

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 6 April 2011

(Extract from book 5)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry	The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC
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Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Community Services	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr D. J. Hodgett, MP

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 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 — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Holding, Mr McIntosh, Dr Naphthine and Mr Walsh.

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

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.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Coote and Ms Crozier.

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

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.

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

Acting Presidents: Ms Crozier, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmr, Mr Finn, Mr O'Brien, Ms Pennicuik, Mr Ramsay, Mr Tarlamis

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Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

Leader of the Opposition:

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

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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
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Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
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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, 6 April 2011

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

NATURAL DISASTERS: JAPAN

The PRESIDENT — Order! I take this opportunity to advise the Council that I have received a letter from Mr Yasufumi Kotake, the Acting Consul General of Japan, acknowledging and thanking us for the condolence motion passed by the chamber regarding the tsunami, earthquake and nuclear power plant disaster in Japan.

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES: FEDERAL COMMITTEE

The PRESIDENT — I also have a letter from the Parliament of Australia. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties is seeking interest and submissions regarding international treaties, in particular a treaty that relates to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973. If any members are interested in that process or are considering making a submission, they might like to see me later and I will provide them with information from that committee.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Kindergartens: funding

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

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

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

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

**By Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan)
(349 signatures).**

Laid on table.

Rail: Altona loop service

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the proposed new train timetable will cut service to Altona loop and the Altona-Seaholme community in four ways:

the Altona loop will lose direct access to the city loop;

the Altona loop will lose all of its express trains;

services will be reduced from 20 to 22-minute intervals during peak periods; and

outside peak periods the service will be reduced to a shuttle so passengers will have to change trains.

The Altona and Seaholme communities do not need cuts; they greatly need improved public transport services.

The petitioners therefore request the provision of public transport improvements, not cuts. The petitioners request that the proposed Altona loop service cuts be rejected.

**By Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan)
(1730 signatures).**

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan).

Blackburn Primary School: funding

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the petition of Blackburn Primary School community members and/or residents draws to the attention of the house that the Blackburn Primary School funding for its modernisation project be increased to incorporate our special factors that have been approved in principle at a recent design development cost plan briefing at Treasury Place. The initial funding was \$3 848 415 but now falls short to include our approved special factors required to successfully complete the building project.

The petitioners therefore request that the subsequent realistic cost assessment of the project (inclusive of all the special factors now approved in principle to the value of \$1 012 979) bringing the total funds required to \$4 861 394.

**By Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan)
(197 signatures).**

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's reports on —

Facilitating Renewable Energy Development, April 2011.

Problem-Solving Approaches to Justice, April 2011.

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 —

Government Response to the Family and Community Development Committee's Report on the Adequacy and Future Directions of Public Housing in Victoria.

Government Response to the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee's Report on Farmers' Markets.

Special Investigations Monitor — Report 2009–10, pursuant to section 39 of the Crimes (Controlled Operations) Act 2004 in relation to Victoria Police.

Statutory Rule under the Building Act 1993 — No. 14.

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

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Defibrillators: public access

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — It is estimated that more than 3500 Victorians experience a cardiac arrest each year, with around 500 occurring in a public place such as a shopping centre or sporting venue. With most deaths from heart attacks occurring before a person reaches hospital, access to a defibrillator can mean the difference between life and death.

A study of incidents at the MCG and the Shrine of Remembrance showed that out of 28 victims of sudden cardiac arrest, 86 per cent left the venue alive, having received assistance from a defibrillator. Ideally defibrillators would be located in schools and made available to families with children suffering, in particular, long QT syndrome. Unfortunately, with each defibrillator unit costing around \$4500, schools are limited in their capacity to pay for such equipment.

Through the Heartstart program the Rotary Club of Williamstown aims to provide defibrillators to families recommended by the children's hospital and provide an auto defibrillator to each primary school in the club's area. The group is currently running a pilot project which will place auto defibrillators in five Hobsons Bay primary schools and five secondary schools in the city of Wyndham.

The rollout of public access defibrillators was also acknowledged as a priority by the previous government, which supported the installation of over 150 public access defibrillators at shopping centres and other large public facilities across Victoria. This \$500 000 commitment followed Labor's successful installation of defibrillators in over 20 public venues through the state, including at the airport, the shrine, Healesville Sanctuary, train stations and sporting centres. The Minister for Health must commit to provide funding to install many more defibrillators at major public access points throughout the state.

National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — Today is National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day, which is particularly important as young people make up a considerable number of those who are homeless in our community. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 45 per cent of those who are recognised as homeless are under the age of 24. These figures alone outline why it is important that we recognise the challenge of youth homelessness as a specific aspect of the broader challenges to reduce homelessness in Victoria.

The coalition government is getting on with the job of meeting that challenge. As minister I have been working closely with the sector to improve on what was left behind by the previous government — a toothless strategy that had no buy-in from those who work closely with the homeless. As well as this, I took to the election a key commitment to deliver real outcomes for homeless young people by developing three youth foyers and five work and learning centres. These youth foyers will provide targeted assistance by providing accommodation in conjunction with opportunities for work and learning and other supports that will assist young people to build a better life for themselves and avoid the trap of falling into recurring homelessness.

I commend those in the sector who work so tirelessly to support those most disadvantaged young people in our community and look forward to working proactively with them.

Frankston North: men's shed

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I bring to the attention of the house the Frankston North men's shed, which is due to open shortly. Whilst funding was provided by the Brumby government, Frankston City Council and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, this dream would not have become a reality without the support of a dedicated team of

volunteers including John Holmes, Ray Smith, Reg Swinnerton, William Kelly, John Waters, Ray Sheerin, John Dennis and Alan Chapman, to name a few.

The Frankston North men's shed will become a place for companionship and connectedness, a place of learning and giving and a safe place for men from all walks of life. I wish them well with their future endeavours.

Men's sheds: funding

Mr TARLAMIS — I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the federal government on its recent announcement that men's sheds and community-based organisations across the country can again apply for up to \$10 000 through the second round of the Australian government's shed development program. This round of funding will give community groups an opportunity to establish new sheds or improve existing sheds. The first funding round assisted 20 men's sheds and recognised their valuable contribution to improving men's health and wellbeing.

World Autism Awareness Day

Mr TARLAMIS — On another matter, World Autism Awareness Day was held on the weekend. It is essential that people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are able to participate in the community and have equitable access to all opportunities. In order to achieve this we must raise awareness of the abilities of people with ASD so that we can become a more inclusive society. I would like to congratulate Autism Victoria as well as all the individuals, families and friends who worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the challenges faced by individuals with ASD and to recognise the valued role performed by families and carers.

Bill Pearson

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I wish to acknowledge the retirement of Cr Bill Pearson of Cardinia Shire Council, who was a councillor for the Bunyip ward from November 2005 until March 2011. Bill had previously served as a councillor for the Pakenham shire. He was and remains a strong advocate for his community. His legacy includes the Bunyip Auditorium and Stadium and the Thankyou Firies event, a tribute to local firefighters following the Black Saturday bushfires. Bill is a man of integrity, and I wish him and his family well in their future endeavours.

Susanne La Fontaine

Mr O'DONOHUE — I wish to acknowledge the recent retirement of Susanne La Fontaine. Susanne was my electorate officer from my election to this place in 2006 until the end of January this year. Sue began her career working for Premier Bolte. She spent 20 years variously working for the department of education, for TAFE and then for Cameron Boardman, a former MLC for Chelsea Province. The role of an electorate officer is a demanding and at times stressful one. I thank Susanne for her dedication and loyalty and wish her and Kevin all the best for their future.

Monbulk Rangers Soccer Club

Mr O'DONOHUE — Last Friday night I had the privilege of participating in the turning on of the training lights at the Moores Road recreation reserve, Monbulk. I wish to congratulate Ms Lisa Doolan and all associated with the Monbulk Rangers Soccer Club on their energy and enthusiasm. I wish them well in using this valuable resource, which will enable the new synthetic pitch to be used after hours for training and for matches.

Floods: Mildura electorate

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — Today I wish to commend the Mildura Rural City Council for its speedy response to the damage to homes and businesses caused by the extreme flooding events in northern Victoria. I refer to the \$8.2 million program the council has implemented to address drainage issues without waiting for help from state and federal governments.

The council's actions are in stark contrast to those of the local Assembly member, Mr Crisp, who has sought to take political advantage from the heartache resulting from the damage by inviting criticisms of the council to be sent to his electorate office. The truth is that because The Nationals are now in coalition with the Liberal government Mr Crisp has lost his former whipping boy, the state government, and has now turned instead to a new whipping boy, the Mildura Rural City Council, to cover his own lacklustre performance.

Health: palliative care

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — At a recent meeting with Palliative Care Victoria I gained an insight as to how well received the coalition government's strengthening of palliative care services has been. The coalition government will provide an additional \$8.6 million each year for the next four years, a total of \$34.4 million. This funding will

improve support for carers and play a direct role in enhancing the quality of life of people with a terminal diagnosis.

Palliative Care Victoria defines its service as promoting the quality of life of people with a terminal illness and their families. Its vision is to provide optimal palliative care for Victorians when and where they need it. The World Health Organisation's definition of palliative care is that it is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems of a life-threatening illness through prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

In Victoria over 18 000 Victorians receive palliative care annually, with 85 per cent of those being cancer patients. Inpatient stays average 13.5 days, and the average for community palliative care is 116 days. In Victoria we have 39 community, 31 inpatient and 19 consultancy providers and 6 statewide services: Palliative Care Victoria, Paediatric Palliative Care, Very Special Kids, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, the Motor Neurone Disease Association of Victoria and the Victorian HIV Consultancy.

Antonine College: St Joseph campus, Pascoe Vale South

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — On Monday, 21 March, I attended the blessing and opening of St Joseph campus hall at the Antonine College in Pascoe Vale South. The new campus is another important milestone for the Antonine sisters, who strive to give their students every opportunity to aspire to a rewarding professional career on completion of their studies.

Monsignor Joe Takchi conducted the ceremony of the blessing, and one of the guest speakers was the Honourable Christine Campbell, the member for Pascoe Vale in the Assembly. The sisters can be justifiably proud of this wonderful achievement, in particular the principal, Sister Daad El-Azzi.

Cultural Diversity Week

Mr ELASMAR — On Saturday, 26 March, the launch of the Persistence and Existence exhibition was hosted by Return to Anatolia and Yarra Plenty Regional Library. This was part of Cultural Diversity Week. I congratulate the organisers of this excellent and well-attended exhibition.

Ron Gleeson

Mr ELASMAR — On another matter, it is my sad duty to inform the house that Ron Gleeson passed away in Alphington on 22 March 2011. When I was the mayor and a councillor of the City of Darebin I often used to see him in the gallery at question time. He was active in local politics all his life and a councillor for about 36 years. He was a gentleman to everybody, regardless of their politics. Ron is sadly missed by his community.

Bruce Hamilton

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — The funeral and celebration of the life of Mr Bruce Hamilton was held yesterday. Bruce Hamilton served as Auditor-General of Victoria from 1970 to 1977 after a lifetime of service. He was born in Bendigo in 1916. Mr Hamilton originally joined the Audit Office in 1941 as a financial auditor after studying accountancy through correspondence in the hard years following the Great Depression. Across that period he served with distinction during a period of great change within the auditing profession.

As Auditor-General, Mr Hamilton led the increasing professionalisation of public sector auditing in Victoria and the beginnings of a new perspective on independence — for example, he introduced the regular rotation of auditors across districts and entities to maintain a healthier distance from the agencies and departments they audited. Mr Hamilton's tenure was notable for the introduction of electronic data auditing to keep up with the new reliance of our public sector on large computerised systems. This innovation is important to recognise. Today's Victorian Auditor-General's Office continues to maintain a computerised data audit team, although it no longer works on the huge, slow mainframe computers in the basements of buildings, as Mr Hamilton's auditors did in the 1970s. The other innovation introduced by Mr Hamilton was an increased focus on public authorities outside departments, turning the lens of public scrutiny on water authorities, trusts and colleges, and broadening the net of accountability.

Mr Hamilton leaves two daughters, Lynette and Ann, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, to whom I express great sympathy.

Floods: Grampians

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — The Liberal-Nationals coalition government has overlooked the need for urgent flood repair works and support for

communities in the Grampians. Eighty per cent of the Grampians National Park remains closed, and accommodation providers report reduced business in the order of 25 per cent.

On 13 January this year Halls Gap recorded 66 millimetres of rain between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., following 134 millilitres on Tuesday, 11 January. The substantial damage caused by this downpour closed the Grampians National Park and caused widespread damage across the region. This damage is significant. The recovery effort has been amazing, and I would like to congratulate all involved. Many members of the community are putting in countless hours to bring about a speedy recovery. However, more needs to be done and the community needs assistance.

The Liberal-Nationals coalition government announced the other day a \$6 million package to help Wilsons Promontory reopen in time for Easter. While this is welcome, and this is a very wonderful part of the state for people to visit over the Easter break, the Grampians has not received funding or support similar to that received by Wilsons Promontory to assist with its recovery. Ted Baillieu's Liberal-Nationals coalition government has turned its back on the people of the Grampians and those who visit it. Tourism is incredibly important to the local economy, and the government needs to develop a strategy to increase visitor numbers while repair works are under way.

Australian Coastal Councils Conference

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Last week I attended the Australian Coastal Councils Conference, Speaking Out for Coastal Regions, which was organised by the Australian Coastal Society and the National Sea Change Taskforce. It was attended by coastal researchers and members of local government from all around Australia.

The conference began with a research forum on the Monday looking at the national perspective, planning for resilience, financial adaptation, coastal communities, risks and the economic issues that are facing coastal communities all around Australia.

This follows the release in July last year of *A 10-point Plan for Coastal Australia — Towards a Sustainable Future for Our Coast* by the National Sea Change Taskforce. Its preface states:

86 per cent of all Australians live along the coast yet the major challenges facing the nation's coastal communities are not being properly addressed.

Continuing growth and development is placing the coastal environment at risk. Coastal communities are at risk from the

impact of climate change. They are also at the forefront of having to deal with the impact of Australia's ageing population.

This was an excellent conference, and I encourage members to familiarise themselves with the 10-point plan for coastal Australia and look out for the ongoing work of the National Sea Change Taskforce.

Gordon Institute of TAFE: strategic plan

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — Last Thursday I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Gordon Institute of TAFE's 2011–2013 strategic plan by the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Honourable Peter Hall. At that launch there were a number of distinguished guests, including Mr Brian Williamson, the chair of the Gordon Institute's board of directors; fellow board members; Mr Grant Sutherland, the chief executive officer; some of my state and federal parliamentary colleagues; and representatives of the City of Greater Geelong and regional shires.

As highlighted by Grant Sutherland, the Gordon Institute's operations have grown by 56.7 per cent over the last five years, and this is one of the reasons why it was successful in being awarded the 2010 Victorian Large Training Provider of the Year Award.

The strategic plan itself is an excellent document — I have read it — which sets out four strategic priorities, being future delivery methodology, youth, advanced qualifications, and business building. The document then fleshes out the Gordon Institute's vision, which is 'to be the first choice in our markets and the leader in our field', mission and values, which I found particularly instructive and thought could be applied to many organisations. Those values are taking responsibility, always being positive, showing respect and stepping up and taking a risk.

I would also like to congratulate the Gordon Institute on its excellent contribution in providing jobs in Geelong and support the coalition's continued commitment to the provision of TAFE education in Victoria.

EMPLOYMENT: GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes that the Australian dollar is at a record high against the US dollar and against the currencies of most of our other major trading partners and that Victorian businesses and families are seeing the pressures rise on their job security as a consequence and calls on the Baillieu-Ryan government to demonstrate any plans it may have to —

- (a) save and grow jobs in agriculture and manufacturing which it claims are its top priority, and in particular what it is doing to save the jobs being shed by National Foods in Campbellfield and Simpson;
- (b) grow jobs onshore in skills, particularly as it spent its time in opposition trashing our state's reputation in India;
- (c) grow jobs in ICT, or is it simply relying on a business-as-usual approach;
- (d) grow jobs in financial services, particularly as it has scrapped the role of a designated financial services portfolio to promote Victoria;
- (e) grow jobs in tourism, as it has pledged to reduce the very government advertising that is so critical with our strong dollar;
- (f) enable Regional Development Victoria to exercise its key job creation function without the economic development and job creation functions taken from it by the general order; and
- (g) determine a jobs target for Victoria.

As the motion says, we on this side of the house have grave concerns that the global economy is moving in a particular direction and that the state of Victoria, while a very strong economy with a very skilled workforce, dynamic businesses and good foundations, is at risk of drifting unless there is strong action from the government.

I listened with great interest to the Governor's speech and the proposals mentioned in it. I have read through many of the policy documents of the new government to get a sense of its plan to take Victoria forward and bring about jobs.

This motion starts with an observation on the strength of the Australian dollar. It is an important observation. The reason it is such an important observation, and I think the first point goes to this, is the government has put forward its two key areas for jobs, which is a legitimate thing for the government to do — it is very John McEwen — and they are agriculture and manufacturing.

The agriculture sector is vital to our economy; it always has been. We have, and have always had, an advantage in this country in having very innovative and vibrant family farms. I have always experienced the advantages and disadvantages of climate. Coming from a dairying background, the advantage is that we do not need to put our cows into stables in winter, but we also have fairly erratic weather patterns. More insidious for us, I guess, is the tyranny of distance.

I could go through Manning Clark's *History of Australia* and refrigeration and all it has done, but the reality is that our agricultural sector faces unbelievably strong competition, particularly from the US, the European Union and places like Japan and trading partners which all have protection policies that not only make it hard for our agricultural products to be exported but also often make us vulnerable to dumping from those economies.

Despite all of that, if we go back to May 2008, the American dollar was A98 cents. If we go to May 2009, the US dollar was A60 cents. If we go to May 2010, the US dollar was A92 cents, and if we go to May 2011 — and I am predicting what it will be in a month's time — I would guess the American dollar would certainly be north of A\$1.04.

Mr Barber — Want to lay some bets on the money market?

Mr LENDERS — I am a mere observer. I have far less concern than I did last year on the first Tuesday in May about the state of the dollar, but I would be so bold as to predict that it will certainly not go down until the cash rate in the US, the eurozone, Japan, Korea and various other places starts going up.

In that scenario the government legitimately has as part of its agenda a need to support agriculture and manufacturing, but the most significant thing facing Victoria today is an escalating dollar in that sphere. I guess the first thing that we are seeking to do is to find out from the government what its plan is with agriculture and manufacturing to address this rising dollar. No matter what plans and what rhetoric the government has on this, I suggest this is an immediate issue and that the government needs to discuss one on one with multiple companies and farming organisations what it can do as a government — without a command economy and without trying to regulate everything to death — to leverage and assist in dealing with this amazing situation that we have with our floating currency.

The other thing that is particularly significant here — and I have already talked about agriculture — is manufacturing. One of the privileges I have had in my time as a minister and as an MP has been to go out and meet with many of our manufacturing companies in Victoria, particularly some of the regional manufacturing companies. I can recall going to Ararat to visit a successful auto manufacturing company, AME Systems, which manages to supply the Australian market with and export automotive component parts. When you talk to a company like that which employs

100 people in regional Victoria you begin to understand some of the dilemmas such companies face. They deal with all the issues. Undoubtedly we will come to the stage where every time you get a niche or an advantage in a particular area another economy will undercut you.

The manufacturing sector has seen the clothing, textile and footwear industries shed thousands of jobs in the northern suburbs of Melbourne and places like Wangaratta in north-eastern Victoria. Our manufacturing sector continues to do battle, whether it be against the Thai government and its attempts to poach manufacturing plants out of Victoria to Thailand or whether it is other poaching attempts that come from so many governments in our region. We are constantly under the hammer to maintain our manufacturing and automotive jobs, and all of those industries are under even more pressure now that the Australian dollar is at its current strength.

It is interesting that the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade is in the chamber, because we on this side of the house are asking what, if any, plan the Baillieu-Ryan government has — other than its rhetoric that it cares about manufacturing — to address the immediate issues of companies, particularly in regional Victoria, that are under the hammer as manufacturing faces the dilemmas of a strong dollar. If we go around the world and look at the gross domestic product in US dollars per head of population, at the top of the range is Lichtenstein where it is \$60 000, \$70 000 or \$90 000 or some ridiculous amount, but at the other end of the spectrum in somewhere like Zimbabwe it is in the order of US\$90 per head. When you look at those statistics you know there will always be an economy to which labour can be moved offshore at a cheaper rate. Doing nothing means we lose jobs, so a manufacturing plan is something of great importance.

I am pleased the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade is in the house, because I recall that in the three months that I was the Acting Minister for Industry and Trade when we were in government we were taunted constantly by Mr Dalla-Riva over the whereabouts of our manufacturing plan. As Mr Dalla-Riva knows, during those three months we delivered one.

Hon. R. A. Dalla-Riva interjected.

Mr LENDERS — We delivered one, Mr Dalla-Riva. I was the acting minister for three months and we delivered one in the depths of the global financial crisis. Whether Mr Dalla-Riva liked it or not, it was a plan; it was not rhetoric. It was a plan that

industry signed off on and one that started delivering jobs.

Moving on to the government's lofty rhetoric about agriculture and manufacturing — and they are critical industries for Victoria but not growth industries — the now government when in opposition would gleefully, I would submit, put forward how jobs were being lost in these areas. I draw the minister's attention to issues like the Robert Bosch Australia plant in Clayton, which has lost more automotive jobs overseas. I draw his attention to a couple of issues mentioned in the motion such as the National Foods factories in Simpson and Campbellfield, which are losing jobs. These are the realities of global and economic change. Governments cannot be expected to fix every problem in every single company immediately; however, there is a pattern: a government elected on a policy of fixing the problems needs to address them with urgency. The government needs more than rhetoric and public service speak, or, as I used to call it, DIIRD (Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development) talk — undoubtedly it is now DBI (Department of Business and Innovation) talk. You need more than a sectoral consultation plan. The government needs to do some hands-on work if it is going to start saving some of these jobs.

I have talked about the area that the government has focused on, which is agriculture and manufacturing. I wish to focus now on the National Foods factory closures, a matter I recently raised in the adjournment. National Foods has announced that by 2013 it will shed approximately 133 jobs, of which about 47 will be in Simpson with the rest in Campbellfield. What is the government doing about these closures? Campbellfield, which is in the northern suburbs of Melbourne — an area dear to the heart of the Acting President and dear to a lot of people's hearts — is an area that can do with more jobs. It is an area where the wholesale market is under some threat from this government, an area, particularly in the inner northern suburbs, that traditionally has had a high exposure to manufacturing, and an area where some municipalities are particularly innovative. I refer to Whittlesea in particular, which tries to match urban growth with job creation. But Campbellfield, which is the heart of the northern suburbs, has now lost jobs in manufacturing, dairying and processing.

