a question on any general area of government.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In regard to the comments Mr Lenders made in his discussion of the point of order, I think at that time I was also persuaded by the fact that Mr Davis was dealing with subject matter that actually involved himself, and that was something I also took into account on that occasion, notwithstanding that on that occasion I believed he probably would have been better served by a personal explanation rather than a question.

I must say that I think Mr Eideh's question would be better put to the minister representing the Minister for Public Transport, because it does seem to me to be a transport matter rather than a matter the Premier would be expected to be dealing with in the lower house. I am sure if this question were put in the lower house it would have been put to the Minister for Public Transport.

Mr Guy represents the Minister for Public Transport, and I would ask him to respond to this question if he feels he is in a position to do so.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — On behalf of the minister, Mr Mulder, I thank Mr Eideh for

that question. While I will take on notice for the minister's reply the specifics of his question in relation to the detail of the formula around ascertaining which crossings are to be eliminated and which are not, it should be noted that over the last 20 years Victoria has eliminated three — maybe four — level crossings on the metropolitan network in Melbourne. In fact the Melbourne metropolitan network has a huge issue with the number of level crossings on it compared to comparable networks, such as that of Sydney. That is why through the budget this government has put in place a large amount of money for the elimination of level crossings, starting with some in Mitcham — and I note that there are others in Western Metropolitan Region, Mr Eideh's area, that are flagged for possible elimination.

One of the reasons we put that money aside was that we take this issue with absolute seriousness. Obviously the issue Mr Eideh raised is one that is of concern to all Victorians. It is certainly of concern to all of us in government, particularly bearing in mind the cost of removing those level crossings. We have allocated that money in the budget so we can do more than four or five over our term in government and speed up the removal of a number of level crossings.

Supplementary question

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — The Premier has indicated on a number of occasions that fixing the problem at Furlong Road is a priority. Can the minister advise the house why the Brighton level crossing will receive a \$2 million upgrade when it is ranked at no. 223 compared to Furlong Road, which is ranked at no. 4, and why my constituents seem to be treated as second-class citizens compared to those in Brighton?

Mr Finn — On a point of order, President, Mr Eideh seems to have his facts wrong. In fact it is the Main Road level crossing in St Albans that is at no. 4 on the priority list. I ask him to get his facts right in the interests of accuracy in the house.

The PRESIDENT — Order! As Mr Finn would be well aware, that is not a point of order.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — The government does not wish to make any kind of political issue over incidents that have occurred at level crossings. We have a formula that will be put in place through the budget process that will eliminate a greater number of level crossings than have been eliminated in the past, and we are doing that because we regard this issue as being of obvious seriousness. There is of course a considerable cost in eliminating level

crossings. Some can be done at a lower cost than others.

I again note that level crossings have been flagged for removal in the western suburbs, and there is one in particular that I am aware of that has been publicly listed to be examined for removal. There are others which can be done at a lower cost. Of course any level crossing with trains moving over roads is an issue that we are aware of and will be doing our best to address.

Planning: Officer

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. Can the minister advise the house of what action the Baillieu government has taken to save small businesses in the township of Officer and provide certainty for the future of that town?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr O'Donohue for asking me a very important question about the Officer township and the future of the township of Officer, which is in one of those fast-growing areas of Melbourne and is the subject of considerable built-form change. As you would know, President, the Officer township is nearly 50 kilometres out of Melbourne and is an area going through substantial change. It has an old town centre and a number of small business areas. It has a number of older buildings, and indeed has a charm of its own.

Before the change of government there was a precinct structure plan in place which flagged a large connecting road from the freeway to the Princes Highway. The building of that connecting road in the location that was flagged would have seen the destruction of a number of small businesses in the township, huge pressures placed on neighbouring schools and the possible removal of a very old local community hall. I was alerted to this issue by Mr O'Donohue, by Mr Smith, the member for Bass in the other house, and Mr Battin, who was then the Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Gembrook in the Assembly.

We had a town meeting and spoke to a number of people who raised their concerns about achieving change in a town without any option other than what was being put forward at the time — that is, an interconnecting road that would demolish the old town and destroy a number of small businesses. This side of the house values the contribution of small business to our economy. This side of the house values the importance of maintaining a town's character at the same time as allowing urban change to occur. This side of the house made a very clear commitment that, should

we attain office in late November, we would ensure that any structure plan that was to be approved would not be at the expense of the township of Officer — of Van Steensel timber merchants, of Rawson motor mechanics and of other businesses like those that have been in Officer for some four decades and employ local people. We said we would get on with the job and allow urban change to occur, but not at the expense of that town.

I can inform the chamber, thanks to the work of Mr Battin, Mr Smith and Mr O'Donohue, the precinct structure plan that is approved — and I have made sure it is approved — will see a different route put in place to ensure the survival of the Officer town centre as it exists today. The town centre will allow growth in the new part of Officer township to the south of the railway. We will allow for a new civic centre and a new civic precinct. We will allow all those areas to be developed.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Well, well, well, President! I hear the former Gippsland boy constantly interjecting. What is interesting is: where was the former Treasurer — the former West Gippsland boy, Mr Lenders — when Officer was about to be dug up by former planning minister, Justin Madden? Where was he? What did he do to stop this happening? Where was he? Where was Mr Scheffer? Maybe he got out his VicRoads directory to go down there. Where was Mr Viney? Trying to find where Officer was in the *Melway*. At the time they were looking at the map we were down there talking to locals, and in government we have ensured the survival of the old town while also allowing change to occur.

Holmesglen: financial agreement

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. The minister would be aware that under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 a TAFE board must:

... keep full and complete books and accounts of all money received and paid by the board and must arrange for a continuous audit of the income and expenditure to be made at any intervals not exceeding one month that the Minister directs.

Can the minister confirm whether he has directed Holmesglen TAFE to provide him with the details of the secret financial agreement between Holmesglen TAFE, Carrick international and Kaplan Australia that was announced this week?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Like every other member of this chamber, I am keen to make sure that public authorities and bodies, such as Holmesglen TAFE and others, are fully accountable in terms of their financial dealings. That is why we require such bodies to publish annual reports which are tabled in the Parliament and which contain a detailed analysis of the financial statements relating to them.

Yesterday the annual report of Holmesglen TAFE was tabled in this Parliament. If members want to look at that report, at page 84 they will see explanatory note 22 regarding the financial statements, which clearly outlines a financial arrangement that was undertaken between Holmesglen TAFE and Carrick Australia. That is detailed in the report. That report has been signed by the Auditor-General. It is public information. That is the level of disclosure I require and the Parliament of Victoria requires by way of statute.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank Mr Hall for his answer. My supplementary question regards, firstly, the \$6.5 million loan. At the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing the minister did not answer a question that asked him if he had received legal advice on the probity of the \$6.5 million loan from the publicly-funded Holmesglen TAFE to a private provider, so I ask: can the minister now advise the house if he has received legal advice on this transaction, the nature of that advice and whether he will make it available to the Parliament and the public?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — As minister I have a responsibility to be accountable to the people of Victoria and ensure that money expended by those organisations under my responsibility has been spent wisely. When this matter was drawn to my attention by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority of course I made it my business to inquire about it. As to the advice we have received regarding the circumstances of that particular loan, I am more than happy to make that advice available under the normal provisions by which such information is made available to the public. Mr Lenders well knows that he has lodged a freedom of information request for that information, and if that request complies with all the provisions relating to FOI, then it will be released to Mr Lenders, who I am sure will make it more broadly available to the public.

Vocational education and training: national regulator

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, who is also the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, and I ask: can the minister explain to the house the coalition government's concerns about the commonwealth government's new national vocational education and training regulator and what the implications are for Victorian training providers?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mrs Peulich for her question and her interest in this matter, which is one of concern for us all in Victoria. It relates to the establishment of a new national vocational education and training (VET) regulator. Most members would be well aware that the federal Parliament has now passed legislation to establish a national regulator to be called the Australian Skills Quality Authority, which will commence its operations on 1 July this year. At that time all training providers based in Victoria who operate interstate or internationally, or provide services in Victoria for international students, will be required to be registered with the Australian Skills Quality Authority. That means about half the providers of VET in Victoria, of the order of some 500 providers, will be required to be registered and then regulated by the new national authority.

Victoria is one of two states to resist referral to the new national VET regulator, and I might add that was a position the previous government also adopted. I think there are very sound reasons both the previous and current governments have maintained that position. To elaborate on those reasons would take me far in excess of the 4 minutes allowed for me to answer this question. Essentially, to summarise our joint concerns, we believe the system proposed under the federal legislation is not as rigorous and robust as the one we currently have in Victoria.

It is of interest to note that as a result of the 2010 amendments to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, which had bipartisan support and which strengthened some of the regulatory requirements under the act, 109 vocational education providers either voluntarily closed their doors because they were unwilling to meet the new quality standards that the act required of them, or put in place measures for improvement, particularly in relation to protection schemes for student fees.

The strength of the Victorian system was such that it prompted a number of providers who were unwilling to meet those standards to close their doors. We are not sure if that will continue under the federal government scheme. In fact we have some serious concerns that the federal scheme proposed under federal legislation will not have the same effect and will not be as rigorous or robust as the one currently applying in Victoria.

That being said, we have some more immediate concerns in regard to the transition provisions, which will require those 500 or so Victorian providers to now be registered and regulated by the federal body. As I said, that federal body comes into existence in Victoria on 1 July. Currently it has no staff in place at all in Victoria. There is no memorandum of understanding or agreement with the Victorian Registration and Quality Authority for the functions of this new body to be undertaken. There are some unresolved legal and privacy issues surrounding data transfer between Victoria's regulator and the proposed new federal regulator.

We have something of the order of four weeks to try to have those matters resolved. I want to assure the house that my department at both an officer level and a ministerial level, with some correspondence I have had with Senator Chris Evans, is trying to stress the urgency of the need to resolve this matter so that no Victorian provider is disadvantaged from any transition measures. We will work diligently on this from the Victorian government's point of view, and I urge the federal government to work with us to resolve this matter so that no Victorian providers are disadvantaged.

Teachers: short-term contracts

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, Mr Hall. I refer the minister to his comments reported in the *Age* of 10 January about the need to reduce the number of teachers on casual or short-term contracts, and I ask: have there been any changes to the school funding formula which underpins school budgets to accommodate this policy?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — I thank Mr Elasmarr for his genuine interest in this matter and for his question. No, there have been no changes in school resource packages or funding arrangements that specifically go to address this question. What has happened is that I have made some investigations within the department about the use of short-term contract positions in the teaching service. While I am still determined to look at ways to reduce the number of short-term contracts, I can assure

Mr Elasmarr that the number of short-term contracts, which are necessary for teachers who take leave, exceeds the actual number of teachers who take leave only because short-term contract teachers are used for a term at a time, two terms at a time or in some cases 12 months at a time when there is a genuine reason for a teacher to be on leave. There is also some use of contract positions to accommodate fluctuations in student numbers from year to year.

This is a matter on which I am still determined to put in place any measures I can to reduce the number, but I do not expect we will have financial implications in a budgetary sense, and that is why there has been no specific change in funding for schools for this particular issue.

Supplementary question

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer. My supplementary question is: of the 4200 people who graduated as teachers in 2010 how many have been employed permanently by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and how many are currently employed on a casual or short-term basis?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — Mr Elasmarr would know that the employment functions are undertaken at a school level, so there is no central body which employs teachers and allocates them to schools. Schools advertise — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — There would be central records kept, surely.

Hon. P. R. HALL — There are central records for purpose of payment. I can give some approximate numbers, which I am about to do, if Mr Pakula will be patient in listening to my answer to this question. I want to make sure the member understands the context of it.

Initially the employment and the basis on which the employment is undertaken is done at a school level. What I can say is — and I will seek some specific information in response to Mr Elasmarr's question — that I know that something of the order of 2500 of those 4200 graduates are employed in Victorian government schools. The exact breakdown as to how many of them have permanency and how many of them are on fixed-term contracts is something I will take on notice and get back to the member on.

Heart disease: Go Red for Women

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ageing, and I ask: will the minister inform the house of the no. 1 cause of early death among Australian women?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — It is a pleasure to take a question from a member for Southern Metropolitan Region who is a good member; she is a significant improvement on former members in that position, Mr Thornley and Ms Huppert. Not wanting to reflect on them, but one fled from the place and the other was clearly a temporary member of this place. I welcome Ms Crozier and the enormous contribution she will make to this place. The matter she has raised today is an important one. It concerns heart disease among women, which is a significant cause — in fact it is the no. 1 killer — of death among women. It kills four times as many women as breast cancer does.

Today the Heart Foundation is asking women to take up the fight against heart disease. It is an important day as part of the Go Red for Women campaign. I know a number of members in this Parliament are committed to supporting that campaign. I certainly add my support to that campaign, as most members of this chamber would do. We know that the Healthy Heart Challenge, which the Heart Foundation encourages, is an important step. We know also that there are a number of warning signs that women should pay attention to. They should have their blood pressure checked and they should have their cholesterol level checked, and they should do that with their GP often. Equally there are other factors such as waist circumference, diabetes and a history of heart disease in the family that increase the risk of heart disease.

A good factor, as the Heart Foundation points out today, is that the disease is preventable. Actions can be taken to prevent heart disease. I encourage Victorian women to take those actions. I urge them to take those tests to check for high blood pressure and cholesterol levels and to take action from there.

The aim is to be active every day and to improve nutrition, because we know that fruit and vegetables are important in controlling the risk of heart disease, as is improving knowledge of heart health and quitting smoking — I note we discussed that in the chamber last night. That is an important step, and lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels are also important.

I welcome the question from Ms Crozier. I add my support to the Heart Foundation's good work. I am sure

I speak on behalf of everyone in the chamber in wishing it well with its work as an important foundation. Its advocacy for heart health among all Victorians and Australians is welcome. I wish today's activities great success.

Children: early childhood services

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. As the minister is aware, the national quality framework, some aspects of which are commencing on 1 January, will require early childhood workers to get additional qualifications. Other than funds carried forward from last year, what assistance will the minister's government be providing to support early childhood professionals to upgrade their qualifications?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for her question and the opportunity to talk on the national quality framework and the fact that I am chairing the ministerial council that is overseeing the implementation of that framework. We all want to see the highest quality of service in early childhood education and care in Victoria. That is why we are working towards the increased regulation of early childhood services, which includes improved ratios and better qualifications for early childhood teachers.

This budget has been a tough budget. We had to make some hard decisions around projects that were funded. As part of the funding that has come to the state to implement the national partnership on early education, there are seven key areas where funding can be directed. One of those key areas is early childhood qualifications. We are using money from our national partnership funding — which is a specific purpose payment that is given to the state to spend in the way that it feels necessary to prepare for the implementation of the national partnership on early education — to fund qualification improvements and scholarships for early childhood educators.

Supplementary question

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer. It is interesting to note that she is receiving money from the federal government, because she is always complaining that the Gillard government is not giving her enough money. It was reported in the *Age* of Friday, 27 May 2011, that state funding for workforce training programs — made available, as I pointed out, in the forward estimates of previous Labor budgets — was going to be redirected

to other programs and that federal funds were now going to be used for the workforce programs. My supplementary question is: can the minister confirm that this is the case and that she has advised the federal government of this decision?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — The accusation that this is money from previous Labor budgets is inaccurate. This is funding we have been given this year as part of the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education, and it is the money that we will be using to fund these qualifications.

The member talked about the inadequate funding from the federal government. Let us reflect on that for a moment. Members should remember that the promise to move to 15 hours of kindergarten was a federal Labor election commitment in 2007. At the time the federal Labor Party made that election commitment it said those 5 hours would be fully funded by the federal government. That is not the case. The work we have had done by our department shows that over the forward estimates of the budget the funding for those 5 hours is \$120 million short.

An honourable member — Short-changed!

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Short-changing Victoria. I call on the opposition to join with us to tell the federal government as part of the — —

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, the minister is yet again referring to the \$210 million that the federal government has committed to 15 hours. The question was about workforce programs.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is not a point of order. As with Mr Finn, members trying to put in additional information and trying to canvass their case by way of a point of order is not on. That is not a point of order. Ms Mikakos will have another day to pursue further information for the chamber if she wishes, but she will not do it by way of point of order now.

Road safety: government initiatives

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Assistant Treasurer, Mr Rich-Phillips, and I ask: can the minister inform the house of any initiatives the Baillieu government is supporting to help reduce Victoria's road toll?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Drum for his question and for

his interest in road safety in Victoria. Delivering road safety outcomes is a matter that crosses jurisdictions. It is a matter for the commonwealth government, it is a matter for the Victorian government and it is a matter for local government. Within Victoria there are a number of agencies that also participate in delivering road safety outcomes: there is the Transport Accident Commission, which is responsible to my portfolio; VicRoads; Victoria Police; and the Department of Justice.

Essentially there are three elements related to road safety outcomes. One is delivering safer drivers in safer vehicles on safer roads. The Transport Accident Commission is heavily engaged in delivering on all three of those elements. The first is in relation to safer roads, and it is being delivered through the Safer Roads Infrastructure Program undertaken by the Transport Accident Commission, and this year's budget shows there is \$75 million being spent out of that program funded by the TAC. The second is in relation to safer vehicles, and we have the TAC's How Safe is Your Car campaign encouraging people who are purchasing new vehicles to have regard to the safety features that are found in new vehicles and to make them a primary consideration when choosing a new vehicle. The third element is the behavioural change campaigns around ensuring that we have safer drivers — the drink-driving and drug-driving messages and the Wipe Off 5 campaign.

Allied to those behavioural change campaigns designed to ensure that we have safer drivers is Fatality Free Friday. Last week I was pleased to represent the government at the launch of the fifth Fatality Free Friday event at Federation Square, where I joined with patron Bev Brock, Deputy Commissioner Kieran Walshe from Victoria Police and touring car driver Mark Winterbottom. This is a community-based campaign to encourage drivers to have regard to others on the road and to ensure that they use our roads responsibly.

As part of the launch of Fatality Free Friday at Federation Square last week the organisers laid out 1500 pairs of shoes across the forecourt. Each pair of shoes laid out across the forecourt at Federation Square represented somebody who had been killed on Australian roads last year. I can tell the chamber that to see 1500 pairs of shoes laid out across the forecourt representing each fatality on Australian roads last year was a very stark reminder of the impact of road fatalities. This year in Victoria we have already seen 131 fatalities.

The message is very clear from Fatality Free Friday: there is a responsibility for the community to be engaged in ensuring that we as individual road users use our roads in a safe way. I am pleased to report that as part of Fatality Free Friday drivers are being encouraged to sign up to a pledge to use our roads in a safe manner. Last Friday more than 30 000 pledges were signed Australia-wide by people who have committed to using our roads responsibly. Responsible drivers are a key element of road safety, and the government would encourage all Victorian drivers to get behind the message of Fatality Free Friday and ensure that we act responsibly on our roads so we can ensure that our road toll in the future is lower than in the past.

Rail: regional link

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, in relation to the regional rail link project. The relevant planning controls for this project are to be found in an incorporated document to local planning schemes, and at section 5.2 it says that the works:

... must be undertaken generally in accordance with an environmental management plan prepared to the satisfaction of the responsible authority. The environmental management plan must provide an integrated and accountable framework for managing environmental effects during project construction and operation.

Given that the works have been announced for July, can the minister tell me: has that environmental management plan been received by him; is it to his satisfaction; and if so, can we see a copy?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — It is a good question again from Mr Barber in relation to the regional rail link (RRL) section 1. The house would be aware that RRL1 and the management plan that is required contain clauses for exemptions for preparatory works within the incorporated document. The works that are taking place in July are to move the existing tracks in the Tottenham area by about 7 to 8 metres. It is not constructing new track; it is moving existing track to allow the construction of new tracks for the RRL which will eventually be put in place. Moving the existing tracks by 7 to 8 metres is considered to be consistent with what was put in place by the previous government in the environmental management plan for the exemptions in the incorporated document, which allow for that minor and preparatory work to proceed before the presentation of the document to the responsible authority, which is me.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — The minister is saying that the works that will be done are under that definition in paragraph 5.4 of the incorporated document. Can the minister give some indication to the community as to when that environmental management plan is likely to be prepared and available, because it is effectively the only document that tells the community what the impact of this project is on their community? By the way, there will be construction impacts as a result of these preparatory works. The entire rail line is being shut down for two weeks, thank you very much. My supplementary question is: when will that environmental management plan be prepared, and will it be made available?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — It is required three months before the major construction begins, and that time line will be adhered to. I am expecting it fairly soon. Mr Barber is quite right in noting the absence of an environment effects statement, because it is very important that this document be presented and be considered before the major works take place. As I have stated, consistent with the incorporated document, we believe that the moving of the track 7 to 8 metres, which will result in disruptions to the existing network, is not consistent with being a major track work event in relation to the laying of a large amount of new rail. But it is consistent with those preparatory works, which are given an exemption under paragraph 5.4 of the permit. As I have stated, that will be coming fairly quickly and the three-month provision will be adhered to before the major works commence.

Toolamba: kindergarten funding

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, who is also the Minister for Housing. I ask the minister: what action has the Baillieu government taken to secure the future kindergarten needs of young families living in Toolamba?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for her interest in the ongoing education of the children of Toolamba, which is a very important, vibrant and thriving community in our electorate of Northern Victoria Region. In order to answer this question I should reflect a little on the history of what has happened at Toolamba. In the early hours of 3 February last year both Toolamba Primary School and the

kindergarten were destroyed in a fire. It was a tragic blow to the Toolamba community.

Parliament was sitting that week, and the story of the fire at the primary school and the kindergarten was mentioned in Parliament and certainly heavily covered by the press, but the minister had had no contact with the kindergarten for over a week. I had been in contact with the kindergarten as a local member, but the then minister had not contacted the kindergarten. I rang the minister's office only to find that one week after the fire she was unaware the kindergarten had even burnt down. The former minister blamed a staff member for not having read an email.

The former government then embarked on a series of misleading remarks in the media that led the community to believe the kindergarten was to be replaced as part of the rebuilding of the school, but the former government failed to commit any funding to the rebuilding of the kindergarten. In fact when we came to government it had left no money for the funding of children's facilities in the budget.

I am pleased to announce that last Friday I stood in Toolamba with the community and announced that the Baillieu government would commit \$450 000 to the rebuilding of this kindergarten. Combined with the insurance money covering the former kindergarten, this forms the bulk of the money needed to rebuild the kindergarten. There will be a small shortfall, and we are hopeful that local government will chip in to pick up some of that shortfall. I will certainly be working with the Toolamba community to ensure that this kindergarten is rebuilt. This pledge is a testament to the Baillieu government's commitment to the future education of Toolamba's children.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I have a number of questions overdue — 598, 599, 600 and 235. These are well overdue, and we have faxed the minister's office.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I will take those four questions back to the minister to ensure that they are answered.