Simpson is even more problematic. It is in the middle of the Heytesbury settlement and has a population of about 800. Former soldiers, as settler farmers, moved out there during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and up until the early 1970s, when the last of the Heytesbury estate was allocated. The Simpson community is reliant

primarily on farming, but the manufacturing add-on is exemplified by National Foods. Jobs have been lost in Simpson.

The government was elected on the basis of fixing the problems. It was critical of everything that the previous government did, and it is now in the government's hands to address the specific issues in Simpson and Campbellfield, so my question to the government is this: other than rhetoric, what is the government doing? The government attacked every sectoral plan that the previous government had, so what is it now doing for those jobs?

I will put on my shadow agriculture spokesperson hat. These jobs in Simpson are not urban jobs. They are held by people in a rural community of 800, and many of them are second jobs for farming families who are trying to keep the next generation on the land. These are assembly-line, processing-plant jobs in a food distribution company. There are great examples, such as Bonlac Foods in Gippsland and a range of others. These are the jobs of farming families — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — You will have your chance. We are looking at solutions. To look at what the previous government did, Luv-a-Duck in Nhill, in the north-west of Victoria, is an example of what a government can do. Members of The Nationals and rural Liberals with Victorian Farmers Federation backgrounds may just stand by and ask what to do about consolidation, but let us look at what Luv-a-Duck did in Nhill. It was a community with a declining population and rising unemployment in which farming families found it hard to find the full employment they were looking for. The town of 2000 people was in decline. The Bracks Labor government, through Regional Development Victoria and in consultation with the Hindmarsh shire and local businesses, found a way, using a Regional Infrastructure Development Fund grant, to get an employer to go into Nhill and set up Luv-a-Duck. It is a strange name for a company that slaughters thousands of ducks a day, but I love eating them. With Luv-a-Duck there were almost 100 manufacturing jobs in the town, and in a town of 2000 people that means real jobs, which Simpson could do with at the moment.

In addition there were even more jobs on the individual farms around Nhill. Farms were housing the ducks, putting the grain in place and dealing with it. Things matched perfectly. It was taken away from the outer fringes of Melbourne, where there is congestion and people do not want broiler chicken farms and poultry-broiling industries. The company went to

regional Victoria because there was a collaborative approach. In the case of Hindmarsh shire and Nhill, a proactive government helped the community find the sorts of jobs that Simpson has lost with National Foods going. To move on we need action rather than rhetoric.

I move on to point (b) of the motion. I have talked about where the government says the issues are — that is, agriculture and manufacturing. They are noble issues that Sir John McEwen was pursuing in the 1960s and 1970s and the government is still pursuing now. I turn next to some of the emerging industries that seem to have dropped off the radar. If we talk about growth industries in Victoria in which new jobs are created — each year over many years 100 000 jobs have been created in this state — where do they come from?

Firstly, there is the issue of skills, and I am pleased that the new government has kept a skills portfolio. The Minister for Higher Education and Skills is very good; I think he is one of the better ministers in this government. The challenge for the new government will be — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I take up Mr Drum's interjection about the member for Bendigo East in the Legislative Assembly and about fixing her problems. Victoria has led the country in jobs growth with overseas students. That is a fact. It has done so because of the actions of the previous Victorian government and federal governments, both Labor and Liberal, to generate job creation in educational services. We saw strong growth with amazing numbers of enrolments in undergraduate and postgraduate courses at our eight universities. There was also growth in some of the tertiary areas, such as hairdressing and cooking, that needed tighter regulation, and the federal and state governments dealt with that. There was extraordinarily strong growth, assisted by an Australian dollar that at the time was weaker vis-a-vis the US, Japanese and other currencies. We saw an activist government that created extraordinarily large jobs growth in Victoria because of overseas students.

One of the largest sources of overseas students was the Indian subcontinent. When there were issues there, some members of the previous opposition started dog-whistling about racism in Australia. They did all the things they could to undermine a growing economy, and now the Australian and Victorian governments need to spend a lot of time working on the extraordinary community of India to bring those students back to Australia to create jobs. The current government does not appear to have any new skills or

jobs plans of its own. It is business as usual. The government is trying to repair the damage done in India by cheap political point-scoring in Victoria.

The issue that comes up in the debate today is the question of what the government is doing to address the growth in skills. Let us not kid ourselves — skills is a giant growth area. In my electorate you can go through Swinburne University and see its dependence on overseas students, you can go through TAFE at Holmesglen and see the extraordinary number of overseas students or you can look at just the Australian students going through those institutions. The state of Victoria has the highest number of Australians of any state who are completing year 12 or an equivalent, and we also have strong uptake in the skills area. We have a strong foundation, with challenges because of a strong Australian dollar and perceptions of Victoria in India. What I am asking is: what is the government's plan to generate jobs in this growth area, other than to criticise the previous government?

I turn next to jobs in ICT, which is an area that became very near and dear to my heart. It is one of the three strong generators of new jobs in Victoria. I am disappointed that my friend Mr Rich-Phillips, as the Minister for Technology, is not in the chamber now. During the global financial crisis we saw ICT jobs in Victoria grow. Why did that happen? It was fundamentally because we had a skilled workforce, good business operators, a good regulatory environment and a government and a department whose members would go out there and encourage the growth. We were the strongest advocates for the national broadband network (NBN) to be brought in, because of the opportunities it would offer, with ICT jobs being one immediate opportunity but the broader one being what it would do for regional Victoria.

If there is an NBN in regional Victoria, jobs can be created in regional towns. I have been to a photography studio in Horsham, Horsham Colour, which can employ 70 people in the town because the broadband speed enables it to compete with Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Singapore and various other places. Not only does ICT create jobs but the ICT platform enables a town such as Horsham to employ 70 people in a photography studio. ICT is not something that should be allowed to sit or drift. It is something which people in government have to roll up their sleeves for and work on to encourage companies to come to it.

From listening to the Governor's speech and to Mr Rich-Phillips's answers to questions in this house, it seems that all this government does on ICT is announce grants that were funded by the previous government —

presumably out of some black hole — or programs that were negotiated by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, Victorian business offices or the previous government.

ICT requires nurturing, ICT requires competition and ICT requires the government to actually put Victoria first. We have a very aggressive state government just elected in New South Wales that is doing what a New South Wales government should do, which is try to bring jobs into New South Wales — that is what it is claiming to do — and Premier O'Farrell has made it public: he is out to grab financial sector, ICT and major events jobs out of Victoria.

Mr Barber — Send him the grand prix!

Mr LENDERS — That is for you to suggest, Mr Barber, but what I would suggest to the government, which was elected to 'fix the problems', which is what it calls the issues, now has a politically friendly government north of the Murray that has ripped up the no-competition agreement where states do not use taxpayers money to grab jobs from the next state into their own. A state only uses investment facilitation to bring jobs into Australia. Barry O'Farrell has ripped that up, and Mr Baillieu here in Victoria has questioned its validity. We now have a regime where two coalition governments think it is okay to spend taxpayers money trying to poach jobs from one part of Australia and take them to another rather than having a coordinated approach to try to get jobs in from overseas.

What we have with ICT is a good foundation. We have a good industry and we have a minister whom I have respect for, but the challenge going forward is not just to drift but to be proactive — to roll up the sleeves and go out there and get the jobs. Otherwise there will be no jobs for young Victorians going forward.

I move on now to the financial services portfolio — again one of the three big generators of jobs over the last decade. The big generators are skills, ICT and financial services. During the global financial crisis ICT jobs in Victoria grew. I know Mr Dalla-Riva took great pride in question time in saying that when I was Minister for Financial Services I did not have any acts to administer. I say to Mr Dalla-Riva that I did not. I specifically asked the Premier for the financial services portfolio so that, to generate jobs, I could leverage off my role as Treasurer when meeting with financial institutions to put the word in for them to come down to Victoria.

We have some very innovative banks. We have the ANZ, which has turned its efforts into going global, being a bank in Asia and generating jobs. We have the National Australia Bank, which is a Melbourne-based bank. We have innovative niche banks like Members Equity, which is one that the current Treasurer trashed and caused a run on during the global financial crisis. Not only do we have innovative banks, we have organisations like Medibank Private and HBA, and we have Bendigo Bank. We have so many niche, innovative financial institutions here. We have the superannuation funds, all of them based in Melbourne, and we have seen job generation.

Now we have a new government in New South Wales that I suspect Mr Baillieu & Co. will not criticise and it is out to restore Sydney as the financial capital of Australia.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Again I will leave that for Mr Barber. What we have is a government that does not have a designated minister for financial services; it does not spruik for a strong, growing sector of the economy, and it has put up the white flag.

Part of the reason I am concerned about this is the last Liberal government in Victoria regarded things such as call centres and the like as unimportant, and the then Premier, Mr Kennett, actually said, ‘They are low value. Let them go to Sydney’. I paraphrase him, but that is in effect what he said. In the end, unless you chase every single financial services job down every single burrow, no matter how small — there may be only 5, 10, 15 or 20 — you do not get them.

The Baillieu government has no strategy for financial services and no designated minister for financial services. We also have a government that has just come in. Tourism, which is another of our extraordinary growth sectors, is incredibly sensitive to a strong dollar as are many other industries. While many of our electors may take great joy in a strong Australian dollar and the fact that you can go to New Zealand and find that 73 cents Australian buys you a New Zealand dollar or you can go to Europe and get probably 50-something euros for it or you can go to the UK and get whatever you get for it there, it costs all these jobs. It is great for Australian tourists to go abroad, but that does not generate any jobs. The strong dollar means that tourists coming from Japan, coming from China, which is effectively still pegged to the US, coming from Hong Kong, coming from Singapore, coming from Latin America or coming from Europe find it more expensive.

What does the new government do in tourism? Its election commitment is to cut government advertising by 25 per cent. How do we think tourism operators are going to get into the US market, the Japanese market and the growing Chinese market with any capacity to spruik Victoria when their budget has been cut by 25 per cent? The answer is that they will not, and jobs will go in regional Victoria.

Looking at the existing industries — agriculture or manufacturing — the coalition says they are important, but it has no plans to deal with jobs in Simpson or Campbellfield. The coalition has not enunciated plans to anybody, not in the Governor’s speech and not in any documents I have seen that deal with anything other than hot wind and rhetoric. Looking at the growth areas — skills, financial services and ICT — at best the coalition is cruising on the policies and plans of the previous government; at worst it is putting up the white flag to its Liberal mate in New South Wales, Barry O’Farrell, who says, ‘We have got to take back what is rightfully ours and what has gone to Victoria over the last little while’.

Probably the most vulnerable of the service industries is tourism, and the coalition is going to cut the advertising budget for tourism. Yes, coalition members thumped their chests and said it was government spin and waste, but they are going to cut government advertising by 25 per cent. I have not met many tourism operators who think that is a good idea.

I move now to the penultimate item in my motion, which takes my Luv-a-Duck example and asks how to facilitate job growth in Victoria. We have had this ideological obsession with getting rid of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund and making Regional Development Victoria an arm of The Nationals. There has been the idea that you just cannot have any legacy of Brumby Labor there, so you have to go and neuter it all and muck around with it. If you take Regional Development Victoria out of the industry department — it is where Luv-a-Duck or Toyota or another company actually goes to find investment and where people can say, ‘Here is a niche in regional Victoria’ — and you put it into the Department of Planning and Community Development, you will not get the same result. Even though that is a great department with great people, it is a department that regulates and administers grant programs, not one that rolls up its sleeves, mixes with industry and helps facilitate and leverage jobs. What we are seeing here is the gutting of a program that delivered Luv-a-Duck to Western Victoria Region.

In conclusion, what this government also does not have is a job target. People can spend a lot of time belittling targets. Looking at the whole of budget paper 3 we can see that every government department has, line by line, item by item, targets that the government has set. These are things that the public sector is held to account for.

These targets outline things that departmental secretaries and assistant secretaries have their performance bonuses measured against, things that ministers should be measured against and things that the community can hold the government accountable for. We have no target on jobs whatsoever. All the hollow rhetoric about agriculture and manufacturing, the lack of action on skills, financial services and ICT and the dismantling of the infrastructure to deliver jobs amount to nothing but hot air.

In the end the new government will be accountable for what it calls 'fixing the problems'. I thought the problem at the moment was lack of job growth because of the high dollar. That is not the government's fault, the high dollar. However, it has been responded to without having a jobs target for Melbourne, regional Victoria, the whole state or even a sector. I challenge the minister or any of the government speakers to show me a target they have for jobs. It is fine for the Minister for Agriculture to saunter into Simpson or to do a press release on his way past saying he will look into getting jobs for Simpson, but what is the target? What is the target for Western Victoria Region? What is the target for agriculture? What is the target for manufacturing? How will the government be held accountable for its efforts?

This motion is one that actually asks the government for its plans. I have made comments on what I think the economy is and what I think the government's plans are, but essentially we are asking the government for its plans. I would hope the Minister for Finance would ensure that these things are put into budget paper 3 so that they can be measured, so that there is actually a target and so that Victorians can actually say, 'The Baillieu government has a plan for agriculture, and these are the jobs it will generate. The Baillieu government has a plan for manufacturing, and these are the jobs it will generate. The Baillieu government has a plan for ICT and for financial services and for skills, and these are the jobs they will generate'. If the government comes up with that, the Victorian community, and particularly Victorian businesses, will have greater confidence. If it does not, Victorian families who see their jobs under threat and who see jobs going at Henry Bosch or National Foods or who see all those jobs under threat will have grave

reservations going forward. I commend the motion to the house.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I am refreshed by the renewed and reinvigorated attitude about Victorian finances from Mr Lenders. It is heartening to know that in opposition he has some care and concern about the state of the Victorian economy. He talked about the Australian dollar versus the greenback. It is not just the greenback, it is a number of economies around the world that feed into the way the Australian dollar ranks against the US dollar right now. He talked a bit about jobs and about National Foods, and I am going to address all those in my discussion today.

Jobs growth is one of the highest priorities the Baillieu government has. It is about generating new jobs and investment in the state of Victoria. We are confident in the resilience of Victorian industry, especially but not exclusively small and medium enterprises. While the Labor Party wants to talk up the doom and gloom of Victorian manufacturing, the coalition is excited about the opportunities to revitalise industry and generate jobs. In fact we have in this state the very first minister for manufacturing, the Honourable Richard Dalla-Riva. He is the very first minister for manufacturing; that is how seriously we take it. And happy birthday to him.

Mr Lenders — That happened in 2002.

Mr ONDARCHIE — You are still living in the past.

Mr Lenders — Yes, but you said he was the first. You are misleading the house.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mate, you were the joke of Collins Street. I would not be interrupting if I were you.

Mr Lenders — You are misleading the house. Tim Holding was minister for manufacturing back in 2002. Are you going to retract?

Mr ONDARCHIE — We have a minister for manufacturing, Mr Dalla-Riva, and he is doing a wonderful job. It is interesting, though, that Mr Lenders decided to talk about National Foods when in August 2010, under the previous government, National Foods announced an extensive review of its operations following the acquisition of Dairy Farmers back in 2008. The former government had over three months to examine what was going on at National Foods, and nothing was said, nothing was done. It is interesting now that, after 11 years, its members are suddenly concerned about the state of the Victorian economy.

After people up and down Collins Street laughed at the competency, or lack thereof, of the previous Treasurer, the Labor Party is now concerned about the Victorian economy. During my business life I lived up and down Collins Street, and I have to say the Labor Party was the joke of Collins Street.

It is interesting to note that the Labor Party is now concerned about it. The Department of Business and Innovation is working with National Foods and looking for options regarding Campbellfield and Simpson. Campbellfield is in my region, and the minister has heavily committed himself to my region. He has visited my region, he has held business round table meetings, he has visited manufacturers, he has visited small businesses, he is listening, he is concerned about it, he is acting, he is a visionary — —

Mr Lenders — It's not a fig jam factory.

Mr ONDARCHIE — There are short memories on the other side of the house. Mr Lenders talked about action rather than rhetoric. Oh, the irony of him saying action rather than rhetoric! Let us look at the Labor's spending on advertising during its last term of government. Many pony-tailed Porsche drivers on St Kilda Road have lost their jobs because of the amount of advertising money that is now responsibly not being spent by this government. It was just spin, spin, spin. We are a government that takes the outcome and works backwards from experience in a strategic and visionary way. We have experience. We do not engage in the ad hoc, slapstick, union-serving charades that we saw from the previous government.

Mr Lenders used the term 'drifters'. But the Labor Party members were the drifters of the 2000s. Mr Lenders talked about skills. He talked about Indians and international education. Under the previous government international education in this state experienced a significant downturn in demand. That resulted in financial pressures and job losses in the state of Victoria. The Labor Party blames and shoots it all home to the global financial crisis. It says, 'It was somebody else's fault other than ours'. The consistency remains — that is, the Labor Party blames somebody else.

To help stem the downward trend and to assist international education to move to a more sustainable long-term growth trajectory, we laid out in the election campaign a comprehensive agenda to revitalise the sector and help restore Victoria as a first choice destination for international students. Mr Lenders talked about the Indian community. The Indian community in my region is very supportive of this

government; it is more supportive of this government than it was the previous government.

Last night was the Australia India Business Council industry dinner. How many members of the ALP turned up to that dinner last night? I will give members a tip — the number is something less than one. Not one member of the opposition turned up to the Australia India Business Council dinner last night. The Labor Party calls itself supportive!

Mr Lenders — Actually we are paid to sit here in Parliament, not to have a free feed.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Suddenly Mr Lenders has woken up. Our approach includes national advocacy in support of a student visa program that does not unnecessarily disadvantage Victorian education providers. It makes the international student care service permanent. There are a range of regulatory reforms.

But let us be realistic: the government has inherited a situation whereby, on the basis of current data, we expect the sector to continue its downward trend for the next few years before it stabilises. There is a lot of work to do to repair the mismanagement of the last 11 years. It is a mess. There is not one hole in the bucket — dear Liza, dear Liza — there are several holes in the bucket. We can talk about the desalination plant; we can talk about the myki ticketing system; we can talk about the Victorian Funds Management Corporation that lost half a billion dollars by hedging funds against aged pensions in the US. There has been no clue from the other side about how to run state finances. We have seen them today showing feigned compassion and concern for the Victorian economy. It makes me ill.

With regard to the domestic training market, in order to underpin training delivery we have already implemented our election commitment for the allocation of concession places to diploma and advanced diploma students who hold a health-care card. That is going to attract more students and ensure that more publicly owned providers remain viable while our remediation measures are implemented.

In addition — and Mr Lenders might want to listen to this because there are fresh ideas coming from this side of the chamber — we are about to commence a review of vocational education and training fees and funding which will examine the extent to which the fee regime currently in place encourages greater participation in training. We are trying to upskill Victorians. We are trying to make Victoria the powerhouse. The Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade leads this.

Interestingly, Mr Lenders talked about the ICT market; he talked about ICT in Victoria. We are committed to making this an international ICT market. Our election policy — and I know those opposite have read it, because it is a great policy called the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Stronger Industry and More Jobs — recognises the importance of the ICT industry to Victoria's economy and to improving the delivery of government services. I know that 'government services' is a term the opposition is not familiar with. I know Victorians have not had a lot of delivery of government services over the last 11 years, but in the words of Bob Dylan, 'The times they are a-changin'.

I am reminded it was a Liberal government that installed the first minister for information technology — it was the Honourable Mark Birrell, who sat in this house. Again, the Labor Party is running behind. Where was the Labor Party between 1999 and 2010 in terms of information technology? It was probably doing advertising.

This government has a heightened focus on the financial services sector. This sector is a strong contributor to Victoria's economy. It represents around 12.5 per cent of the economy, contributing about \$36 billion to the state gross product and employing more than 110 000 people in this state. In support of our priorities of driving increased economic development, productivity and competition, which are identified in our plan about stronger industry and more jobs, we will actively assist and support financial services businesses to base themselves in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

We will review the effectiveness of the state grants program and make sure it fits with the needs of the market. In January we had already developed financial services events for G'Day USA. In March Westpac announced it is relaunching the Bank of Melbourne, with 14 new branches expected to open up through this calendar year, creating up to 800 new jobs in Victoria. In February 130 industry representatives were at a business round table co-hosted with the Carbon Market Institute and heard the latest developments in local and overseas carbon markets. We are taking this seriously. We sponsored the Melbourne Financial Services Symposium, the Melbourne International Venture Capital Conference and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. In fact just in the last sitting week of Parliament my colleague the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips announced a new data centre will be coming to Victoria.

If Mr Lenders is so concerned about the financial services in this state, where is the shadow financial

services minister? Where are all of them? Maybe they are dreaming up the next load of advertising.

Mrs Kronberg — Where is Mr Lenders?

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mr Lenders has left the house; he takes this so seriously. Complementing our activity in financial services we are developing a refocused approach to the financial services sector that will yield significant gains to the economy, not just through new investment but also through the provision of innovative and competitive financial services across the economy and the state. This approach will look to focus action on state policy leaders and will include financial and facilitative assistance, education and training, procurement, infrastructure development, taxation and the regulatory reform and advocacy required.

I have had a bit to do with economic development over my career. I have led foreign direct investment in a number of countries — the US, the UK, Japan, Indonesia, South Africa, Germany, France, Italy, Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada and, of course, here in Victoria. During that time, under the reign of the previous Labor government, we were told as a company, 'You'll never get serious foreign direct investment into Australia'. Guess what! That was wrong. We delivered significant foreign direct investment into Australia and created more jobs in Victoria, in Melbourne and throughout this country — when the government said it could not be done.

It is a good thing that the amateurs have left the playground, because it is time for serious people to do serious business, and that is what the Baillieu-led government is all about. I have held directorships of economic development organisations, and I have a clear understanding — as does this whole government — about what it takes to grow Victoria.

Tourism itself is a serious economic driver for Victoria. It contributes about \$15.8 billion directly and indirectly to the Victorian economy and employs 185 000 people across this wonderful state. It contributes \$8.6 billion directly to the Victorian economy, accounts for 3.2 per cent of gross state product and generates 105 300 jobs directly — or 4 per cent of total employment in Victoria. Tourism contributes \$7.2 billion indirectly to the Victorian economy and generates over 79 000 jobs. This coalition is committed to the target identified in tourism across Victoria. We think that over the 10-year strategy the tourism industry will be employing 225 000 people by 2016.

Despite challenges such as a historically high Australian dollar Victoria continues to perform strongly in attracting international visitors to this state. Indeed there is no better time for visitors to visit Victoria, particularly the north of Victoria, which has had significant impact from floods, and Wilsons Promontory, where we would like to see lots of tourists over the Easter period to support local economies.

The Baillieu-led government is absolutely committed to increasing its work with the business sector on innovative and new ways to attract and grow investment in Victoria, particularly with international markets. We expect growth to come from the Chinese and Indian markets. We are committed to increasing our linkages with these markets, and we have already started to demonstrate that. As much as possible this state government, through Tourism Victoria, targets high-yield investors from a range of international markets that are less influenced by cost, such as the US.

I am absolutely gobsmacked that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lenders, is not in the house.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ONDARCHIE — It is his motion. Such is his interest: more spin and more rhetoric. It is all about talk and not about action. Those on this side of the house have a genuine concern for Victoria's economy, and we will deliver the things that need to be delivered.

An honourable member — Where is the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr ONDARCHIE — Where has he gone? He has run away. He talked about having grave concern for the global economy and Victoria's economy. He talked about agribusiness and manufacturing. I am glad he has identified those two key sectors, because we take them seriously. We have a Minister for Food Security, the Honourable Peter Walsh, and we have a Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, birthday boy Richard Dalla-Riva. We believe in the whole one-on-one consultation. We are talking to business, we are talking to industry and we are talking to small business; we are a consultative and collaborative government. But where is Mr Lenders? He has gone running. There is no point in Mr Lenders running up and down Collins Street any more; people do not care about him.

It is interesting that those across on the other side talk about industry and about the automotive sector, a sector I have had a lot to do with over my career, particularly with component manufacturers, whose innovation, research and development and high skills are

centralised in Victoria. Let us talk about the green car plan. What happened to that? It has gone away. The federal government has killed the green car plan. Is it not ironic that the federal minister, Minister Carr, cares less about cars than we do? Then the federal government enacted a regulation impact statement in relation to the global technical regulations (GTR) for pedestrian safety, GTR/09, which would have decimated part of the automotive component manufacturers industry. The work experience student who put GTR/09 together had no economic clue about the impact it would have on Victorian manufacturing — such is the amateur regime in the ALP.

Mr Lenders said he put himself up to be finance minister. We all know that ministries in the ALP are decided not in the caucus room but down in West Melbourne. The ALP in West Melbourne decides who is going to get ministry positions; it does not happen in the party caucus.

I add to that our concern about the Victorian economy, the survival of jobs and improvement in manufacturing and tourism. That could be linked to the \$2.5 billion that has been pillaged from the state coffers by the federal government. That is \$2.5 billion out of the pockets of every Victorian. Where is the opposition on that? Where is the opposition on \$2.5 billion being taken out of the Victorian economy, when Victorians are demanding better services, better transport and better health? This government is already demonstrating a capacity to fix things.

The previous government supplied a garage to the Austin Hospital for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and did not supply a fit-out for it — we have fixed it; and a regional rail link that is \$900 million over budget — and we have fixed that. The holes in the bucket are bigger and bigger, Dear Liza. They have left us a mess. Mr Lenders said governments cannot be expected to fix every problem immediately. I do not know if he thinks 11 years is immediate, but after 11 years the mess continues — and we are going to fix it.

This motion has no substance, because it comes from a former Treasurer who has no substance. He is the laughing stock of Collins Street, and he is still not here. He ran away. Little Boy Lost ran out of the house once he delivered his motion. Victorians are tired of the spin and rhetoric from the other side. Thank goodness and thank God they have a Baillieu government that will lead Victoria forward.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I thought Mr Ondarchie was in full flight, but he ended abruptly.

We should be able to agree in this place that the proper role of a state government in developing jobs growth and a healthy economy is to set targets for those fundamental responsibilities of state government. The key issues a state government that wanted a healthy economy would be addressing are state responsibility for regulation, taxes, the creation of skills, the development of infrastructure, an energy system and an orderly system of land use. If a state government can get those things right, then job creation, a healthy economy and, for that matter, a healthy population should be assured.

I have reasons to agree and disagree with both previous speakers. Mr Lenders only really addressed those key issues in passing. He spent most of his time urging more facilitation of jobs and enterprises — some call it picking winners. To be more neutral, let us call it the business-facilitation approach, versus what I am arguing are the essential underpinnings of a healthy economy.

Mr Lenders said the conditions for business left by his government were in great shape, but the new government was at risk of drifting. Mr Lenders wanted to know what plan there is. I disagree with Mr Lenders that the basic underpinnings of business left by his government are sound. Most in Victoria understand that a number of those underpinnings — and I refer to them as regulation, taxes, skills, infrastructure, energy and land use — are in poor-to-middling shape, and in some cases in a complete crisis.

On the other hand I agree with Mr Lenders that it is hard to discern from the government's policy pronouncements in the run-up to the election exactly what plan or vision it has that encompasses all those important issues. Yes, there are some indications in some of the government's policies, and I have read them all, but is there a comprehensive vision for Victoria on those key issues of regulation, taxes, skills, infrastructure, energy and land use? No, it is not possible to say that from looking at the government's policy pronouncements.

It is of course impossible to talk about any of those things now without considering the overarching concern of climate change. It is now impossible to have this sort of discussion, or very much discussion about anything at all, without having an overarching plan for how to address climate change, in terms of not just reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also what will prove to be ultimately the much more expensive part of

the equation, which is adapting to climate change. As we move along, the costs of adapting to climate change will dwarf the costs of reducing our emissions.

I have some agreement and disagreement with both sides of the argument, as they have appeared so far. I would like to go through a number of these issues. Regulation is an important issue. Most people see it as a negative and want to get rid of it, but when we address one of the specific issues that Mr Lenders raised, which is job growth in the skills market, we see that lack of regulation has let us down. Mr Lenders asserted that the government, while in opposition, talked down Victoria in India. That was not the dominant factor. In fact it was the failure to properly regulate our local training industry for international students that ultimately damaged Victoria's brand.

Any government would have known this, because at any time during the last four years members would have seen students protesting on the steps of Parliament about how they were being ripped off in their courses. It was there for any politician to see that we had a problem with our brand, and that the problem was the lack of strong regulation of our training institutions, specifically of those targeting international students, and some of the fly-by-night operations.

It is a bit rich for Mr Lenders to now say it was the opposition that damaged the brand when the previous government had four years of warning about the problems. For that matter, the now Chief Commissioner of Police did not do us any favours either when he suggested that if there were attacks on Indian students on the public transport system, then they needed to hide their iPods and make themselves not so conspicuous.

Regulation is important, including when it comes to that all-important energy system, an energy system that has to be rapidly adapted to the needs of a zero-emissions economy. You can see the importance of regulation again in the Auditor-General's report on facilitating renewable energy development, which was tabled this morning. While the government had a number of aspirational targets for the uptake of renewable energy in the Victorian grid and some mechanisms to achieve those targets, the Auditor-General reported that there was not much behind those targets. There was not much in the way of assessment or regulatory impact study and there was not much in the way of market analysis either that would ensure that we would get consistent uptake of renewable energy into the grid.

Frankly, in relation to solar energy, we know that politicians like nothing more than to have their

photograph taken next to some sort of solar facility. It is addictive to them, because they know that most Australians understand we need more renewable energy. However, an Auditor-General's report tabled this morning shows an almost complete failure, on the part of at least the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Premier and Cabinet to achieve the sorts of targets that the government, for its political needs, was throwing up rapidly. The exception to that is Sustainability Victoria, which has been doing this for a long time. While it would like to be given more resources, according to the Auditor-General it manages to deliver all its targets.

While on this question of how to get a zero emissions energy system and ensuring that energy is there and competing for business, the Auditor-General noted that for the government to have achieved some of its large-scale solar investments, which it certainly wanted everybody to know about in the run-up to the election, we would have been looking at something like 1300 megawatts of solar energy facilities, the cost of which could have been around \$8 billion.

In addition, there would have been substantial augmentations to the transmission grid — which is very much a state government responsibility and a challenge for this incoming government — of an additional up to \$2.9 billion. As the Auditor-General noted, this would have constituted one of the largest infrastructure programs undertaken in Victoria. In fact it would have been a lot bigger than the desalination plant, and we all see how well they did on that one.

What confidence can we have that the government would have achieved this level of infrastructure development, albeit through incentives and facilitation? The Auditor-General said that it had Buckley's chance. Would we have been worse off with the previous government, which had a plan but no real way of achieving it, or are we better off with this new government, which does not actually have a plan for the uptake of renewable energy into the grid? Either way, the basic underpinnings of our economy are at risk.

I will talk about taxes, although Mr Lenders did not. The Greens are apparently the only party backing some major reform of taxes as written up in the Henry report. We seem to be the only party in Australia that is asking for that Henry review process to get back on track and to introduce the kind of major reforms to state taxes that may actually make a difference. I am not talking about tinkering around the edges; I am talking about real reforms. Ken Henry was talking about real reforms, but now he is gone. The Henry review is in fact the longest resignation letter for a public servant in Australian

history, because it is clear that neither Labor nor the Liberal Party, at any level, has the guts to take it up. So much for that.

Ms Pennicuik — They're having another taxation summit.

Mr BARBER — Correct, Ms Pennicuik, they are having another tax summit, but only because Rob Oakeshott, the federal member for Lyne, forced them into it. Where is the drive for economic reform in Australia? It is not to be located in the Liberal or Labor parties.

In relation to skills, I welcome the government's announcement that it will review TAFE fees to determine whether they are providing an impediment to the uptake and development of skills in our population. There is no question that skills are one of the best ways to grow an economy. The proof of this is that whenever someone upskills they earn a higher income because their bosses are prepared to pay them more because they are a productive asset for their boss. That is basic accumulation of a labour force, in the classic sense of factor accumulation: capital, labour and knowledge.

These are not the major things that a state government does — a state government does these other things that I am referring to — but skills are important, and the state government has an important role in that specific area. It is entirely possible that the government has got it wrong with its pricing policies for TAFE courses, because the individual has to pay those costs up-front while the employer gets the benefit down the line. It is possible that we have an inefficient system there. I always liked the free education system. I imagine most frontbenchers in the Baillieu and Gillard governments were the beneficiaries of a free education. I paid at least one semester of higher education contribution scheme fees and paid full fees for my master of business administration course. However, one needs to go only a few years above my and Mr Rich-Phillips's generation to find that they all benefited from a free education, which they now say is not economically viable.

I have already spent some time addressing the energy system. This is a major challenge, and it is a major challenge for the Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr O'Brien, because despite various attempts to send that area of regulation off to the commonwealth and make it Martin Ferguson's problem as the federal Minister for Resources and Energy, it continues to be Michael O'Brien's problem.

In relation to infrastructure, transport is a dominant factor. We will debate the metropolitan public transport

system in a motion to be moved immediately after this, but from the point of view of business, particularly of the agriculture and food processing industries that Mr Lenders wanted to highlight, freight is key, and freight was a major failure of the previous government. This was another example where it set targets with no clear plan as to how it was going to achieve them. Then — surprise, surprise! — it went backwards.

The government may have some good stories to tell around its development facilitation activities. This is somewhat of a mystery to me. We never quite found out from the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development exactly what the government did or exactly how much money it was giving — Mr Rich-Phillips is looking even more po-faced than usual as I make that statement — so facilitation, not to mention competition with other states, becomes a black box; it is a matter of alchemy as to how these jobs are created or facilitated. That is another reason I like to go back to the fundamentals of business and a healthy economy and draw any government's attention to those areas.

We also have some real problems in land use planning. Mr Guy may be full of energy, but he has by no means cracked those problems. I am not yet hearing from him a clear articulation of what he thinks the problem is, but I can tell the house that it is the problem of an ever-sprawling city that is eating up some of our most productive farmland. It is the problem of the drivers of rural land use in some cases being residential or hobby farm development and in other cases being major changes to agricultural uses in given regions.

For that matter, we could look at wind farms, which is one of the major forms of investment coming down the line for rural Victoria. It is not hard to predict where it will go: solar will be north of the Divide and wind will be largely in western Victoria, with some opportunities in central Gippsland. Yet the government has just slapped down a policy which will choke off the majority of that development and will run into billions of dollars. The major driver for that is the federal renewable energy target, which is already in place.

Returning to land use, we have a major issue to come to grips with, and that is the competing demands that will be put on land over the next few decades for the production of food alongside the production of biofuels alongside the use of that land for carbon sequestration. Those are three massive semitrailers that are heading for us all, and if we do not find ourselves a space and set a clear plan for that, we are going to have the worst of all worlds. You only need to look at the recently released report from VicHealth, which assesses at

different scenarios for providing Victoria with its healthy food needs, to see that within fairly short order Victoria could go from how it sees itself now, which is as a food bowl, to being an economy that is a net importer of some of the most essential foodstuffs for a healthy lifestyle — and that is even before we see the high levels of climate change.

That brings me back to the most important underpinning of a healthy economy, which is not even thought of as an economic issue, and that is a healthy population. The health of the population, and therefore its productivity, is not something we can take for granted any more. It is not a factor of production that just falls from the sky; it is something that every government must have a plan for, because we are also headed into a number of public health crises. They are a drain both on the public purse and on productivity in the workplace. I am talking about the SNAP factors — smoking, nutrition, alcohol, and physical activity.

In terms of this motion, if the government does not have a target or a plan for how it is going to rapidly improve those different measures — and a few others that we could throw in as well, such as workplace and public accidents; the impacts of those stressors on mental health; and the underlying major cause of ill health for young adult women, which is domestic violence — then we do not have a plan at all. It is frightening to realise that the government did not announce a health policy in the run-up to the election, although it did have a mental health policy and it was planning to address a number of other smaller initiatives within that subset I have just mentioned.

If the terms of the motion are simply that we are calling on the government to demonstrate any plans it may have to set targets for these various sectors and to determine a jobs target for Victoria, then the Greens can support this motion. As I have outlined in my rationale, we are not particularly buying into Mr Lenders's particular world view of past and future challenges, but at the same time it is a reasonable thing to ask the government to be clearer about its plans and targets, because these matters will dominate the attention of the Parliament and the public over the coming four years.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In speaking on Mr Lenders's motion, I want to touch on a few areas. I know previous speakers made some pretty broad contributions around the motion. Mr Ondarchie made a quite interesting contribution, and there were some pretty good one-liners in it — I will give him that — but I am not too sure after hearing his contribution what the government is actually proposing to do in these areas. I heard a lot of policies and words

inside his policies, but I am not too sure that he really indicated what the new government is actually going to do.

I want to touch on the importance of job creation and where government has an important role in that. When you talk about the particularly big government capital projects something that gets lost is the actual job creation. There are always numbers thrown around about the cost of a project. The cost of this project will be X million dollars; it is sensationalised if the cost blows out; it is great if it comes in under budget and before time. There is a lot of concentration on that when it comes to government and particularly major projects, but account is never taken of the effect on the economy of the number of jobs that are created by these projects, particularly in the construction industry, and the economic flow-on effects of those people being in good jobs even after those projects are completed.

The Royal Children's Hospital is a fantastic example of that. That project has been continuing for a number of years now. There have been hundreds of construction workers on the project, but there are also jobs you do not see on the project; there are people working in conjunction with those who are doing the physical work, such as draughtsmen, planners and managers, and they are a huge workforce on a project like the Royal Children's Hospital. My hope is that the new government will continue to see major projects not only for what they produce at the end but also for their job creation and what that means for our economy. They enable people to earn a wage and contribute to their local economy, which I see as a good thing.

It has been a chequered few months with the new government trying to decide whether it will supply further funding for a number of these projects. It was good to see that it has flip-flopped on the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. I add to that the stage 2 funding for the eastern autistic school, on which it flip-flopped as well, which is a fantastic result for the parents out there.

The government has been relying on the argument that there have been huge black holes associated with these particular projects. I think it is relying on the electorate being ignorant of the arguments it is making. It thinks the people of the electorate are quite silly when it comes to understanding the way that budget forecasts and election commitments work.

The previous government made an election commitment regarding the Olivia Newton-John cancer centre, and it was in the costings. It was a commitment that a Labor government, if it was successfully returned

to office — obviously history shows that it was not — would supply X dollars to make sure the project was completed. The new government is running around saying, 'Shock horror! There's a big black hole, and it should have been in the forward estimates'. How can an election commitment be in a previous budget's forward estimates? This is where the government's argument falls down: it is comparing an election commitment with a budget.

The argument is the same with funding for stage 2 of the eastern autistic school. It is interesting to note that when the coalition was in opposition it did not have these particular projects in its costings, but it went around and bought into every project. It said projects like the Olivia Newton-John centre would be great, and it bought into that, with its members saying, 'I'm the local MP who pushed for that. I called for that'. But when it came to the costings, the current Premier, the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer, Gordon Rich-Phillips, were not there to call on. It is okay to call for projects, but it is very important to make sure that you call on the appropriate people on your side of politics in case you win the election so that the local projects you called for can actually be developed.

I want to talk about skills. I note Mr Barber welcomed the government's position on examining skills and particularly the skills in the TAFE sector. I recently had a conversation with some people at one of the bigger TAFE colleges in the east. If the government is serious about conducting a review of how things work in TAFEs and how people become eligible for TAFE course subsidies, it would be helpful if it looked into an unintended anomaly that currently exists.

When young people finish their VCE (Victorian certificate of education) they can come out with a certificate II and then be eligible for subsidies for pre-apprenticeship courses in different trades, for example. However, if they defer their studies for one, two or however many years and then come back, they become ineligible for that subsidy. Their certificate II is taken into account as a previous course of study, making them ineligible for the subsidy and they face having to pay full fees for that course. That is a difference of a few hundred dollars versus a few thousand dollars. I said to the person I spoke to at the TAFE that I am happy to discuss that matter with the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. If the government is serious about reviewing the eligibility for subsidies, that would hopefully be a really good point to start with. We do not want young people who have finished their VCE and maybe taken a couple of years off to miss out on those subsidies. We want them to be eligible for the types of TAFE courses

which can help them get into meaningful training and jobs. That is important.

Again I urge the government, as it sets out to promote its new projects, not to balk at the opportunity to complete the previous government's projects, particularly in education and health, which are obviously areas that are very important to the community. I also suggest that the government finds better excuses than comparing election commitments with what was in previous budgets.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to join the debate on the motion moved by Mr Lenders which seeks to elicit from government members any plans they may have to secure the economic wellbeing of Victoria in a range of sectors that are of great importance to our economy. The motion notes the Australian dollar is at a record high against the US currency, at US\$1.03 and counting, with many commentators expecting that this trend will continue for some time. This creates a great deal of pressure on our exporters, those operating businesses and those employed in a number of sectors of the economy. We are very keen to learn what the government plans to do to protect and grow jobs in Victoria in a number of sectors.

The government has indicated that agriculture and manufacturing are its highest priorities. These are areas of great importance. Our agricultural sector contributes enormously to the Victorian economy despite some significant challenges from increasingly erratic weather. Many of our primary producers have been battling fire, flood, drought and locusts, among other difficulties, including the great challenge of a strong Australian dollar. Our food manufacturers are presented with an additional challenge in the form of supermarket price wars, making life very difficult for our dairy industry, which employs an enormous number of people and is a great contributor to the local economy in my electorate of Western Victoria Region as well as in other parts of the state.

The food manufacturing sector is neatly linked to our agricultural sector, but there other types of manufacturing as well. The Victorian manufacturing sector has fantastic and innovative examples of wonderful creativity, which are to be celebrated, but again we should not underestimate the challenge for many of these organisations of a strong Australian dollar. Our manufacturers need strong government advocacy and support for innovation and research and development. They need support through the provision of critical infrastructure so that they can thrive and grow, invest with confidence and secure the

employment of their workforce, which I am sure we would all agree is incredibly important.

One role that government can play in supporting our manufacturing sector is to have a strong local content policy around government procurement. I note that the Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder, was recently in my home town of Ballarat visiting the UGL Rail and Alstom workshops. People working there have been busily putting together the carriages purchased by the Brumby government as part of its Victorian transport plan. With the Baillieu-Ryan government's backflip on the regional rail link and, as part of that, its decision to also commission additional rolling stock, I hope that the government continues to support mechanisms that will enable, wherever possible, that work to be done in Victoria.

The rail workshops in Ballarat and at Bombardier in Dandenong have created many jobs because of the local manufacturing expertise of those organisations and their competitive tenders, but it was the purchasing policies of the previous Labor government, which required due consideration to be given to local tenders for major government projects, which contributed to that job creation.

I note that the government has mixed rhetoric around these issues. In opposition its members were quick to jump into the then government about costs associated with major procurements, but they were also critical about its lack of intervention. On many occasions I heard the then opposition members, now government members, saying that on the one hand the government was not doing enough in the procurement space and on the other hand it was doing too much, depending on which way they were hoping to cut the argument on that particular occasion. I hope that support and encouragement around export replacement in transport projects in particular, but in other projects as well, can continue, and that the government will support Victorian jobs through important strategic projects, because the previous government was very successful in doing that.

Mr Lenders's motion talks about the need to grow jobs in ICT. We have a wonderful ICT sector in Victoria. The federal government recognised this when it established the NBNCo Ltd operations in Melbourne. It created a great many jobs in a new and rapidly evolving sector of the economy. Melbourne is the location of choice for international organisations to set up their businesses — for example, Polycom. We have some wonderful research being done by organisations like the Institute for a Broadband-Enabled Society at Melbourne University, which is exploring how our ICT

geniuses and innovators can be at the forefront of the significant transformation not just to the Victorian economy but the world as uptake in ICT escalates resulting in changes to the way in which many things are done and many services are consumed as they adapt their ICT uptake.

The Liberal Party's friends in Canberra continue to be nay-sayers around things like the national broadband network, so I urge the Victorian government not to take a head-in-the-sand approach to emerging technologies, but to continue to foster and develop the wonderful industry in Victoria. I urge the government not to take a business-as-usual approach, but to support the continued development of that very important sector.

Mr Lenders's motion also talks about the need to grow jobs in tourism. The very strong Australian dollar has had an immediate impact on the tourism sector. In recent days I believe Roy Morgan Research has published findings indicating that a high percentage of people planning to take a holiday this year — around 20 per cent, if my memory serves me right — plan to go overseas. When the dollar is so strong it becomes more difficult for local tourism operators to compete with cheap overseas holidays. People like to grab a bargain by having a cheap overseas holiday or shopping online from overseas sources — things that are very popular and increasingly accessible — and the government needs to develop strategies to support our industries in the face of these challenges.

The flooding and heavy rain of January and February this year has had a severe impact on many of Victoria's iconic tourist destinations. Local tourism operators along the Great Ocean Road believe that significant reinforcement work needs to be done. As I have said before in this place, around 80 per cent of the Grampians National Park remains closed. We welcome the support that the government is providing to the folks at Wilsons Promontory, but a phenomenal number of people are employed in and around tourism. Tourism and the service industries that support it are the most rapidly growing parts of the global economy. The strength of the Australian dollar makes it a particularly challenging time for those operators, and they need better support from the government.