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — Under standing order 8.11 I request an explanation from the Minister for Health in relation to questions on notice 612, 613, 614, 615, 616 and 617 for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Notice was given on 7 April. It is

now well past the 30-day limit, and I request an explanation as to why an answer has not been provided.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I will likewise take those to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and seek a detailed explanation as to why he has not brought them forward.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — On the same issue, question 161 tabled on 3 March this year has been the subject of eight phone calls to the relevant minister's office, which is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Question 165, first tabled on 22 March, has been the subject of six different phone calls to the office of the Minister for Energy and Resources. The last email that we received yesterday said it will be ready when it is ready. I have now raised both of those questions three times with the Leader of the Government.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Likewise, I will take those back to the relevant ministers and seek a response and answers for the questions.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I take great pleasure in rising to contribute to the debate on Mr Viney's motion about respective budget promises. At the forefront of my contribution I have to be very clear. In relation to questions about whether we budgeted for our pre-election commitments, the fact is that nobody believes the Labor Party anymore. Nobody believes the previous government in the way it goes about making these claims, because when it comes to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, everybody in Victoria understands that whilst the former Premier, Mr Brumby, was very happy to have his photo taken with Olivia Newton-John, when it came to the actual truth of the funding there was a \$45 million shortfall. We are missing one vital ingredient for the whole cancer centre, and that is the entire fit-out of the inside of the building.

Now that Victorians understand the way the previous government used to operate, it is a bit rich that opposition members come into this chamber and start questioning the government about whether it is properly funding its election commitments. I am sure that every member on the coalition side of this house has a whole raft of promises that were never funded in their

electorates, so God help Victoria if the previous government had survived the last election and then turned around and started using its own weasel words to suddenly back out of all the verbal promises it was giving throughout the course of the election last year.

We also have to understand about the Royal Children's Hospital. Six weeks ago we found out it was built without funding for an IT centre, which would enable each of the various departments to communicate with each other. That was a fantastic building that was put in place through a public-private partnership, but all of a sudden the developers have come back to us and said, 'There is just one primary aspect of this development which has not been funded. We need another \$20-odd million to put an IT system into the Royal Children's Hospital'. Every time we go and look at a major project or a major piece of funding initiated by the previous government we see absolute chaos, mess and incompetence.

Many other members have spoken about the desalination plant. Talk about a noose around the state's neck! A special deal was done with the unions to expedite the desalination plant project and make sure that under no circumstances would the previous government ever be caught short. Victorians will be paying for it forever and a day. Instead of desalinated water being used as a last resort, which is how desalinated water should be used, the previous government rushed in and committed this state to using water from the desalination plant as a source of first preference. We will pay for that decision for the rest of our lives, and our children will pay for it for all of their lives, because we are locked into a contract that is going to cost this state way above the \$5.2 billion that the plant is going to cost to build.

When in opposition the members of this coalition government had vision in the lead-up to the election, and that vision has now been worked through in the formation of the budget that was handed down in May. It shows the ability that this government's members had when in opposition to take on meaningful leadership roles, such as proposing the policy to bring in 1700 new police in our first term of government — something that was ridiculed by the former Premier, who said it was unnecessary and that police numbers were high enough.

For months and months Premier Brumby fought our policy on additional police and the call for more police on the streets. He continually said this was not an issue for the Parliament or the government and that the government was resourcing the police sufficiently for police officers to be put where necessary. Finally, with

about six weeks to go before the election, the Premier relented and came out with his matching policy. He effectively ran to the people saying, 'We are going to minimise the damage caused by the coalition opposition's leadership in this area with its policy, and the coalition's policy is now going to be matched by the Labor Party'. It was just ridiculous.

I also bring to the Parliament's attention the Premier's opening words in response to the opposition's protective services officers announcement. When the Premier was told that Mr Ryan, then the shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, had come up with the idea of putting over 900 protective services officers on our transport stations, the first sentiment expressed by the former Premier was, 'Oh yeah? And what are these people going to do when there is a fight or an issue? Are they going to call a cop?'. It was totally demeaning to the entire brigade of protective services officers. It was only after further study of the policy that the Premier then acknowledged that that policy had significant merit.

In opposition the coalition had the vision to take significant steps — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr DRUM — And expensive steps, Mr Pakula, to put some law and order back on the streets, not just in Melbourne and not just in the CBD. If you look at the policies associated with the Labor Party's old view of what we should do to stop violence in the CBD, you see that it was, 'We are going to charge all of the licensed venues triple or four or five times the amount for their liquor licensing that they had been charged, right around the state'. This meant that Charlton Bowling Club's licensing fee went from \$400 to \$2500 just so that it could sell 20 slabs of beer a year. Mr Pakula's party thought that was really good governance. His party thought, 'We will hit all the small distributors right around Victoria. We will make sure that the liquor licence fee for the Beechworth hotel is increased from \$4000 to \$25 000'. The ALP thought that was a good way to fight violence in the CBD.

We decided we would go to the people of Victoria and say, 'This is an important issue, so in our budget we will fund 1700 new front-line police. We will put them on the streets, and over the term of our government we will try to make a difference to the drug and alcohol-fuelled violence that is besetting our streets, not just in Melbourne but right around regional Victoria as well'.

No-one really believes Labor, because in government all it did was try to spin its way out of doing nothing. In effect it has been caught. One of the greatest head-in-the-sand tricks on the part of the previous Labor government was what it did to the health sector in relation to waiting lists. In the first instance the waiting lists in the public domain were bad enough, but this is the first government that has ever meticulously, deliberately and deceitfully invented the concept of hidden waiting lists — that is, waiting lists that people go on before they go onto a waiting list.

We have the numbers. Thousands of people in Bendigo are on the outpatient waiting list. They do not even have the opportunity to go and see a surgeon in order to get onto an official waiting list. Up to 2000 people will wait on another waiting list. The Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, who was the Minister for Health at the time, oversaw a situation whereby the use of outpatient waiting lists and all of the other hidden waiting lists in effect meant that the people of Victoria were never really sure of the extent of waiting list numbers in the public health system. The government of those opposite oversaw that deceit, and it refused to even acknowledge that it had created a set of hidden waiting lists.

Further accentuating that problem was the issue of ambulance ramping — that is, ambulances forced to line up on ramps at the back of hospital emergency departments. Again when we were in opposition the leadership came from David Davis, who said, ‘We cannot fix the problem overnight, but we will publish the extent of ramping. We will put it on the website if ambulances are forced to go on bypass mode or forced to park one behind the other’.

In Bendigo we quite often see up to eight or nine ambulances at the back of a hospital, trying to get their patients unloaded and into the system, because they do not have the opportunity to go on bypass. At least we have identified this issue. We have clearly stated in an open and transparent manner that we will effectively highlight and publish the extent of ramping so that everybody is clear about the extent of this problem, and then with the influx of 300 additional paramedics we are putting into the system we will work out ways to alleviate the problem.

It is a bit rich for Mr Jennings, as a former minister, to come into this house and say, ‘The extra \$102 million you have set aside in your budget for the Bendigo hospital redevelopment is actually not in this year’s budget; it is not even in the forward estimates’. We are going to spend an extra \$102 million to build the hospital at a total cost of \$632 million, as opposed to

Labor’s \$512 million — sorry, \$530 million; you have to add up the contributions over various years to get the final sums.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr DRUM — Mr Pakula, members of the opposition might have a shred of credibility if they once thanked the coalition for, in opposition, committing to \$632 million for the hospital. Local members for the seats of Bendigo East and Bendigo West in the other place are effectively calling for the government to scrap the additional \$102 million and build a cheaper hospital for the city of Bendigo. If Mr Pakula thinks that is good representation of Bendigo, then he is different from most members of Parliament. The two members of Parliament representing Bendigo are the only members of Parliament to ever advocate for \$102 million to leave their electorates and be spent elsewhere.

If Mr Pakula thinks that is good representation, he should stick with Jacinta Allan and Maree Edwards, the members for Bendigo East and Bendigo West in the other place, because that is exactly what they are doing. It is unbelievable — a set of Laborites, believing in what Labor does, believing that Labor is unquestionable and believing that nobody else could ever build anything to rival the brilliance of the former Labor government. It is so arrogant. The process Mr Pakula’s government went through in relation to that Bendigo project beggars belief.

I move on to schools. Labor members have effectively said, ‘We have an issue with a lack of school funding’. Again this is quite laughable. All the members on the government benches are being inundated by principals and school council presidents coming to us and in effect saying that prior to the last election they were led to believe that they were going to get a new school or a new hall or an extension to their science lab or a new library — money for this or that —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Because they were election commitments.

Mr DRUM — No, Mr Pakula, they were not election commitments; they were just winks and nods. The former government said, ‘Keep quiet, get your merge done and we will come good with the money’, but there was nothing at all in the forward estimates.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Because they were election commitments; do you understand the difference?

Mr DRUM — No, they were not election commitments, Mr Pakula; they were simply winks and nods. Schools throughout the system have gone ahead

with mergers with other schools in their areas in good faith after the previous government said, 'If you get these mergers done, we will fund you', but absolutely nothing has come forth. Now we are in a position where we have to face up to the schools and say, 'We will do the best we can, even though your funding has not been put into the forward estimates, even though we have been given absolutely no warning as to how these projects are supposed to be funded'. We have handed down a responsible budget. We have used the money of Victorian taxpayers to the best of our ability to ensure that they can take some comfort in knowing that the people in control of the budget will not be totally consumed with the idea of spin. We have not made half-baked verbal promises that come down to no substance in the budget in the end.

We heard previously from the former Treasurer, Mr Lenders, who said the people of Victoria have paid for a north-south pipeline and it is sitting in the ground out the back. I will go through the process that led to the north-south pipeline. The idea was put to the previous Premier, Premier Brumby, who went to the 2006 election saying, 'We will never pipe water over the Great Dividing Range. We will not do that; we do not have to do that — it is ridiculous'. He also went to that election saying, 'We will never build a desalination plant'. That was four and a half years ago; within six months Premier Brumby had reversed that decision, without environmental effects studies, without any worries about the social impact on the Goulburn Valley of taking the water away, without even looking at it — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — What damage would it do now? It is full of water up there.

Mr DRUM — Melbourne's dams are full of water too, Mr Pakula, but you have tunnel vision — you keep your head forward, making sure that whatever criticisms come your way you will bulldoze and bluff your way through this whole process.

When it comes to the accuracy of the claims about the extent of the savings achieved in the Goulburn Valley through the billion-dollar investment in the irrigation system — we thought that was a fair enough investment too, by the way — the lies and deceit coming from the Labor government and the water authorities have been proven beyond doubt.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr DRUM — Mr Pakula can sit there and pretend to know something about this issue, but I know he knows nothing about it — do not worry about that. I

know he knows nothing about the deceit that went on through the water authorities. He knows nothing about the deceit that went on with the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project. That will be exposed in good time.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — How's that?

Mr DRUM — It will be exposed when the Ombudsman brings down his report, Mr Pakula.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — So you know what's in it, do you?

Mr DRUM — I know what went on. If he gets to the truth, he will expose it. The former Treasurer has been saying, 'We have this investment called the north-south pipeline sitting in the ground. Why don't you pump the water out of it?'. The idea is that not pumping water out of the north-south pipeline will make Melbourne water bills dearer, but using the pipeline is the most expensive way to get water, with the exception of desalination. The cheapest way of getting water to households is via dams and the traditional system, and the dams are more than half full now.

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

Mr DRUM — Prior to the suspension for lunch we had the opportunity to touch briefly on the issue of the north-south pipeline. The former Treasurer was in here saying that somehow or other the current policy for Victoria — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I apologise, then.

Mr DRUM — I say to Mr Pakula that we have asked the former government to apologise numerous times, but in most things to do with the north-south pipeline the former government was absolutely deaf to the views of northern Victorians.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I was actually talking to Mr Dalla-Riva.

Mr DRUM — However, the current policy of the coalition government is to leave the north-south pipeline unused, except in the case of exceptional or critical human need. The former Treasurer will lose his financial credibility, if he ever had any, if he thinks it is more expensive for the people of Melbourne to access dam water than it is for them to access water through a pipeline that pumps water 70 kilometres uphill to the Sugarloaf Reservoir. That is only the start of the Melbourne reservoir system. That water has to then find its way right around the suburbs of Melbourne.

Another reason the people of Victoria simply do not believe what they have been told by the Labor Party is that three and a half years before the last election the Bracks-Brumby government decided to break its initial promise by building an interconnector from north of the Divide to pipe water south of the Divide. Right throughout that three-and-a-half-year period Labor's Minister for Water, Tim Holding, refused to detail what would be the cost of a unit of water at the end of that pipeline process. We wanted to know what it was going to cost to procure, pump and deliver the water, including the capital costs. For three and a half years former Minister Holding refused to answer that question. At the time we asked the government what it would cost, and we received no answer. It did not know or it was not going to tell us. It was none of our business and it was irrelevant.

Now, after six months in opposition, the former Treasurer has figures available indicating that using the north-south pipeline would be cheaper than bringing water in from the Thomson Dam. It is just smoke and mirrors. It is unbelievable that in three and a half years a government, with all the resources of the various departments at its disposal, was unable to come clean with the true cost of providing water via the north-south pipeline, but that now after six months in opposition it is furnished with costings of the water that is coming out of the dams.

The former Treasurer was attacking members of the government who were saying that they were going to do their best to keep down price pressures and the cost of living. However, when you compare what we are doing to what the previous government did, you see that is exactly what we are doing. The policies we are introducing are going to help keep down the costs of living.

Over my eight years in opposition in this Parliament I watched the former Treasurer stand in this place and implore those on the opposition benches to ring their mates in Canberra to make sure that Victoria got a fair deal through the GST and grants commission process. For eight years it was okay for the former Treasurer to lecture coalition members about how we needed to get in touch with our coalition colleagues in Canberra and work as hard as we possibly could in opposition and in cahoots with our federal coalition colleagues to ensure that we got the very best deal for Victoria.

Hon. P. R. Hall — 'Pick up the phone', they said.

Mr DRUM — We were told to pick up the phone to our mates; pick up the phone to Peter Costello; pick up the phone to the transport minister and the education

minister. The besotted former Treasurer spent so much time speaking in this house about Julie Bishop that we thought there was something going on. I do not know what the truth was behind that.

Mrs Kronberg interjected.

Mr DRUM — I hear you loud and clear, Mrs Kronberg. The besotted former Treasurer always had that lady's name on his mind. He never let a day go by in Parliament without mentioning the wonderful work of Julie Bishop. However, when he had to relinquish the education portfolio, he decided he had better let it slip. Quite simply we need to acknowledge the truth that with the Labor Party now in government at the federal level, we in coalition find ourselves an additional \$500 million per annum out of pocket. The grants commission has made its decision; so be it. However, if it is good enough for the former Treasurer to take that line of abuse for eight years, then I think it is fair that the former Treasurer stands in his place now on the opposition benches and acknowledges that we are \$500 million a year worse off because of a decision by the grants commission in regard to the forward years. In effect, for another four years we will be \$2 billion worse off.

As it was in opposition, so it should now be in government for us. Can we get that sort of recognition or acknowledgement from the former Treasurer? No, we cannot. It is deceitful, it is wrong and it is his way of manipulating figures and being selective with them.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Same way you are! GST revenue is up.

Mr DRUM — I say to Mr Pakula that it is the former Treasurer's way of saying one thing in government and exactly the opposite in opposition. We understand now that what members of the Labor Party really want is to make sure they celebrate every job loss in this state. The Labor Party wants to celebrate every bit of bad news. It wants to make sure that we do not have enough money to try to do the projects that are going to benefit Victorians.

Members opposite would take great pleasure in that. You can tell by their questioning, their speeches and their sheer demeanour that they are all about trying to inflict as much pain on this state as they possibly can, because that will give them the platform to stand up and run off to the media. That is what they are all about. We understand it. It is quite clear. They have made themselves blatantly clear. The former Treasurer was one thing in government and is totally the other in opposition. As a former minister he should know better.

He should be trying to work as hard as he possibly can for the betterment of this state.

We have brought down a responsible budget. It is a caring budget. It looks after those who many members on this side of the chamber have acknowledged are vulnerable and in severe states of disadvantage. They have been looked after in this budget. We will ensure that we generate regional growth through the Regional Growth Fund. We have made sure that a responsible decision has been made for every aspect of this budget. We just wish that the opposition had taken across to the opposition benches the same line of promoting Victoria that it took when in government as opposed to the line of questioning and the line of attack that it now takes.

The Labor Party has just two members of Parliament in the chamber today to discuss one of its own motions. I think that is quite indicative of the way it operates. I now see there are four Labor Party and Greens members.

Hon. P. R. Hall — There are two Labor members and two Greens.

Mr DRUM — That is about right; it is about even there. Without any further ado I conclude my remarks by wishing that the former government and now opposition would start promoting Victoria, getting behind some of our policies and acknowledging the better infrastructure projects that are happening throughout the state, and stop this whingeing, whining and negativity.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — Mercifully I am not going to replicate Mr Drum's rant. I have to say there was nothing particularly surprising about any of it because it is the same speech I have heard for the last four years. Mr Drum appears to have missed the fact that he is now in government.

This government promised a number of things to the Victorian community. One of the things it promised was that it would be a spin-free government. It promised that spin was a thing of the past and that there would be no more glossy brochures and no more drops to the media, like the ones we have seen almost every day this week. The worst spin of all is saying one thing and doing something else, which is what this government has shown itself to be a master of in the last six months.

The government likes to claim that the budget delivered on all its promises. The government likes to claim that it is open, accountable and transparent. It made that its mantra in the lead-up to the last election — 'open, transparent and accountable' — and I will come back to

that a bit later in my contribution. The government likes to say there have been 150 days of action. The reality is very different.

I will not go over the ground that Mr Lenders went over in his contribution, but I agree with him when he says that probably the greatest broken promise is the promise to Victoria's teachers. That was the promise to make them not just the highest paid in the nation on average but the highest paid at each and every classification level. We went through this at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee with the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, who is in the chamber. The minister's response to pretty much every question about this issue, both in the committee hearing and previously in this house, has been, 'There is an EBA process going on, and it is a matter for negotiation. The government is not going to pre-empt the EBA process'. It is as if somehow the EBA (enterprise bargaining agreement) process has come as a surprise to the new minister. It has come as a surprise to the government. It is as if when the commitment was made prior to the election Mr Hall did not know he would have to engage in an EBA process. Then all of a sudden he has made his way to the Treasury benches and said, 'Oh dear, I might have a bit of a problem delivering this promise, because I have to go through this heretofore unknown EBA process'.

The EBA with the teachers unions and with teachers more generally has been part of the process for a couple of decades now, for as long as there has been enterprise bargaining and since we ended national wage cases. The commitment was made by the now government in full knowledge of the fact that an EBA process would have to be gone through, but the commitment was made nevertheless. It is, as Mr Lenders says, not just a commitment that the government is not going to honour, it is a commitment that the government never intended to honour. It is a commitment that the government knew was beyond its budgetary restraints, and it is a commitment that was given for the sole purpose of electoral gain without any intention of honouring it.

There have been a whole lot of similarly cynical promises made by the now government. We all recall in the lead-up to the last election the promise that there would be 500 new prison beds without the need for a new prison. 'We might need to look at a new prison', said the coalition, 'but that will be down the track, after we have delivered the 500 new beds'. What do we now find? The Minister for Corrections comes along to the budget estimates hearings and says, 'We can deliver 108 prison beds at Langi Kal Kal and Dhurringile, but for the other 392 we are going to need to build a new

prison'. The Minister for Corrections claims in a non-credible way that the coalition was not aware of that before the election.

The most cursory examination of the capacity of Victoria's prisons would tell you that there are not 500 spaces to be found in existing correctional facilities. But the coalition knew that if it went to the last election promising a new prison as a consequence of its new tough-on-crime approach, the question it would have had to answer would have been, 'Where is it going to go?'. The coalition did not want to have to answer that question, so it told a big fat fib. The coalition said it could deliver 500 beds without a new prison, knowing full well that was a promise it was never going to be able to keep. Even now the coalition government still cannot say where this new prison is going to go.

It is the height of cynicism to go to an election telling the Victorian community 'We do not need a new prison in the next term of office' and just six months later indicate that in fact it does. That was not something that came as a surprise to this government. It would have known that when it made the promise, but it chose not to reveal it to the Victorian community.

It is much the same with regard to premium railway stations. Two days before the election the now government released its costings, and in that costings release there was a mysterious savings item that could not be identified. My office looked at it and other offices looked at it, and what occurred to us was that the savings item that was allocated but not identified looked very much like the amount of money that the premium station upgrade program would have cost. Two days before the election it was put directly to the now Minister for Public Transport and his office that that savings item meant that the coalition in government would not proceed with premium stations.

Do members know what the response of the Liberal-Nationals parties was to that proposition, which was put to them directly not just by the media but by the Public Transport Users Association? They blatantly and directly refuted any suggestion that the coalition in government would not proceed with premium stations. It was put to them directly, and the people who asked that question received in return, from a coalition that was desperate to win, a bald-faced lie. We now know through the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee process that in fact the premium station program will not proceed, and yet again the coalition was absolutely aware before the election that it was not going to proceed with that project. The question was asked

directly of the coalition, and it refused to tell the truth about it.

Let us look at the issue of speeding fines. For four years, and I have only been here for four years, we had to listen to the now Deputy Premier saying that speed cameras were not about saving lives but about raising revenue. We had to listen to the now Deputy Premier saying, 'Speed cameras are being placed in positions by the government and by Victoria Police in order to maximise revenue'. He said the government was addicted to speeding fine revenue.

Almost the day after the Deputy Premier became the Minister for Police and Emergency Services the tune started to change. All of a sudden we started hearing about why speed cameras were in fact crucial to saving lives on the roads. It was the thing that we had been saying for 11 years and that he had been disputing the whole time. What do we find when we look at the state budget? Is this new government going to wean itself off speeding fine revenue? No, there will be an extra \$24 million in the next financial year alone in fines revenue.

I spent four years listening to the now Minister for Gaming talk about how the government was addicted to gambling taxes. He said we were addicted to gambling taxes, and he said that gambling taxes should fall. The previous government was told that if it did not take 5500 poker machines out of the system, it would have blood on its hands. That is what the now Minister for Gaming, Mr O'Brien, said. He said the government would have blood on its hands if it did not reduce the number of poker machines by 5500.

Is there a move to reduce the number of poker machines by 5500, by 2000, by 1000 or by 500? No. Is there any move by the new minister to wean the government off its addiction to gambling taxes? No. What does the budget contain? A \$76 million increase in gambling taxes in the next financial year alone. All the spin and sophistry we heard from coalition members over the last four years has been made redundant by a 10-step walk across the aisle. A 10-step walk across the aisle has made everything they had said for four years utterly redundant.