Tourism provides a great many jobs in regional Victoria as well as in Melbourne. When we debated the Shop Trading Reform Amendment (Easter Sunday) Bill 2011 not so long ago, one of the arguments that government members made was that Easter Sunday trading will give us an edge on visitor numbers over places like Sydney. I suggest that being required to work in the middle of a four-day weekend will impair

the ability of some people to get away to the wonderful locations around Victoria that they may not otherwise be able to get to, from wherever they live, over the course of a regular two-day weekend.

Mr Lenders's motion also calls on the government to demonstrate any plans it may have to:

... enable Regional Development Victoria to exercise its key job creation function without the economic development and job creation functions taken from it by the general order ...

In the Labor Party we are very concerned that moves by the government in the area of regional economic development will have a detrimental effect. The one point of entry for investment attraction and job creation is no longer what it was, and this remains a matter of real concern to regional Victorian communities. I imagine there is consensus around the chamber about the need for thriving, strong, vibrant regional communities.

On that I am sure we can agree, but we have some real concerns about the way in which the Department of Planning and Community Development or the Department of Business and Innovation will be in charge of economic development in regional Victoria but without the presence and contact on the ground that Regional Development Victoria staff have developed over many years. Those staff have a strong and well-established track record in demonstrating flexibility and an ability to quickly react to opportunities and also challenges that are presented to businesses that might be having a difficult time.

Yesterday there were reports in the media that the government is softening the blow for a budget that will not include significant reductions to payroll tax and WorkCover premiums, which are things we were often lectured about by members opposite when the government shoe was on the other foot. I hope the government continues to support job creation. Over recent years WorkCover premiums were successively reduced while benefits were simultaneously increased. There is no reason that it cannot continue to be an objective of government that good benefits be paid to workers who are injured at work but with a strong focus on occupational health and safety so that fewer people ever experience it and the cost to employers and injured workers alike is as minimal as possible.

For the Labor Party there are few things that government can do that are more important than creating an environment in which jobs are created — quality, permanent jobs with decent wages and conditions. This motion calls on the government to demonstrate exactly what it will do about all those

challenges. The dollar presents new challenges. It has been strong for a time, but it has not been as high as it is right now; it is breaking new records with great frequency. The high dollar presents a great challenge to many businesses and employers in Victoria.

We on the Labor Party side certainly hope that the Baillieu government will be up to the task of responding to this challenge and that it will provide the right environment in which our creative businesspeople, our entrepreneurs, can flourish and employers can provide permanent quality jobs to people in great numbers in both Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until next day.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure References Committee to inquire into, consider and report on the changes to the metropolitan train timetable which are proposed to commence on 8 May 2011 and that the committee present its final report to Parliament no later than 2 June 2011.

While the proposal to inquire into the changes to the metropolitan train timetable, which are now online and are proposed to commence on 8 May, might sound like a fairly mundane task, in fact Melbourne's metropolitan rail system is one of this state's fundamental pieces of infrastructure. We all know it has had massive problems, but those problems have by no means been solved.

What makes the rail system fundamental? Every day half a million people in Melbourne use it. If they could not do so and they ended up in cars on the roads, the city would grind to a halt. The rail system is an essential piece of infrastructure, just as much as the lights that have to be kept on and the water that has to be kept flowing to and from our homes. It has set, and to this day still sets, the pattern of land use for Melbourne. Most identified activity centres are on the rail system or are very closely accessible from it. Even the past and current governments now seem to understand that building a new community on the suburban fringe without access to a rail station is no go. Our pattern of land use both depends on and reflects that fixed rail system. Both country and city trains use

the rail system, with many passengers on both forms of trains coming all the way to the CBD or the major activity centres along the way.

Finally, rail is the most radically efficient way we have of moving people around. A single lane of freeway might move around 1200 cars in an hour. Now we have individual trains — dozens of them in morning peak — that are carrying more than 1000 people. Those trains zip by in a matter of moments with very little ecological footprint. They are thousands of times more efficient than freeways at moving people and, for that matter, they unload those people at their destinations in just a few seconds.

Without a plan for the future of the rail network, this city and much of the economy that depends on it would be in the doldrums. What this particular version of the metropolitan rail timetable, which is a greenfield timetable prepared by Metro Trains Melbourne at the behest of the Department of Transport, tells us is that there is very little we can do to improve the capacity of the rail system or that the constraints on improving it are too difficult to overcome in the short term.

As we sit here, questions are being raised about the regional rail link project to the west. We know its price is going up by billions of dollars. What we do not know is how many trains will run on it, how fast they will run or how many people they will carry. We seem to know everything about this proposal except what it will actually do as a rail system. Since that is integral to the already foreshadowed timetable, this inquiry will provide an opportunity for those questions to be asked as well.

The theoretical capacity of a rail system should be a lot higher than the one we have now. If you take out the city loop, few parts of Melbourne's rail system receive a train more often than every 6 minutes and around about every 4 minutes at peak times. I acknowledge that in the city loop there is a train every 2.5 minutes. We are a long way short of the running capacity of other rail systems around the world. If there are barriers to achieving that capacity, they need to be made transparent, and this inquiry is the way to do that.

When designing a rail timetable, particularly one such as Metro tells us it has done here — that is, a greenfield timetable — you go through an optimisation process. You ask, 'What is the best result we can get until we effectively become constrained by a particular barrier?'. In rail systems that could be lack of capacity, single-track sections, the signalling system, speed limits or lack of rolling stock. We have never been told clearly by the government what those constraints are.

We are simply told, 'Here's the timetable. This is as good as it gets, for now'.

Unfortunately on this the government has chosen to hide behind the Labor Party. When the new timetable was prepared and released to the public, the Minister for Public Transport basically apologised for it. He said, 'Yes, I understand it's going to make journeys longer and more complicated for a whole range of people, but, oh well, we can't get out of it because the Labor Party got us into it'. First, that apology is not particularly acceptable. Second, does the government really want to go forward from this point blaming the Labor Party rather than taking on the responsibility that it can?

Recently we saw a people's revolt in Altona. The patrons of the Altona train loop found their service was to be dramatically reduced. Hundreds and hundreds of people at multiple meetings have come out and said, 'We're not going to cop this'. Something of a miracle happened when, for the first time, Metro people had to come out and explain to their customers what they were doing and why. They had to stand in front of those hundreds of people and give an account of why this timetable had been prepared as it was. The response to the citizens of Altona was effectively, 'Look, guys, you're going to have to take one for the team. There are all these constraints and to maintain the overall sort of beauty of this design that Metro has prepared, yes, it's going to really affect you, but that's just bad luck'. Despite many PowerPoint slides and many minutes of questioning, things did not really progress past that point.

That just indicates how completely in reverse we have it here. We have a timetable that affects the most basic service for the half a million people who use trains every day. They are not being told that the review is under way, what the limitations of that review are, under what framework it is being done, who is actually doing it or how they can have input into it. It was only through the strategic leak by the Minister for Public Transport when he apologised for the outcome that we first got to hear about our service.

This is completely the reverse of how well-run, strong and accountable public transport authorities in other cities operate. In places such as Vancouver such decisions of the authority would be made in public with maximum citizen participation, and there would be detailed discussions down to the neighbourhood level. Here it is just like the Manhattan Project — a bunch of guys working on it in secret and the first time you hear about it is when it goes boom. It was revolutionary in its own way that Metro had to come out and provide a bit of an account to the public. It was forced into it, but

it was still the other way around. The government should not have had a mere contractor coming out and explaining the government's proposal. The government should have been out there backing it up. What we find is that this has been put together by a kind of axis of incompetence between the department and Metro, who move people back and forth all the time anyway.

The Greens put forward a motion seeking some basic material on this process from the government. In fact the contract between the train operator and the government sets out a very detailed process as to how a change to the timetable should occur, and that requires the operator to produce the basic rationale; to prepare passenger impact statements; to talk about the detailed impact it will have on running times, capacity utilisation and rolling stock utilisation; and to model the impact it might have on the costs, either to the contractor or to the government, through payments or fines for poor performance. The procedure as envisaged by this sector of the franchise agreement appears to be very detailed and very satisfactory.

The only thing is that the public never had a right to be in on that conversation, and when in a previous sitting week the Greens put a motion to this Parliament saying that we would like to see the same material as the department examined, we were told, according to the Attorney-General's letter, that the government is working on it and that diligent searches are being undertaken, but it could not do it within the time requested. That just demonstrates even further that the government has got it completely backwards. It was not in any way prepared to have a conversation with its community about how this rail timetable was going to affect the community.

As I touched on briefly, the timetable is just one of the basic elements of a critical piece of infrastructure. So far we have seen a reworking of the timetable for the west and the south, but in the same vein we know — we found out, actually — that the government intends to go all the way round the clock face and review all the timetables over coming years. If the amount of extra performance it has got out of this exercise is any guide, we will not expect much from the review of the Eltham and Diamond Creek and Upfield and Broadmeadows timetables, let alone Belgrave and the Burnley group. The morning peak is critical to this, because that is the greatest concentration of patronage, and for every 1 per cent increase in morning peak patronage we need to add basically an extra train to that morning peak timetable. In the last 12 months patronage has grown by 2 per cent. On some lines extra trains have been added, but on others they have not, and in those others there has been a dramatic increase in overcrowding.

The government and Metro measure overcrowding as more than 800 people on a train. On that measure, at 799, you do not have a problem, but at 800, you have a major problem. On many of these train lines to the east and to the north overcrowding has increased to such an extent that the average train in morning peak might be carrying 600 or 700 persons, coming very close to that 800 result, which is a discomfort factor, but in Metro's most recent survey of train overcrowding, dozens of trains on a typical morning peak are still carrying more than 1000 passengers — often 1100 and sometimes approaching 1200 passengers — on a train that the government and the contract say should not carry more than 800 for comfort purposes.

I said that was as a result of 2 per cent growth over the last 12 months. In the past we have seen 25 per cent growth in just one year, and there has been a 50 per cent growth in patronage in that morning peak over a small number of years — often as a response to booming CBD employment, to the ongoing increase in inner city living and of course to a petrol price spike. Who would like to predict that those three planets would not line up in the next four years? Last time the planets lined up we had quite a bit of spare capacity on our trains; this time we have none, so we could plunge ourselves into a crisis if we do not get this right.

What Metro has told us in relation to the recent changes is that this is as good as it gets, that the timetable now is, in its words, 'maxed out', and that we will not be able to run any more trains without some major infrastructure upgrades, which it says are the regional rail link. That is not good enough. The assumptions and the constraints behind that claim need to be aired. In other cities in the world that would just be a normal process. It would be something that the public transport authority would take on and do as a matter of course. Around here it is like pulling teeth — public meetings, fights to get the government to respond. Metro, the contractor, is eventually forced to come out and try to explain itself, but it is not making political decisions. The government makes those. We cannot get the documents from the department, and for that reason we are putting forward a proposed inquiry.

Whilst it is not my job alone to say what the inquiry's work plan would look like, in my view it would not be a major exercise. That is why I have set a reasonably short reporting date on this reference. The inquiry would certainly need to hear from Metro, the government and anybody else involved in the exercise of preparing this timetable, including independent contractors. We would expect to have all the documents available to us in the inquiry — I have been requesting them by moving motions in the chamber — and

members of the public with an interest in this issue would have an opportunity to talk about how it impacts them. These are the sorts of things that a strong and accountable public transport authority would do as part of its daily business. For that matter, any government service provider or public service provider that wanted to deal with its passengers or its customers in a proper way would act similarly.

I think the government is running scared on this issue. The government is hiding behind the Labor Party, which is hiding behind Metro, and certain local members are hiding behind the government. Hundreds of people attended a public meeting in Altona. We have the critical seats — critical to the government that is — of Mount Waverley and down the Frankston line to Bentleigh being significantly impacted by this timetable, but everybody is blaming everyone else. I know a bit about politics, and I am here to tell you that once you start running it is pretty hard to stop. It is pretty hard to know where to stop. It has happened to Julia Gillard; she started running and now she does not know what she stands for. If local members in the area most affected are going to hide behind their government, which is going to hide behind the Labor Party, which is going to hide behind Metro, I do not know where any of them will stop running.

It could be that this particular motion — that is, the setting up of an inquiry — might be the circuit-breaker. It might be the opportunity to have an open and public discussion about issues associated with certain proposed timetables which can be reviewed and changed at any time. It is in the power of the government to do that. Public discussion would bring into the open some important debates that do not appear to be going anywhere at the moment. Questions raised might include: what are the constraints to running more trains on the existing infrastructure? Is \$3 billion, \$4 billion, \$5 billion or \$6 billion the right price for the regional rail link? How can the basic backbone of our transport system, the train system, be properly integrated with trams, buses, walking and bicycles?

This brings up the broader question of land use, which is absolutely critical and takes up a huge amount of this Parliament's time. For that reason I urge all members to support this motion. I urge the government, if it is not already moving to do so, to take on this task itself and be open with rail commuters about how this system is intended to be run and developed over the next four years.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That the debate be adjourned for one week.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — It is time to interrupt business for question time. Mr Viney will have the call when we resume after question time.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Monash Freeway: noise barriers

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health in his capacity as the minister representing the Premier in this house. The Premier has indicated that he will honour all election commitments made by the coalition, and I ask: will the government honour the coalition's commitment to improve noise barriers along the Monash Freeway in Ashburton and Glen Iris?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question, and I stand by the coalition's determination to deliver on all its election commitments. I am certainly familiar with the issues along the Monash Freeway and the part of the freeway where the expansion has occurred. The previous government failed to fit that out properly and left residents exposed to a great deal of noise and the impact of that. I will take the specifics of the question on notice and will come back with a detailed response, but I can assure the member that our election commitments will be honoured.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I take in good faith Mr Davis's comment that he knows about the issue, because as a local member he raised it eight times in this house in the last Parliament. I draw his attention to page 1 of yesterday's *Progress Leader* which says that VicRoads has canned the \$8.4 million allocation made under the last Labor budget towards noise walls. VicRoads has canned the project funded by Labor. I ask Mr Davis: if the government is going to honour its election commits, will it put more in? More specifically, why is the government punishing the residents of Ashburton by taking away \$8 million allocated to VicRoads for the noise barriers the minister called for in this house eight times?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his further point, but I assure him that the coalition will honour its election commitments in full. I too have read the article that he is referring to, and I note the comments made by the noise action group in the area about this probably being the last hurrah of the previous government.

An honourable member interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I have read the story. My point is that this is not the action of this government. It is, as is pointed out in that article, the last hurrah of the previous government.

I take the specifics on notice. I will come back to the member with a detailed response, but we will certainly be keeping our election commitments. I have to say that the people living along the Monash Freeway have had to endure a tremendous amount under the maladministration of the previous government, which did not see walls erected during the time of the development proceeding.

Planning: Docklands development

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to my friend and colleague the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy. I ask the minister to inform the house of how the Baillieu government is acting to advance new urban renewal in Melbourne's Docklands in my electorate.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank my colleague, who is a member for Northern Metropolitan Region, Mr Ondarchie, for a very important question regarding urban renewal in Melbourne's Docklands precincts. As you, President, and members of this house would be aware, the Baillieu government is heavily committed to ensuring that urban renewal is one of the key components of population accommodation for Melbourne over the coming years.

We see the Docklands precincts, 150 hectares of urban renewal opportunity initiated by the Kennett government and its former major projects minister, Mark Birrell, as one of the key areas for growth and urban development in the inner city areas of Melbourne. We have a similar urban renewal proposal to what the Cain government, through Evan Walker, put in place in Southbank in the 1980s. Good governments see urban renewal as a way of accommodating the population.

I have moved quickly to approve the new 2010 Victoria Harbour development plan for the Docklands. This plan sat with the previous government for years. It sat on the previous minister's desk. Nothing was actioned; nothing was brought forward. What the previous government could not achieve in four years, this government has achieved in four months. We have brought forward this new development plan to ensure that the Victoria Harbour precinct will become a

brand-new precinct for Melbourne. It will be Melbourne's version of Sydney's Finger Wharf.

Members opposite may not think urban renewal is important. Why would they? These are the same people who mocked CityLink; these are the same people who mocked achieving our AAA credit rating back in the 1990s. They opposed the new museum, they opposed the exhibition centre and now they oppose urban renewal at places for which they had responsibility just four months ago. No wonder the petty-minded Labor Party is again opposing and talking down the Docklands, one of the key areas of urban renewal across Australia.

The new precinct for which I have sped up the master plan will see the North Wharf Road area — that is, beyond the ANZ precinct — transformed into a residential, commercial and retail space that is unprecedented in Melbourne. We will see, as I said, something similar to Sydney's Finger Wharf, a new area for Melbourne which offers low-rise residential accommodation on the edge of what is now the old wharf-docks precinct. It is an area that will offer new shops and tram access and an area of Melbourne that will be completely different to what we have experienced. It will be somewhere in Victoria where Victorians can go to experience a new style of entertainment and indeed somewhere to live.

More importantly, we have been working very closely with Melbourne City Council, VicUrban and developer Lend Lease to ensure that there will be community infrastructure put in place through this new development plan. There will be a new community civic space, possibly a new pool and a new library. We will see this area as a new and unprecedented community residential hub for Melbourne in the Docklands.

The corner of Bourke Street and Collins Streets will become Melbourne's equivalent of Times Square. I look forward to in 20 years inviting some of the nay-sayers opposite to come to see New Year's Eve celebrations in Melbourne's Times Square in what will be the best development in the Docklands precinct in what is the greatest city in Australia. The Baillieu government sees urban renewal as a way to entrench Melbourne as the best city in Australia.

Government: freedom of information

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Leader of the Government in his capacity of representing the Premier in this house. I refer to the government's commitment last year to take

first-stage FOI reviews out of the hands of departments. Was it the intent of that commitment to take the decisions out of the hands of departments and put them into the hands of the private offices of ministers?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — As I understand the commitment, there will be an FOI commissioner, who will have the role of overseeing across government to ensure that practices are of the highest standard and that information is available according to the highest standard. That is the focus of the government's commitment. We will be transparent and open, and the FOI commissioner will assist in that way.

Supplementary question

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I thank Mr Davis for his answer and his commitment to openness and transparency. I wonder whether that answer means that until the FOI commissioner has been created that commitment does not exist. I ask the minister to explain to the house why FOI applications lodged by me with the Department Premier and Cabinet are being replied to and summarily rejected by Mr Don Coulson, a member of the Premier's private staff.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — As I have said, the government has a commitment to an FOI commissioner, and we will deliver on that. As to the specifics that the member refers to regarding specific FOI requests, I cannot answer for those in the Premier's — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — You can answer for the practice of the Premier's private office dealings with them.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — In fact I am not familiar with the process at the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I will take that matter on notice and seek some information from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and I will respond. I am genuinely not aware of the details of the process at the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Housing: homelessness strategy

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Wendy Lovell. I ask the minister can she inform the house of her continued vision for homelessness services in Victoria, and how is she improving services after the previous Labor government's 11 years of mismanagement?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing interest in the vulnerable people in his electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. I note that it is an important issue that he raises today, which is National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day, because 45 per cent of the homeless people in Victoria are under the age of 24.

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, I apologise for the delay in taking the point of order, but it took me a moment to reflect on it. The question actually asked the minister about the previous Labor government. I fail to see how that is directly relevant to the minister's administrative responsibilities, given that the question was about what occurred under a previous government. I fail to see how the question is in order.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, President, I distinctly heard the word 'after'; it was seeking information about her continued vision for services and how she was improving services after the 11 years of mismanagement.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank Mr Viney for his point of order. I listened intently to the question as well. I was concerned the question might in fact invite the minister to comment in a way which was not within the bounds of what I was talking about yesterday, about not overtly criticising the opposition and focusing on the issues. I was mindful of the question asked and was listening intently to the answer to make sure that the answer did not become a free hit to the minister in criticising the former administration.

Notwithstanding that, I think Mr Davis's point is right, that the question itself is framed in such a way that it is a legitimate question. The minister is clearly able to draw some comparison between, or give a description, if you like, of issues that she feels were not addressed previously and are now being addressed. I would hope she would do that positively in commenting on issues rather than playing a blame game. In that context I think the question is valid, and I invite the minister to continue her response, through the Chair.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — There is no doubt that the former government did drop the ball on homelessness in Victoria. It was only in its 11th year in government that it decided to develop a strategy. It released a discussion paper in October 2010. It was supposed to have released a draft of that in January 2011. We never saw that draft. There was supposed to be a final strategy by May 2010. At the end of September — 115 days late — it delivered a strategy that lacked depth and lacked a vision for homelessness services in Victoria.

The sector told me that it was not engaged in that strategy and was not satisfied with that strategy. We are engaging with the sector; we are working with it. On National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day I am proud to announce that I am working with the people in that sector, who work so hard to deliver services in Victoria. We are developing a strategy in conjunction with them to deliver on and find real answers to the very complex problem and the multifaceted area of need in homelessness.

But of course the decision of the Commonwealth Grants Commission to cut \$500 million per annum out of Victoria's share of the GST funding will severely restrict our ability to invest in homelessness services and in housing in Victoria. We could ask what that \$500 million per annum could deliver in Victoria. It could deliver an additional 2000 homes per annum to house those who are in need of housing in this state.

If this Labor opposition cares about vulnerable Victorians, it will join with the coalition government and stand up to the federal Labor government and demand that the \$2.5 billion that has been stripped out of our share of GST funding is restored for Victorians. However, Labor members are not prepared to stand up to Prime Minister Julia Gillard and their federal Labor mates because, as always, they will put Labor first and Victoria second.

Government: freedom of information

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Leader of the Government in his capacity as representing the Premier. In regard to the Premier's office, does the minister have confidence that the government's obligations under the FOI act will be properly administered, following the shift in responsibility from a departmental officer in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to an adviser in the Premier's private office who has been a Liberal Party staffer for years and is, in all likelihood, a member of the Liberal Party?

Hon. P. R. Hall — On a point of order, President, the question clearly seeks an opinion from the minister. The first part of the question was phrased, 'Does the minister have confidence in'. Clearly that is seeking an opinion from the minister and, as such, it is out of order.

Mr Viney — On the point of order, President, I have been in the Parliament now for over 11 years and I have heard questions — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr Viney — Thank you, Mr Finn. I can guarantee Mr Finn that I am not going to come back twice. I have heard many questions ask ministers whether they have confidence, and this question was asking whether the minister has confidence in an administrative process in relation to freedom of information requests. Asking if a minister has confidence in an administrative process is hardly asking for an opinion, and it is perfectly legitimate to be asked.