I also want to talk about the mantra we heard from the now Premier for months, if not years, about how he would lead a government that would be open, transparent and accountable. It certainly got the *Age* on board, and it was the thing that Mr Baillieu said defined him and separated him from Mr Brumby as Premier — that he would lead a government of openness, transparency and accountability. That promise lasted

about as long as it took for the new Premier to shake hands with the Governor on 2 December. That is how long that promise lasted.

In the greatest sense of the word, what you can say about that commitment is that the mountain gave birth to a mouse. Members need to consider the sorts of issues we have had to confront in the last six months and the government's response to them. We have had example after example of ministers who find themselves in difficult situations flatly refusing to go out and front the media. We have seen Mr Davis do it — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — When?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — You know when.

Hon. D. M. Davis — That is not true.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I will take a point of order if you like. We have seen the Minister for Public Transport literally running away from the cameras after a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing. We saw Mr Dalla-Riva lock himself away for 24 hours before he came out to front the media.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Davis, let me tell you that I spent two years as a minister, and when the pack wanted to speak to me, they got me.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I advise the Leader of the House that he is out of his place.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — When the pack needed me, they got to speak to me. In sitting week after sitting week we have seen the extraordinary spectacle of the Speaker in effect refusing any attempt by the opposition to hold the government to account. We have seen extraordinary rulings and extraordinary efforts being made to prevent ministers, including the Premier, being asked legitimate questions about the management of their portfolios and other matters.

We spoke to the President and to the Speaker when they appeared before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and it was one of the most extraordinary pieces of testimony I have ever heard. Members will remember that in Queensland there was a minister who took bribes from a developer. What was put to the Speaker was this: what would happen in this state if there were a case of similar circumstances that

led to the resignation of Gordon Nuttall in Queensland? Would the opposition be entitled to ask a minister about his personal probity in Parliament? The Speaker's answer was, 'Only if it fell within his portfolio responsibilities'. Presumably if a minister is taking gratuities, or brown paper bags as the coalition used to refer to them — —

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Before you jump to your feet, Mrs Petrovich, that is how you used to refer to them when we were in government. Mrs Petrovich knows full well that she and Mrs Peulich, and many other members of the coalition, used to yell across the chamber at us almost every question time about brown paper bags. But if that situation were replicated now, members could not ask about it unless it happened to be the Minister for Planning, because for any other minister it would fall outside their portfolio responsibilities. It was an extraordinary attempt to protect ministers from legitimate questions about their behaviour.

Mrs Petrovich — On a point of order, Acting President, I am concerned that Mr Pakula has crossed the line in talking about brown paper bags and in relation to the only portfolio that this issue could be related to being planning. I object to that and ask for it to be withdrawn.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — On what grounds?

Mrs Petrovich — It is offensive.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — On the point of order, I made it very clear in my contribution that the reference to brown paper bags was in response to the fact that the coalition used to say that about the previous government almost every sitting week, and the example I raised was clearly hypothetical.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, Acting President, the coalition talked about brown paper bags in relation to the previous government because we were very concerned about what was occurring with respect to planning in the state. I have to say that occasionally it was ruled out of order, but the point is that there were legitimate concerns and a fear that there was frank disorder and that there had been frank breaches of the law.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I am advised that there is no point of order. If a member has taken offence to allegations, another member can ask for those words to be withdrawn. That

has not happened in this instance, so there is no point of order.

Mrs Petrovich — On a point of order, Acting President, I did ask that that comment be withdrawn.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I did not hear that in the point of order. Upon reflection, I do not believe there is a point of order and there is no statement to be withdrawn.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I have to say it is extraordinary that the member would suggest I was reflecting on a member in this place when she knows full well I was not. However, I will continue on this theme of openness, transparency and accountability.

I have on numerous occasions raised the matter of freedom of information and the somewhat extraordinary situation that exists now of a member of the Premier's private staff handling FOI applications, even though those applications are not lodged with the Premier's office but with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Apparently a protocol has been created that where those applications relate to the Premier's office in any way they are forwarded to the Premier's office for response, and on many occasions the response that comes back is of such a nature that there is no opportunity for internal review. A member of the Premier's private staff summarily and without the provision of any adequate reason just rejects FOI applications.

How can the Premier and government members genuinely put their hands on their hearts and claim this is an open, transparent and accountable process when FOIs that relate to the Premier are being handled by a member of his private staff who is answerable to his chief of staff? It is beyond comprehension that anyone could be so audacious as to claim they support openness, transparency and accountability when that is the process they have put in place. We saw as almost the first action of this government — —

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Let me help Mrs Petrovich. This is a motion about broken promises. Openness, transparency and accountability was a key promise of the coalition, and I am going to the point of why this is not a promise the government has kept.

One of the first acts of the new government was to slash the opposition's budget almost in half — not quite in half, but almost in half. The government knows full well that that decision makes it much more difficult for any opposition to hold the government to account. To

put it in context, when the Liberal Party and The Nationals went into coalition back in 2007, the then government allowed them to combine their budgets, which came to a total of \$2.5 million or so, even though the combined number of members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals when they were in opposition last term was considerably lower than the total number of members of the opposition now. Using the spurious excuse that they were two parties and we are one, the government has connived to slash the opposition's budget and deny the opposition the ability to scrutinise the government as well as it otherwise would.

Hon. D. M. Davis — It was exactly the same budget.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Davis says it is exactly the same budget. Let me take up the interjection. He knows that is not true. He knows it is the same budget as the Liberal Party had but not the same — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I advise Mr Davis that in 2007, when the Liberal-Nationals combined to form the coalition, they had fewer members than this opposition has now.

Hon. D. M. Davis — Prior to that time we were the opposition. Mr Pakula knows that to be the fact.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — If Mr Davis is talking about the 2002–06 term, the fact of the matter is — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — I am talking about after 2006; Mr Pakula should deal with the period from 2006.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I have. I said that from the moment the Liberal-Nationals went into coalition, the government of the day allowed them to combine the budgets.

When he was the Leader of the Opposition the current Premier made a commitment to reform question time. There has been no attempt to do anything of the sort. There was a commitment that ministers would answer questions directly. Nothing of the sort has occurred. We have seen a refusal by the government to release the Vincent report into the Office of Public Prosecutions. Yesterday the Attorney-General said that the process Frank Vincent has gone through is pretty much the same as the process in the review of the Jama case. There is one important difference. The Jama report was publicly released; it was released to the Parliament. There are similarities in the nature of the review, with

the one exception: the Jama report was released and this report is being suppressed.

Both the Premier and the Minister for Corrections, Mr McIntosh, have refused to give any indication about when the independent office of the FOI commissioner will be opened. I asked the Premier about it during the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing. His answer was, 'In due course'. I asked Mr McIntosh about it, and he literally sat there silently, refusing to speak.

The number of members on parliamentary committees has been reduced. We have seen every motion to refer bills to an upper house legislation committee rejected by the government. This all puts the lie to the proposition that somehow this government was going to improve the standards of openness, transparency and accountability. I have just gone through something like a dozen examples of how the government has either made no improvement or has actually taken the notion of transparency backwards. It was a key coalition commitment, and it has been the biggest disappointment of the government. It was clearly a fundamental promise that has been broken by the government, and it is one that the opposition will not stop pursuing until this government is true to its word and actually delivers on its commitment of greater openness, transparency and accountability.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on this motion, and in doing so I firstly thank Mr Viney for his congratulations on the election of the Baillieu government. However, I remind Mr Viney in relation to this motion that this government listened to Victorians in the lead-up to last year's election and delivered a budget that was in line with the expectations of the Victorian public.

This budget was put together at a time when significant challenges were being faced by the Treasurer and the leadership of the government. For example, floods have affected many parts of Victoria, and communities are still being affected by those floods. Another factor in formulating the budget has been the Gillard government's significant cut of \$4.1 billion to GST revenue, and the house hardly needs to be reminded of the enormous cost blow-outs in relation to a number of projects that have been mentioned numerous times by those on this side of the house, such as the desalination plant, myki, HealthSMART, smart meters and so on.

The government has provided detailed costings for this budget, and many election commitments are being met by the Baillieu government. Some \$5.1 billion of election commitments have been put forward. The

budget has been tabled, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, to which Mr Pakula has referred, has conducted its hearings and, as we heard from Mr Davis this morning, some 50 hours of public hearings have taken place in relation to that process.

I will highlight some areas of the budget which were of most concern to the Victorian public in the lead-up to last year's election. I refer in particular to the area of community safety. As we all know, law and order is a big issue due to the increasing incidence of violent crime on our streets, both within metropolitan Melbourne and across rural Victoria. Violent crime has increased, and that needs to be addressed. This government has put in place significant investment in that area. This government will provide 1700 police officers and 940 protective services officers on our transport system to help people in the community feel safer. These officers will have a presence on our streets to ensure that we are delivering on that commitment.

Transport has been an absolute mess in this city for a number of years, and it was totally neglected by the previous government. This government is aiming to fix many of the problems, and in doing so it has provided significant investment in various areas. As I mentioned yesterday, in my own region there will be an upgrade of the Balaclava railway station. Other upgrades include grade separations at several locations in Melbourne. The government faces a huge undertaking in relation to the myki ticketing system fiasco, and the government is looking into that and other difficult areas.

The budget provides \$13 billion to deliver improved health services, which is a record spend. I note that in his contribution to the debate on this motion Mr Jennings drew significantly on the health aspects of the budget. He was concerned about this government's ability to deliver on the commitments in the budget. He said this government is living in denial and has the mindset of being in opposition. He then listed a number of hospitals and said there are various issues in relation to health funding in the budget.

I remind Mr Jennings that there will be significant investment in that area — as I mentioned, \$13 billion — which will improve those health services that were neglected by the previous government. Other improvements will affect elective surgery wait times, ambulance response times and other factors that impact on a patient's ability to receive proper and appropriate care in a timely fashion in this state. In addition the budget provides significant funding of \$34 million for palliative care services, a measure that has been widely accepted and appreciated by those working within that area.

In relation to various other aspects of the budget, this government has gone a long way to ease cost of living pressures for Victorians. We have had to do so in a number of areas. I will refer to Mr Lenders's contribution to the debate on the budget papers. He spoke about a number of issues. He again reminded the house of his birthday in 1958 and recalled a number of very successful Liberal governments over a number of years; however, he fails to realise that Labor was in power in this state for almost three decades.

He kept referring to the Monash railway link and asked what the Liberal government is doing about that. It is interesting that he can say the Liberals have done nothing to fix that issue, particularly as Labor spent so much time in office. I suggest that Labor did little to deliver the Monash railway link either.

Hon. P. R. Hall — And it had plenty of opportunity to do so.

Ms CROZIER — Absolutely — as I said, almost three decades. Labor spent a lot of time in government and completely ignored that issue that Mr Lenders now seems to think is very important. He has raised it a number of times in this house.

Mr Lenders also referred to an advertisement about assisting families to reduce utility prices that was put out by the previous opposition, now the government, during the election campaign. Mr Lenders referred to a number of people who are now members of this Parliament, including the members for Evelyn and Gembrook in the Assembly and a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in this place. I remind Mr Lenders that what this government has done with this budget is assist in a number of areas in relation to utility prices. There is \$382 million to extend energy concessions to more than 815 000 families. I am sure a significant number of those families in the lower house electorates of Gembrook and Evelyn and the upper house electorate of Eastern Metropolitan Region will be very grateful for the concessions that have been extended to them.

In relation to the advertisement to which he referred, I think Mr Lenders can see that there has been significant input from this budget to help ease cost of living pressures for Victorian families. The budget has also provided for a reduction in ambulance membership fees that will assist families along with \$445 million for eligible households in relation to a year-round electricity concession to enable water and sewerage concessions to keep pace with the increased costs that Victorian families are having to deal with.

This budget goes a long way towards delivering on what the Victorian community said to us it needed in the lead-up to last year's election. It is a caring and responsible budget, and it provides for a number of significant investments in areas that have been neglected over the past 11 years. This budget will go a long way towards remedying the many problems we found on coming to government. Those problems relate to various portfolios and matters to which I have already referred.

Some of the significant achievements of the budget include finding \$55 million to pay nurses over the Christmas and New Year period, providing the money for the IT system at the Royal Children's Hospital that had not been funded and providing \$45 million for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre — all very worthwhile and necessary commitments but commitments that were not made by the previous government. The Baillieu government has had to pick up the slack and fulfil those obligations.

With those few words I again congratulate the Treasurer on the budget, and I know this government will succeed in delivering on its promises and commitments.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

**ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT (BEVERAGE CONTAINER
DEPOSIT AND RECOVERY SCHEME)
BILL 2011**

Introduction and first reading

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Environment Protection Act 1970 to make further provision for environmentally sustainable uses of resources and best practices in waste management by establishing a beverage container deposit scheme to be administered by the Environment Protection Authority and for other purposes.

Read first time.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 14 June 2011, the following documents relating to the government’s advanced metering infrastructure project, also known as the smart meters project:

- (a) all documents relating to all cost-benefit analyses of the project;
- (b) all correspondence and instructions, direction, guidelines and similar documents provided to, or received from, the party or parties undertaking any cost-benefit analyses;
- (c) all correspondence to or from the former and current ministers for energy and resources, his department or agencies, and Victoria’s electricity distribution businesses concerning smart meters;
- (d) all documents relating to the operation of time-of-use pricing and smart meters, including the government’s decision to impose a moratorium on the operation of time-of-use pricing and the government’s subsequent decision to determine that time-of-use processing will not be mandatory; and
- (e) all documents relating to any proposed communications, education or public awareness campaigns concerning smart meters, including financial documents and invoices.

This is going to be an extraordinarily easy motion for the government. I can see that Mr O’Donohue is in the starting blocks ready to go on this one.

Ms Pulford — He has got that look about him.

Mr BARBER — He is tense and ready to go. He will no doubt support this motion because this motion is in fact an identical motion, with the exception of a few trivial words, to the one which the government, then in opposition, itself moved in 2010 in relation to a whole range of documents that would tell us a little bit more about smart meters and the pros and cons of them. Better than that, though, is that it was coalition policy at the last state election to release this exact material, and the terms in which the coalition stated that were that it would release the documents previously not given to the Legislative Council — that is, the documents that were covered by the original David Davis motion, which I have copied out quite faithfully to form my motion. I look forward to the speedy passage of this motion through the house.

Mr O’DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise in response to Mr Barber’s very brief contribution on this motion. As he correctly points out, this motion reflects — save, as he said, some minor changes — the motion moved by Mr David Davis last

year. This motion requires the Leader of the Government to table by 12 noon on 14 June the following documents:

- (a) all documents relating to all cost-benefit analyses of the project;
- (b) all correspondence and instructions, direction, guidelines and similar documents provided to, or received from, the party or parties undertaking any cost-benefit analyses;
- (c) all correspondence to or from the former and current ministers for energy and resources, his department or agencies, and Victoria’s electricity distribution businesses concerning smart meters;
- (d) all documents relating to the operation of time-of-use pricing and smart meters, including the government’s decision to impose a moratorium on the operation of time-of-use pricing and the government’s subsequent decision to determine that time-of-use processing will not be mandatory; and
- (e) all documents relating to any proposed communications, education or public awareness campaigns concerning smart meters, including financial documents and invoices.

I will start by noting that again Mr Barber is requesting that the government respond to this motion in a very short time frame. I make the point that whilst the government is happy to accept the motion, with the usual caveats, for the government to respond in less than two weeks would be very challenging indeed. As Mr Barber points out, whilst this is similar to a motion that the previous Parliament passed, the reality is that there are processes within government for these sorts of documents to be produced. I call on the house to be realistic about the time frame required for documents to be produced.

The government is very happy and indeed willing to be responsive to the house and to be open and transparent in the provision of information, but I anticipate that to allow less than two weeks for the production of documents will be very challenging. I say that not just on the basis of the processes of government but also on the basis of previous experience with this motion when the opposition was in government, because the Legislative Council passed a similar motion to the one before us on 23 June and the Legislative Council subsequently received two letters from the then Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, about this matter, the first on 27 July and the second on 30 August.

I will read into *Hansard* the correspondence from the then Attorney-General dated 30 August. It states, under the heading ‘Order for the production of documents — smart meters’:

I refer to my letter to you of 27 July 2010 regarding the Legislative Council's order of 23 June 2010 seeking the production of documents relating to smart meters.

As I foreshadowed in my letter, the government has attempted to refine the scope of the order. However, the language used in the order is at such a level of ambiguity, and the subject matter so broad, that it has not been possible to identify the subject of the order with any particularity.

The reference to 'all documents' in the order means that preparing the government's response would require a substantial diversion of the department's time and resources and take many months to complete. Indeed, there are likely to be over 4000 documents relevant to this order.

Consequently, the government invites the Council to refine the scope of the order with a view to enabling the government to respond. I otherwise trust that the Council will not insist on the government responding to the order in its current form.

The government did not produce the documents before the Parliament was prorogued at the end of last year. The Attorney-General identified in his letter that the request involved several thousand documents.

The government is happy to respond to the house, but the timetable for production is ambitious, to say the least. I note that yesterday the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Michael O'Brien, released a smart meter issues paper for public consultation, which is a significant step forward and something which the previous government should have done. I welcome and congratulate the minister on his releasing the issues paper and seeking to have positive engagement with the community on this important project. With those words, the government does not oppose the motion moved by Mr Barber.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — The opposition will be supporting Mr Barber's motion. This is an important issue. The motion simply makes some reasonable requests for documents that relate to important projects. This is the type of request that was perfectly acceptable to government members when they were on the opposition benches.

The advanced metering infrastructure project is an important project. It was initiated as part of the Council of Australian Governments discussions when John Howard was the Prime Minister. In other countries advanced metering has been shown to provide relief and benefit to people where it has previously been rolled out. The experience in Canada and the United Kingdom, if my memory serves me correctly, is that the installation of these kinds of devices places downward pressure on the cost of living and billing because consumers have at their disposal a whole lot more information on their use habits.

There has been great success in increasing community awareness leading to rapidly reduced water consumption. It has been my view for a long time that this is one way to tackle energy prices for consumers and to encourage measures that will promote the smart use of energy in a way similar to the system that has realistically and practically had a great impact on water use. There are some good lessons for us from that. Mr Barber's motion seeks to explore some of the issues around smart meters and this important project. We support Mr Barber's endeavour to do so through this motion.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Mr O'Donohue was in the starting blocks, and then he came out in slow motion like the Six Million Dollar Man, and slow motion is exactly what we are going to get. Members heard Mr O'Donohue say that two weeks is not enough time. These documents are in fact five and a half months overdue already, because it was the coalition government's promise to release them. We then heard from Mr O'Donohue that we can all relax because a discussion paper is out. We are supposed to read the discussion paper and from that, using the information the government thinks we need to have, make our own decision. I am sorry, but the government is not going to get off that easy; we are going back to the original documents. It was Mr O'Brien in his press release who committed to releasing exactly these documents. We are going back; it will be like it is on *Air Crash Investigation*.

Ms Pulford interjected.

Mr BARBER — It was the government's election promise to release not just documents about smart meters but the documents that had been refused by the then government in the Legislative Council. The definition of the minister's policy is the definition of this motion. If we are going to go back, we are not going to do a few little submissions on the discussion paper. We are going to go back as they do on *Air Crash Investigation*. Does the member know that show? It is on late at night. It is a bit dodgy, but I really like it. On that program they go all the way back and discover exactly why it was that a plane fell out of the sky, and until they get to the proximal cause, if you like, of the bad decision, they do not rest — and neither will I. I look forward to whatever it is that Mr O'Brien comes up with next.

Motion agreed to.

AUSTRALIAN SYNCHROTRON: FUNDING

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) —
I move:

That this house condemns the Baillieu government for putting further pressure on Victoria's advanced manufacturing sector by failing to commit ongoing funding for the Australian Synchrotron and notes that the synchrotron —

- (1) is a major tool for research and development; and
- (2) plays an important part in the development of advanced new products and processes which are key elements in maintaining and growing Victoria's manufacturing base.

I am going to do something rather unusual today. I am going to commence my contribution by quoting from an interview between Peter Mares, who is the host of the Radio National program *National Interest*, and his guest on the program Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, Professor Frank Larkins. I do this in order to give an insight into what the highly gifted individuals who actually use the synchrotron and the scientific community think about the potential closure of this facility and also to give an insight into how incredulous the scientific community is at the potential closure of the Australian Synchrotron.

As I would expect from a professor, Professor Larkins's views are objective — that is, they are evidence based, unlike the polemic that goes on in this place. With the house's indulgence — this is quite a lengthy interview — I will now commence.

Peter Mares — How important is the synchrotron to Australian science and research?

Frank Larkins — Oh, it's absolutely critical. It's a world-class facility which does represent what we would call displacement science. You can do experiments at the synchrotron that you cannot do in your laboratory and if you want to attract and retain world-class people, we want to be seen in the top echelons of research performance world wide ... It's a facility that we must have and it's something that we've lobbied for since the early 1990s, in fact.

Peter Mares — And are you worried about the future of its funding?

Frank Larkins — Well, the future ... It's clearly of great concern to everyone that if we are, as I said earlier, to continue to be seen as a world-class contributor to science and technology, then it's a must-have facility and the failure to put in place a forward plan for funding beyond 2012 is of great concern.

Peter Mares — And so, could the synchrotron be shut down in the middle of next year? Is that conceivable?

Frank Larkins — Well, we all hope not. I mean, it is in the hands of the politicians now. But that would be a disaster for Australia. It's a disaster for science. And we just cannot allow that to happen. But yes, Peter, in theory, it could happen.

Peter Mares — How did it come to this, where we build a world-class research facility at a cost of \$200 million plus, and now we don't know whether we're going to fund it beyond the next 12 months?

Frank Larkins — Well, you really need to ask other people to answer this question ...

Peter Mares — But as you say, this is now in the hands of politicians. And part of the issue here, as I understand it, is that the Brumby government were big supporters of the synchrotron. In fact, it was known as 'Brumby's Baby'. The Victorian government jumped in to get the facility before Queensland and New South Wales, that were both interested in it as well ...

Frank Larkins — I understand all that. I think we should just reflect for a moment, though, because in the early 2000s, the federal government was convinced of the importance of Australia having such a facility and as you said, they set up a competition, and again, it's an indication that the Queensland government, the New South Wales government, the Victorian government, all saw this as a critical piece of national infrastructure, and all governments, the federal and the three eastern state governments, all said initially, 'We want this facility'. So, the question is, what fundamentally has changed such that it is now not critical to our future? And the answer, of course, is that nothing's changed; it is still critical to our future.