Hon. P. R. Hall — Further on the point of order, President, I would contend that where the question is phrased, ‘Does the minister have confidence in’, it is asking the minister to make a subjective judgement and therefore to offer a view on a matter. That is completely different to a question which asks a minister to account for an action or which requests something. Where a question requests from the minister a subjective judgement, I contend that that is seeking an opinion. The standing orders do not allow for questions seeking the opinion of a minister.

Mr Jennings — Further on the point of order, President, I know you might be grappling with whether you need to intervene on this matter, and I would not want you to prematurely intervene without necessarily considering that the question, as I heard it, relates to the standards of ministerial behaviour and the degree of administrative responsibility within the competency of the government. For that reason, it is an important matter that goes beyond opinion. It indicates the standards of ministerial behaviour and the expectations of ministers in relation to the standards of the administration for which the government is responsible. That is the reason it is very important that this question is not ruled out, as Mr Hall is inviting you to do.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am in a position to adjudicate on this matter. I thank the members for speaking on the point of order. Mr Hall’s comment that the standing orders do not allow for the expression of an opinion, as such, or invite the expression of an opinion, is valid in the circumstances of questions put to ministers. That is a fairly wise position in that it ensures that questions go to matters of fact and information and do not simply allow ministers to stand up and make a commentary, if you like, or just a speech.

In the context of this specific query by Mr Hall and the people who have spoken on the point of order, Mr Pakula has been good enough to provide me with a written copy of the question he asked. I have read it, and I have the view that the question is in order. I am mindful of Mr Hall’s comment that the phraseology might suggest that the question was asking for an

opinion, but I do not believe that this is the case with this particular question. The offending words in the question that Mr Hall might be concerned with are:

In regard to the Premier’s office, does the minister have confidence that the government’s obligations under the FOI act will be properly administered ...

I think that is a fair question to put to a minister. I do not think it invites a minister to express an opinion outside of what would be his informed position on that matter. Whilst I think Mr Hall’s general point of order is valid and we do try to ensure that ministers do not provide opinions, in this case the wording is adequate and it is within the ability of the minister to answer the question.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I am pleased to respond to the question and indicate that I have absolutely no reason to believe that the processes under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 are not complied with in the Premier’s office and in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Obviously I do not administer that department specifically, so it is difficult for me to give any detailed response, but I have no reason at all to believe the freedom of information processes in the Premier’s office are anything but predictable.

Supplementary question

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I understand from the minister’s remarks that he is unable to answer in detail about the workings of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, but he does represent the Premier in this place and he is the Leader of the Government. As such, I am sure he is familiar with the workings of the Premier’s private office. I wonder whether the minister can confirm for the house whether it is a fact that as a staffer in the Premier’s private office Mr Coulson is subject to the direction of Michael Kapel, the Premier’s chief of staff?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I can be quite clear: I am not responsible for the Premier’s office or the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I must say that the arrangements in the Premier’s office are a matter for him entirely.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Will you take it on notice?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I would be very happy to take on notice matters in detail about the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Premier’s office.

Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan).

Health: GST revenue

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Health, the Honourable David Davis. I ask the minister to inform the house how many Victorian doctors and nurses the \$500 million cut by the federal Labor government would fund.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question. The community will become increasingly aware of the concerns of the Victorian government — and I think of all members of this Parliament — about the plans of the commonwealth to remove \$2.5 billion from the state through changes to GST arrangements. I would have thought, as I said before, this would be a bipartisan matter in this chamber. We would want support from all parts of the chamber and all parts of the Parliament in our quest to have that money restored in full by the commonwealth. We are aware that the commonwealth is removing the money and then undertaking a review rather than reviewing the situation and then dealing with the subsequent outcomes of the review.

I know in the case of health the additional money could have employed perhaps more than 1600 doctors and perhaps more than 5000 additional nurses. If this money is lost, the \$500 million that will be cut would have assisted in massive additional activity in health. I think Victorians would be very concerned to see that happen in our health service. It could be more than 5000 additional nurses and more than 1600 doctors. These very significant expansions to the health workforce could be funded. I am sure a number of other portfolios would bid for some of this money to see if they could expand services in Victoria where there are great areas of need and demand in Victorian communities. They would seek to meet legitimate demands for additional services.

What I can say is that if the commonwealth persists with its plan to remove a large amount of money, it will make it difficult to expand the services in the way that all Victorians — I am sure even including members of the opposition — would want to occur. Victoria has been dealt a very raw deal by the commonwealth and the grants commission. The process which has been undertaken, where the money is removed and a review conducted after the money is removed, is frankly putting the cart before the horse. The review should have occurred and any changes to the GST arrangements should have followed that review.

As I said yesterday in this chamber when making reference to earlier discussions, there are issues in Victoria in terms of the cost of delivering services. We

have congestion issues and large city issues. We also have migrant communities that require specific services, and those services ought to be funded as far as possible. Those communities have legitimate expectations.

I urge opposition members to get on board and work with the government in trying to convince their commonwealth colleagues to not remove the \$500 million this year and the \$2.5 billion over the forward estimates period. I hope the Labor opposition will not act in a way that is Labor first and Victorians second. I am concerned it is going to act in that way. I think all Victorians should speak with one voice. We need a fairer deal from the commonwealth, and the commonwealth should not take this money before the review is conducted.

Government: freedom of information

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Leader of the Government who represents the Premier in this chamber. I refer to items of correspondence received by the opposition from Mr Don Coulson in response to FOI requests submitted to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), and I ask: will it now be the practice across other government departments, including the minister's own, that where an FOI request relates to a minister or the minister's office the reply will come from, and the decision will be made by, the minister's political staffers?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question, but I again make the point that I am not familiar with the letters to which he refers.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I have asked about the minister's own department.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — You didn't, actually; you asked me about DPC, and I am not familiar with the letters to which you refer.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On a point of order, President, I can see where Mr Davis is going, but my question specifically asked will it be the practice across other government departments, including the minister's own? That was the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is not really a point of order, because the member is essentially trying to clarify the question, and there has been no breakdown in the proceedings of the Parliament that would call into question a point of order. I make the point that the minister has just begun his answer, and much of the member's questioning today has been on practice in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Therefore Mr Davis is quite entitled to use that as part of his initial response. I am sure he is mindful of the rest of the member's question, and I do not think it needed to be reinforced, either by explanation or point of order.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — My response to the member is quite straightforward. In terms of the detailed matter about which he has asked, in terms of correspondence and FOI matters in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, I am unaware of the letters to which he refers. In terms of my own department, I indicate to him that my department and my office will respond in terms of the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

Supplementary question

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for confirming that his private office will handle responses with regard to his private office, and I indicate to the Leader of the Government, in his capacity of representing the Premier, that Mr Jennings submitted an FOI request to the office of the Deputy Premier, and the reply came from — you guessed it! — Don Coulson. Can the minister advise the house whether Mr Coulson will be taking responsibility for FOI decisions for other ministers apart from the Premier and now the Deputy Premier?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — As I understand it, the correspondence to which the member refers relates to a different department to that of Premier and Cabinet. I am not familiar with that particular correspondence, and frankly it would be surprising if I were able to track every piece of correspondence on freedom of information across the whole of government. I simply will not attempt to respond to the detail of that matter. But in terms of my own department I again indicate that across the whole of government the Freedom of Information Act 1982 will be the basis for responding. We have indicated a series of reforms that will occur — an FOI commissioner will be established later in the year — and we will stick by those commitments.

Manufacturing: defence industry

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, the Honourable Richard Dalla-Riva, and I ask: can the minister update the house about any new and upcoming developments within the defence industry section of his portfolio?

An honourable member interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We wish Mr Dalla-Riva a happy birthday.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — Thank you, President; another year older. I thank the member for his question. I am pleased to update the house on the important issue of defence industries in Victoria and to advise that Australian soldiers will soon be wearing body armour that has been made in Victoria. This is another example of the great innovative capacity in defence capability.

The Defence Materials Technology Centre and Australian Defence Apparel announced on 25 March their brand-new capability to manufacture advanced armour-grade ceramic materials to be made into personal protective armour. I have been there and I have seen it. It is fantastic and very lightweight. This technology and innovation is a significant step that will improve the safety of Australian Defence Force personnel on active duty. This exciting development means that now the ADF can source this essential protective body armour more cheaply and more quickly. It is important to acknowledge, given the global competitiveness of defence industries, that they are able to provide it more cheaply and more quickly than suppliers elsewhere in the world. This highlights the importance of the defence industry in Bendigo and how Bendigo is becoming a significant and important location in terms of Australia's manufacturing defence capabilities.

This also gives me a chance to talk about the great work that is being undertaken at the nearby Thales factory, with its Bushmaster and Hawkei vehicles. Nothing could serve to more fully highlight the critical importance of a major procurement decision by the commonwealth government than that it will soon ensure the ongoing viability of this world-class manufacturing facility by supporting the Bushmaster vehicle. This vehicle has a proven reputation for protecting the lives of Australian and Allied soldiers and is an example of world-leading technology produced here in Victoria.

We recognise the importance of Thales, which is why we have been out advocating on its behalf. We are strongly engaged with ministers at all levels of the federal government, and we advised Senator Kim Carr and Jason Clare how important it was that Thales be strongly considered. We stressed to the commonwealth government the vital manufacturing capabilities and outstanding record and achievement of Thales in Bendigo, and we hope that the Gillard government will recognise the importance of ensuring that Thales is

given the opportunity to be involved in this world-class vehicle, to build on its exports and to become a leading centre globally for military vehicle manufacture.

Those opposite may talk down the gloom and doom of manufacturing, but we do not. We are here to support manufacturing, whether it is in the auto sector or the defence sector, and I think it is important that we have a clear objective and agenda for those particular industries.

I am pleased to support companies like Australian Defence Apparel and Thales as they compete in the world market for the very important domestic and international markets in the military and defence capability space.

Government: freedom of information

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to Minister Dalla-Riva in his capacity as minister representing the Minister responsible for the establishment of an anti-corruption commission, who is also the minister responsible for the FOI act, Mr McIntosh. Given that Minister Dalla-Riva's pre-election policy document says that government without scrutiny is bad government, and given that the same policy document states that structural reform of FOI, including the creation of an independent office of the FOI commissioner is urgently required, can the minister tell the house when legislation to create that office will be introduced?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I thank Hollywood Pakula for his question, because — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Adjectives should not be applied to members. It is most unhelpful in terms of the conduct of question time.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — As I said, I thank the member. Like a number of us on this side did, he is now engaging in the role of scrutiny of government, and I notice he is very much enjoying that. He is entertaining a lot of media on the portfolios of other shadow ministers, and I guess he will continue to do so because he wants to get the limelight.

The reality is that he has asked a question relating particularly to our policy commitments, and those policy commitments will be delivered, as we said they will be, before the next election.

Supplementary question

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I note the colour has returned to Mr Dalla-Riva's face this week, but I am not sure I would be giving out nicknames if I were him. I note Mr Dalla-Riva's answer that it will be done before the next election, but I indicate to him that his own pre-election costing document had an allocation for the office of the independent FOI commissioner in 2011, and I ask: will he give the house an undertaking that it will be up and running before the end of this year?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — If it is in a policy document that it will be delivered this year, then it will be delivered this year.

Higher education: regional campuses

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Peter Hall.

Hon. P. R. Hall — Don't ask me for an opinion!

Mr RAMSAY — I have had to change the spirit of the question to help the opposition.

Is the minister confident that the coalition government will be able to continue to support students who wish to study in regional Victoria, despite the federal Labor government withdrawing \$2.5 billion in GST funding from Victoria?

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, if I heard the question correctly, it was asking Mr Hall for an opinion.

The PRESIDENT — Order! This opinion area is an interesting one, because I think this question actually did seek a response from the minister in the context of a budget issue, if you like, a reduced budget parameter, and it sought his indication of what the implications of that might be. To that extent I think he is able to provide that information, and I do not believe that it seeks an opinion in terms of going outside the supply of information.

The point made by the Leader of the Opposition is that Mr Hall has been hoist on his own petard, and we all need to be mindful, as I said, that this opinion issue needs to be considered carefully in the crafting of questions and certainly regarding what is invited from ministers. In this case I am sure that Mr Hall will be able to provide the house with an informative and perhaps factually based response to that question and

not simply an opinion that is outside the scope of his administration.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Thank you, President, for the opportunity to answer this very important question and your generosity regarding the spirit in which my question was rephrased to get some important information on the record during question time.

I thank Mr Ramsay sincerely for the question, because he was one of a number of colleagues who joined me in my visits to western Victoria last week where I was able to make some very positive announcements that will go some way towards assisting students to live and study at local campuses in western Victoria. I was joined by Mr Ramsay, Mr O'Brien, Dr Naphthine and Mr Koch at various times during the day —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I might add, before they get too excited over there, lower house members Mr Trezise and Mr Eren joined me at functions in Geelong when some announcements were being made last week.

In respect of the particular issue asked of me by Mr Ramsay — that is, support for students to study in regional Victoria — last week I announced that the coalition government is supporting applications by Deakin University to the federal government under the national rental affordability scheme. We will assist the university with its application, because that will see an increase of 411 accommodation beds —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. P. R. HALL — As I have said, I am always happy to receive good ideas.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. P. R. HALL — It is not a matter of pinching policies, it is a matter of responding to needs. If in the past somebody else has said they would do this, I feel no guilt or shame in delivering for the people of Victoria, particularly the students who live in the western region of this state. I am proud to say the coalition government is putting in \$10.275 million in support of the applications to build an extra 311 accommodation beds at the Warren Ponds campus of Deakin University and 100 accommodation beds at the Warrnambool campus of the university. I think that is admirable.

As I said, I stand proud that we are prepared to support them in this regard, because it has been demonstrated time and again that students who study and complete their education in regional Victoria are 70 per cent more likely to continue their working life in those regions. We should all be doing — and there should be a bipartisan approach to this — everything we can to assist young people to live at home or within their local regions so they can attend their nearest campus. We need to encourage their presence in that community for both education and work purposes.

I thank Mr O'Brien, Mr Ramsay, Mr Koch and others for their support of these important announcements, which were made last week and which will go a long way towards helping students in the region. The only disappointment or regret that I have in respect of this question is when I think to myself how much more we could have done with an extra \$2.5 billion of GST money.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I am glad opposition members are excited by that comment. I expect their excitement might extend to a phone call to the Prime Minister suggesting that money be returned.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I ask the Leader of the Government to advise me where answers to questions 108–112 and 114–116 might be.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Those answers are not far away.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I am trying to help, President. Mr Pakula raised those questions with me yesterday, and I will diligently follow those through.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference

Debate resumed.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — The opposition will not be supporting the adjournment of debate on this matter. It will not do so for a number of reasons. There

is a very important principle at stake here. It is a principle that we always honoured when we were in government — that is, that matters of general business were determined by non-government parties, that they were to be determined by them and not influenced by the government party. That was the one day the non-government parties had an opportunity to raise matters of concern to them and to have those matters considered and debated, even to the extent where the government of the day acknowledged it would not even propose or seek to amend general business motions that were put by non-government parties and certainly would not make amendments that would negate those motions.

What we have today is an attempt by this government to curtail a proper debate on a matter of some significance in relation to public transport and changes to train timetables, which Mr Barber has legitimately raised as a representative of a non-government party in this place. The non-government parties have discussed how the order of business for general business will proceed, and we have agreed on how general business will be dealt with. Now we have the government moving to end that debate without it being concluded when it is the desire of the non-government parties to conclude the debate and put the motion to the test.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — I am not sure what the interjections are about, but let me make it clear that in all the time that I was manager of government business and government whip we respected the processes of the non-government parties in general business, and we allowed those debates to be concluded and the motions voted upon if that was the desire of the non-government parties at that time. That is the desire of the non-government parties in this instance.

The government has not put an argument as to why it wants to adjourn the debate, but I think it will argue that there was not sufficient notice given. I advise the house that as Leader of the Opposition at the time, Mr David Davis used to email me the general business motions every Wednesday at 4.59 p.m. He must have been sitting at his computer — this is an unusual character — waiting for the clock to tick over to 4.59 p.m. before he would hit ‘Send’.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — He must have, because every week it was at 4.59 p.m. Unless I was sitting at my computer at 4.59 p.m. waiting for Mr Davis’s emails, I often did not

get them until late on Wednesday night or Thursday morning. This is an odd view.

My understanding is that the Greens made it clear to the government, I think it was on the Thursday morning, that they were intending to bring on this motion. What I would say is that whilst this motion is giving a reference to a committee, it is clearly a policy matter. In the emails that I used to receive when Mr Davis was in opposition he would only say, ‘We will debate a policy matter on transport’, or on health or whatever. This is a clear matter of policy. The Greens are seeking to have referred to a committee of the upper house a critical policy issue, and it is perfectly reasonable that that notice was given in the way it was and that the subsequent detailed wording was given when it was given. In fact, to follow the then opposition’s precedent, that wording could have been given on Tuesday.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — As Mr Viney said, the Greens gave an outline of this motion to the government last Thursday morning and the full text of it on Monday morning, but the proposition we are putting forward is not a complex one. The reference itself would not take a long time for a committee to work through, and it is timely, because it relates to changes to the timetable that were brought in on 8 May, which now cannot be examined before they arrive, and with this delay more time will be wasted.

There are two possibilities: one is that the government is seriously considering supporting this amendment, which would be gratifying; the other is that the government is stuffing around. Indecision seems to be a bit of a theme for this government. This is quite a small decision for it to make, and the time has been adequate. There are not any rules associated with how we notify each other about what we will be doing or about the timing of those things. The government’s own program this week has been a movable feast of items in terms of what has been brought on and when.

At the end of last Thursday we exchanged a whole lot of lovely words about how we would adopt a more cooperative attitude in order to make the processes of the Parliament work better, but that offer has not been taken up. The Greens have proceeded this week in the same way as we did last week. If the government is willing to have conversations about what matters need what level of notice and then when they will be debated, and some assurances are given around when matters will be debated, we will find ourselves in a lot better space and certainly with a more productive group of people.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I want to make a brief contribution to this procedural motion. The substantive issue at this point is not the motion; the government is quite receptive to debate on the motion itself, but — —

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — No, Mr Viney's contribution was quite extraordinary. I will lay the government's position out for him very clearly: when we were in opposition he deferred debate on one of my motions to establish five inquiries into a range of matters after we had advised him on the Friday of our intention to move those motions. The debate started, and then Mr Viney deferred it for a week on the basis that — —

Mr Viney — Friday?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — It was on a Friday that we gave notice of the motion, and Mr Viney was very unhappy with it being less than a week's notice. The practice in this chamber has been that where there are substantive motions there will be a week's notice — —

Mr Viney — What were the five inquiries into?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Would Mr Viney like me to outline them?

Mr Viney — This is a policy — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! This is a procedural debate; that is what it is. It is not a conversation. Mr Davis has the call. I suggest to him that he has limited time in a procedural debate, and if he takes up the invitations of members interjecting, he might find that he runs out of time for his key point. I will try to keep interjections to a minimum, particularly in procedural debates. I invite Mr Davis to continue without assistance.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — This is not just simply a policy debate; it is a debate to send a reference to a committee. In seeking that reference, the Greens have taken an entirely legitimate step, and the government is prepared to engage with them. Mr Viney set one standard in government when he demanded a week's notice of substantive motions that were required to establish inquiries, obtain documents or for similar matters, as opposed to simple policy matters. This is precisely that situation: it is an inquiry matter, and a week's notice is the general practice.

Ms Pennicuik advised the government that the Greens would possibly proceed with a motion on timetables on Thursday, but the nature of the motion was not made

clear. It was not until Monday that the government was advised of the detail. The government is not being difficult here. We are adhering to the standard practice of the chamber where as a courtesy the other parties are given notice of one week for matters that require a debate on documents, for example, or a substantive matter like the establishment of terms of reference for an inquiry. We are sticking precisely to the practice of the chamber, and I am in effect supporting a motion, like the one proposed by Mr O'Donohue, which did precisely what Mr Viney did when those five inquiries were being established.

Mr Viney claimed there was insufficient notice, and he was correct: it was less than one week. For that reason the chamber made the decision to defer the debate for one week. Mr O'Donohue has moved precisely the same motion in this chamber to establish a deferral of one week for further debate. It matches precisely what Mr Viney himself did at that earlier point and precisely matches the practice of this chamber. I put to the chamber that we are being consistent and fair. I accept that Ms Pennicuik may have believed quite legitimately that she had advised the government, but it was not clear from what was sent to the government precisely what the Greens had in mind with their motion. We will continue the debate in good faith if the chamber accepts the deferral for one week.

The PRESIDENT — Order! For the benefit of all members, but particularly new members who joined the Parliament after the last election, this procedural motion is basically discussing conventions between the parties, things we have done in the past on which the parties have had agreements regarding the courtesies around when the government is advised of particular motions. I make that remark in the context that this procedural motion does not deal with matters laid down in the standing orders. The courtesies extended in this house between the parties is a convention and something parties have done in the past to facilitate the workings of this house. It is not a matter covered under standing orders, and members ought to know that as part of this debate.

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

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — This is an important issue, and the principle that is involved in the procedural motion raises a broader issue. The community expects this chamber to show a degree of common sense and flexibility when it comes to debating motions such as this. What is compelling for me is the tight time frame that we are faced with. The timetable changes will commence on 8 May, but this chamber will not sit again on a Wednesday until 4 May.

We should not be waiting until four days before it comes into effect to get on top of this looming timetable change.

It would be outrageous to say to the community, 'This issue has caused you concern, will disrupt your lives and will affect your capacity to get to work. We know there is a degree of agitation there, but we cannot look at it, because we fell one day short of the required seven days notice'. Instead of having seven days notice, we had six days notice. I do not think that argument will in any way resonate with the community.

The other point is that what is being asked for is not a substantial change to or complex analysis of policy. The motion does not require a complex consideration of policy. It simply requires a referral of these matters to the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee. In essence it is a simple issue that is being considered — that is, should these timetable changes be considered more fully by the committee?

It would be churlish for this chamber to use a procedural impediment, which is not set out in the standing orders or the rules but is based on protocol and convention between the parties, as a tool to shut down this debate and stop legitimate community concerns being investigated by the references committee. It would be a slap in the face of the community concerned about the changes for us to deny it the opportunity to ventilate those issues. It would be a slap in the face of the community for us to say that there is some technical, procedural matter that prevents us from considering the issues until they are almost upon the community.

We need to take a common-sense approach, we need to have a look at all the circumstances, particularly the timing issues, and we need to be cognisant of the concerns that are felt by the community in relation to what is being imposed upon them. We should allow those issues to be ventilated through a referral to the committee.

Mrs Coote — Ventilated?

Mr TEE — Isn't that the right word?

Mrs Coote — Vented!

Mr TEE — Ventilated means to get it out. For those reasons, I oppose this procedural motion.

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I understand that the motion before the house is a procedural motion moved by Mr O'Donohue to adjourn for one week — —

Mr Barber — One month in practical terms.

Mr P. DAVIS — The motion is to adjourn for one week the substantive motion moved by Mr Barber. I do not wish to debate now the content of the substantive motion; that is a separate matter. I turn to remarks I heard made by Mr Viney in particular and to which the Leader of the Government made an appropriate response. I want to embellish on that.

Substantially, the way that this house has operated for a decade in terms of the cooperation between the government and opposition parties has been to ensure that there are no, what I would describe, surprises. The substantive motion that is before the house for consideration was a surprise to the government.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — No. Mr Barber did not advise the government until Monday afternoon. The motion was formally listed on Tuesday, yesterday, but the first time that the government received advice that this motion was to refer a matter to a parliamentary committee was on Monday. I have no objection at all to opposition or Greens members moving motions to refer matters to parliamentary committees. Indeed, when we were in opposition members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals did exactly the same thing. Sometimes we were successful, and at other times we were less so.

I can advise that in relation to these matters a proper protocol was established to ensure the good order and management of all these issues in a deliberate way that would also ensure that members of the government, opposition and minor parties could have time to consider the merits of the arguments being proffered in this place. That cooperation developed while I was the Leader of the Opposition in this place. I can tell Mr Viney that I did not have the pleasure of dealing with him as the manager of government business when he succeeded to the role of Government Whip. In my role as then Leader of the Opposition I had been dealing principally with the then Leader of the Government, now the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lenders, who was very keen to establish a process, and the members of the minor party, the Greens, who were very keen to see an orderly process for business in this place.

I put to the house that we have had a cooperative approach that has ensured that there have been no surprises. That means that members can come into this place and be prepared for a substantive debate.

There are two issues before us. The first is, what does the motion in effect seek to achieve? The other is, what

is the urgency of dealing with it today? I see no urgency to deal with a motion about a matter of which formal notice was not given until yesterday, Tuesday. Members of the Greens and the opposition are trying to circumvent a proper, orderly scrutiny of the business of this place and somehow gazump a parliamentary committee into undertaking an inquiry which the government may support. I do not know what position the government will choose to take.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — The government has had insufficient time to consider the matter. There has been no capacity for it to consider the detail and merit of the matter.

There has been insufficient notice, and it is beyond the goodwill and protocols between the minor, opposition and government parties that have been established for a decade. In my view we should adhere to that tradition of ensuring that no member in this place is surprised by the matters that are brought before the house for debate.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I also wish to speak on Mr O'Donohue's motion to adjourn debate on this important policy question moved by Mr Barber. It is a shame that the government, with all the resources available to it, is unable to get a handle on a proposition that runs to literally one sentence. It is a shame also that Mr Philip Davis struggles to see the urgency of having the debate. Whilst Mr O'Donohue's motion proposes adjourning for one week the debate on the motion, because of the parliamentary sitting schedule it will be a very long week indeed. It will be a week that runs until 4 May, which is the next time we will be here on a Wednesday having a debate on general business.

There is urgency because the motion relates to train timetable changes that will take effect on 8 May and that will affect a great many people in Melbourne's western suburbs. There is plenty of evidence of the urgency for this debate, in spite of Mr Davis's best efforts.

This is really about a couple of other things. One is the government's desire to manipulate the general business program when we have longstanding conventions about who chooses the order of what things are to be debated on which day in the sitting week so that from time to time we can have a bit of order in this place. The other thing I am concerned about is the winner-takes-all view that is coming from the government and an emerging pattern of behaviour around our new upper house committee structure.

Only yesterday Mr David Davis brought to this place a motion for a reference to the same Economy and Infrastructure References Committee. There was quite some debate about that complex motion which will require the assistance, one might guess, of the Department of Health, which is not a department attached to this committee, and indeed perhaps even the commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

Government members have said, 'But there's so much capacity on this committee; they're all very clever people; they'll be able to work it out. They've got lots of time, they're very smart and they'll be able to do this'. I take the compliments from members opposite as they were intended, but I suggest that if we are clever enough to handle this health reference without the expertise of the Department of Health and the commonwealth government on these questions of federal health matters, then we are probably perfectly capable of getting the Department of Transport, a department with which the committee does have a formal relationship, to give us a hand to look at some train timetables over the course of the next few weeks.

My concern is that the debate on Mr Barber's motion to refer a matter to a committee is a policy debate that does not require a week's notice. On many occasions in our term of government we were given notice of 'a policy motion, subject to be advised'. At the start of the week we would get to Melbourne wondering what we were going to talk about on the Wednesday. The then opposition, now government, members seemed to be perfectly flexible and able to move on their feet reasonably quickly then.

There is urgency around this issue. According to everybody who spoke in yesterday's debate, there is untold capacity in committee members to walk and chew gum simultaneously. I express some serious concern about an emerging trend of the government seeking to manipulate the order of and the manner in which we debate general business motions on a Wednesday and also the role of and way that the new references committees will conduct their business. That is something we should be greatly concerned about.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — This is a matter of urgency. On 8 May these timetables will come into force. The people who live in Altona will have their train services cut and they will have to change trains to travel to and from Altona. We do not know why the government has come to this decision. No passenger impact statement has been prepared. We have had two public meetings in the area. The minister has not deigned to attend them, and neither have the local members. It is time that this Parliament

scrutinised how this decision was made. It would be good for the community to actually understand how that happened rather than having the secrecy that we are now encountering.

I remember hearing complaint after complaint from coalition members about the Labor government not being transparent. This is their chance to be transparent.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — To be clear on the opposition's position, we are debating that this is a policy motion. A good way forward may be to suggest that all the parties get together to see if we can get consensus on what is a policy motion and what is not before we come back to the Parliament, which would be similar to the discussion we had at the end of the last sitting week about getting together to work on the program for the next week. We have endeavoured to do that. I am a little surprised that the government has been a bit inflexible as far as the time of notice and the form of words used, because I think we have been trying to show flexibility on all sides of the house.

The government's view is that we will debate all 11 items under 'Orders of the day', including the families statement, which I do not think the government really wants to get to, as well as two motions. I would welcome coming to a consensus as to what is important to the government, what is important to the opposition and what is important to the Greens and working closely on that into the future.

I am surprised that the government is showing such inflexibility, but I am not as surprised as I will be when this motion comes to the house on Wednesday in three weeks time and the government actually supports it.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I rise to make three very brief points. From what I have heard, it appears to me that the motion is a substantive motion, the due process is that there should be one week's notice and any suggestions by Mr Leane to change the process in the future are welcomed. I am sure Mr Hall, as the Leader of The Nationals, would support that, but that does not change the processes that exist, and therefore we support Mr O'Donohue's motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — This has been an interesting debate on this procedural motion, and I thank the speakers for their contributions.

We seem to have a distinct lack of clarity from the opposition about its position on this issue. Mr Viney spoke at some length about how Mr Davis in the last Parliament would give notice on time. He laboured the point about giving notice at 4.59 p.m., but that only highlights the fact that Mr Davis gave notice on a

Wednesday afternoon pursuant to the agreement that is longstanding between the respective parties for cooperation in this place to enable it to work as it should.

This is a very important issue. Mr Viney and other speakers have on other occasions spoken at length about the importance of this place having a degree of cooperation so that it can work appropriately.

We see in this situation that there is one rule for one and another rule for others. It is very clear that the motion before us is a substantive motion, and for Mr Leane and Mr Tee to suggest otherwise is absolutely false. This is the consideration of a reference to a committee. It is not a policy motion. It is a substantive motion, so a week's notice is required. As I understand it the actual motion was not given to the government until Monday afternoon, which is considerably short of a week.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Mr O'Brien, I am not aware of any reason why a full week was not provided. This is a matter of due process. It is important that members of the house work cooperatively and together, and it is important that those conventions are respected and understood. On that basis the government seeks that this matter be adjourned for one week.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I was having a discussion with the Clerk on the role of the Chair in respect of voting on procedural motions, because I must say that it would be my preferred position as the presiding officer not to cast a vote on procedural matters if that were possible. We would think at this time there is no opportunity for a presiding officer in the Chair to abstain on a vote, because they are obviously on the floor of the house. Nevertheless, we will investigate that because, as I said, I see that the position of a presiding officer is somewhat different on procedural matters to matters of legislation and so forth. My job is really to try to get matters progressed in the house and perhaps not necessarily to arbitrate on procedural things unless asked for a ruling.

Having said that, I indicate that the matter before the Chair at this stage is a procedural motion moved by Mr O'Donohue. The motion is that Mr Barber's motion on train timetables be postponed for one week — indeed to the next week of sitting — and I have put that question. Because at this stage I have no further guidance as to what my philosophical position might be, I cast my vote with the ayes.

House divided on Mr O’Donohue’s motion:

Ayes, 21

Atkinson, Mr	Koch, Mr
Coote, Mrs (<i>Teller</i>)	Kronberg, Mrs
Crozier, Ms	Lovell, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr	O’Brien, Mr
Davis, Mr D.	O’Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Ondarchie, Mr
Drum, Mr	Petrovich, Mrs (<i>Teller</i>)
Elsbury, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Finn, Mr	Ramsay, Mr
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Hall, Mr	

Noes, 19

Barber, Mr	Pakula, Mr
Broad, Ms	Pennicuik, Ms
Darveniza, Ms	Pulford, Ms
Eideh, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Scheffer, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Elasmar, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Hartland, Ms	Tarlamis, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tee, Mr
Leane, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Lenders, Mr	Viney, Mr
Mikakos, Ms	

Motion agreed to.

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 13 April.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

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.

I want to start my contribution by saying that I am a firm supporter of the democratic processes that exist in the Westminster system and that the opening line in the motion congratulating the Liberal-Nationals coalition on its election to government is genuinely meant. I can recall making a contribution to a debate in this place in which I made the comment that I have faith in the people of Victoria and in fact the people of Australia to get it right in terms of election outcomes.

Whilst I might not always have been happy with particular election outcomes and perhaps was not so happy with the last one, I do recognise that the democratic process in this state and nation is one that we must respect. It is a process that means there is occasionally an orderly transition of power from one political perspective to another. I have often spoken to groups of students visiting these chambers and made the comment to them that I am sure they have seen those of us in politics not always behaving as well as we might. I usually get some furious nods of agreement from those students, particularly when I suggest that sometimes we do not behave as well as they may do in their own classrooms. But I go on to point out to them that each of us has different views about the way our society should be run and that in our society we resolve our differences in here. The place where we sort out the different views that we all hold is in this place, and we do that with words. In other places they try to resolve their differences by other means. In my view the way we do it — that is, with words, and occasionally with heated words — is the most preferable method.

As a consequence, if it is your view that this is a good way to resolve our differences, then one must always accept that people get it right in terms of election outcomes. I congratulate the Liberal-Nationals coalition on its election to government. It was a significant achievement for the coalition to take itself to a position of having a majority in the other place, particularly considering the number of seats it required to win. The coalition did so and had quite a good result, albeit a very close one.

That does not change the fact that it is our role to make sure the coalition honours its commitments. We in opposition must hold the government to account for its decisions. One of the most fundamental positions that the then opposition, which is now the government, took leading up to the election was in relation to issues of integrity and accountability. That was often couched in more colloquial words, like ‘spin’, which were used when criticising the former government and its methods and approaches. I remember debates in this place about government publications, government advertising and a range of related issues.

At the heart of accountability and the democratic process is the community being made aware and kept informed of the basis of government decision making. At the heart of that is the transparent presentation of information. When we were in government we made a lot of the fact that we took a strong view about openness and accountability. We often referred to the reforms we put in place not only in terms of this chamber but also in terms of making the

Auditor-General and Ombudsman independent officers of the Parliament and making sure ministers always fronted the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. These were changes to the circumstances we inherited in 1999.

The then opposition, which is now the government, made its own points in these areas. One of those points was made when opposition members said they believed there needed to be better openness and more accountability. The central issue regarding accountability and openness is the provision of information.

The coalition made a lot of commitments and election promises using colloquial words in the lead-up to and during the election. The coalition also decided it would not subject its election commitments to the scrutiny of the Department of Treasury and Finance. The coalition questioned whether such scrutiny would be done in an independent way, which I think was a very unfortunate development because it was appropriate. Governments and oppositions subjecting their election commitments to that process is a relatively new development in politics, but I think it has been a healthy and good development in terms of enabling the community to have confidence that in making election commitments political parties have some capacity to deliver those commitments.

It was unfortunate that the then opposition, which is now the government, did not subject its election commitment to that process. Instead the then opposition chose to have a relatively small to medium size accounting firm undertake an analysis of its election commitments. I have that document. It is in the order of 8 to 10 pages.

Having been a parliamentary secretary and been associated with government for 11 years, I can say the costing of policies and commitments is much more complex than what would normally be done by a small to medium-scale accounting firm. Usually costings of election commitments take a considerable amount of expertise to complete and require the work of people with not just accounting backgrounds but also strong economic backgrounds, because there is a degree of forecasting required beyond just looking at the general cost of implementing a policy.

There is a whole range of issues around the forecasting of future income, revenues and recurrent costs to programs. It was an unfortunate development that the then opposition did not subject its commitments to that normal process. I do not believe that the 8 to 10 pages of costings done by the Melbourne-based accounting

firm were sufficient for the community to have confidence that all of the commitments made by the then opposition, which is now the government, could be met. That is the undertaking we are seeking from the Leader of the Government in this house in relation to the election commitments.

I look at the election commitments that were made in my own region of eastern Victoria. Interestingly my collection of election commitments has more pages than the pages associated with the costings. I have some 17 pages of election commitments that were made for Eastern Victoria Region alone.

I will make some general comments about the commitments. One is that a considerable number of them seem to be out of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, which I have to say is turning out to be something of a magic pudding. Somehow or other the Regional Growth Fund of \$1 billion seems to be able to fund an awful lot of projects. Secondly, a lot of the commitments made in the coalition's promises for Eastern Victoria have no dollars attached to them at all, such as the 24-hour police station for Churchill and the men's shed for Boolarra. Some of them are quite small-scale projects, but no recurrent funding has been allocated to them. There is a significant number of commitments.

Mrs Coote interjected.

Mr VINEY — My point is a serious one, Mrs Coote. It is that there is a significant number of commitments made for eastern Victoria which do not have any recurrent funding attached to them. In some cases they are capital commitments with no capital funds attached to them; they are just a promise.

In the first instance I will say that many of the commitments that have been made are very loose, and it will be interesting to see how they can be honoured. The second thing I will say is that trying to identify where the commitments — and there are 17 pages of commitments for Eastern Victoria Region alone — are funded in the coalition's funding document is something of a challenge, because very few of them can be linked. Very few of the commitments made for Eastern Victoria Region exist in the coalition's costings document.

When you look at the election commitments and ask, 'Where are they funded in the coalition's own costings?', that cannot be found. I am happy to accept that that does not mean they are not there; they may well be in some global figure in the coalition's costings, but these things ought to be transparent. It ought to be

quite clear that the commitments that have been made for every region in Victoria, and I am using just Eastern Victoria Region as an example, have been fully accounted for and costed in a transparent way in the coalition's own costings document — which I believe in and of itself is inadequate.

We are seeking that the government make available to the house the documents — if you like, the blue book — that the public service produces but most specifically the elements in relation to the costings of the policy commitments. We are seeking that those documents be made available to the house, not just for us in the opposition but as a process of making sure that the government is being transparent, accountable and open about the commitments it made.

Just by way of one example, a commitment was made by the member for Narracan in the other place, Mr Blackwood, of \$17 million for the Warragul railway station. This is a major project for that town, but that \$17 million is not mentioned anywhere in the coalition's costings document.

If the public is to have confidence in the political process, and if the community is to have confidence in us as politicians, they need to be given the information so they can assess whether what has been committed and what has been promised will happen — that it has been accounted for.

In recent weeks we have heard a lot about so-called black holes that the government is finding everywhere. There are so many black holes you have to be careful where you walk these days. We are hearing about black holes in almost every project the former government was funding. This is of course an attempt to smear the reputation of the former government in terms of its financial and economic management.

Recently I was at Farm World, where some people at one of the functions were talking to me about this. They were a bit sceptical about the government's continuous smearing of the former Labor government in relation to its economic management. They were businesspeople in particular; they certainly were not rusted-on Labor supporters. Anyone who knows Farm World will know what I mean. This is not Labor heartland.

At the event these people — who are businesspeople, farmers and so on — were saying, 'Whatever one says about the former Labor government and whatever political views you have, you would not criticise John Brumby as being a poor economic manager'. And I said, 'No, you wouldn't'. In fact I said, 'We are hearing a lot about black holes, but I will say this about the

former government's economic management: 11 years of economic and jobs growth, 11 years of budget surpluses, reinforced, I might say, in each of those 11 years by Auditor-General sign-offs on each budget and the financial accounts always coming in with budget surpluses'. Not only were surpluses predicted in the budget, they were delivered in the financial accounts at the end of each financial year. I said, 'Eleven years of economic and jobs growth, 11 years of budget surpluses and 11 years of AAA credit ratings'.

When the history of the Bracks and Brumby governments is written I think it will be about its achievements in health and education: its commitment to rebuilding every school in the state, its massive rebuild of the health system and its massive rebuild of our ambulance stations across the state. That will be the history that is written, and the annotation will be that it was a good government in terms of its financial management and that during the global financial crisis the Labor government was still able to deliver a budget surplus and deliver on its commitments in those critical service delivery areas.

We are hearing a lot about black holes in an attempt to smear the former government. I understand the political process, and I understand why the government is doing it, but it is worth putting on the record that history will record that the Bracks and Brumby governments, with three Treasurers — Treasurer Bracks in the first year; Treasurer Brumby, subsequently Premier; and Treasurer Lenders — always delivered budget surpluses and sound financial management.

Hon. P. R. Hall — It does depend on who writes that history — whether it is you or whether it is me writing that history.

Mr VINEY — That is true, Mr Hall. As is often said, history is written by the victors, and what is happening right now is that you as the victors are attempting to revise history and write it the way you wish it to be. But the facts are — and even Mr Hall cannot deny the facts — that there were 11 years of economic growth, budget surpluses and AAA credit ratings. Even Mr Hall cannot change those facts of history. He may wish to nitpick about particular projects and describe them as black holes, but the stunning black hole of the election campaign was this coalition document, which does not mention our electorate of Eastern Victoria Region. I cannot find the coalition's promises, policies and commitments from the last election — all 17 pages of them. I cannot find them; they are hidden.

The point I am making is that this is about openness and giving the community the opportunity to assess whether the coalition is able to deliver on the commitments it made. I have a keen interest in my electorate, and I cannot find the commitments made by Mr Hall and particularly by his colleague Mr Northe, the member for Morwell in the Assembly, who made commitments all over town. Mr Northe and Mr Blackwood, the member for Narracan in the Assembly, made a commitment to fund the recurrent expenditure of Old Gippsdown. Mr Northe made commitments to build facilities at just about every sporting complex in the seat of Morwell. None of these commitments can be found in this costings document.

My point is that if the coalition is going to use rhetoric about openness and transparency against us, as it did in the lead-up to the last election, the coalition ought to have the integrity to deliver it. That openness and transparency is not there, and it cannot be found. Those election policies and commitments in our region of eastern Victoria cannot be found in this costings document. If there is a black hole, it is this document.

We have been asking for the Department of Treasury and Finance to deliver its report to the government about what funding is available and what the full cost will be of those election commitments, and that is what this motion is about. It is about openness and transparency and the coalition being true to its rhetoric. The coalition, the new government, is refusing to release these documents.

Not only has the coalition refused to release these documents under the cover of cabinet confidentiality or whatever other executive privilege excuse it wants to create, but it sent its press officer to say that the Department of Treasury and Finance has ticked off on all of the coalition's policies and financial commitments — without releasing the documents! Mr Hall cannot have it both ways. If the documents are cabinet in confidence, the coalition cannot use them for its media releases. The coalition cannot say, 'We are going to put out a media release claiming that the Department of Treasury and Finance has ticked off on all our commitments but we are not going to let anyone else have a look at those documents'. No court of appeal would allow that to stand in relation to FOI.

Hon. P. R. Hall — You sit down and I will respond to every one of those points.

Mr VINEY — You will get your chance, Mr Hall, no doubt. I am not even responding anymore.

The issue before the house is a simple motion to ask the government to make these documents available, to be honest about what occurred in the funding of these commitments and to advise how revenue is going to be increased to fund these commitments, because the commitments are way beyond the current capacity of the Victorian budget.

I am pleased Mr Hall has put his name on the speaking list. That is fantastic; I look forward to hearing his contribution.

One of two things needs to occur: either the coalition government has to increase its revenue or there needs to be the introduction of a series of program and service cuts to enable the coalition to fund its commitments. All we are asking for is some honesty, openness and integrity and some matching of coalition rhetoric with coalition integrity in government.

When we were in government we heard coalition rhetoric about openness and accountability and transparency, and now we want the coalition to deliver it. I understand rhetoric is part of the political process. Good on coalition members for using it. Congratulations to them for getting elected with their rhetoric. I understand all of that. All I am asking is that the rhetoric be matched with some integrity.

It is not a big ask, especially given that in this chamber in the last Parliament there were weeks and weeks of debate about the release of documents. Week after week! Month after month! I know because I spoke on all those motions. The release of documents was the benchmark rhetoric of the then opposition. I have heard Mr David Davis thunder about, 'If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear' — or whatever the rhetoric was that he used. Mr Guy used the same lines.

All we are saying is have some integrity. Give the people of Victoria the opportunity to consider the coalition's policies and financial commitments, based on the Department of Treasury and Finance documents and the department's assessment — an assessment which the coalition refused to be part of during the election campaign. The coalition refused to subject its election commitments to scrutiny during the election campaign, yet all of its election commitments on coming into government were assessed by the Department of Treasury and Finance. From the moment the writs are issued, including the period when there is a caretaker government, a fundamental role of the public service is to prepare for whichever party might win office. It does so with the blue book and the red book, as they are colloquially known. All we are essentially asking for is that those elements of the books that relate

to the funding, cost savings and things associated with the coalition's election commitments be delivered to this house, so that the people of Victoria have the opportunity to assess them. That is not a great ask, and it ought to be an easy thing for the government to do, given the position it took in opposition with regard to openness and accountability.