I ask the same question: what has changed? Why has this vital facility that the federal government and the three eastern states competed for been seemingly wiped out by the Baillieu government with the stroke of the pen? If I may channel Professor Larkins's question: how has it come to this? I will answer that question a little later in my contribution, but first I want to talk about the synchrotron and what it does.

The Australian Synchrotron is one of the most significant pieces of science infrastructure in the Southern Hemisphere. It was officially opened on 31 July 2007 by the Brumby government. The facility was constructed with funding of \$157 million from the Victorian government's capital fund and, as I recall, about \$50 million of federal funding. The synchrotron is used for critical research and knowledge production across a wide range of applications, including manufacturing, health, minerals, materials, food security, climate change mitigation, energy security, homeland security and biosecurity.

The advent of the synchrotron has significantly increased the depth and breadth of world-class research that can be undertaken by Australian and New Zealand scientists. Let us not forget New Zealand in this. The synchrotron is not just for Victorians and it is not just for Australia — New Zealand is also a stakeholder in this facility.

The users of the synchrotron are rapidly diversifying to encompass a broad cross-section of the research

community. The Australian Synchrotron is the country's largest user facility and the only operation of its kind in Australia. It is a major part of Victoria's, and the nation's, scientific infrastructure, providing significant capabilities and delivering scientific, educational and industrial benefits to Victoria, to the rest of Australia and to New Zealand. I might add that the industrial benefits are not well known, but they are significant, and I will talk a little more about them later in my contribution.

Many of the highest impact research programs which depend on the synchrotron are very difficult to conduct overseas. For example, it is often impossible, for obvious reasons, to send biological tissue, live animals and soil and plant samples offshore. The number of users of the synchrotron has increased exponentially since 2008 when 325 people used the facility. In February 2010, 1600 people used the synchrotron.

At this point I want to touch on some of the achievements of the Australian Synchrotron in the hope that government members might be galvanised into lobbying ministers and the Premier to save this facility. The achievements of the synchrotron include successfully staging the peak international synchrotron science and technology conference, which is held every three years and is hosted by a major international synchrotron user facility. I am informed that hosting such an event is very prestigious for the host country and host synchrotron.

The synchrotron hosts over 3000 domestic and international research visits per year. It has also been instrumental in the lodging of 15 new patents. It has generated 336 scientific papers since 2007, which is a great deal, and these have been in areas as diverse as immunology, biomedicine, mineral processing, environmental sustainability, food security, accelerator physics and instrument development. This is equal to or better than any other leading synchrotron at a comparable time of its development. A further 420 papers were generated by work done at the Australian National Beamline Facility. Of these 756 scientific papers, approximately 70 per cent have appeared in journals with an A-star or A rating under the Excellence in Research for Australia assessment scheme, including leading international science journals such as *Nature*. This is comparable to the performance of Australia's best research groups.

Research undertaken at the facility is making a positive contribution to Australia's national research priorities, creating an environmentally sustainable Australia, promoting and maintaining good health, developing frontier technologies for building and transforming

Australian industries, and safeguarding Australia. The Australian Synchrotron has attracted new research infrastructure grants totalling \$51.48 million, which are being used to further strengthen the facility's capabilities. The fact that the synchrotron has attracted that funding indicates that it is ticking all the right boxes in terms of where it is going as a major piece of scientific infrastructure.

Activities undertaken by commercial clients — and this is the area of most relevance to this motion — are contributing to the development of anti-infective drugs, electronic and bio-analytical measurement instruments, biofuel products, pharmaceutical and nutraceutical products and bio-pharmaceuticals.

The Australian Synchrotron's beamlines are oversubscribed. In some cases requests for beam time are more than three times the availability, demonstrating the high demand for its techniques. Between 2007 and 2008 cumulative publication numbers for two of the synchrotron's most popular techniques, powder diffraction and macromolecular crystallography, rose from zero to 50 and 100 respectively. There is more I can say, but in the interests of time I will end my elaboration of the achievements there and continue with my contribution.

The achievements of the synchrotron demonstrate how much Victoria and Australia need the synchrotron. The synchrotron gives us a leading and competitive edge in technology, research and development. We are currently at the forefront of major scientific discoveries. We have opportunities that are available to only a small number of countries. There are fewer than 40 such facilities in the world. It is the largest stand-alone scientific structure in the Southern Hemisphere, yet it is at risk.

Earlier in my contribution I asked how we came to a position whereby scientific infrastructure critical for the future of our state is now being put at risk. How did we come to this? We came to this by the coalition playing irresponsible, inane, lowest-common-denominator retail politics — in other words, it made some outrageous promises and never thought it would be in a position to implement those promises. In order to implement at least some of its promises, the Baillieu government had to cry poor, hence the black holes. Having cried poor and supposedly softened up the electorate, it then had to find cuts that could be made, and the most logical way to cut programs was to find programs which had lapsed. That is how it landed on the synchrotron.

The failure of the government to commit to ongoing funding for the synchrotron puts further pressure on Victorian advanced manufacturing by potentially depriving industry of one of the most important tools available in the world for research and development. The state budget provided no extra ongoing funds to a facility that supports over 2500 scientists, has 120 highly skilled world-class scientists and is a source of scientific discoveries of world significance.

Many of these scientists are not short of options. You cannot play chicken with this facility, because many of these scientists are highly qualified and highly sought-after individuals. They are in demand; I would not be surprised if they are on the radar of other governments, other government agencies and companies throughout the world. We cannot risk these people going overseas. We talk about the brain drain in this country. Headhunters would be after these people as we speak if there were any sort of insecurity about the synchrotron. I hope these people stick with us.

I hope the government eventually comes through with the funding. Let us hope the government makes up its mind to do that in a short period of time. We definitely need leadership and responsibility in decisions from this government. The honeymoon period is now well and truly over. The government has been in government for close to seven months, so it is time to end the insecurity and accept some responsibility for things like the synchrotron and indeed for Victoria's manufacturing sector.

I need to go back to basics in explaining why the synchrotron is of vital importance to the future. The synchrotron is a large machine that is around the size of a football ground. The machine accelerates electrons to almost the speed of light. As the electrons are deflected through magnetic fields they create extremely bright light. The light is then channelled down in what are known as beamlines to experimental workstations where it is used for research.

The synchrotron light advances research and development in diverse fields. The electrons generated in the centre of the synchrotron are accelerated to almost the speed of light by the linear accelerator. The electrons are then transferred to the booster ring, where they are increased in energy and transferred to the outer storage ring. The electrons are deflected through the magnetic field created by the magnets, and at each magnet a beam of synchrotron light is produced. I am no expert on the details of using the synchrotron, but it is important for members to have at least an elementary knowledge of its operation to understand how the beam of light can be used for a particular technique.

Our synchrotron is what is known as a third-generation synchrotron. It is leading world technology using three different light resources — namely, bending magnets, multipole wigglers and undulators. It enables a wide range of advanced experiments and measurements to be carried out. We are equal to anywhere in the world. That is now at risk due to a lack of understanding by the Baillieu government. I am not suggesting that everyone in the Baillieu government needs to understand the intricacies of how the synchrotron works — that would be a pretty tough call to make — but what we expect of the Baillieu government is for it to have a conceptual understanding of the importance of the synchrotron in many fields, including innovation, productivity increase and obviously the manufacturing sector.

Somewhat ironically the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips had the task of launching MASSIVE, the Multi-modal Australian ScienceS Imaging and Visualisation Environment, where scientists will for the first time be able to create, analyse, view and interact with high-resolution three-dimensional samples of their work in close to real time. Mr Rich-Phillips sang the praises of MASSIVE in a press release, but the fact that the project partner of MASSIVE was the Australian Synchrotron is a great irony, and it sounds a touch hypocritical to me.

The government has created a sense of great unease in the scientific community. The government has put at risk the state's international reputation as a research and innovation hub. There is no doubt that the Brumby government provided a significant investment of \$157 million in capital, but for us to become the clever country and be at the forefront of scientific breakthroughs we have to invest in our future.

Having spoken at length about the Australian Synchrotron, its inception, its functions and its achievements, I now turn my attention briefly to the state of Victoria's manufacturing sector. I will then conclude my contribution by discussing the importance of innovation, and more particularly the synchrotron, to the future of manufacturing in this state and in this country. The Victorian manufacturing sector is going through a pretty tough time at the moment with the Australian dollar at historically high levels. As a result, since March 849 jobs have been lost at Bosch, National Foods, Ford Australia and Heinz alone. The Australian Industry Group-PricewaterhouseCoopers Australian performance of manufacturing index — otherwise known as PMI — shows that manufacturing is in a state of contraction.

I am a reasonable person, so I am prepared to concede that the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

does not control the levers which influence the nation's macroeconomic performance. I thus know he cannot be blamed for the high Australian dollar, the resources boom and the two-speed economy. However, I also know that the minister and the Baillieu government have tools at their disposal to help cushion the blow of the high Australian dollar, and I think that is lost on Mr Dalla-Riva because he keeps referring to the high Australian dollar. I know the dollar is high, and I know Mr Dalla-Riva does not control the level of our currency, but he and the state government have tools at their disposal to cushion the impact of the high currency.

What I do not know is why the government is sitting back and allowing our manufacturing sector to drift. The government cannot do this for long. It cannot sit back and allow our manufacturers to go to the wall. The historically high level of the Australian dollar requires the government to take a more proactive approach to the manufacturing sector in order to cushion the impact of the currency's high level. The Baillieu government and Mr Dalla-Riva need an urgent and serious policy response, and they need it now because of the high Australian dollar. The government needs to quickly develop a plan.

Allowing the manufacturing sector to drift while allowing the bureaucracy to come up with a plan for the manufacturing sector through the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission process is simply not good enough. Victorian manufacturers and Victorians employed in the manufacturing sector are nervously waiting for leadership from this government. I would not want to be a manufacturer or to be working in the manufacturing industry at the moment, because there is a huge vacuum in leadership on the part of government in relation to the manufacturing sector.

The Victorian manufacturing sector is waiting for a statement on government purchasing policy that would benefit our manufacturing industry. It is waiting for a commitment that our manufacturers will benefit from ongoing acquisitions for Victoria's public transport services, such as trams. It is waiting for a commitment on payroll tax relief. It is waiting for a plan. It is waiting for a policy. Any one of the things I have just mentioned — or maybe any two of them — would build confidence in local manufacturing, underpin access to financial investment and perhaps increase job retention levels.

You cannot take a fatalistic view on this. You cannot put your hands up in the air as Mr Dalla-Riva seems to do and say, 'I cannot control the level of the Australian dollar, so I am disempowered'. No. The minister has

power and has been in power. He has tools at his disposal to cushion the blow of the high Australian dollar. It is about time Mr Dalla-Riva worked that out.

None of those things were mentioned in the budget. Furthermore, the word 'jobs' was not mentioned once. The budget was a missed opportunity to assist and inspire confidence in our manufacturing sector. Not only was it a missed opportunity to assist this besieged sector but as it turns out the budget became an opportunity for the government to strike a further blow against our manufacturing sector by failing to provide funds for the Australian Synchrotron.

Innovation and the consequent improvements in productivity are critical for the survival of the Victorian manufacturing sector. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, Australian businesses that innovate are twice as likely to report increased productivity and 63 per cent more likely to report increased profitability than businesses that do not innovate. According to page 198 of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee's report of its inquiry into manufacturing in Victoria:

... the future of manufacturing in Australia is dependent on improvements to innovation performance and productivity levels.

The EDIC report is saying that improvements to innovation equal increased productivity. That is pretty straightforward.

I refer to budget paper 3 — and let us not forget this is the government's budget paper — which says on page 156 under the heading 'Industries and innovation':

Industries and innovation outputs drive sustainable and enduring economic growth in industries across Victoria through programs and initiatives that support research, innovation and commercialisation and a thriving small business sector.

There you go — that is straight from the horse's mouth. That is straight from the government's budget paper, which also says improvements in innovation equal increased productivity. There is no doubt, therefore, that in future the Victorian manufacturing sector will be very different to the one we now have.

In order for our manufacturing sector to survive the competition from international jurisdictions that have a competitive advantage over our state in terms of labour costs, other production costs and government assistance, the Victorian manufacturing sector must continue the transformation it had been undergoing under the Labor government from a traditional, low-skill, labour-intensive base to being an

innovation-intensive, high-technology, high-value-added, high-wage, high-skill manufacturing sector.

The industry assistance and grants provided by the Bracks and Brumby governments over their 11 years have facilitated this transformation. The development of the Australian Synchrotron is one example of this transformation. As a consequence Victorian manufacturers now have a competitive advantage and must continue to develop that advantage in cutting-edge capabilities, including the utilisation of advanced manufacturing processes, materials and technologies in areas such as scientific and medical instruments, specialist engineering and aerospace industries.

Let us now have a look at how the Australian Synchrotron has engaged with industry. The Australian Synchrotron has contributed to not only the Victorian economy but also the national economy. It has done this by providing services to commercial users and promoting collaboration between science and industry. As I said earlier, it is not common knowledge how much work the synchrotron does with industry, but it does a lot, hence my moving of this motion today. I will outline some of the things the synchrotron has done with industry. The Australian Synchrotron has linkages, either directly or via its users, with at least 88 individual companies, and 30 of those companies are involved in linkage grants that mention the use of the Australian Synchrotron.

Commercial companies that have used the Australian Synchrotron include small and medium enterprises such as Aximill, Techniques Incorporated, global biotherapy leader CSL Ltd and other successful biopharmaceutical companies. More than 60 tours of the synchrotron have been conducted for a wide variety of industry sectors, with groups coming from Agilent Technologies, Hospira global pharmaceuticals, Wacker Chemicals Australia, Amcor, Siemens Australia, Phosphagenics Ltd, the University of Queensland, St Vincent's Hospital, BASF and Telstra operations.

The synchrotron's business development activities include active participation in and support for initiatives and organisations that facilitate interaction between science and business, including by hosting or organising visits and events. For example, in May 2011 the Australian Nanotechnology Alliance, which focuses on economic growth in Victoria and Australia, held a networking event at the synchrotron that attracted over 70 industry participants. There are numerous specific examples of the manufacturing sector benefiting from the cutting-edge techniques of the Australian Synchrotron, which plays a key role in that space, but I

will not go through all of them given that we are running out of time. However, I will convey to the house a particularly relevant and symbolic example.

The saying 'Living off the sheep's back' conjures up the image of an Australian economy that lacks technological know-how or lacks the will to value-add to our natural resources — the old quarry mentality, if you like. It is highly symbolic that the perhaps soon-to-be-closed Australian Synchrotron has come up with a method of value-adding for sheepskin. The problem with sheepskin is that it cannot be used in a variety of commercial applications because of its lack of strength. By using Australian Synchrotron tools essential to this problem, scientists are studying the nanoscale structure of sheep leather.

The benefit of this is that based on a better understanding of the molecular properties making up sheepskin, new treatment and processing strategies have been developed to increase its strength and commercial applications. The annual return from this change potentially amounts to an additional \$118 million per year for the Australian industry. That is a lot of money and I would have thought on its own a pretty good reason to keep the synchrotron open. There we have it: the Australian Synchrotron solving one of the most intractable problems in our economy — that is, how we value-add to our natural resources.

As can be seen from the examples I have cited, the Australian Synchrotron is a significant contributor to the Victorian and national manufacturing sectors and to industry as a whole, and therefore to our economy. Many of the techniques used and developed by the Australian Synchrotron are vital in continuing to develop the Victorian manufacturing sector's competitive advantage in cutting-edge capabilities and technology. The failure of the Baillieu government to commit ongoing funding for the synchrotron — —

Mrs Peulich — What have you been doing for 11 years?

Mr SOMYUREK — Funding the synchrotron. The Baillieu government's failure to commit ongoing funding for the synchrotron puts further pressure on Victorian advanced manufacturing sector by potentially depriving industry of a major tool for research and development. The development of advanced new products and processes is one of the keys to maintaining and growing Victoria's manufacturing base, and the synchrotron has a significant role to play in those developments.

The Baillieu government's failure to fund the Australian Synchrotron puts its future and Victoria's reputation as a state of excellence in science and innovation at risk. It may also undermine our attractiveness for overseas companies looking to invest in Victorian manufacturing and establish new enterprises here. Despite the immediate pressure on our manufacturing industry from the changing value of the Australian dollar, which is making our exports more expensive and our imports cheaper, the Baillieu government ignored the opportunity presented by last month's budget to provide a serious policy response to the competitive strains put on Victorian manufacturers by the current high value of the Australian dollar.

The Victorian manufacturing industry is heavily reliant on our competitive advantage in high-tech manufacturing. The sector invests 43 per cent of total Victorian expenditure on research and development. That is all at risk now, yet regardless of current and future opportunities for advanced manufacturing through the operation of the synchrotron, the Baillieu government decided to stop funding it. Just like that, out of nowhere.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr SOMYUREK — I do not think so, Mr Barber. I think the government just happened to land on the synchrotron.

The previous Labor governments worked hard to establish Victoria as the high-tech capital of Australia. This high-tech capability has facilitated the development of viable and competitive new manufacturing processes and capacities in the Victorian manufacturing sector at the same time as it has faced increased competition from countries with low labour costs and significant government support for industry.

Its failure to fund the synchrotron shows that the Baillieu government simply does not understand modern manufacturing or how to help our manufacturers access new global opportunities using the very latest technologies. The Baillieu government does not understand that governments have a responsibility to help industry build domestic and international competitiveness through the attraction of investment and the provision of support for research and development, innovation and technological transfer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! Being a sheep farmer I got quite excited during Mr Somyurek's speech. I thought he was going to

suggest that the ugg boot was the icon of the manufacturing industry.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise today to oppose Mr Somyurek's motion. He was right in one aspect of his discussion — that it is all about the numbers. It is interesting to note that the Labor Party takes this so seriously, but who among the Labor members of this house was here to listen to Mr Somyurek's speech today? There were zero members of the Labor Party here. It is all about the numbers. Such is the importance of their view about this matter.

The Australian Synchrotron — just so we know what the correct pronunciation is — was launched in July 2007. The former government contributed \$157 million to fund the synchrotron machine and the building that housed it. Partners committed \$50 million to fund the beamline and the commonwealth government provided a further \$14 million. The total cost to build the Australian Synchrotron was \$220 million, which was \$63 million more than the original estimate. We are seeing a pattern here.

The Australian Synchrotron has a dual board structure, with assets held by the Australian Synchrotron Holding Company, and the operational company is the Australian Synchrotron Company. Mrs Catherine Walter, AM, is the current chair of the Australian Synchrotron Company and was appointed by the former Victorian government in November 2007 for a five-year term.

In its 2007–08 budget the commonwealth committed \$50 million towards the cost of running the Australian Synchrotron in its first five years of operation, subject to the explicit requirement that Victoria provide matching funds. These funds are held in a dedicated trust that is managed by the Victorian government. The New Zealand government, as Mr Somyurek pointed out, contributes \$750 000 per annum towards the synchrotron's operating costs. That funding envelope concludes in June 2012.

Interestingly the commonwealth government in its budget for the fiscal year 2011–12 did not commit future funding for the Australian Synchrotron. In an interview broadcast on 20 May, Senator Kim Carr, the federal Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, indicated that the commonwealth would seek to change the governance structure of the Australian Synchrotron as a condition of additional commonwealth funding. He observed that the commonwealth government does not currently have a seat on the board and has no capacity to influence the

Australian synchrotron's operations. Maybe the federal government has been flat out trying to work out its carbon tax — this great big new tax that will affect every single Australian.

Mr Finn — And achieve nothing.

Mr ONDARCHIE — It will increase the cost of energy, and, as Mr Finn has just said, it will achieve nothing. It will increase the cost of goods and services, and importantly it will threaten Australian jobs.

Mr Finn — Hundreds and thousands of them.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Hundreds and thousands of Australian jobs will be at risk due to this great big new tax. Where is the Labor Party on this? It is silent.

We on this side of the house acknowledge the scientific value of the synchrotron. This is yet another example of a project that was botched by the inept Brumby Labor government. To put the issue completely into context, this project was late and it was over budget. That is almost a bumper sticker for the former government: 'We were late and over budget'. The project was one year late in delivery. The former government announced it would be finished in June 2006, but it opened in July 2007 and it was over budget. The Auditor-General has gone through that in his report. The situation left by the previous government has meant that there is no funding for the synchrotron beyond 2012. It was late and over budget.

There are two funding scenarios on the table. The minimum funding requirement for the synchrotron is \$156 million over four years, but if the synchrotron wishes to position itself as world class and world scale, which is what the Australian Synchrotron Company wants to do, the funding requirement would be \$294 million over four years. That is the level of the shortfall. That is the level of the black hole. Late, over budget and a black hole — we see a recurring theme here with the Brumby Labor government.

In addition there was some capacity to negotiate with the commonwealth government for some of this funding. And guess what? I regret to inform this house that the Brumby Labor government did not even bother to do the tough work of negotiating funding from the commonwealth government. It failed to negotiate with the commonwealth government for some funding for this project, and today the former government sits opposite — I would say en masse, but it is singularly — and bleats that this project has not got appropriate funding.

Mr O'Donohue — There are two of them.

Mr ONDARCHIE — There you go. There is no surprise about that. I understand that the commonwealth government has indicated its willingness to discuss the synchrotron's future. I also acknowledge that the commonwealth has previously provided \$50 million in recurrent funding and \$14 million in beamline funding for the synchrotron, and we recognise the fantastic work of the previous Howard government in getting that project under way. However, negotiating with the commonwealth should have been a key priority for the previous state government, and it was not. It forgot. It is a bit like the desalination plant — late, over budget and 'We forgot'.

The former government rushed headlong into the synchrotron project. It bypassed the Australian Synchrotron bid, which probably would have been a better-thought-out bid, to establish its own synchrotron. It is a bit like a ticketing system: 'Let's not listen to the experts; let's do our own thing' — myki mania at its best. Unfortunately for the synchrotron there are no plans and no funding, and — here is the catch — no idea has been left behind by the previous government.

This is another example of a Labor financial mess and yet another problem the Baillieu coalition government will have to fix. Members of the former government were wayward. They were like ball boys at the French Open. They just ran and charged headlong into the action without any consideration for the implications. Late, over budget and no negotiation with the commonwealth — there is a recurring theme here.

I have to say that funding for 2011–12 is secure. The first five years of the operation have been jointly funded by the Victorian government and the commonwealth government, each committing \$50 million. The funds are held in a dedicated trust, as I have spoken about. The New Zealand government has also contributed three-quarters of a million dollars per annum to the operating costs.

The Australian Synchrotron is required to provide an annual budget by 31 May each year for the following financial year. To be fair I am not sure if it did that by yesterday's deadline. We acknowledge the value of the synchrotron. Our criticism is directed at the former government's mismanagement of the project — a \$57 million cost blow-out, one year late in delivery and no plans as to how the recurrent funding will be funded. There are no plans for its future operation.

Ongoing funding was only achieved when the then Howard government contributed \$50 million for five years until 2012 on the condition that the state government matched that funding. That was the former

Howard government, not those talking about ‘a great big new tax’. The synchrotron is funded until the middle of 2012, but the reality is the Brumby government’s mismanagement of the synchrotron means that there will be no funding beyond 2012. The Labor government did not do the tough work. It did not do the hard work to negotiate with the commonwealth.

Mrs Peulich — It never does.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Maybe the commonwealth government was not available via phone. Maybe you can only ring the carbon tax hotline.

Mrs Peulich — Julia was overseas.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I do not know how much per call it was going to be, Mrs Peulich. Was it going to be \$10 a call? Was it going to be \$40 a call? Maybe with the Australian Greens it was \$100 a call to call the carbon tax hotline. This is another problem that the Baillieu government is going to have to fix. I have to say, as Mr Viney scampers out of the room, that at official levels we have opened up the process to work through and resolve this issue. We have opened up the process. What is the real story?

Mr Leane — That is just childish. Every time one of your members walks out we will bring it up in our speeches. It is just ridiculous.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Make no mistake, Mr Leane: when I left the chamber last week you banged on ad infinitum about me being out of the chamber during which time I was meeting a constituent. Mr Leane should make no mistake: his side drew attention to the fact that I was out of the chamber last week whilst I was meeting a constituent — on a motion he brought into the house.

Let us talk about the synchrotron. What is the story here? How did all this start?

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President, I note that the Opposition Whip is out of his place and interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! The point of order is upheld.

Mr ONDARCHIE — To be fair, Mr Leane is actually in the chamber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I ask both sides of the house not to encourage interjections.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Let me just remind the house that the Labor government did not do the hard work to negotiate funding with the commonwealth. It forgot about it — ‘Oops, we forgot’. The Baillieu coalition government will have to fix this problem as well. We have started to work through it.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mrs Peulich, how did this synchrotron project begin? How did it all start? A formal bidding process to decide the location for the national synchrotron facility was conducted by the commonwealth government, but the Victorian government of the day — the Brumby Labor government — pre-empted the process and announced it would build the facility. It thought it would get the jump and went ahead of everybody else.

The former Victorian government contributed \$157 million to fund the cost of the synchrotron machine and the building. The partners involved — the New Zealand government, the state government and the university-led consortia of CSIRO and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation — committed \$50 million in beamline funding, and the commonwealth government provided another \$14 million. The total cost to build the Australian Synchrotron was \$220 million — \$63 million more than the original proposal. Oops, they did it again.

This government is committed to supporting industries and institutions that add value to Victoria, including the Australian Synchrotron. Funding was secured for the first five years of its operation; that funding concludes on 30 June 2012. The previous government did not formally engage with the commonwealth or other stakeholders regarding the Australian Synchrotron’s future. There is a bad case of amnesia on the other side of the house. While they sat there making judgements about this government they forgot to do the work. Forget about the Partridge Family; we have the Amnesia Family over there.

This government is currently working through the issues to ensure that the Australian Synchrotron can continue to add to Victoria’s economic development. Negotiations have commenced with the commonwealth government and key stakeholders. That is what the former government failed to do. As with funding for other lapsing programs, future funding for the Australian Synchrotron will be addressed in the course of the 2011–12 budget cycle. Once again the Brumby Labor government left it up to the Baillieu coalition government to repair the situation. It just adds to the list

of failings of the inept former Labor government. I humbly call on this house to reject this motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 8 June.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 14 June 2011, any letter or letters sent from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to the Yarra Ranges Shire Council, in relation to relocation of VicForests office to the municipality.

This is about the curious letter sent by the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to the Yarra Ranges Shire Council in relation to the seemingly simple, non-controversial matter of the relocation of the VicForests office to the municipality. We read in the *Herald Sun* that in response to the Shire of Yarra Ranges Council moving a motion saying it will purchase its photocopying paper from certain environmentally friendly sources, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr Walsh, has threatened the council and asked it to withdraw or reverse its previous lawful vote. Otherwise he will not allow VicForests to relocate its office, apparently from the Melbourne CBD, to somewhere in the municipality. This report in the *Herald Sun*, if it is correct, is disturbing on a number of levels.

VicForests is not under the direct departmental control of the minister. VicForests is a state-owned enterprise, and it also has an act which gives it a commercial charter. If VicForests decides to relocate its office from the CBD to Healesville or Yarra Glen based on a commercial decision, then that is entirely a decision for it, and I would expect it to make such a commercial decision. Clearly rents are going to be a lot cheaper in Healesville than they are in Melbourne's CBD, so that is one consideration. On the other hand, most of what VicForests does is lobby the state government for further subsidies, so maybe it does need to be located close to Treasury. But in any case it is concerning that the minister believes what goes on here is decided simply on his whim, rather than the formal process of a ministerial direction to a state-owned enterprise.

The more concerning part is the Brimbankesque nature of Mr Walsh attempting to dictate council business. The findings of the Ombudsman's report into Brimbank council, and subsequently the report made by the inspector of municipal administration, were quite clear.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BARBER — The Ombudsman noted in relation to some of the people that Mr Finn is now interjecting about:

Such individuals have not taken an oath of office to act in the best interests of the community serviced by the council and are not subject to the conduct rules of the Local Government Act. Their influence was exerted behind closed doors and at times for their own personal or political motivations.

If that is a risk in relation to some of the people Mr Finn might like to name, I am sure it is an equal risk for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. He has not taken an oath to look after the best interests of the shire of Yarra Ranges, and it seems he is exerting his influence behind closed doors. If nothing else, I hope to get that influence out in the open. The Brimbank analogy included local members of Parliament, and the Ombudsman said that their influence had pervaded the council. He further noted that:

Where undue influence is exerted it can impede councillors' ability to make objective and independent decisions in the interests of their community. Where councillors allow such influence to be exercised over them, they place themselves at risk of not being able to exercise their functions in accordance with their statutory obligations.

It is, of course, entirely the business of the Yarra Ranges Council as to where it buys its paper and under what criteria and, for that matter, the very real and direct social, environmental and economic impacts of woodchipping on the Yarra Ranges Council itself. According to the *Herald Sun*, the letter — and we need to see the letter to verify this — stated that Reflex, a product of Australian Paper, was an 'important client' of VicForests. That may be an important consideration for the board of VicForests, but Yarra Ranges Council has a set of considerations that it has to go through, and in this case it seems that the minister has used a form of blackmail. In fact, he has tried to cause detriment to the council, echoing section 76D of the Local Government Act 1989 — that is, if the council did not reverse a previous lawful vote, he was going to take it out on that council area.

After the Ombudsman's report into Brimbank, the Scales report noted the very significant emphasis on the issue of improper influence. Scales then went on to use a letter from the St Albans branch of the Australian Labor Party which advocated a particular position on a vote of the council as evidence of an attempt to bind particular councils to the organisation's position rather than have them assess the particular matter on its merits as required under the Local Government Act 1989. That was the smoking gun that caused the Labor and Liberal parties to get together and to sack Brimbank

council. The attempt, by writing them a letter, was to bind those councillors to a particular position. I hope the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security was not attempting to do that, but we need to see the letter in order to know that.

However, we do have another letter which was provided to the annual conference of the Municipal Association of Victoria. As it happened, Yarra Ranges Council was sponsoring a motion at the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) conference — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr BARBER — Mr Drum will just need to change a few policies. The same motion was moved before the MAV conference where further councils were urged to adopt this policy of paper purchasing to influence environmental outcomes. It was not only the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security but also the Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan, who got so excited by this consideration at another democratic forum of local councils that he pulled out all stops. MAV delegates arrived to find that a show bag had been distributed from Australian Paper and a specially drafted letter from Peter Ryan and Peter Walsh, addressed to the head of Australian Paper, which was basically a testimonial — a reference — from the two ministers saying that Australian Paper was a good guy. It refers to the Deputy Premier's statement that:

It is my intention to raise this matter at a meeting of Rural Councils Victoria which I, as Deputy Premier, am attending this evening.

That was the evening prior to the MAV conference. There is something about this matter that has got The Nationals completely rattled. Either the paper boycott is working or the finances of VicForests are now becoming so parlous that it realises the loss of this client with its small commitment to native forest logging relative to its much larger commitment to plantation feedstock is enough to knock over VicForests over. Remember this government promised it would fix up VicForests. I am not too clear how it is going to do that. VicForests is the sort of company that loses money on every sale and then thinks it can somehow make that up on volume.

The government is either going to squeeze the contractors a bit harder, which I do not think it wants to do; it is going to raise the log prices, which it has said it does not want to do; or it will try to sell more, but it cannot sell much more, because the dog will not eat it anymore. Plantation is better on every level. Everybody wants to get into it. Nobody wants to buy photocopying paper that has caused the destruction of water

catchments and wildlife habitat, not to mention the world's richest carbon banks in those wet forests behind Healesville.

It is something of a mystery, and I would like to pursue this issue a bit further. In the last four years Parliament has seen an enormous fund of time devoted to the issue of improper influence over local government by members of Parliament who are members of the Labor Party. This government seems to have put its big fat foot in it, but we need to see the letter before we can take this discussion any further.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The government does not oppose the motion moved by Mr Barber that says:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 14 June 2011, any letter or letters sent from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to the Yarra Ranges Shire Council, in relation to the relocation of VicForests office to the municipality.

We do not oppose that motion, but let me say that I heard some very long bows being drawn before, particularly in this place. To make the comparison between the Brimbank council fiasco and the revelations about internal Labor Party workings and machinations and correspondence between the minister and the Yarra Ranges Shire Council is indeed a very long bow.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — To pick up the interjection from Mr Barber, I do not think he is saying that Cr Samantha Dunn is an advocate for The Nationals who is somehow revealing the internal workings of that party. Indeed, as the chamber would know, Mr Scheffer narrowly defeated Cr Dunn, who ran as a candidate for the Greens, for the fifth spot in Eastern Victoria Region, so I think his comparison is flawed. I do not think it is unreasonable — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Again to pick up Mr Barber's interjection, as I understand it from the council's minutes it was Cr Dunn who moved the motion that is the subject of the correspondence.

The Yarra Ranges is an area that needs more local jobs so that people from Lilydale, Yarra Glen, Healesville, Warburton and other towns in the municipality do not have to travel to Melbourne or to Knox, Bayswater or other areas for employment. Local jobs are good for the environment; they are good for local people. Having a local job means people can spend more time at home. It

is good for their health. The prospect of more local jobs, in my opinion, as a member who represents part of the Yarra Ranges, is a good thing. For the benefit of Mr Barber, I will quote from Mr Walsh's letter:

VicForests has an existing presence in Yarra Ranges and the proposal is worthy of further detailed consideration for a suitable office based either in Healesville or Yarra Glen. I understand relocating VicForests corporate office from Melbourne's CBD — —

Mr Barber — On a point of order, Acting President, if I understand it correctly, Mr O'Donohue is now reading directly from the document which is the subject of this motion. It is the actual document we are asking for. When a member reads extensively from a document, or if it is the intention of Mr O'Donohue to read the entire thing into the transcript, then I would ask as a courtesy to the house that he table it.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am more than happy to do that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmar) — Order! That is the answer to the point of order. I ask Mr O'Donohue to make sure he does that.

Mr O'DONOHUE — The letter continues:

I understand relocating VicForests corporate office from Melbourne's CBD to Yarra Ranges could increase local VicForests employment from approximately 35 up to approximately 80 staff and provide significant economic and social benefits to the community.

I understand your council passed a motion at its 27 April 2011 meeting to sign the so-called ethical paper pledge. Institutions signing the pledge commit 'not to purchase Reflex paper until Australian Paper stops sourcing from our native forests'.

It goes on:

Sustainable management of native forestry from Victoria's state forests is VicForests core business. Australian Paper is an important client of VicForests and a valued Victorian business providing real employment and sustainable production.

The council's pledge motion is inconsistent with state government policy and contrary to the interests of VicForests. The proposal to relocate VicForests corporate office to Yarra Ranges is therefore off the table for so long as council maintains the pledge as its policy.

The contents of that letter are hardly a revelation given that large parts of it have been quoted in various local media outlets, including the *Upper Yarra Mail* of 24 May and the *Herald Sun* of 26 May, in an article that was referred to by Mr Barber.

I note the comments from one of the Yarra Ranges councillors in the *Upper Yarra Mail* article dated 24 May, which included the following:

The council is not united in the pledge though, with O'Shannassy ward councillor Chris Templer asking other councillors to reconsider their support of the pledge.

The comments go on:

Council has made a mistake in supporting a boycott pledge put forward by Cr Dunn against Reflex paper ...

This boycott campaign is based on an ideological opinion, which is fine for the Wilderness Society or the Greens party, but not for elected councillors to sign our shire up to.

In this case, I feel our council chamber has been manipulated to attack a company, its work practices and the timber industry behind it.

As I said before, I am happy to table the letter as requested.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition supports Mr O'Donohue tabling the letter concerned. In the context, it sounds like it was quite a threatening position that the minister took in relation to the council — that is, to threaten to not relocate a headquarters of VicForests due to action that the council took, which it has the right to take. However, in saying that, it sounds like the job is done as far as Mr Barber's motion is concerned.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank Mr O'Donohue for reading the content of the letter into *Hansard*. I hope it was the complete text. I thank him for tabling the letter, and I look forward to grabbing a copy in a moment. However, we did learn something from what he has just said that we had not learnt from the previous media report — that is, that the argument of Mr Walsh is that the motion of the Yarra Ranges Council was inconsistent with state government policy. That is a new line of argument for why an MP or minister would attempt to direct or coerce a council into a particular course of action. Never has it been the case — and it is certainly not contained in the Local Government Act 1989 — that councils are required to act at all times to be consistent with state government policy. The fact is that councils frequently act inconsistently with state government policy when it is in the best interests of their electorate to do so.

We also heard quoted from that letter that the minister's consideration was that the paper pledge was damaging to VicForests. Of course there will be occasions when the interests of a state-owned enterprise or the state government as a whole could be directly opposed to those of a local council, for example. They could be in

direct conflict, suing each other or cost shifting to each other. One may be implementing a practice that causes direct loss to the other. They might be arguing over who is going to fix up a road. Never has it been the case that a council is required to vote in such a way that it will be consistent with state government policy. That adds a third plank to my level of concern about this particular government venture.

Clearly government members are rattled for a reason. I am not suggesting it is an overreaction by inexperienced politicians; I am suggesting that government members do not like the impact that the ethical paper pledge is having out there on the market, which is at some sort of tipping point. Nobody wants to support the sort of destruction that you will see hidden in those valleys behind Healesville when you get off the beaten track.

The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security has responsibility for all those who want to grow trees on their own land at their own risk, as well as to their competitor, VicForests. I think the minister and the Deputy Premier have lost track of what they are here for. We will see more such overreactions and heavy-handedness not just in this one area but in any area that proves to be a sore point for the government at that particular time.

Motion agreed to.

FLOODS: WATER STORAGE MONITORING

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requests the Minister for Water to conduct an urgent review of the operating rules for all major water storages so as to minimise potential flood risks on regulated rivers.

I notice from the government press release that this week has been designated Flood Awareness Week, during which citizens are being given instructions on how they can help through their action to minimise their own flood risk. This motion asks the state government to take action in order to mitigate everybody's flood risk in relation to regulated rivers.

My rationale for this motion has arisen from the floods we experienced earlier this year. Some of those floods were the immediate result of flash flooding in unregulated rivers, but north of the Divide the worst devastation was seen on rivers which all have large dams at their headwaters and where the flow of those rivers has traditionally been strictly regulated.

I am not pointing the finger at anybody with this motion. Of course we have just had a decade of drought during which nobody would have turned their mind to this. Over the past five years I have visited the area around Lake Eppalock several times. If I had been standing, as I was, at the bottom of Lake Eppalock when it was a dry dust bowl, it never would have occurred to me that our biggest risk coming down the line was going to be a flood from that dam onto the river and downstream communities. However, we have an opportunity to learn from this recent experience. With water storages being as full as they are around the state, it is urgent that we deal with this issue before the arrival of winter rains, spring rains or even the unseasonal summer rains that finally tipped the balance on the Lake Eppalock system.

I attended one of the public meetings of the Comrie inquiry into the flood disaster in Rochester. At that meeting a member of the public stated that this was a man-made flood. I knew what he was referring to, because I had observed and tracked the extraordinary situation with Lake Eppalock, which had been all but empty for decades up until August last year. In the space of a week or so in September the lake had risen to two-thirds full, by December it was just below full and then became over-full and in fact extremely full in January, leading to the overtopping of the dam and floodwaters pouring down to Rochester. By one measure this was the largest flood we have on record — that is, from the public record of flow rates, which is still available on a departmental website going back to the 1970s. Prior to the 1990s there was a big flood every year — a big one in the 1970s, a big one in the 1980s and a big one in the 1990s — there was nothing in the 2000s and then the biggest of all in terms of rates in January this year.

Lake Eppalock is a significantly large storage which, as I said, filled up extraordinarily quickly — 300 gegalitres and beyond — as the water tried to crowd out over that spillway. Even though the dam was technically at a level of 100 per cent, another few metres of water standing over the spillway causes a backward pressure that fills the dam to an even greater level across its large surface area. Lake Eppalock has only a small regulated outlet which is used for irrigation releases of 1000 megalitres or so a day. There have been calls for that to be expanded to 10 000 gegalitres.

Having studied the rates of inflow and outflow and storage at Lake Eppalock with data that is now available, it is clear to me that with a 10-gegalitre storage, with some degree of foresight and some different operating rules, the amplitude of this flood could have been reduced; there is no doubt about it.

There would still have been a large flood, but it would not have been the record-breaking flood if, over the space of a few weeks, water could have been released from the dam. That lead to calls not only for the lowering but also the changing of the operating rules for Lake Eppalock.

At first Goulburn-Murray Water stated it was awaiting the outcome of the Comrie review, but when the Comrie review indicated it would not be doing specific work in that area, although it would consult some independent hydrologists, we later heard the local member in the Assembly, Paul Weller, calling for some work in this area. That was followed by Peter Walsh making some sort of announcement that Goulburn-Murray Water would conduct a review. An ABC report of 9 February quotes Mr Walsh as saying:

As a result of the constant rain events ... Goulburn-Murray Water will be looking at the operating rules, just to ensure they are still appropriate ...

I have had a great deal of difficulty gaining from Goulburn-Murray Water any understanding of how this review is progressing or what it will consist of. Naturally irrigators and other owners of water will argue, 'That is our water', but the degree of impact of a lower operating level depends a bit on the type of events we are talking about. If a small proportion of excess flows were being released in only those most extreme years and only in the most extreme circumstances, then we might not really be losing very much water at all. The cost benefit of that, vis-a-vis the flooding of Rochester and downstream communities every 10 years or so, as a more cautious approach might prove to be preferable to how it is being operated at the moment, which is for the greatest possible storage of irrigators' water and to a certain extent of water that is allocated to Bendigo.

In any case the minister has recognised the need for a review of that storage, but storages right around the state are quite full as I speak. Of the Yarra storages, only the Thomson is about half full; most of the others are close to 100 per cent full. The Upper Yarra is at 60 per cent, Sugarloaf is at 95 per cent, Silvan is at 86 per cent, Tarago is at 66 per cent, Yan Yean is at 89 per cent, Greenvale is at 76 per cent and Maroondah and O'Shannassy are at 100 per cent. I am not suggesting that it is the Yarra catchment that is at most risk of severe flooding; I am simply trying to create a complete picture.

The information from the Southern Rural Water area last week as storages were still rising was: Glenmaggie at 81 per cent, Blue Rock at 97 per cent, Melton full, Merrimu full, Narracan full, Pykes Creek full and

Rosslynne full. In the Goulburn-Murray Water area the figures were: Dartmouth at 63 per cent, Hume at 93 per cent, Yarrowonga Weir at 53 per cent and Torrumbarry at 92 per cent. The group around Kerang were at between 60 and 95 per cent capacity: Lake Buffalo was at 50 per cent, Lake William Hovell at 100 per cent, Nillahcootie at 99 per cent, Eildon itself at 84 per cent, Goulburn Weir at 100 per cent, Waranga at 80 per cent, Greens Lake at 70 per cent, Eppalock at 97.2 per cent, Cairn Curran at 89 per cent and Tullaroop at 99 per cent. Laanecoorie — there are big problems down there because the gates are broken — is down to 36 per cent, and Newlyn and Hepburn are both over 100 per cent.

Collectively those are our major storages on regulated rivers, and I am asking for a review. I am not specifying how big that review should be or what form it should take; I am simply asking someone in the area of responsibility as a matter of risk management to look at what changes to operating rules might be contemplated that would minimise the chance of further flooding when those dams go to full and over-full.

It is a touchstone issue for the coalition, I know. Building more dams is one of those trendy right-wing issues they like to sit around and talk about over a latte, but they have got no real intention of pushing it forward in any serious way. It is more of a culture war for them. In relation to where we can build more dams I noticed that federal coalition members Greg Hunt and Andrew Robb are conducting an entire review on behalf of Tony Abbott. Again, opportunistically after the disaster in Queensland they announced that they want to have a review of where we should build more dams for flood mitigation.

There is a whole pile of them here in Victoria, and if the operating rules for them do not in any way account for flood mitigation, especially at the extreme end of the weather events, then that is a good place for them to start. But if the government is at all serious about building new dams, it should check out a report that is in the parliamentary library that was put together by the former Rural Water Commission back in the 1980s, I think. The commission looked at virtually every possible site for a dam in Victoria. I do not think there were too many that it left out. You would need to convert from acre-feet to megalitres and perhaps put on an inflation factor, but I bet you those guys knew something about the cost of dam building, because they had actually built some — not like the Carlton branch of the Liberal Party or whoever it is that keeps moving these motions saying we should have more dams in theory, revved up by having read an Andrew Bolte article once.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr BARBER — Mr Ondarchie, I know you are very studious. I know Mr Ondarchie is very studious and always well briefed. Next time he has to address one of his branches he should check out the Rural Water Commission report — it is in the parliamentary library — in which the construction costs of dams — —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr BARBER — You will wow them, Mr Ondarchie, with the figures that you will be able to quote from this report, because the construction cost of every single one of those dams was assessed in relation to the yield from that dam, as measured in acre-feet. It would be simple to convert to megalitres.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr BARBER — No, I suspect it was treated more as a perpetuity, in a way: spend X amount up front and then get all this water coming out the other end. Given the long life of dams — obviously when you build them you are talking about 100-year lives — effectively the discounted cash flows out at the end really are not worth talking about, so value it any way you like, or just use a rule of thumb if you like.