If one is wondering why we on this side of the house might be a bit sceptical about the coalition's preparedness to release this information, one need only look, for example, at the *Herald Sun* of 4 April. There is extraordinary documentation of how the coalition in a matter of hours slashed and cut its own health commitments. We heard years ago that Mr David Davis was regarded as lazy — I think that was the description given to him by the president of the Liberal Party — in relation to the development of health policy. He subsequently became the Minister for Health after some time as the shadow health minister.

The *Herald Sun* article outlines that between 12 October and 27 November there was a massive reduction in the number of commitments that the coalition made in the health area. This included things like extending out the amount of time before it would produce a metropolitan health plan and the removal of a commitment on maximum waiting times for elective surgery and for outpatients, while substantial shortfalls were identified in capital funding for coalition commitments. Clearly, then, right up to election day the coalition was chopping and changing its own health plans, because they were not properly costed.

That one example from the leaked documents which were provided to the *Herald Sun* demonstrates that the coalition's commitments were not properly thought through and were not properly costed. The only black holes during the election campaign were the black holes in the coalition's costings document, which was prepared by a small-to-medium scale accounting firm and was not subjected to scrutiny by the Department of Treasury and Finance, as had become the practice in all elections of recent times. The coalition did not submit its costings in that way because it said it did not trust the Department of Treasury and Finance. Yet on coming to office it would get an assessment from the Department of Treasury and Finance about the true cost of its commitments.

The coalition then ran out with media releases saying the Department of Treasury and Finance had ticked off its costings, but the coalition was not prepared to release those documents. I now say to Mr Hall, since he has put himself on the list, it would be good if he could explain why it is okay for the government to use

documents that it claims are under executive privilege and to use documents that it claims are cabinet in confidence in its own media releases, and somehow think that this does not make those documents available to the public. That is not how these things work. The coalition has an opportunity to come clean on its costings, to be open and transparent, to be true to its rhetoric when in opposition and to demonstrate it means what it said about integrity, openness and transparency.

The coalition owes this to the people of Victoria, in whom I have faith and who, as I acknowledged at the outset of my address, changed the government. As much as I may be disappointed in the election result, people voted for change, and I respect their right to make that decision. As I have said on many occasions during debates in this house, the people never get it wrong. As much as I may be disappointed in the result, I recognise that people do not get it wrong. I congratulate the coalition on its election but — as our role is to keep the government to account — I am asking the house to pass a motion that holds the government to account for the cost of its commitments.

There were 17 pages of commitments for my own electorate of Eastern Victoria Region, and I can find hardly any that are included in the coalition's election costs. There are three possibilities: the coalition's election costings document may be poorly presented, it may be simply inaccurate or it may be deliberately misleading. I could give numerous examples of commitments which cannot be found in that document. The Warragul railway station redevelopment is just one, but there are numerous other examples that are not included in that document. This is the coalition's opportunity, through this motion, to present to the people of Victoria the costings of its election commitments.

If the government is proud of its election commitments, all it has to do is release the documents. If the government believes in its election commitments, what is there to hold it back from releasing those documents that demonstrate the cost of those commitments? There should be nothing to hold the government back. If the government believes in what it said in November last year, all it has to do is release the costings from the Department of Treasury and Finance. It has been prepared to use those costings to promote itself in its media releases, but it is not prepared to make those documents available to the public. I will hold the government to account for its rhetoric. If government members believe in openness, honesty and integrity in government, if they believe in their commitments, they

will release these documents. I call on the house to support the motion.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — That was a diatribe of absolute denial. We have heard just over 35 minutes of sour grapes; there is nothing surer than that. Mr Viney began with a really noble line that he was going to congratulate the coalition for getting into government and said that the people of Victoria never get it wrong. Talk about rhetoric! We have just had a diatribe of complete denial from Mr Viney.

The Victorian people did get it right; they said that Mr Viney's government was full of spin and a whole range of wastage; on and on the litany goes. I will give the house evidence of exactly what it is. Mr Viney could not cover what he has just been talking about in wolf-in-sheep's-clothing-type platitudes and congratulations because we won the election. Mr Viney could not cover up what he really and truly believes. He was trying to justify the spin that the former Labor government put this state through for 11 long, dark years. They were 11 long, dark years of rhetoric and spin.

Sadly for Mr Viney I was here in the last Parliament, and the Parliament before that, with him, and I heard him spin on many occasions the then government's line about how wonderful it was. It is as if a switch has been flicked and suddenly Mr Viney is holier than thou; he actually believes all of this stuff the former government came up with. It is as if it never existed, but it did exist. What is more, I am going to go through the information to prove just that.

The first part of Mr Viney's motion calls on the Leader of the Government to give a commitment to the house that the government will honour all of its election commitments. I would like to go through some of those commitments, because they are comprehensive and we have already instituted a number of them. We have been in government for about 120 days, and there is a remarkable record of what we have achieved in that very short period of time.

For example, in community safety we have introduced legislation to abolish suspended sentences for serious crimes such as arson, recklessly causing serious injury, commercial drug trafficking and aggravated burglary. We have introduced legislation to expand the functions of the Victoria Police protective services officers (PSOs) to protect people on railway stations after dark, and I might just add that the opposition fought us on that every single step of the way — the opposition did not want to see improved safety at railway stations and

an increase in the number of PSOs. The opposition fought us on every single turn and twist of that bill.

We have also introduced legislation to give principals the power to ban, search and seize weapons in the possession of students, another bill that the opposition proposed amendments to — the opposition did not believe that principals should have such power. We have introduced legislation enabling tough new penalties for drunken, loutish and threatening behaviour, including increasing on-the-spot fines for drunk and disorderly behaviour and persons who fail to leave a licensed venue when drunk, violent or quarrelsome, and we have introduced legislation prescribing new offences to do with drunks hanging around licensed premises.

Mr Viney spoke of integrity in government. We have been in government for 120 days, and we have already done much to improve the integrity of government. We have improved ministerial standards in Parliament by amending standing orders to require ministers to answer questions, and we have limited answers to 4 minutes, not like the Dorothy Dixers we used to get in the days of the former government when ministers went on and on and just talked the time out. I can remember many instances of the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change going on for significant periods of time, which was not enlightening at all.

We have also introduced legislation requiring members of Parliament to be financially penalised for poor behaviour in Parliament. Mr Viney talked about the behaviour of members of Parliament in this place during a debate, and he agreed that it was less than salutary in many cases. I think it is very important that this measure was introduced by the Premier.

Mr Ondarchie — Where is Mr Viney?

Mrs COOTE — Mr Ondarchie asks, 'Where is Mr Viney?'. I think we may well ask. Perhaps he cannot take the heat in the kitchen. He had to flee the chamber because the debate was too close to the bone; there was too much truth for him, and he could not stand the truth.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I pause Mrs Coote in her contribution to bring the house's attention to the presence of a former Minister for Education in the Kennett government, the

Honourable Don Hayward, who is present in the gallery today.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to place on the record that during the Kennett years we had many ministers with great integrity. The Honourable Don Hayward was a minister who had the education portfolio and did the most remarkable work. In fact he made schools in Victoria so good that Victorians were proud to attend them and they were excellent places to be involved with.

When we talk about integrity in government we should also talk about Lindsay Thompson's era. He was a remarkable Premier. He had great decency and integrity; none of us will ever forget the Faraday school affair. He set the benchmark for premiers. Lindsay Thompson is to be commended and remembered with great fondness, and our thoughts and wishes go to his family. His time is certainly something that we all recognise and continue to use as a benchmark for integrity in this new Parliament and government.

Let me talk about transparency. Mr Viney went on and on about transparency. I have to say in fact we have already been very transparent in a whole range of ways. For example, we released the details of the cost of Labor's desalination plant, which the Labor Party refused to do when in government, showing the plant will cost Melbourne water users more than \$23 billion over the next 30 years. We have also released new data to improve the transparency of Victoria's health system, including comparisons of state median waiting times with national median times by procedure and hospital, and the number of patients waiting for longer than 365 days by procedure and hospital. We have successfully sought an Ombudsman's investigation into the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project.

Mr Viney said the hallmark of the government he was involved with will, when the history is written, be its achievements in the health and ambulance sectors. That will be a very short paragraph, because I do not think there were any successes at all. We know of the huge blow-out in the health sector, and we know about the ambulance waiting lists. We know that we inherited a system that has some major flaws and systemic problems, which we will address. We will be very transparent in giving out information dealing with the health sector.

I turn to the cost of living. We have introduced year-round discounts on electricity bills for Victorian concession card holders from 1 March — earlier than promised. We have established Victoria's first housing affordability unit within the Department of Planning and Community Development to help improve housing affordability by providing whole-of-government planning advice. However, it does not end there.

In the area of economy and business we have halved liquor licence fees for 10 000 small business owners. These people were absolutely hurting under the former government, which was just not listening to them. It brought in draconian bills and provisions that penalised small businesses. Will we ever forget about the huge taxes that were imposed on small businesses that happened to be sending wine with bunches of flowers? They attracted an enormous tax. It was absolutely and utterly ridiculous and outrageous. Those small businesses listened to what the former Labor government had to say and voted with their feet — and voted for us, the Liberal-Nationals coalition government.

We also commenced an expert independent review of the state's finances. We ended Easter Sunday trading confusion by introducing legislation to ensure all Victorian businesses will be able to trade on Easter Sunday. We reversed Labor's clearways laws which damaged small businesses, cost jobs and made no real improvements to travel times. I acknowledge my colleague in the chamber, Ms Crozier, and indeed Ms Pennicuik, both of whom, together with me, marched in the streets together with the now member for Prahran in the Assembly, Clem Newton-Brown, and also the member for Malvern, Michael O'Brien. We took that issue right up to the government. Georgie Crozier was certainly right at the forefront of those demonstrations. In fact she was out there taking it right up to Tony Lupton, the former member for Prahran. The people of Prahran listened to the coalition's policy. They listened to what we had to say, and they thumbed their noses at Mr Lupton. In fact the Labor Party and Mr Viney should have a very close look at what we did in Prahran, because we listened to the small businesses of Prahran. But Mr Viney is nowhere to be seen. Where is Mr Viney? Who knows!

We established the only state ministry for aviation in Australia. My colleague the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, a very capable pilot himself, will have a great deal of understanding of his ministry and will make Victoria a hub for the aviation sector.

We have reorganised industry portfolios into the new Department of Business and Innovation to refocus

government assistance on making all Victorian industry more competitive. We ended waste. We terminated Labor's wasteful plan to spend \$20 million on fairy lights — if you don't mind! — for the West Gate Bridge. This was an absolutely outrageous policy of the Labor government. The people of Victoria showed John Brumby and his team exactly what they thought about fairy lights for the West Gate Bridge. We immediately halted taxpayer-funded, party-political advertising and reduced by 40 per cent the government's advertising spend — and the list goes on.

I would like to comment about an area where we have been quite successful, and that is in the community services and support area. We have launched a comprehensive review of Victoria's child protection system to recommend how the protection and support of vulnerable young Victorians can be improved.

We introduced a national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) into the Council of Australian Governments agreement and announced that Bryan Woodford, OAM, of Yooralla would chair an expert task force to advise the government on the establishment of an NDIS. We announced a \$3.8 million package to more effectively recruit front-line child protection workers and retain them in their important roles. In addition to that we strengthened ongoing support for bushfire survivors in towns ravaged by the 2009 bushfires, providing \$450 000 to the Yarra Valley Practitioners Project.

In the area of transport one of the big things we said we would do was make public the location of mobile speed cameras. Members of this chamber who may be leadfooted have only to check out the *Herald Sun* newspaper on a weekly basis and they will find out where the speed cameras are. People have been very appreciative of this open and transparent approach to traffic cameras. This is not using traffic cameras as a revenue raiser in secrecy, as the Labor government did under Premiers Brumby and Bracks.

I turn to regional growth. The Honourable Peter Hall wants to make a contribution about this to refute some of the outrageous statements made by Mr Viney in his contribution about the electorate they both share. I will leave that to Minister Hall, whom I know will provide a very articulate response to that.

But one area that I cannot let go is planning. Those of us in this chamber who were here in the last Parliament sat through absolutely tortuous answers from the then Minister for Planning, Justin Madden. They were absolutely appalling. We watched him wriggle and squirm over the Windsor redevelopment. We watched him wriggle and squirm over a whole range of things.

They were not just allegations, they were the absolute truth. If the public lost confidence in one particular area, it was in planning. The public had absolutely no faith in the Bracks and Brumby governments with regard to planning. The former minister, Mr Madden, is now sitting with his tail between his legs over in the other chamber, and I have to say there would be many of us who would say they are not really missing him.

I turn now to what we have done. We have reversed Labor's VC71 planning scheme, which would have allowed high-rise, high-density development along every transport corridor. We have started delivering on our election commitment to ensure that residents within 2 kilometres of proposed wind turbines are considered in planning applications, and we restored the authority of local government for all new wind farm permits. We opened registers of interest to develop the last remaining uncontracted land parcels in the Docklands, and we approved plans for the new suburbs of Greenvale North and Greenvale West in the City of Hume, allowing for approximately 7000 people to live in about 2500 homes across 363 hectares.

The new Minister for Planning, the Honourable Matthew Guy, has shown an enormous amount of compassion and demonstrated his understanding of the huge complexities and areas of tension around planning in this state. Mr Guy is to be commended for the excellent start he has made in his portfolio. Talking about open and transparent government, absolutely nothing could be clearer than the comparison between the former planning minister, Mr Madden, and the current minister, Minister Guy. That is just the beginning of what we have done, and as I have said, we have been here for just over 120 days.

Mr Viney went on at great length saying he wants openness, transparency and documentation. He said he is having an enormous amount of difficulty just trying to work out what is to happen in his own electorate. I note Mr Scheffer is in the chamber. Perhaps he has a far better understanding of what is happening in the electorate he shares with Mr Viney. He might like to enlighten Mr Viney as to how the money will be used in their electorate, but I know Minister Hall will enunciate it for them.

However, I remind Mr Viney that on 3 May, which is in just under one month, the next Victorian budget will be presented. At that time Mr Viney might seek some help to have the budget deciphered for him in order to make certain that he can understand exactly what we are promising and where the funding lines are. He will find all the answers he wants in the May budget. I suggest he set aside some time to go to one of the

government briefings because he will be enlightened about what is happening and will see how short-sighted this motion is.

A massive, unprecedented and unjustifiable cut of \$2.5 billion has been imposed upon Victoria by the federal ALP government in cahoots with the state opposition. The Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and state Labor have been completely silent on this \$2.5 billion cut proposed by their Canberra colleagues. The opposition has refused to say whether it supports this massive cut, which will impact on every Victorian household, or if it will join the coalition in attempting to protect Victoria and its interests and therefore oppose its federal colleagues. We have yet to hear what the opposition intends to do. Mark my words: no other state will suffer a reduction anything like Victoria's. In per capita terms, Victoria will be \$88 per person per year worse off in comparison to each and every one of the other states. This is not good enough for Victoria. It means Victoria's share of GST revenue will fall to 22.5 per cent, moving us even further away from our per capita share of 25 per cent. Victorians currently subsidise the rest of Australia to the tune of \$118 per person, and that figure will now rise to \$206 per person.

Last week the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, conceded the merits of Victoria's argument and announced that her government will review the GST grants process. It seems to be the week for mea culpas and saying you got it wrong: a former Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, turned around on Monday night on a national television program to say he got the emissions trading scheme wrong. We have had a week of confessions, including Julia Gillard saying that she concedes the merits of Victoria's argument about the proposed \$2.5 billion cut and that it will be reviewed. Given that there is this concession, you have to ask yourself whether the Gillard government should immediately suspend this unjustifiable \$2.5 billion taking of Victoria's money.

It defies logic that the Prime Minister will proceed with the \$500 million cut in Victoria's revenue each year while the flawed formula itself is being reviewed. On the one hand she is saying, 'We think Victoria has merit in challenging this', and on the other hand she is saying, 'Well, too bad, we are still going to go after their money and will hit Victoria'. And where is the Victorian opposition? It is nowhere to be seen defending Victorians; it is nowhere to be heard at all.

In addition to what the federal government is ripping out of our budget, another significant challenge for the Victorian coalition when developing this year's budget were the black holes. Mr Viney, whom I am very

pleased to see has had the courage to come back into the chamber to listen to the debate, went on at great length about black holes and said that the coalition is using this as spin. His litany of examples showed that it was not just black holes that Mr Viney was calling spin.

There are some \$12 billion worth of projects over budget. For example, the promised cost of the desalination plant in Mr Viney's very own electorate was \$3.1 billion, but the cost is \$5.7 billion, with a budget blow-out of \$2.6 billion. The EastLink tollway had a blow-out of \$2.5 billion. The myki smartcard — what a misnomer that is — has a blow-out of \$857 million. The South Morang rail extension, which Mr Ondarchie spoke so eloquently about yesterday, has had a blow-out of \$642 million. The Royal Children's Hospital has a blow-out of \$250 million; the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline, \$180 million; HealthSMART is at \$104 million; and the national gallery redevelopment is at \$28 million. I move on to the Grovedale railway station, which has had a blow-out of another \$2 million. Stage 2 of the Dandenong Hospital redevelopment has experienced a blow-out of \$10 million, and the list goes on.

If Mr Viney is not going to call those examples black holes, I do not know what a black hole is — and those examples come before we even go into the details of absent recurrent expenditure. If we look at that figure, the blow-out continues. Mr Viney talked about spin, but his party was the absolute master of spin, and he was the spin doctor of all time. Mr Viney continued his contribution with a self-congratulatory, self-justifying diatribe on the legacy of the Bracks and Brumby governments. Mr Viney will be looking for a good historian. I am sure Mark Latham is free; he writes very good diaries, so I am told. He would do a very good rewrite of Victorian Labor history, and it would certainly be entertaining.

All of the coalition's election commitments were carefully and accurately costed by the Department of Treasury and Finance. It confirmed that all of the coalition's election commitments were fully costed and budgeted. Mr Viney went on about how the coalition costed those commitments, and he indicated that we used a substandard accountant. This goes to show yet again that the opposition has no faith in people undertaking open and transparent assessments, which is what these accountants did. That costing was ticked off by the Department of Treasury and Finance at a very early stage.

It is important to remember that before the election the coalition did the hard work to identify \$1.6 billion worth of savings. We implemented our savings plan

after being elected. The savings have included things like cutting Labor's empire of spin doctors and ministerial staff. Victorian taxpayers would be horrified to see the enormous offices and to know about the Labor government's huge expenditure. It was quite sickening to see the overkill of some of those offices. We ended the waste of millions of dollars of taxpayers money on politically driven Labor propaganda.

Mr Viney's contribution, including this motion, was a diatribe of denial. He congratulated the coalition — and I think he was being genuinely gracious when he said that, and I will take him at his word. He went on to say that the Victorian people do not get it wrong, and that is absolutely true. The Australian people will not get it wrong at the next federal election, I might add. Nevertheless, the Victorian people want openness and transparency. They do not want spin, expensive programs that blow out or people telling them lies, because they see through all of this. They want dialogue, discussion and openness and to be able to see what is going on.

The coalition is committed to delivering its election commitments in full, and it will do so. We are returning the state's finances to a sound and sustainable footing, but the challenge has been made much harder by the \$2.5 billion cut by the commonwealth government and by state Labor's legacy of billions of dollars of black holes left for the coalition to fix.

It seems that the program is being repeated; we see Labor governments come in, blow money around and spend taxpayers money willy-nilly. To paraphrase Margaret Thatcher, Labor governments are good at spending money only until the money runs out. The interesting thing is that here we are, a Liberal government, reintroducing openness and transparency and reinstating integrity in government. When the history books for the Baillieu-Ryan coalition government are written, they will be glowing in openness, transparency and integrity.

I am proud to be part of a government that has this approach. I am extremely pleased to have seen the huge commitments and decisions that have already been made in 120 days. It is a positive beginning, and into the future we will see more of the same. I encourage Mr Viney to ask us a similar question at some stage, because quite honestly it is a lovely opportunity to talk about our successes. I suspect we will be able to do that after the next 120 days as well. I look forward to Mr Viney having to eat humble pie. I thank him once again for his gracious — tongue-in-cheek perhaps — comments when he moved his motion. I suggest he

watch with great interest when the budget is brought down on 3 May.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I am reminded by the Clerk that the Honourable Don Hayward, who is present in the gallery, was a member of this chamber from 1979 to 1985 as the member for Monash, prior to becoming the member for Prahran in the other place from 1985 to 1996.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Unless I have missed something, this is an extremely simple motion. Item (1) calls on the government to:

give a commitment to the house that the government will honour all of its election commitments in full ...

I presume the government's answer to that is yes. Item (3) asks the government to:

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.

I presume the government's answer to that is that we will read it in the budget. Item (2) calls on the government to:

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 ...

I presume, because I have already made such a request, that the answer to that question is no.

In relation to the government's proposal to introduce protective services officers on trains, we gave the government fair warning and then made numerous requests of the government to provide, at the time we voted on the bill, a Treasury costing. The government neither confirmed nor denied that a Treasury costing had been made, and it failed to provide us with the information we wanted. Mr Viney is quite right that the Treasurer claimed that Treasury checked all of the

coalition's election promises and found them to be correct, but we did not get that information.

If Mr Viney is finding it frustrating in opposition to ask for things and not get them, he should expect a lot more of it. I base that on my experience over the last four years of asking for things and not getting them. I asked for detailed information about the costs associated with the desalination plant. In fact, I set up a parliamentary inquiry for that sole purpose, and I did not get the answers. I asked for the business case associated with the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project, and I did not get it. I spent 12 months and about \$13 000 fighting the previous government in court to get its submissions to the Infrastructure Australia funding pool. Included in that was the regional rail link. I wanted to see the benefit-cost ratio. I received those documents on the courthouse steps, but the key number was taken out. To this day I am still asking what the benefits of this project are, as is anybody else who is associated with it. And so on and so forth.

I could go on for a very long time about the things I asked for in the last Parliament in the attempt to make that government accountable for the decisions it was making. I should say 'accountable in a timely fashion', because there is not much point finding out after the desalination plant is half built what we are going to be up for. However, in the coming four years we will of course spend a lot of time asking these questions of the government. With the numbers in both houses the government is likely to be even less cooperative, but that will not stop us asking. I commend Mr Viney on moving this motion that asks the questions it does, and I support the motion.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — The coalition won the last election on the basis of its promise to fix Victoria's problems and also on the basis of the many hundreds of funding promises it made to communities across the state. As election day drew closer, many were increasingly concerned that the coalition was recklessly running up a bill it could not fund and making promises it could not keep.

By way of a bit of background to this, Labor had shown in the elections of 1999, 2002, 2006 and again in 2010 that it could present a responsible set of commitments to the Victorian people that were costed and capable of being progressively delivered through the four budgets of each term. Labor's election promises were always on the public record for all to see and to assess how well we were performing.