Suffice it to say, through you, Acting President, that the original cost estimates put together by the Rural Water Commission back then probably had a lot more rigour around them on the basis of organisational knowledge than anything you would get out of the department of water these days. It is a useful reference to have, which is why I went to check it out, why Mr Ondarchie should check it out and why Greg Hunt and Andrew Robb should check it out if they are at all serious about their effort to propose more dams.

We know it is sheer tokenism. That is why in the 2006 election Mr Baillieu put forward a policy of damming a tributary of the Maribyrnong. He did not want to get any significant water out of a dam; he did not want to spend any money on a dam. He just wanted to make the point that in theory the Liberals are in favour of dams and other people are not.

Mr Ramsay — On a point of order, Acting President, as I understand it, Mr Barber is speaking on a motion that is about a review of the operating rules for water storages. For the last 5 minutes he has waffled on about Greens policy in relation to building dams or not building dams as well as inciting some interjection in relation to latte drinkers who might well support dams,

to which I object. I ask you to ask him to stick to the motion before the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! I advise Mr Ramsay that that is not a point of order.

Mr BARBER — I was simply making the point, very much within the terms of this motion, that there is a live debate about the value of dams for flood mitigation. Certain members of the Liberal Party at various levels are promoting the value of dams for flood mitigation. My motion calls on a member of the current Liberal-Nationals coalition to conduct a review of how our existing dams could contribute to flood mitigation, because it is certainly the view of one community north of the Great Dividing Range and those downstream that it did not do that and that it was managed in such a way that worsened the impact of the flood on Rochester. That is a most serious concern, given that it was put forward by a flood-affected community. For that reason I am looking forward to Mr Ramsay's support of my motion as well as that of other members of the house.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I say from the outset that the government does not support the motion moved by Mr Barber. I wish to spend some minutes talking about why we will not support this motion. With respect to your ruling, Acting President, in relation to my point of order, I certainly do not see anything in the motion that would incite discussion about whether latte drinkers in Carlton would support the opportunity to build more dams or not. I find those remarks objectionable, because it is a serious issue for all of us to decide what the appropriate water infrastructure should be for this state for its long-term sustainability and viability.

For the record and without stating the obvious, as Mr Barber has already said — in fact it was one of the few sensible things he did say — record rainfall occurred in some parts of Victoria in January which resulted in major flooding in the Campaspe, Loddon and Wimmera valleys. In response to this flooding the coalition government has already initiated a review of the 2010–11 flood warnings and has established a parliamentary inquiry into flood mitigation in Victoria.

In addition, Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW), Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water and Southern Rural Water, which all operate water storages on the state's regulated rivers, as Mr Barber has already said, have initiated reviews of their storage operation procedures to ensure that these storages provide the maximum flood mitigation possible within the

constraints of the design of these storages, including not compromising their primary function of water supply to urban and rural customers.

Each water storage facility has a filling curve for the water authority to use as a guide for maximum storage levels during the period from May to October. However, while the filling curve can provide flood mitigation benefits, its primary function is to maximise the storage potential for consumptive use. The government does not propose to change the design purpose of the major storages and is satisfied that the current internal review process being undertaken by rural water corporations will ensure that all practical steps will be taken to minimise floods to the greatest extent possible.

It is important to remember that Victoria has only recently experienced its worst and longest drought on record — over 13 years — with a number of major irrigation storages being virtually emptied whilst others were drawn down to record low levels. During this period farmers experienced record low irrigation allocations, forcing many to abandon farming, and many towns faced prolonged periods of severe water restrictions. It is therefore imperative that any proposals to significantly increase flood mitigation beyond what is currently undertaken not compromise the reliability of existing entitlements, including supply to towns. The potential for flood mitigation that can be provided by storages varies significantly depending on the storage's size in comparison to flood inflows, the design of the storage and whether the storage has the capacity to absorb the flood inflows. I would like to cite a few examples of how these factors affect flood mitigation.

As Mr Barber knows, Lake Eildon is the only Goulburn-Murray Water storage which has a formal filling curve that is defined in the governing bulk entitlement. The purpose of the filling curve is to limit the risk of not filling the storage in the May to October period if releases are made to maintain airspace to provide additional flood mitigation benefits. The adopted risk is 5 per cent, and releases would be undertaken to prevent the storage filling to above the filling curve until October or November if conditions turn wet. Operating to the filling curve will provide approximately 300 000 megalitres of airspace to absorb floods in the following two months.

Dams such as Lake Eppalock were built for water supply irrigation purposes, and as such they are managed to maximise the water resource available for water entitlement holders. The operations of the dams at lower levels to provide flood mitigation benefit would be at the expense of water entitlement reliability.

Any change to that would require consultation with and possible compensation for the affected entitlement holders.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr RAMSAY — Deputy President, is there another debate happening on the other side of the chamber?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! I ask members on my left to make their conversations a little less audible.

Mr RAMSAY — While Lake Eppalock is not operated to provide a flood mitigation benefit, by its very nature as a fixed-crest spillway it does provide significant flood mitigation. For instance, during the January 2011 event the instantaneous peak flow was approximately 140 000 megalitres per day. Due to the fixed-crest spillway creating surcharge volume in the lake, the peak outflow was reduced to 80 000 megalitres per day.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Surcharge, Mr Barber. GMW can only prerelease water when there is a high level of certainty that the prerelease volume will be recovered by the end of the event — for example, if there was a reliable prediction of rainfall. Typically this would be based on a four-day Bureau of Meteorology forecast. Given the outlet capacity of only 1000 megalitres the day, this means that very little airspace can be created in the time following the prediction of rainfall before the event occurs.

Lake Eppalock has a storage capacity of more than 312 000 megalitres. The historic record shows great variability in inflows to Lake Eppalock. While there was unprecedented rain in January, there remains significant uncertainty as to the volume of inflow that might be received in the coming months. GMW has recently commenced work to review the impact on entitlements of operating within the greater airspace. The outcome of this work will be used to further inform discussion with key stakeholders in the community.

Lake Buffalo and Cairn Curran Reservoir, the only other gated spillway storages within GMW, have local operating rules in place which are designed to manage the storage levels within the limits of the bulk entitlement. Local operating rules which allow for the creation of airspace are driven by dam safety considerations.

Southern Rural Water has existing storage filling curves for Lake Glenmaggie, which still apply. However, it

has introduced more flexibility, at the discretion of the managing director, to lower the storage level in response to Bureau of Meteorology weather forecasts when there is a low risk of not being able to fill the storage at the end of the filling season.

Blue Rock is a relatively large storage on a relatively small stream. It has a fixed spillway and limited outlet capacity to control spills. It has not spilled much in recent history, because the private hydro-electric company can release water through the outlet at its discretion from the top 5 metres of storage. As this arrangement with the company ends on 30 June 2011, Southern Rural Water is considering the need for a new target filling rule, which would reduce spills after 1 July 2011. This work is in progress.

Melton Reservoir is a small storage on a stream that generates large flows so there is little opportunity to mitigate flood flows in the Werribee River. Southern Rural Water does not see a need to consider changing the existing rules.

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (GWMWater) has recently extended its existing target filling curve for Lake Wartook to cater for unusually wet years like 2011 when the storage is full in autumn. GWMWater will review the existing rules for other Grampians storages as part of its arrangements to develop storage management rules following the completion of the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline.

In conclusion I reaffirm that there is a parliamentary review in progress. The water authorities already have operating rules for the water storages for which they are responsible. On that basis the government will oppose the motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until next day.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house —

- (1) notes that the documents ordered by the resolution of the Council on 2 March 2011 to be tabled in the Council by 12 noon on 22 March 2011 have not been received by the Council;
- (2) affirms the privileges, immunities and powers conferred on the Council pursuant to section 19 of the Constitution

Act 1975 and the power to make standing orders under section 43 of that act;

- (3) affirms the need to protect the high standing of Parliament and to ensure that the Council may properly discharge its duties and responsibilities; and
- (4) again requires the Leader of the Government representing the Premier to table by 12 noon on Tuesday, 14 June 2011, a copy of —
 - (a) the financial arrangement/current contract between the government of Victoria and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) regarding the staging of the 2010 Formula One Grand Prix event and, if not included in the above document, the rent paid by the AGPC to Parks Victoria for the use of Albert Park Reserve for the 2010 event, any subsidies in the form of sponsorships, advertising or corporate entertainment or for other services relating to the 2010 event, paid by government departments or agencies to the AGPC, any services provided to the AGPC by other government departments (e.g. Victoria Police) relating to the 2010 event;
 - (b) the economic study performed as the basis of the five-year contract extension to 2015; and
 - (c) the most recent cost-benefit analysis of the Australian Grand Prix.

In brief, this motion asks the house to note that the documents I called for on 2 March and 22 March relating to the costs of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix 2010 as listed in the motion have not been received. The Clerk has received two letters regarding the Council's call for these documents, and the first of those said the house was not able to be furnished with the documents because the grand prix was occurring at the time and it would interrupt the ability of Major Projects Victoria, I presume, to locate the documents I was asking for.

On 24 May, in the last week of sitting, the Clerk received from the Attorney-General another letter, which said:

I refer to the Legislative Council's order of 2 March 2011, seeking the production of certain documents relating to the Australian Grand Prix by 22 March 2011.

I also refer to my letter of 21 March 2011, in which I advised that the government would not be able to respond within the Council's deadline.

The government is continuing to process its response to this order and is currently assessing relevant documents. The government will endeavour to respond shortly.

The date of that letter is two months after the first deadline, which was 22 March, and almost three months after the date the motion was moved, which is 2 March. I have moved this motion to require the

Leader of the Government, representing the Premier, to table the documents by 12 noon on Tuesday, 14 June 2011, which is two weeks from now. It will definitely bring us past three months since the documents were first asked for. I am not anticipating that Mr O'Donohue, who usually assists the government with these motions and in these matters, is going to stand up and say there has not been enough time.

In my motion I am requiring the Leader of the Government in the Council to table the documents by 14 June. I think that is reasonable, given that by then it will have been three months since the staging of the grand prix.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The government does not oppose the motion moved by Ms Pennicuik. Ms Pennicuik has given an accurate summary of the dates and issues associated with the production of these documents, namely, that the original motion was moved at about the time of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix, and she has referred to the most recent response from the Attorney-General dated 24 May 2011. I note in that letter the Attorney-General says, 'The government will endeavour to respond shortly'.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition supports Ms Pennicuik's repeated call for these documents and supports the stated reasons she requires them.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I want to point out that this is a bit of a step up from requesting that the documents be presented; it is requiring them to be presented. I thank the other speakers for their support. I neglected to say that the Attorney-General has written to the Clerk on at least two occasions to keep us up to date on progress, even though the documents have not been forthcoming, which did not happen in the last Parliament.

Motion agreed to.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Membership

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) —
By leave, I move:

That Mrs Petrovich be a participating member of the Environment and Planning Legislation Committee.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Implementing the Government's Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission — May 2011

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I wish to make a statement on the report *Implementing the Government's Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission — May 2011*.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — I heard an interjection from the Leader of the Opposition that I was going to talk about firewood. I am not; I am going to talk about fire and wood that burns, of course. I am delighted to have the opportunity to make some brief comments — and they will be brief — in relation to the report before the house.

The government response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission is emphatic in that it supports all the royal commission's recommendations contained in the final report and is committed to implementing each of them. It is quite clear that the government is making a substantial investment in achieving that response. The government has provided \$900 million in response to the final report. Importantly, there are aspects of the implementation of the recommendations that are relevant, and the implementation plan is the foundation of the government's strategy to deliver a state that is better prepared for catastrophic fires.

I speak with some passion on this subject, as I have spoken many times before. Coming from East Gippsland, there is a well-defined and well-understood threat to the community as a consequence of catastrophic fire, but there are many actions which the community, and government in particular, can take to mitigate some of those risks. In terms of the government response, at the top of that list is the need to commit to reducing the fuel load on public land while monitoring and carefully managing the ecological consequences of any such activity.

We have had debates in this place in recent times about that issue, including debate around the issue of whether or not one mitigation tool might be the grazing activity of cattle in the Alpine region. I am sure that debate will continue, but it is only one tool in the kit of fuel load minimisation. The major action that can be taken by government is to increase investment in fuel reduction burning, and there has been a significant attempt over this past autumn to step up that investment. I

understand the Department of Sustainability and Environment is leaving no stone unturned, as it were, to achieve a high figure — I am not quite sure of the record — in terms of that process.

The maintenance of strategic fuel breaks to protect communities and critical assets is an important part of the response, and the government has made a very serious investment in that as well as a commitment to better manage fuel on roadsides. I know that in my region many people are of the view that one of the major threats to communities is the fact that bushfires use roadsides as wicks to migrate from one area of significant vegetation to another even though there may be limited fuel in between because of grazing and farmland. Over recent decades roadside vegetation has become prolific, the result of which is that in a hot period it is quite possible for those fires, which are difficult to control, to simply be encouraged to migrate because there is no capacity to limit the speed at which they move along the fuel on the roadsides.

It is also important that we understand that activity in the bush on high-risk days is something that needs to be managed. The government has acknowledged that that is a significant issue, and there will be a better management regime put in place around that, including restricting the development of buildings in bushfire-risk locations and ensuring that buildings are of an adequate design to withstand fire and to integrate with the surrounding environment where there is a high risk of fire. In conclusion, I think it is important to note the government's commitment to encouraging people to live in areas that are not high-risk bushfire areas.

Auditor-General: *Revitalising Central Dandenong*

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak about the Auditor-General's report entitled *Revitalising Central Dandenong*, which was tabled in Parliament on 4 May. The Revitalising Central Dandenong (RCD) project is a 16-year, \$290 million investment to rejuvenate Dandenong under the former Labor government's Melbourne 2030 planning policy, later known as Melbourne @ 5 Million. It sought to address the urban decline of a once-vibrant satellite city known locally as Melbourne's second city. The last 20 years saw that city's gradual decline, which was manifest in slower population growth, higher than average unemployment rates, low wages when compared to other metropolitan areas and ageing housing stock.

Added to this decline was the emergence of neighbouring shopping centres and entertainment

options that diverted activity away from the central activity district to new housing developments and suburbs in the surrounding area. The city's ability to attract investment was limited due to poor integration between the train station, the central business district and Lonsdale Street, dividing the CBD into two opposite retail and commercial areas. While the report outlines a number of governance matters and a series of recommendations on how to improve the performance and measurements of RCD, which I am confident the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, will duly act upon, I wish to talk about the transformation that is occurring in Dandenong and the improvement that this investment has brought to the area.

Dandenong is located at the centre of Melbourne's South Eastern Metropolitan Region and is home to one of Victoria's largest manufacturing sectors, providing more than 74 000 jobs. It was home to Heinz and GM Holden, just to name two of the large industrial and commercial businesses that were established there after the war. This led to a burgeoning population of migrants seeking to settle in the area, close to the employment opportunities it offered. As these businesses have closed or moved offshore over the years, Dandenong itself has fallen victim to gradual decline. The establishment of Dandenong Plaza in the early 1990s impacted heavily on the central business district, with many retail stores and services moving across to the new centre or relocating due to the dramatic decline in pedestrian traffic in the CBD.

The former Labor government understood the importance of Dandenong's revitalisation in addressing not only urban sprawl and Melbourne's growing population but also the social and economic decline of the area. Dandenong's location, being close to road and rail infrastructure, as well as the presence of government, health and education services along with its geographical location in the south-east, makes its renewal central to good urban planning in the region.

The Monash, South Gippsland and EastLink freeways are all within easy access, and it is an ideal suburb for commuting between Melbourne, the outer south-east, Western Port and the peninsula. In addition to its large manufacturing sector and the attendant job opportunities this base generates, many people are drawn to the area to live, work and raise their families.

Putting to one side the performance of the RCD project, from the raw data I can say that Labor's investment in Dandenong has paid dividends for the community. On page 22 the report identifies the following trends and perceptions. Between 2005–10 the declared area has decreased the downward trend in employment evident

between 1996 and 2004 and has added 400 jobs. Office and commercial floor space increased by 10 932 square metres between 2005 and 2009, which is an increase of 10 per cent. Between 2006 and 2010 the estimated resident population increased by 800 or 20 per cent. Patronage at Dandenong station has increased by 30 per cent since 2006. In 2009, 91 per cent of residents reported having a positive view of the area with access to services as a key 'like'. The number of residential dwellings in central Dandenong increased by 500, or 27 per cent, since 2006. There was an almost sixfold increase in high-density dwellings between 2004–05 and 2009–10, with the average unit price below the Melbourne average.

The report also states that since Labor's investment of \$290 million, a further \$285 million of private sector investment in central Dandenong has occurred against the business case target of \$1.17 billion across 16 years. I am proud of the commitment we on this side of the house have to Dandenong's revitalisation, and I look forward to further improvements building on a dynamic, thriving, multicultural Dandenong in the future.

Auditor-General: *Early Childhood Development Services — Access and Quality*

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a statement on the Victorian Auditor-General's report of May 2011, *Early Childhood Development Services — Access and Quality*. The Auditor-General makes no bones about the fact that this audit reflects on the practices and policies of the former Labor government and does some benchmarking against certain periods, especially the period 2005–06. The audit also reflects that the identified trend is part of a trend that had occurred in the five years prior to 2005. What I have to say focuses on the previous administration.

I am pleased to refer — and I think it needs to be referred to at the outset — to some dialogue between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Municipal Association of Victoria, representing the other important partner in the delivery of early childhood development services such as kindergartens and maternal and child health care. Obviously those two bodies need to work collaboratively as partners in planning and in the delivery of early childhood services. In the past that relationship had not been working as effectively as it should have been, but now the Auditor-General tells us the department has advised there will be a formal evaluation, scheduled for August, to investigate opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the

partnership agreement. It will be to lift the game, to lift the dialogue and to lift the watchfulness and oversight of standards and service provision on the part of the department. That is good news.

I am here to report, however, on the audit, and there are elements of it that need to be put on the public record. First and foremost the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is accountable for the planning and provision of early childhood services, in particular in the area of the provision of the universal kindergarten access program. It is important to underscore that word 'universal' in the context of this audit report, because according to the audit, access to kindergartens — and to maternal and child health services — has been far from universal. Areas and people have been disadvantaged, and people have not been able to access this so-called universal service.

Part of the department's brief is to provide enhanced maternal and child health services for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. That is actually specified; it is a clear area where the department has accountability. The department funds 1400 organisations, including local councils, community organisations and private providers. The monitoring is done through service agreements. To plan effectively — and we all know the importance of the need to plan — the department in the first instance must have a sound understanding of the demand for the services.

To my chagrin I have to report that once again in a government department that was being run by a former Labor government in this state the left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. Government services and taxpayers money have attempted to deliver a quality regime and service that would respond to need and demand when and where it existed, but in fact it was another story with the former government, involving the inflicting of a lot of suffering on the people of this state, particularly new mothers, little children and people from disadvantaged settings who were sold short because the practices were so poor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Auditor-General: *Effectiveness of Small Business Victoria's Support Programs*

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General 2011 report *Effectiveness of Small Business Victoria's Support Programs*. This report means a little bit more to me than it will to some others given the large number of small businesses operating throughout my electorate,

Western Metropolitan Region. Such businesses are critical to my electorate, as it is the most socioeconomically disadvantaged electorate in the entire state. I therefore know the great importance of small business to this state, and I am also well aware of just how much support the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments gave to small businesses, a level of support that saw our small businesses heralded as the engine room of the state by those who were wise enough to recognise good government and good leadership. This is especially important given that Victoria does not have a mining industry; small business is therefore vital to our prosperity.

According to the Auditor-General's report *Effectiveness of Small Business Victoria's Support Programs*, there are more than 470 000 small businesses in Victoria. They make up 96 per cent of all Victorian businesses and generate 35 per cent of gross state product. It was therefore wonderful to read the report, in which the Auditor-General wrote so positively about the Time to Thrive policy, which the previous Labor government launched in 2006 — just one of many measures by the former government to support and grow small business in our state. I note that the Auditor-General is also supportive of the World Class Service website, another proud accomplishment under our tenure in office. Then there is Fair Payments Policy Advocacy, which is all-important to recipients of small business support.

The conclusion section of the audit summary, on page viii, states that 'the programs' objectives were achieved'. Small business operators reported gaining skills and information essential to better management of their businesses and thus a greater chance of business success. If nothing else, this alone is something that all members should applaud — helping Victorian small business owners to survive in tough economic times and to grow in the years ahead, benefiting themselves, their families and of course our state.

I must congratulate my colleague, Joe Helper, the member for Ripon in the other place, who was Minister for Small Business in the last government. He had a sincere appreciation of the wants and needs of small businesses across our state, and his leadership helped to achieve the successes listed in the report. The regulatory burden on small business was massively reduced, as the Auditor-General himself identified on page 8 of the report, where he refers to the significant savings made by those small businesses that used the World Class Service website.

I must also refer to the excellent Energise Enterprise program, which I hope will be continued by the Baillieu government. Over 30 000 small business operators and

6000 potential business operators participated in the workshops, seminars or other events run as part of this excellent statewide program. Imagine that last figure — 6000 potential businesspeople! That says a great deal about the strength of small business and the confidence by small business in the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments. If the program is continued this year, I will look closely at whether it grows or shrinks — and I hope it grows. The Baillieu government has already made a number of changes. We are as yet unsure as to what will remain, what will change and what the Baillieu government will throw out the door, but given the success of these programs it would seem wise for the new government to continue and in fact strengthen these programs as they offer countless benefits to our whole state and not simply to major cities.

In conclusion I wish to thank the Auditor-General for yet another work of professionalism by his office, and I commend the report to all members.

Auditor-General: *Tertiary Education and Other Entities — Results of the 2010 Audits*

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to make some remarks on the Auditor-General's May 2011 report titled *Tertiary Education and Other Entities — Results of the 2010 Audits*. The report covers the results of the annual audit of 113 entities from the tertiary education, sustainability and environment, health, planning and community development and local government sectors with a financial year end other than 30 June 2010. It principally focuses on 105 tertiary education sector entities, comprising the 8 public universities and their 63 controlled entities, 14 TAFE institutes and their 12 controlled entities, 6 training entities and the 2 entities they control.

The report informs Parliament of some significant issues arising out of the audits, and I will look specifically at three recommendations. It comments on the effectiveness of internal controls, in particular making relevant comments about the management of staff sick leave in various universities and TAFE institutes. It also talks about the controls over creditors and the management of other matters relevant to the financial sustainability of universities, TAFE institutes and alpine resort management boards and their financial management and reporting activities. The report notes that two universities, Melbourne University and Deakin University, have received qualified audit reports. These qualifications are continuing qualifications that relate to the disclosure of grant revenue where these two universities are not in compliance with accounting standards.

In addition to these qualifications, four entities — Monash Educational Enterprises, Monash South Africa, Driver Education Centre Australia and DECA — have received audit opinions that emphasise the reliance of these entities on the continuing financial support of their parent entities to continue their operations. There are a further seven recommendations for improvements in the reporting performance on the operations of the universities and TAFEs. The primary recommendation is that performance reporting in the TAFE sector be elevated to legislative status. That will augur well for open and transparent reporting to Parliament.

The Auditor-General has been promoting improved performance reporting by the TAFE sector for some time. Whilst TAFE institutes have been complying with disclosure requests, the Auditor-General now argues we need to beef it up. The Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Honourable Peter Hall, is working with his office, Skills Victoria and with the sector to identify a more robust and relevant group of key performance indicators. Once that is done, he will discuss these matters with the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Minister for Finance in order to formalise how these performance standards will be implemented.

The report makes a range of other recommendations, which are welcomed. I will comment on two recommendations. On page 25 of the report the Auditor-General comments on the huge liability of the TAFE sector in particular, especially those institutes that have a substantial number of international students. In 2010 university fees increased by 62 per cent and TAFE fees by 118 per cent. There will be a decline, and that exposes both sectors substantially as a result of the vagaries of the competitive market for such students. I am also aware that some of the home countries of our international students are introducing measures to respond to their needs for higher education domestically, and this may also impact on the revenue we derive from this very important export market. I urge our institutes to factor that in when they turn to the issue of securing their financial sustainability into the future.

The report also makes recommendations about improving the financial sustainability of the sector, in particular the way in which TAFEs allocate capital grants across the sector rather than managing the grants process to factor in the need for the replacement of assets and instead of just relying totally on the government to do so. Some valuable recommendations have been made by the Auditor-General to improve what is a very important source of services for our domestic clients and students as well as for our international clients. This has become a vigorous sector

that can help to protect the future of the state of Victoria.

Auditor-General: *Early Childhood Development Services — Access and Quality*

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's report entitled *Early Childhood Development Services — Access and Quality*, which was tabled in this house on 25 May. The report highlights many of the positive achievements that were made by the previous Labor government in early childhood services. Labor has a proud record of investing in early childhood services, and it increased funding to those services by 225 per cent during its term in government.

With Victoria experiencing record-level birth rates — 200 babies born a day — parents have become more aware of the importance of children's early years to their health and development. A lot of that is reflected in this report. A total of 73 827 babies were notified to the maternal and child health service in the last financial year, representing a 22 per cent increase in birth notices over the last 10 years.

Unfortunately I need to come to this house on a regular basis to remind the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development that she now has an obligation to Victoria's children and is responsible for delivering vital services for Victorian families. During question time I often hear her absolving herself of that responsibility and seeking to claim that the federal government is responsible for her portfolio.

When this report was tabled last week I was quite astounded that the minister put out a media release in which she basically pointed the finger at her own department. She seemed to be talking down her department, and I found that quite alarming. That media release also seemed to represent a complete lack of understanding of the findings of the audit. I am certain that the media release was not drafted by her department but that it would have been drafted by her ministerial office, which would explain why she got it so wrong.

Victorians can quite rightly have confidence in kindergarten services in our state. The audit has shown that statewide participation rates in universal kindergarten have increased to record levels. There was a 95 per cent participation rate between 2005–06 and 2009–10, yet despite being well aware of Victoria's current baby boom and of the growing demand for more kindergarten places, the Baillieu government has

budgeted only \$15 million in the next financial year for capital improvements to kindergartens.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Darveniza — On a point of order, Acting President, I am unable to hear the contribution that Ms Mikakos is making. Ms Lovell is interjecting at such a high volume it is really difficult for me to hear Ms Mikakos, even though I am sitting quite close to her.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Eideh) — Order! There is no point of order. However, I ask members to remain quiet so we can hear the contribution of Ms Mikakos.

Ms MIKAKOS — I thank Ms Darveniza, because this is an important issue. I know she cares about the local kinders in her electorate and wants to hear the positive news that is contained in this report. The minister would do well to listen; she might actually learn something.

As I have been saying, we are experiencing a baby boom and yet the Baillieu government has only budgeted \$15 million for capital improvements to kindergartens. This lack of investment will almost certainly impact on kindergarten participation rates across Victoria. It appears that under the Baillieu government many of Victoria's kindergartens will be left without adequate facilities and more Victorian children will miss out on this vital learning experience.

Hon. W. A. Lovell — On a point of order, Acting President, I believe the member is misleading the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Eideh) — Order! There is no point of order. The remarks of Ms Mikakos are a part of the debate.

Ms MIKAKOS — The minister has the opportunity, which she is yet to take, to stand up and speak for five minutes on her views about this report, but she has been very silent on the issue since she put out her media release last week.

The audit found that participation in services such as maternal and child health services and services for vulnerable children and families also rose between 2005–06 and 2009–10. I think that is a positive thing, because maternal and child health services are so important for Victorian families. It is the responsibility of the state government to ensure that all our preschoolers and young children have access to quality early childhood facilities, no matter where they live.

Unfortunately we are not seeing this in the budget this year. We are seeing cuts in a number of areas that I have talked about on previous occasions, and we are certainly seeing underinvestment across the early childhood sector.

We have had dedicated funding towards children's centres. Yesterday I gave the minister an opportunity to talk about whether new proposals would be able to access the \$15 million facilities program, and she failed to elaborate on that. When I asked the minister a question about this during question time she kept interjecting. I would like her to get up and speak for 5 minutes on this and to provide some information, because we are certainly not getting it during question time.

The Labor opposition welcomes this report. There are always improvements that can be made to the early childhood sector, and we look forward to these improvements.

Auditor-General: annual plan 2011–12

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's annual plan 2011–12. In doing so I note that it is a very comprehensive overview of the proposed audit program for 2011–12 and covers many areas that this government will be dealing with in relation to services and other areas of government.

As Victorians we can be confident in the Auditor-General, who plays a key role in providing independence in this process. I thank the Auditor-General for the work he has undertaken.

On page 1 the report states:

Entities to be audited during 2011–12 include government departments and agencies, public hospitals and ambulance services, universities and other educational institutions, water authorities, public sector superannuation funds, as well as companies, trusts and joint ventures controlled by public sector agencies. The Auditor-General also has responsibility for auditing the local government sector, which comprises municipal councils and the entities they control, and regional library corporations.

Members can see that the report covers a wide range of areas. On pages 4 and 5 the report discusses both internal and external influences. External influences include the 2009 bushfires and the global financial crisis, which are still having some impact on this current program. Internal influences include targeting fraud, waste and non-compliance and looking at assessments in relation to the achievements of the

government, wastage of funding and money spent on various programs.

It is fair to say that this state needs a government that will administer public money in a responsible manner. It certainly does not need a government that is going to go from one financial blunder to another as the previous government did with myki and the desalination plant, as I have previously stated. There are a number of programs that we are all aware of.

On page 9 the report states that the five goals for the 57th Parliament, as outlined by the Governor in his speech, are: a growing economy; services that work; strong families and vibrant communities; secure water and a healthy environment; and government you can trust. I would like to focus on the issue of services that work, because there are a number of very interesting areas that I think the Auditor-General will be looking into. Those areas that will have a great focus include access to public housing, addressing the ageing of the teacher workforce, casual relief teacher arrangements, compliance with building permits, individualised funding for disability services, learning technologies in government schools, maternity services capacity and public transport performance.

Although there are many areas in this report that could be commented upon, the one area I am particularly interested in is in relation to maternity services capacity. This is an area I have worked in in the past. As the house is aware, I spent 10 years at the Royal Women's Hospital in that very area and worked in a number of roles. At that time there were significant challenges placed on both hospital resources and resourcing. I think this is going to be a huge issue in the future. The report states:

Demand for maternity services, while falling slightly during 2010, increased by more than 14 per cent between 1998 and 2009 ... Older mothers and rising obesity have also increased the level of complexity of maternity services.

They are some of the issues that we as a government face. They are some of the issues that need to be planned for. In my experience older mothers and an increasing level of obesity will lead to higher risk pregnancies, with more resources needed to manage those pregnancies and very often the neonates.

In saying that, we have an obesity crisis across the Western world. Here in Australia it is being highlighted as a problem. I think we need to look at planning for the future and putting appropriate initiatives into play, which I am sure this government will do as we are looking at it very closely. I look forward to hearing

about the outcomes of the audit program after it is finally completed.

Auditor-General: annual plan 2011–12

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — In the last parliamentary sitting week I attended a briefing from the Auditor-General and his staff. It was a most informative briefing on the Victorian Auditor-General's Office annual plan. It is that report, which I believe was tabled in this place on the same day, on which I would like to make some comments this afternoon.

Firstly, I think it is appropriate to thank staff members and the Auditor-General for their presentation. I would certainly commend the report to all my colleagues who were unable to be there, especially part 2. Part 2 goes through the work plan for the office of the Auditor-General and current and prospective areas of performance audit focuses from now through to 2014–15. I expect that a great deal of the work of the office of the Auditor-General will be of interest to members given the change in policy in many areas of government administration in Victoria since the last election. There are a few I would like to highlight.

One of the areas for prospective focus is the Melbourne Markets redevelopment. The government has been flip-flopping on this and has been really unclear about it, despite the significant investment of public money into a project that will provide enormous benefit to all of the northern suburbs.

In 2013–14 there is some work to be done on the changing profile of the public sector workforce. From my reading of the budget papers I am not quite sure how the government makes those numbers stack up, maintains a wages policy of 2.5 per cent and delivers on a number of election commitments around wages for the public sector workforce. I would hazard a guess that there will be some contraction in the public sector workforce over the coming years. I will certainly be very interested to see the result of the audit on the way in which our public sector workforce is composed, particularly the impact that a contraction would have on front-line service delivery.

There is some work to be done on the out-of-school-hours care program. Ms Mikakos has frequently talked in this place about cuts to services that are of critical importance to people with young children. I see Mr Hall is in the chamber. He and I have a great shared passion in the area of equitable access to education for rural students, and we will probably be rushing to see the results of that audit.

In the justice portfolio the Auditor-General's office has flagged some work on court backlogs. With regard to the government's tough-on-crime approach, I note that just yesterday we read in the papers and indeed talked about the on-the-spot fines for offensive language. The government has also floated the idea of mandatory sentencing in some circumstances for minors. A great many changes are being undertaken in Victoria at the moment in the justice area. The way people have speedy access to justice and to remedies through the court system will be an area of focus for the Auditor-General's office.

Public transport performance is an important area, and that is also in the report. The report also talks about the Provincial Victoria Growth Fund. I imagine that work will involve an examination of the appropriateness of spending and the identification of priorities for the Regional Growth Fund. That will certainly be of great interest to me. There is also the implementation of the climate change white paper and action on progress. The government seems to be going backwards at a great rate on this. Then there is the food bowl modernisation project, including the Sugarloaf interconnector. Government members have had a great deal to say today about our water security infrastructure, so we will have to wait and see.

This is a good report. Unlike the Baillieu-Ryan government, the Auditor-General's office has a work plan for four years that I urge members to look at. The Auditor-General is an independent officer of the Parliament, as is the Ombudsman, and is enshrined as an officer of the Parliament in the constitution. That is quite a contrast to the approach that Mr Baillieu's mentor and friend Jeff Kennett and his government took, which was to nobble the office of the Auditor-General. This government does not talk the same language.

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

**Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee:
impact of drug-related offending on female
prisoner numbers**

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the government's response to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's report entitled *Impact of Drug-related Offending on Female Prisoner Numbers*. This is a comprehensive response, as was the interim report. As I have said in this chamber before, this committee was chaired by the former member for Essendon, Judy Maddigan, and the committee did an excellent job. My

colleague Mr Leane, who is in the chamber here today, was a part of that committee and also did an excellent job.

It was an interesting inquiry, and although initially we were looking at the drug issues in the female prisons, we learnt a great deal about what is actually happening in those female prisons. When I was speaking on reports last week I spoke about the issue of appropriate housing for women after they leave prison. Today I would like to speak about the issue of women at Tarrengower, particularly in relation to them keeping in touch with their children.

Many women who go to prison find it difficult to maintain their relationships with their children. Tarrengower is a farm just outside Maldon. It is a low-security prison for women who will eventually be reintegrated back into the community, and it is highly successful. Women can have their children to stay at Tarrengower, and I might add they can also do so at the Dame Phyllis Frost centre in Deer Park. Children up to school age can live with their mothers in prison, should the mothers feel they want that, and there are very good programs run out of Dame Phyllis Frost for children in the prison system. I remember it was a huge step when it was first instigated many decades ago.

However, the problem we discovered when we went to Tarrengower was that every telephone call the women make to their children is in fact an STD call. The women only get paid a small daily wage, and they are faced with the dilemma of whether to ring their children or to use the limited funds they earn for toiletries — shampoo, health products et cetera. The recommendation in the report is to subsidise either the telephone calls or the toiletries.

The difficulty with this, which was something our committee did not look at in great detail, or in fact even recognise as an issue, was that there are inmates in prisons right across our state who face a similar dilemma. There are many men in country prisons who want to maintain relationships with their children. To have a blanket approach to contacting children from prison is going to be quite an expensive exercise, so it is important that it is done correctly. On the one hand we want to support women so they have continuous contact with their children. On the other hand we have to be realistic with taxpayers money and make quite certain that telephone calls are made responsibly. In its reply to the interim report the government supported this recommendation in part. Basically its reasons were that it would be prohibitive to include all telephone calls that prisoners — male and female — in country areas make to their children.

It is pleasing to note that Corrections Victoria already has a number of programs in place to support prisoners to have contact with their children, particularly women. It is developing a model of support for the children of women in prison. As part of the development of this model, Corrections Victoria will investigate the possibility of increased contact between women prisoners and their children. I am pleased to note that Corrections Victoria has taken note of this report and will include it in the discussions that are to be held.

At the moment prisoners are encouraged to contact their children, and there are programs to support women to have contact with their children. As I said, children can live at Tarrengower should their mothers wish. The Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders has a residential visits program and a videoconferencing program. The videoconferencing program is turning out to be quite successful. It certainly needs to be increased, but I am pleased that Corrections Victoria is addressing some of these issues, and I hope we can see them resolved in the future.

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE: report 2010

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I want to make some comments on the 2010 annual report of the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE. The TAFE, or GOTAFE as it is known throughout north-eastern Victoria, is the largest post-compulsory education provider in north-eastern Victoria. In my electorate of Northern Victoria Region it delivers annually in excess of 3 million student contact hours across 38 industry subsectors to more than 16 000 students. It employs 450 staff located at 13 campuses and achieves an annual turnover in excess of \$50 million. It is a very big TAFE. It has a lot of campuses and it looks after a lot of students in north-eastern Victoria. It has a very good reputation throughout north-east Victoria and in fact throughout Victoria. It is recognised as being innovative and progressive in its approach to post-compulsory education.

The region that is covered by GOTAFE almost mirrors my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. It includes 11 local government areas, and it services the vocational education and training needs of more than 220 000 Victorians who live in locations ranging from Wallan down in the south to Kyabram in the west, Mansfield in the east, from Nathalia to Rutherglen in the north and all that lies in between. The establishment of GOTAFE took effect upon the amalgamation of the Wangaratta Institute of TAFE and the Goulburn Valley Institute of TAFE back in 1996.

The TAFE's strengths lie very much with its experienced, skilled and, as I said, innovative staff. They provide training and skills development and other services to students as well as to industry clients and the wider community through innovative, customised and quality assurance training programs and products, flexible education and training delivery methods. They are committed to consultation, partnership and customer satisfaction.

The TAFE engages very much with the community and with industry. It looks at what students and industry need in the region and at where employment opportunities exist both now and into the future. The TAFE has never shied away from stepping up to the plate and having a go at something that is interesting and different and in taking up the challenge. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the board of GOTAFE including the chair, Michael Tehan, the deputy chair, Liz Chapman, and all the board members. I also congratulate Paul Culpan, who is the chief executive officer.

In GOTAFE's 2010 annual report the key achievements are listed as it having an operating revenue of \$53 million, organisational assets of \$81 million plus, a full-time staff of 458, student enrolments of over 70 000 and student contact hours of just under 5 million. The TAFE does a really fantastic job. Over 2060 students graduated from the primary industries, service and technology divisions and the Koori and multicultural units at GOTAFE, the GOTAFE Regional Academy of Dramatic Arts, the National Centre for Equine Education and the National Centre for Dairy Education. Students received recognition for completing nationally accredited courses at advanced diploma, diploma and certificate IV through to certificate I levels.

Implementing the Government's Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission — May 2011

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I wish to comment on the report entitled *Implementing the Government's Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission — May 2011*. At the outset we have to preface any comments about the bushfires by acknowledging that on that terrible day 173 people lost their lives, and that is something of which we must always be mindful when we talk about the bushfires, the ensuing royal commission, its report and now the implementation of those recommendations.

The Premier is on the record as saying that the 2009 Victorian bushfires were one of Victoria's, if not Australia's, worst national disasters of all time. A consequence of the 2009 bushfires was that a royal commission was held, and it worked tirelessly and with compassion to recommend steps that are needed to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

Of the 67 recommendations handed down by that royal commission, one recommendation was that an implementation monitor be appointed to ensure that the recommendations did not just sit on a shelf and gather dust. The implementation report is now before the Parliament for members to peruse and for the people of Victoria to look through. In providing their final report to the Governor and to the people of Victoria, the commissioners indicated that their recommendations give priority to protecting human life and are designed to reflect the shared, mutual responsibility that governments, fire agencies, communities and individuals have for minimising the prospect of a tragedy of this scale ever happening again.

There are some key themes in the commission's report, and those themes revolve around, firstly, preventing bushfires in the future. That can be done effectively by stopping or reducing arson — that is contained in recommendations 35 and 36 — and also by reducing the ignition of fires caused by electricity asset failures. That is where there is a big difference between the action taken by this current coalition government and the actions that were going to be taken, or the lack of action that was going to be taken, by the Labor Party, because this is one of the key recommendations that the Labor Party whilst in government shied away from. It did not want to know about the concept of undergrounding many of those electrical assets to prevent similar fires in the future.

In relation to reducing the impact of bushfires in the future, there is an understanding in this document that bushfires in Victoria are in fact inevitable but that measures can be taken to lessen the intensity of such fires and to better protect the community from their impact. The main angles that the commission recommends we take to minimise the intensity of bushfires in the future are the reduction of fuel loads on land where bushfires are likely to be most prevalent and the maintenance of strategic fuel breaks to protect communities and community assets, such as electricity supplies and water supplies, from fires.

In relation to improving planning and preparation for bushfires, the commission emphasised, and the government acknowledges, the importance of local planning that is tailored to meet local needs along with

the need to build stronger partnerships with and provide better support to local councils in their planning processes. The government has provided the Municipal Association of Victoria and 34 local councils with funding for 30 staff to boost their emergency management capability and capacity. They have also asked the Country Fire Authority — —

Mr Lenders interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Mr Lenders.

Mr DRUM — Thank you, Mr Lenders. Obviously if you want me to start responding to your interjections, we will have a little bit of fun.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I advise Mr Drum that there is no need to respond to Mr Lenders; I have asked him to cease interjecting.

Mr DRUM — I will stick to the report, because it makes a bit more sense than the former Treasurer. They have asked the Country Fire Authority to improve the level of local government and community engagement in the development of township protection plans. There is also an aspect of this report that relates to enhancing capacity and capability to respond to bushfires once they start. The commission considered that improved operational performance will be needed to develop the common operation policy.

The principal focus of the new fire services commissioner is to promote and lead reform in fire services and to deliver improved operational performance and the capacity for three fire services to operate as one integrated force. Part of the report is about recovery and also continuing to learn and improve in the way we approach our accountability in relation to bushfires in the future. It is a fantastic report.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I advise Ms Tierney that she has only a bit over 4 minutes for her statement.

Cancer Council Victoria: annual review 2010

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to speak on *Cancer Council Victoria — Annual Review 2010*. I am particularly pleased to speak about the excellent work that the council does, but today is also a significant day for another valuable organisation. It is the first day of the Heart Foundation's Go Red for Women campaign, and I commend those who have participated in that campaign by wearing red today.

Sadly it is a reality that at some stage in every person's life they will feel the effects of cancer, whether it be suffering it themselves or supporting a close family member or friend through the hardship of fighting cancer. Cancer Council Victoria works extremely hard and is very effective in reducing cancer mortality rates. One of the most effective ways that it does this is through prevention.

I want to quickly touch on the campaigns, advocacy and achievements of Cancer Council Victoria. During the reporting period the cancer council has run some very effective campaigns on the dangers of smoking and obesity. Partly due to the cancer council's advocacy and constant public information campaigns, 2010 proved to be a very positive year in terms of reducing the number of people smoking, with the move towards plain packaging, the increased tax on tobacco, the subsidisation of nicotine replacement therapy and the mounting pressure for smoke-free public spaces.

There have been other prevention activities, including Cut Your Cancer Risk, a website that helps people to identify lifestyle changes that will cut their cancer risk; Peace of Mind, a campaign to encourage all women to have regular pap tests; and Never Give Up Giving Up, another antismoking campaign.

In terms of the position of obesity on the agenda, it is recognised that obesity causes a significant number of other health issues, and the council has been effective in promoting that. One of the other campaigns I particularly like is the one we have been able to promulgate through schools — that is, Go for Your Life. At every primary school that I have attended where we have promoted that particular campaign it has been an exciting event for all involved, so I applaud the cancer council's involvement in that.

I also make special mention of the advocacy role of the council. The council takes a very sophisticated approach in lobbying all political parties, which we have seen in the way the council has effectively engaged with all the political parties leading up to the last federal election, in particular the council's advocacy in relation to bowel cancer tests.

In terms of its achievements, over 20 years the Cancer Council Victoria has provided assistance to over 750 000 Victorians, and it has also attracted a record number of cancer clinicians to participate in the Victorian cancer clinicians communication program and workshops. In the reporting period the council has also welcomed an additional 12 new face-to-face cancer support groups, which added to the already existing 170 cancer support groups. I commend the

report to the house and the very effective work that it is doing in fighting cancer in this state.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Energy: Latrobe Valley

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, Michael O'Brien. The issue I raise is about the future of brown coal mining in the Latrobe Valley. On four occasions this year I have been down to the valley and have had the privilege in that time of visiting Loy Yang A, Loy Yang B, Hazelwood and Yallourn, generally in the company of Mr Viney, Mr Scheffer and my lower house colleague Lily D'Ambrosio, the Labor spokesperson on energy. The future of brown coal and the future of resources is a complex issue — complex partly because of the federal debate on the emissions trading scheme and carbon tax, and complex because of where the resource is generally going forward.

What has been obvious to me when I have been to the Latrobe Valley and spoken to people about this issue is that the industry and the community are looking for a degree of certainty going forward. While I can understand that the minister resorts, as much as any government would, to finger-pointing at the federal government over a carbon tax — it is the government's political prerogative to do so, so I do not have any particular issue with that — I guess what the industry has an issue with, and probably people in the Latrobe Valley have an issue with, goes beyond that to what the vision of the state government is going forward on the coal industry.

The industry going forward needs more from the state government than criticism of the federal government's views on carbon tax. As I said, that is a legitimate position for a state government to have a view on, so I am not having a go about that; however, I am saying that it is the next step which industry is looking for. For energy supplies in the Latrobe Valley to be continuous there needs to be new investment, including investment in maintenance. If we do not deal with that as a state, then we will have security of supply issues coming forward. A number of turbines across the four stations have been down for routine and cyclical maintenance, but this issue will become a bigger and bigger issue unless we start getting investment in the sector.

Mr Hall, who is a reasonable man, may well say one of the uncertain issues is the commonwealth carbon tax, and I absolutely accept that is an issue of uncertainty, but there is a further obligation on the minister and the state to start looking beyond blaming the commonwealth government over what is happening in the valley and to start moving forward.

The action I seek from the minister is that he sit down with people in the industry to come forward with a plan for the future that deals with security of supply. While he is at it perhaps he can have another look at the Morwell bypass.

Local government: rates

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. The matter relates to local government's annual budget and rate increases. Some councils have released their annual draft budgets for 2011–12, while others are yet to be announced. I have been quite surprised by the extent of the increases I have read about, particularly given that families are being challenged at the moment with ever-rising cost of living pressure. While some councils have taken this into consideration and exercised restraint on their infrastructure wish lists to deliver the best possible outcomes to their ratepayers, others have not. Some are motoring along at full speed ahead and jacking up rates to an unaffordable level with ballooning bureaucracy — and the blame game begins.

For the very first time in the history of Victorian governments I am proud to say the Baillieu government is allocating \$160 million during its term for country roads and bridges. This is new money for rural and regional councils to fix their local roads. Councils are also set to gain an additional \$100 million under the local government infrastructure account from the Baillieu government's \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. This fund will also provide for additional planners to assist councils with major project developments and planning for future land use.

With all this new additional money going into local government, as I said earlier, I am surprised by the increases in some of the rates that have recently been advertised in the *Herald Sun*. I recognise the vitally important services that local government provides to its communities, and I ask the minister in her deliberations to establish an effective partnership between federal, state and local governments so that there can be cohesive responsibility by all tiers of government not only to reduce the administration costs of these councils

but also to continue to maintain services in the best interests of ratepayers.

School buses: Northern Victoria Region

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder. The matter I raise is about the possibility of regional bus routes in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region being cut following a review of bus routes in the Hume and Loddon Mallee areas. The review will examine school bus routes in the Grampians, in the Hume and Barwon shires, in Gippsland and in the Loddon Mallee and outer metropolitan areas. It will begin on 1 July and could result in cuts to essential school bus services. Any cuts to school bus services would have a dramatic effect on all Victorian students, including those in my electorate.

In regional areas many parents rely on these services to take their children to and from school, and it is causing concern that the Baillieu government is considering cuts to bus services for Victorian schoolchildren. A letter about the review states that 'service rationalisation' is one possible outcome and that any cuts to services would be disappointing.

These bus services are vital for Victorian families, as many families do not live within walking distance of schools, and cuts to services would be devastating. It is important that parents and students are fully informed about the review and receive information about it, and that the minister listens carefully to people who rely on these services. I ask the minister to guarantee that these vital bus services will not be cut or reduced as a result of the Baillieu government's review of school bus routes.

Western Port: port expansion

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning and relates to the expansion of Western Port. On 5 April 2011 Melbourne Water hosted a seminar on the Western Port strategic knowledge review in Pakenham. Over 200 people attended the presentation from a diverse team of eminent scientists led by marine ecologist Professor Mick Keough from the University of Melbourne. The review is being conducted because there are significant gaps in our understanding of Western Port's unique ecosystem since the seminal Western Port bay environmental study by Professor Maurice Shapiro in 1974.

The scientific review identified a series of knowledge gaps, including the need to document key changes since

the previous study; define how sediments, toxicants and nutrients are transported and transformed; couple the environmental conditions necessary for seagrasses and mangroves and assess catchment remediation and coastal protection on seagrass and mangrove recovery; and predict future water quality conditions in Western Port under changing climates and considering their effect on biota.

Western Port is a Ramsar-listed wetland, a unique and valuable ecosystem, and the surrounding area is a biosphere reserve. The ecosystem in Western Port consists of both intertidal and subtidal reefs, and soft sediments, both bare sediments and vegetated ones such as seagrasses, mangroves and salt marshes.

In terms of threats to Western Port, the major categories are: water and sediment quality, hydrodynamic and atmospheric variables, pest plants and animals, habitat alteration and species removals, alteration of coastal processes and cumulative impacts. Those threats increase due to changing land use, such as aquaculture; climate change, which leads to range expansions; population growth, which leads to more recreational boating, for example; port expansion, which facilitates increased shipping; and marine pests.

Last year during the debate on the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill 2010 I said that any government contemplating further industrial, commercial or residential development around Western Port needed to put the health of the ecosystem first. The Melbourne Water website states that:

This review allows an updated and consolidated understanding of Western Port natural research management, environment protection, planning, on-ground works and future research to better predict the vulnerability of Western Port's marine ecosystems to future changes in climate, population growth and land use ... and to better inform government policy.

The final report of the review is not due to be released until July. I call on the minister to put on hold port expansion plans until the strategic knowledge review is completed, thorough community consultation is conducted and a long-term plan is developed which puts the health of the Western Port ecosystem first and foremost.

Children: Take a Break program

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I raise an adjournment matter for the attention of the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell. The action I seek from the minister is that she reconsider her decision to stop funding the Take a

Break occasional child-care program at the end of this year, and that she take up the challenge of convincing the Premier, Mr Baillieu, that the Take a Break program should be a priority for the Baillieu-Ryan government.

As a first step I urge the minister to visit neighbourhood houses in her electorate that are providing the Take a Break program and take the time to listen to what coordinators, staff, volunteers and parents have to say about what affordable occasional child care means to them. The Wallan neighbourhood house provides occasional child care in new suburbs to young families who are a long way from any extended family support. It employs staff who have trained so that they now hold the necessary certificates and diplomas, and it supports students and volunteers to provide this much-needed service.

The minister should talk to mothers like the mother who takes her children to Murchison preschool for affordable occasional child care but who is still struggling to do the basics like making a postnatal appointment with her doctor. Even better would be if the minister could take the Premier with her.

The Take a Break occasional child-care program is provided at more than 220 neighbourhood houses and community centres across Victoria. It allows parents and guardians to participate in activities, including visits to the doctor, meeting people in their community, recreational classes and voluntary community activities, while their children socialise and interact with other children in an early learning environment, which as we know is crucial.

Stopping funding for the Take a Break program will mean that families across Victoria will be unable to access affordable community-based occasional child care to undertake tasks that benefit the family. It will also mean that staff will move away to take up other job opportunities. I call on Ms Lovell to reconsider her decision to stop funding the Take a Break program at the end of this year and to take up the challenge of convincing the Premier, Mr Baillieu, that the program should be a priority for the Baillieu-Ryan government.

Planning: activity centres

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter that I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Planning. It is in relation to the important task that local government has in developing structure plans for activity centres. What I would like the minister to apply his very creative and able mind to is how he can assist local government to improve the quality of structure plans and the process by which they

are developed. In particular I would like him to think about two issues: first and foremost, the level and process of consultation that is engaged in. I believe the Planning and Environment Act 1987 needs to be clarified — although I am mindful of the fact that I cannot ask in an adjournment matter for legislative change — particularly around the issue of consultation where a plan affects abutting municipalities.

A number of activity centres around the state, certainly in South Eastern Metropolitan Region, are bisected and shared across two or three municipal boundaries. One is actually outside my electorate, so I will not speak about it at length, but Moorabbin is an interesting example because it cuts in with the city of Kingston, where there are a number of Kingston civic facilities that are important to all residents of Kingston, as well as Glen Eira and Bayside. Others involve Mentone and Highett, and there are a number in the city of Casey.

Whether or not the local municipality engages the abutting municipality in the development of its structure plan is at the discretion of the individual council. I do not believe that ought to be the case. If we are going to achieve better outcomes for the development of structure plans, they need to be informed by a process of consultation and an engagement with each other in order to achieve greater coherence. I would like the minister to see what he can do to assist councils to engage with each other, consult each other and also allow the community to be consulted on the development of structure plans which abut a range of municipalities.

In addition I would like the minister to consider what new technologies are available on the market, particularly digital technologies, that would encourage and enable local councils in the development of structure plan concepts. They need to then be made available to the members of the community, perhaps by a log-in type of facility, so they can have a look at what something may look like in order to provide opinion and feedback on a draft structure plan.

A lot more can be done by local government to improve the outcome of structure plans. They are very important. Local communities should have an active involvement in consultation on and development of the design of their physical environment, which is going to be a legacy for future generations. Local government in particular could do a lot more to develop better outcomes for local communities, and I call on the minister to assist them in that process.

Gaming: revenue

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Gaming. I should say how pleased I am to see Mr O'Donohue looking at the ALP website while I am making my contribution!

Mr Elsbury — Know thine enemy!

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Don't be like that, Mr Elsbury!

The recent state budget revealed that the estimate for 2011–12 is that revenue from gambling taxes will rise by \$76 million. At the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings I asked the minister how much more Victorians would need to gamble in order for the state's take to rise by \$76 million. The minister was not able to answer that, and frankly I do not have any issue with the fact that he might not have had those exact figures in his possession. He did, however, indicate that some of the increase was as a consequence of a higher tax rate being applied to Crown Casino. That is not about increased gambling, that is just about a higher rate, but it is only a small portion.

Nevertheless, the figure of \$76 million cannot have been plucked from thin air. In fact in the budget papers the figure has to some extent been broken down: it shows that the figure is made up of \$31 million from electronic gaming machines, \$19 million from lotteries, \$18 million from the casino and \$8 million from racing and a few bits and bobs. There must be a methodology to allow the department to make those estimates. For instance, in regard to electronic gaming machines there would be a formula that would allow the government to make that estimate — for example, \$200 million or \$300 million more in revenue divided by the relevant tax rate equals \$31 million extra for the state of Victoria. The same would apply for each of the other gambling forms.

The action I seek is that the minister provide me with the details of that formula and methodology so Victorians can understand the connection between gambling turnover and the gambling tax take and we can calculate the increase in gambling turnover that the \$76 million rise in taxes represents.

Dr Emil Popovic

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I have a matter I wish to draw to the attention of the Minister for Health and the health community for consideration, and that is the need to honour the life and professional dedication of Dr Emil Popovic and to place on the public record

his significant contribution to neurosurgery practice in Australia. Sadly, his contribution came to an end with his passing in tragic circumstances in March 2011 when Dr Popovic took his own life. Dr Popovic was well known to my brother, Terence O'Brien, who is a professor of medicine at Melbourne University. Emil's brother, Dr Robert Popovic, remains a close friend of my brother and our family.

Emil Popovic was an outstanding student, academic and neurosurgeon. He had a medical career littered with academic awards and prizes gained whilst he was a medical student and later as a consultant neurosurgeon. He was trained in Melbourne and at the world-renowned Mayo Clinic. He then worked as a consultant neurosurgeon at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Emil worked tirelessly for the good of the public health system, both in Victoria and later in Western Australia. His compassion and kindness shown to every patient can be reflected in the many patient tributes on the internet, both before and after his sad passing. We should all take the time to ponder the skill and dedication it must take to become a neurosurgeon and the difficulties and complex life-and-death decisions that face practitioners such as Dr Popovic in their everyday working lives.

The circumstances surrounding Dr Popovic's passing are controversial and have led to a request by the family for a coronial inquest. Thus it is not appropriate for me to speculate on the issues that culminated in his sad decision to take his own life. However, at least in a chronological sense, the origins of Dr Popovic's sad demise can be traced back to allegations concerning Dr Popovic's alleged failure to follow the Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or CJD, encryption protocols in place at the Royal Melbourne Hospital during a well-publicised scare in May 2000. I will state that whilst Dr Popovic was cleared by the medical board of any misconduct in August 2000, the damage to his professional reputation was never restored by a public apology or any private apology to his satisfaction during the course of his life.

I do not wish to use this opportunity to criticise other persons under parliamentary privilege. To do so would fall into the same cycle of blame attribution, reputation challenging and the minutiae of factual allegations that Dr Popovic found so troubling to deal with during his life. My purpose today is to bring to light his significant contribution to neurosurgery and to ensure that the most recent utterances emanating from the Victorian Parliament will be of the highest praise for the work of the late Dr Popovic.

Emil Popovic is survived by his wife, Jane, and three children, Andrew, Christopher and Sophie. He was a keen footballer and community contributor. Most importantly he was loved by many who came to see him. It is for them that I stand here today to honour Dr Popovic's good name and trust that the scales of justice can in some way be restored to the balance he sought in his life. Vale Dr Popovic.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I indicate that Dr Popovic was also known to me. He went to the same high school I went to. He was also a player at the Mitcham Football Club, a club with which I have had a long association. He was certainly a person who I held in high regard. Mr O'Brien's adjournment item captured fairly succinctly the concerns that a lot of people, his friends and relatives, share in regard to the circumstances surrounding the challenges to his credibility and professionalism which were unwarranted and unfounded according to later findings. Certainly that contributed to his untimely death. Obviously the matter has been referred to the Minister for Health by Mr O'Brien, but I indicate that I knew this man as well and held him in high regard.

Dental services: Western Metropolitan Region

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I am advised that the Minister for Health, David Davis, once worked as a health practitioner in Moonee Ponds. That surprised me, because the first budget since he has been the Minister for Health has shown a total lack of commitment by the state government to fund better dental health services in my electorate. Why has this budget, the first of this new government, failed to acknowledge the needs of the people in Western Metropolitan Region? Why has the Western Region Health Centre dental service been so blatantly ignored? Are the people of the west not good enough? Do their health concerns come second to those of the people living deep within the Liberal Party heartland seats?

The building and all the facilities of this service are outdated. It needs to be fixed; it needs to be upgraded. The Minister for Health opened a new facility at the Sunshine Hospital only a few months ago, a facility funded by the former Brumby Labor government.

The dental service is overdue for attention, and that is why it must be placed high on the priority list. Indeed it should be given higher priority than a pier at St Kilda. If that is not the case and the dental service closes down, one of two things will happen: either the people of the western suburbs will neglect their oral health care and consequently risk their overall health, which is something I do not believe any member of Parliament

would want, or they will flock in large numbers to the dental hospital.

Putting aside the considerable extra time and expense involved in travelling to that facility, especially with the new train timetables and the higher public transport costs since this government has been elected, we have the potential for far too many people to be seeking care and attention at that one site when the service could be better administered at two sites: the dental hospital and the dental service in the western region. That makes absolute sense to me.

In relation to this matter I congratulate a fellow member of this house, Bernie Finn, for also calling upon his own government to show support and solid commitment to this dental service. I also wish to thank Ms Colleen Hartland for showing her concern and support for this key need within our electorate. If the facility is shut down, it will cause serious harm within the community, and that would be simply unacceptable. I ask the minister to immediately visit the centre to learn why urgent funding is imperative for that service in Western Metropolitan Region and to do so without discrimination.

Children: Take a Break program

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — My matter this evening is for Ms Lovell, the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. It is regrettable that Ms Lovell is not in the chamber this evening as this is an important issue that requires a reasonably urgent response by the government. It relates to the impact of the funding cut to the Take a Break occasional child-care program in Golden Plains shire. In my electorate — and I am sure it is the case for many other members — many families rely on the Take a Break occasional child-care funding, which has now been slashed. This occasional child-care service in these communities will be affected by the cut to funding from the end of December this calendar year.

In the Golden Plains shire there are four communities that use the occasional child-care service — Inverleigh, Haddon, Rokewood and Meredith. Around 80 families use the service. The reduction in funding that flows from Ms Lovell's decision will mean a price rise of around 35 per cent: \$23 a session will become \$31 a session. As members may be aware, child care is incredibly price sensitive. In Golden Plains shire the proportion of child-care places that will be seriously impacted by this decision is four out of six.

I know that Liberal Party members understand the seriousness of this issue. Mrs Peulich — who is in the

house, unlike the minister — raised her concerns about this issue when the federal government was considering its position on funding. Mrs Peulich said at the time:

Each and every electorate will be impacted. This will diminish what working mums can do in terms of the acquisition of skills and taking advantage of learning opportunities.

Child care has not fared very well under Labor at either the state or federal level ...

However, now the Liberal Party is in government and this decision is in the hands of Ms Lovell —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PULFORD — It is worth noting, as Mrs Peulich interjects, that Mr Finn joined in when Mrs Peulich was making her contribution and said even children, not just child care, have not fared well under Labor.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms PULFORD — I am glad Mrs Peulich is enjoying it. For the benefit of members, Mrs Peulich suggested then that the minister do her job or give it up.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Time!

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The PRESIDENT — Order! Before I call the minister I acknowledge the Honourable Barry Bishop, a former Deputy President of the Legislative Council, who is in the gallery. Mr Bishop was a very competent member of this chamber for some years. We welcome Mr Bishop back for a visit.

ADJOURNMENT

Debate resumed.

Responses

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Ten matters were raised tonight on the adjournment. I might follow the order of those most recently raised, starting at the 10th and working backwards, because the matter raised by Ms Pulford is the same as the matter raised by Ms Broad, and it concerns the Take a Break occasional child-care program. I will pass them on to my colleague, the

Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, for her further comment.

However, I ask members to reflect on this when they are raising the matter and while it is being considered by the minister: is it the responsibility of the state government to assume total funding for programs that have been aborted by the federal government? One ought to think about that as these matters are raised in the house, because it is true that the Take a Break program was predominantly funded by the federal government — to the tune of 70 per cent of the costs of that program.

When the federal government withdrew funding from that program some 12 months ago, the state government, as an interim measure, took over total funding for a period of 12 months. While it is fine for members to come in here and raise this matter with the Victorian government, equally they should apportion responsibility for this back onto the federal government, and their representations to the federal government should be as vigorous as they are to the state government. Anyway, I am sure my ministerial colleague Ms Lovell will reply to the members who have raised the matter tonight.

The penultimate issue was raised by Mr Eideh for the Minister for Health, and it concerns the provision of health services in the west. Mr Pakula was very upset that he was not mentioned in representations on this particular matter. I suggest to Mr Eideh that he work with his colleague in bringing these matters forward. There is strength in numbers. I noticed that Mr Eideh included Mr Finn but not his own colleague Mr Pakula, nor Mr Elsbury. Working together is the best way of achieving anything. The Minister for Health will surely respond in a very positive way to the issue that Mr Eideh raised.

Mr O'Brien used the new form for the adjournment debate to make a statement rather than to seek any direct assistance from the Minister for Health, and I applaud him for doing so. The statement paid tribute to the recent sad passing of a fine Victorian citizen in Dr Popovic. I am sure we all join Mr O'Brien in expressing our condolences to the family of Dr Popovic.

Mr Pakula raised a matter for the Minister for Gaming seeking details of how certain projected revenues in the budget were arrived at. I will convey that request to the Minister for Gaming.

Mrs Peulich raised a matter for the Minister for Planning, and it concerns the development of structure

plans, particularly when those plans traverse a number of local government boundaries. There is then a need for consultation both with several local governments and with the constituents of those local governments to come up with decisions about structure plans. Mrs Peulich also suggested that some of that consultation may be enhanced by the use of digital technology to convey information to constituents. I will raise that matter on her behalf with the Minister for Planning.

Ms Pennicuik also raised a matter for the Minister for Planning. It concerns the importance of the environmental attributes of Western Port. Ms Pennicuik asked the Minister for Planning to give consideration to those particular issues when any decisions are being made about Western Port.

Ms Darveniza raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns reviews of bus routes in her electorate and other electorates around Victoria. I will happily convey that matter to the Minister for Public Transport, but I will say in the interim, until such time as she receives a response, that she should not get too excited about this. Reviews of bus services have been happening for ever, and more often than not enhanced and more efficient bus services are an outcome of those reviews. I am sure the Minister for Public Transport will reply along the lines that there is no intention to cut school bus services, but rather we are looking to make them more efficient and to enhance the services for students in Victorian schools.

Mr Ramsay raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. He was asking the minister whether she would be able to work more closely with local government to explore ways to save administration costs, particularly as those administration costs reflect on the rate levels set by local government. I will pass that information on to the Minister for Local Government.

My friend Mr Lenders, the Leader of the Opposition in this chamber, raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, and he spoke of some of his visits — four in recent times — to the Latrobe Valley. We welcome his visits there. I can assure Mr Lenders that Mr O'Brien has exceeded that number of visits to the Latrobe Valley. He has been down there very frequently in the six months he has had that position as minister, and I can also assure Mr Lenders that I know for a fact that Mr O'Brien has met with brown coal power station operators on a number of those occasions.

Mr Lenders's request was for the government, particularly Mr O'Brien, to give some certainty for the future about the use of brown coal for electricity production beyond just blaming the federal government for that uncertainty. I think Mr Lenders needs to reflect again on those remarks, because in the last six months this government has given a fair degree of certainty in respect of the future of brown coal use beyond that provided by the former government. Was it not the previous government that was negotiating to reduce the size and capacity of Hazelwood power station and suggesting a buyout? The current government has said it is not negotiating to reduce any capacity at Hazelwood.

Moreover, a recent decision that was just announced was for a new 300-megawatt brown coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley, and that new power station will be using means by which there will be reduced CO₂ emissions. In terms of giving some certainty to the future use of brown coal as a fuel source in the Latrobe Valley, I would have thought that those two things in themselves are very clear examples of how this government is providing some certainty to the people of the Latrobe Valley and doing so in the face of the federal government, which would look to put in place measures that would jeopardise the future of those initiatives. We are not blaming the commonwealth government; we are doing far more than that, which is what Mr Lenders has asked of the minister tonight. I am sure Minister O'Brien in his ultimate response to Mr Lenders will canvass those issues and others in a fulsome reply.

That being said, those are the 10 issues raised on the adjournment tonight. I also advise that I have no written responses to adjournment matters that I can report to the house tonight.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.23 p.m.