By contrast, throughout the 2010 campaign the coalition refused to release its costings until two days

out from the election, when it finally announced that those promises amounted to \$7.6 billion and that to make the budget balance some \$1.6 billion of government spending had to be slashed.

In this debate the issue has been raised of whether the coalition's promises were properly costed. Coalition members announced that, yes, their promises were independently costed by a firm called Yates Partners, which Mr Viney has already described as a small-to-middle-size accounting firm. As Mr Viney has said in the house, that document was some 8 to 10 pages long, and clearly that was not sufficient for the community to have much confidence in it. Moments later the then shadow Treasurer admitted that he was personally acquainted with Mr Frank Angelico, who is a senior partner at Yates Partners. Bizarrely, after this revelation the same coalition and the same shadow Treasurer said that using the Victorian Treasury to verify the then government's election commitments involved a conflict of interest.

At the time coalition members said there was room for belt tightening across the board and that many millions of dollars could be made in savings. They cited waste and spin and what the member for Box Hill in the Assembly and now Attorney-General, Robert Clark, curiously called 'the bloat'. Coalition members said savings could be found in cutting government advertising, firing government advisers and making all departments cut their expenditure by 1 per cent.

Coalition members also promised not to sack public servants and not to slash government services. These two commitments are now being met by slashing the real wages of public servants by holding down wages, renege on a promise to make Victorian schoolteachers the best paid in the country and reducing the public education budget alone by \$340 million over four years. That is how it is done, how \$1.6 billion is found: by attacking the reasonable wage claims of public servants; cutting critically important programs, including education; and slowing or dropping projects such as the fit-out of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. The government finally and reluctantly agreed to fund that but only after a massive and widespread public outcry.

In her contribution Mrs Coote went through a list of what she called 'our successes'. That is fine. No-one in this chamber is disagreeing with that and saying that the government has not done things. That is not what Mr Viney's motion is aiming to have debated and clarified in the house today. The big problem now is that the community does not have a benchmark against which to measure the delivery of election commitments

that the Liberals and The Nationals have put forward. If members go to the government's website, they will see that it reveals astonishingly little.

I will be fair; the website does contain a range of policy statements, and some of them make very interesting reading. Attached to each of them is a table that purports to show 'Total costings — recurrent funding', as it is headed. Some of the policy documents, such as, for example, the energy and resources policy, consist of one line. Others, such as community services, have eight or nine lines. Then, just to give another example, agriculture has probably half a dozen. They show global figures, and there is not really a lot to go on when you look at them. They certainly do not tell the people to whom the policy documents are targeted what are the funding commitments of this government.

So far as I can work out, the Liberal-Nationals coalition made around 115 individual funding commitments in Eastern Victoria Region. As I can roughly work out, that is a value of around \$268 million. I have identified a further 38 projects for which, so far as I can find — and Mr Viney alluded to this as well — there is no funding allocation. These commitments include around 24 made in the transport portfolio, 14 in education and 30 in police and emergency services. When you look at 12 of the transport portfolio commitments the government has made you see that a number of them are inherited from the previous Labor government.

For example, coalition members announced that in government they will act immediately to fix the problems associated with traffic movement through Koo Wee Rup. They said that in government they will act immediately to fix the problems and build the Koo Wee Rup bypass. The source of this is a media release of 15 November last year. When you look at that closely you see it says that the community is frustrated by Labor's so-called inaction and that the coalition will fix the traffic problems by committing \$50 million to the construction of the Koo Wee Rup bypass.

The media release expands on some of the problems faced by the residents of Koo Wee Rup — everyone acknowledges the serious issues in that town relating to traffic movements — but says absolutely nothing about what the commitment of \$50 million will actually be spent on. The media release studiously avoids the simple fact that this commitment is for a plan and for funding another study. All that is fair enough. If you have engineering works of the complexity of that kind of road construction, of course you need to have detailed studies and specifications and they cost money. The point I am making is that the commitment is spin, because it purports to fix a whole problem but allocates

only \$50 million for a study. The people of Bass deserve to have stated clearly what the funding is for, when and how it will be spent and, importantly, when the Koo Wee Rup bypass will be completed, in this term or the next term or the term after that.

I refer to one more example from the transport portfolio — that is, the Latrobe Valley bus service review that was conducted. Back in October last year the member for Morwell in the Assembly, Russell Northe, expressed his disappointment that the then Brumby government had not yet released the Latrobe Valley bus service review, even though, as he says in his media release, the then Department of Transport had advised him that the recommendations were still being worked through. I know, having been involved in parts of that review and having talked to the people who run the bus services there, that there is a series of complicated issues. Back in October last year Mr Northe said that the then Brumby government had allocated funds for the improvement of the town bus services in the Latrobe Valley and that this was included in the Brumby government's blueprint for regional Victoria.

All that is fine; that is what oppositions do. But the former opposition is now the government and it is committed to the Latrobe bus review and presumably its recommendations.

Other than a media release from last October, I can find absolutely nothing from The Nationals or the Liberals on that policy. It is not one of the 20 policy documents that are on the website. There are 20 of them there, but there is not one that is headed up 'Transport', so where does it come from? What is the source of support for the Latrobe Valley bus service? I am at a loss to know what the coalition plans to do about the bus services in the valley, and Russell Northe knows that it is a critical issue and somebody ought to do something. The community has a right to know what is being committed, how much has been allocated and whether it will involve the former government's plans or there are new plans on foot. The people of Gippsland, and specifically those in the Latrobe Valley, have the right to know exactly where the government stands on this matter: will it adopt Labor's approach or will it devise new time lines?

That is another example, and a telling example, of what has been generated in the community as a result of the coalition's lack of accountability in relation to its election commitments.

The first part of Mr Viney's motion calls upon the government to honour its election commitments in full,

but the government first needs to provide a detailed list of all of its commitments and say what each costs and when they will be delivered. While Mr Viney's motion calls on the government to deliver its promises in full, it is only fair to say that we on this side are clear on the fact that a high proportion of the coalition's commitments, or some percentage anyway, are not good policy, and in many cases we would rather they were not implemented.

The debacle of the cattle in the Alpine National Park is a glaring and spectacular example of a policy that we did not support at the beginning. We have been looking on aghast and in amazement as it collapses before our eyes. People would have seen the headline in this morning's *Age* 'Grazing adviser rebuffs Baillieu', and not before time. I cannot imagine how Professor Mark Adams could have entertained it for as long as he has, so I guess his patience is completely spent by the ineptness of the government.

That is just one very prominent example of a policy and a commitment that we would not support. The opposition always reserves the right to interrogate the quality of each and every government promise and to oppose those commitments if it believes they are not in the interests of Victorians.

The second part of Mr Viney's motion calls on the government to make available to the house the full cost of each electoral commitment, and I have already set out the coalition's overcommitment and the consequential funding cutbacks it is making. The community has a right to full information on what the government is committed to deliver, how much it costs, where it will come from and how particular projects will be delivered. The government has a profound obligation to provide that information.

Day by day we see the government thrashing around as, little by little, it comes to face up to and deal with the inevitability of having to accept that a number of projects and initiatives that the Labor government put in place have to be taken up and completed because they are good for Victoria. The most recent example is the regional rail link that when in opposition the current government denigrated, vilified, criticised and pooh-poohed. In opposition the coalition refused to say it would support this project, but this week in government it has finally been compelled to announce that the project will be completed.

The problem with the government is that it wants to own the major projects that Labor initiated but it wants to do so without acknowledging its debt to the previous government. It does this by confecting so-called flaws,

such as funding black holes and a whole series of management and project faults, and then proposing some cosmetic changes to re-brand the project as a coalition initiative.

The truth is that the coalition has great difficulty in supporting anything that it did not think of. It has a lot of trouble acknowledging that there are a whole lot of necessary projects that Labor started which fall to it as the new government to complete. That is what responsible governments do, and it is what the community expects. If the coalition came to some realisation around the fact that the previous government contributed an enormous amount to the welfare and prosperity of Victoria, it would do itself great credit and it could then move on to implement its projects and the approaches it has to public policy. If it did that, it would earn much more respect than it is at the moment.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to be able to speak in support of Mr Viney's motion. I say at the outset that I certainly agree with the statement made in clause 1 of that motion in relation to the need for the Baillieu government to honour all of its election commitments in full, but I would go further than that and say that it also needs to address the issue of need. Mr Hall referred to the issue of need in an answer to one of his Dorothy Dixers during question time today. I would argue that there is a great deal of need across the state, in particular in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region, that is not being addressed by the coalition's election commitments.

My analysis of all the coalition election commitments that were made for my electorate — and it is a very small list, a tiny list that I am sure Mr Ondarchie is quite embarrassed about — indicates that there will be very little to show for four years of this coalition government if it does honour all of its election commitments in my electorate.

It is a real disgrace that we have a situation where — and obviously Mr Ondarchie and Mr Guy were not in the Exhibition Street Liberal Party headquarters when the whiteboard was pulled out and the education commitments were made about schools around Victoria — marginal seats were clearly targeted, because not even one public school in Northern Metropolitan Region made it onto that list. The coalition's costings documents show that the only commitment it has made to public schools in the Northern Metropolitan Region is to fund a feasibility study for a secondary college in Doreen. I say to Mr Ondarchie, that is just not good enough. The community in Doreen expects a secondary college.

Labor would have provided a secondary college, and all the coalition is able to provide is a feasibility study.

The coalition has also been engaging in a lot of bluff and bluster around costings since it came to office. We saw the Premier, very soon after taking office, state publicly that the budget was in the black. He said everything was sound, that he had had the Treasury briefing and everything was found to be in order. That is confirmed by the 2010–11 midyear financial report which was tabled by the Treasurer in this Parliament in March. Since that time we have seen a deliberate strategy by the government to set the scene for savage budget cuts next month. It is timely that Mr Viney has brought this debate to the house today so we can look at these issues, given it is the last week before the state budget is handed down.

In my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region there are important projects under way, such as the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and the wholesale fruit and vegetable market relocation to Epping. There have been claims made by the Baillieu government about black holes, and yet while the community is clearly outraged at the government for playing political games with an important project which will provide services to cancer sufferers, suddenly the government has discovered that the money is there. I welcome the fact that funding for that final stage of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre has now been promised by a very sheepish Mr David Davis. He certainly looked embarrassed standing behind his leader when he made that announcement on Monday, but despite the fact it is a commitment that is several months too late, the community in the northern suburbs — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Barber — On a point of order, President, I refer to your ruling of yesterday about the level of noise. We have members who are flagrantly flouting your ruling with regard to the amount of noise in the chamber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I was allowing a little latitude this afternoon, but I think Mr Barber raises a pertinent point. I appreciate that Ms Mikakos is perhaps inciting Mr Ondarchie to respond directly to her. I ask Ms Mikakos to keep her comments to the motion, and I ask Mr Ondarchie to try to refrain as best he can and allow Ms Mikakos to make her contribution.

Ms MIKAKOS — I thank Mr Barber. I think that is the first time the Greens have come out to support me on anything.

We have a serious and important motion before us. It is about what services will be delivered by this government. I am extremely concerned that what we are seeing is the setting of the scene for savage budget cuts that will impact on services needed by families across Victoria. I have constituents who have considerable needs. It is a relatively socioeconomically disadvantaged community. We have a lot of families who are doing it tough, and I think they would be absolutely shocked if there were any cuts to important services in health and education. Some cuts have already been publicly flagged, and we have been told to anticipate those cuts.

I call on the government to reconsider any service cuts to important services in the areas of education and early childhood services. I have already flagged in this house in the previous sitting week my concern about the early childhood area. We have not seen any commitment in the coalition's costing document to a whole lot of important programs that exist in the early childhood area, such as toy libraries, the Young Readers Program and equipment grants for kindergartens. I will be appalled if those programs were cut in next month's state budget.

I have also flagged on previous occasions my considerable concern around the coalition's lack of commitment to early childhood education. Fifteen million dollars over four years for capital expansion of kindergartens is not going to be enough. In Victoria we have four of the fastest growing populations in local municipalities in Australia. Those communities will need their kindergartens to expand to be able to provide opportunities to all young people to participate in the kindergarten program. We have also seen the scene set for this government also to walk away from the Council Of Australian Governments agreement in relation to the expansion of four-year-old kinder hours.

This is an important motion. I urge the government to fully release the blue books — the costings — of all its election commitments. It is important that the people of Victoria have an opportunity to scrutinise the costings around those commitments, given that the coalition failed to submit its election commitments for costing to the Department of Treasury and Finance during the election campaign. We are seeing a great lack of openness and accountability by this government, which claimed it was going to champion these issues whilst it was in opposition.

I fully support Mr Viney's motion, but I reiterate that the coalition government needs to go further. In terms of election commitments, the government needs to look at the issue of need. It needs to provide services on an equitable basis across Victoria. The people of Victoria would expect no less.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on Mr Viney's motion, which is timely and gives us an opportunity to consider how the government is going in terms of its election commitments, how it is honouring those commitments and how it is moving towards implementing those commitments. This is important, because we have passed that first 100 days milestone.

The government is starting to set a tone, an approach or an attitude in terms of how we can expect it to behave during the rest of the term. We now have a clear sense emerging of the type of government we can come to expect and the attitude and approach the government is taking.

My area of particular interest is planning. For example, in relation to affordable housing the government set out a clear commitment in its election policies to — I think this was the wording — end the housing affordability crisis. On 18 February of this year the minister suggested he was taking a step towards ending the housing affordability crisis when he announced to great fanfare the government's proposals in relation to Fishermans Bend. In the *Age* of 18 February he described the Fishermans Bend proposal as a building block for affordability.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr TEE — I think the community would consider that an opportunity for the minister to flesh out and provide some detail, Mr Barber, as to how it is going to deliver Fishermans Bend as a building block for affordability.

But the first thing you notice about the announcement is that there is no budget commitment and no commitment to any infrastructure. There is no planning, including planning for schools, nor a budget for work to remove very contaminated soil which has hydrocarbons, asbestos and heavy metals that have leached from fuel oils. We know the site has lead smelting and that there is a considerable amount of contamination in the area. Ultimately I suspect this year's budget — and this debate is timely, because it is our last sitting week before the budget — will give us a clear indication as to the government's commitment in relation to Fishermans Bend and whether or not we will

see it as the building block for affordability. You would expect that if the commitment on the site is about affordability, then there would be an allocation towards the clean-up of the site and an allocation towards the development of social and community infrastructure, be that roads or schools, on the site — —

Mr Barber — Public transport!

Mr TEE — Indeed public transport. But if you do not have that commitment to important infrastructure, you are effectively asking developers to fund the cost of removing the contamination. That will mean that this development will make the well-heeled Docklands development look like the cheap family option. As we all know Docklands is very expensive. It is important for this government to deliver on its commitment to making Fishermans Bend the building block for affordability. It is a very small building block. The proposal for Fishermans Bend involves some 10 000 to 15 000 dwellings to be built over a 20 to 30-year period, so over 20 to 30 years we might end up with 10 000 homes, whereas we know the demand for homes is about 6000 per year. Over its 30-year lifespan the Fishermans Bend project will contribute some 300 to 700 houses per year towards the 6000 houses that are required. That is very much a drop in the ocean if this is the building block of affordability.

But I think Mr Guy let slip what was happening regarding the Fishermans Bend proposal when he told the *Port Phillip Leader* that the project was 'exceedingly long term' and unlikely to start in the next four years. Victorian families who are looking at this building block of affordability at Fishermans Bend will find it will not — and I am using Mr Guy's own words — deliver anything towards affordability perhaps ever but certainly not in the next four years.

On the affordability front line there is a real concern about this government's commitment. The noises that have been made in relation to Fishermans Bend do not provide any comfort to the community or Victorian families.

The government's wind farm policy is causing a considerable degree of angst in regional Victoria where wind farms proponents and developers are unsure about the future. We know the government made an election commitment to make areas no-go zones and that they will include areas like Wilsons Promontory, the Mornington and Bellarine peninsulas, Surf Coast and Great Ocean Road regions, on or near — whatever that means — national and state parks, designated tourist areas and designated residential population corridors. Under that policy it is difficult to envisage any future

for the wind farm industry, particularly when you consider the added impost of the 2-kilometre requirement — which is really, when you pare it back, a requirement for a contract between the resident and the wind farmer — which provides an opportunity, effectively, for legalised extortion. You have the situation where anyone who has a house can demand whatever ransom in exchange for having a wind farm within their 2-kilometre radius.

Mr Barber — Even if the other 20 households have already got their extortion.

Mr TEE — Even if it is everybody else in the whole community, Mr Barber. Even if it is the overwhelming majority, or 99 per cent of the community. They can all be lining up to support the wind farm proposal, because they know that renewable energy is the future. But their views are irrelevant. It takes just one to scuttle the wind farm future for Victoria, and I think that is causing a great deal of concern.

There is also considerable confusion about what this government is doing. We are now seeing what has been referred to as the first wave of reform, and it is unclear how that sits in relation to the implementation of the government's commitment. The first wave refers to the 2-kilometre zone but does not implement the policy. This has caused confusion and is certainly putting a brake on any proponents for wind farms, because they just do not know what the future holds. On the one hand they have the guillotine hanging over their heads, but, on the other, they do not know when it is going to strike. That is very unfortunate. It sends a clear signal that Victoria is not the state for renewable energy; it is the state which is linked to brown coal as the future source of power.

In the planning portfolio there is concern about where wind farms are going. There is absolute fear in regional communities that members of many families who rely on wind farm generation for their employment will lose their jobs. Last week I visited Keppel Prince in Portland. It has 150 employees who are worried about their future. It is estimated that each of the 150 employees support another four jobs in regional Victoria. These are jobs of people who might be in the hospitality industry, who might be teachers, who might be librarians, or who might be in a number of the support services out there — all of whom are under direct threat and are waiting for the execution, when the next wave is introduced by the minister.

Another couple of concerns have emerged about the government's election policies. During the election campaign the then shadow planning minister made

much of amendment VC71, which the house will recall was the provision for medium-density developments along tram and transport corridors. The coalition made much of this, and in its election campaign promised to remove it. The house will recall that VC71 was the provision which sought to identify development sites along tram, train, light rail and bus routes. It caused the then opposition a considerable amount of angst and the opposition promised to remove the provision. Then, lo and behold, when you look at the actions the coalition government has taken, and when you look at what it has done in relation to VC71, it is clear that it did not get rid of it. It certainly did not abolish it.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr TEE — Indeed. The media release might say that the commitment has been delivered, but let me tell you that on the ground that has certainly not occurred. The wording has changed, but the wording has changed very subtly. Instead of referring to identifying redevelopment sites along tram, train and light rail corridors, the new wording requires the identifying of redevelopment sites that are 'on or abutting'. We have gone from 'along' to 'on or abutting'.

It was Associate Professor Michael Buxton who said that the new clause would allow for even more development along land transport corridors, so the promise to remove has become — —

Mr Barber — Reverse; they said they would reverse it.

Mr TEE — Reverse, Mr Barber; I might need to correct the record. That promise to reverse or to remove has delivered an expansion.

Mr Barber — That is my reading of it.

Mr TEE — That is Mr Barber's reading of it, and it is certainly Associate Professor Michael Buxton's reading of it. I concur with those views.

The other issue I want briefly to touch on is the interesting commitment in relation to the Growth Areas Authority. Again Mr Barber will recall the clear election commitment to abolish the Growth Areas Authority.

Mr Barber — Commitment implemented?

Mr TEE — I do not recall that press release, but I do recall the minister's statement on 19 January, when he told the *Age* that when the government said 'abolish', it actually meant 'retain' the authority. He indicated he would be retaining the authority 'for the

time being in a bid to increase housing supply'. I would suggest that the authority will live as long as there is a need to increase housing supply. We also know the government has a commitment to review — and, I suspect, expand — the urban growth boundary every two years. I suspect the Growth Areas Authority will remain for a very long time, as we continue to meet housing needs and to increase housing supply.

On a number of fronts we have learnt that when this government says 'remove' or 'reverse' in terms of the transport corridors, it means 'expand'. When the government promises to provide a building block for affordability, we know — in Fishermans Bend at least — that will be affordability for the very wealthy. The promise to abolish the Growth Areas Authority has now turned into a promise to keep the authority for an indefinite period.

On wind farms, perhaps this analysis suggests a ray of hope and that the stay of execution which is where we find ourselves now might continue for sometime as the government grapples with how to interpret its policy. If it acts in a way which is consistent with its other election commitments, we might even see an expansion.

I would urge the government to provide clarity and certainty around its wind farm policy, because developers are telling me they find it difficult to access the government. Developers are also telling me that if this government's policies were implemented — indeed, developers are also saying this publicly — they will not bother putting in applications for wind farms, because the applications will not succeed. Developers are looking at other more favourable states to provide that high-tech employment and innovation.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr TEE — Mr Barber, what that means is that for generations to come — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! It is my observation that Mr Tee is more than capable of making a contribution without Mr Barber's help. I think I have now tolerated it for 10 minutes, during which I found that Mr Tee was actually speaking to Mr Barber. I am not sure who was supporting whose contribution. My understanding is that there should be one speaker making one contribution. I appreciate Mr Barber's help in this matter, but I ask him to refrain from providing a secondary contribution to the chamber.

Mr TEE — The issue with Mr Barber is that sometimes he is singing with you, but sometimes he is

not! I do appreciate your timely intervention, Acting President.

I want to conclude by urging the government to promote renewable energy and not condemn this generation and generations to come to brown coal generated power. Fossil fuels are going to have a place in Victoria for a long time, but we need to start the process of weaning ourselves off them. I would urge the government to be very clear and careful and to consider Victoria's need for a renewable energy industry.

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to support notice of motion 2 standing in the name of Matt Viney. The preamble to Mr Viney's motion is about extending congratulations to the coalition for being elected into government. I have congratulated individual members of the coalition over the last four months, and I have also publicly congratulated the coalition as a whole. I therefore endorse Mr Viney's comments. But I must warn members opposite that being in government requires a great deal of responsibility. Politicians have a very low standing in our community, primarily because we are viewed as not being trustworthy as far as our word is concerned. That is unfortunate, because I believe most politicians do not lie. Our credibility is everything to us.

I am concerned that the government has overreached with its commitments. It has overreached because fundamentally the coalition did not expect to be in government in 2010. The coalition obviously made some pre-election commitments, thinking they would never be tested because it was not likely to win government. I make that observation based on some of the commitments, such as fixing all the state's problems, which seems to be a fairly broad commitment and which is obviously going to be a very difficult commitment to meet.

I would encourage government members to drop all this talk about the black hole and simply level with the public that some of the commitments made by the government are going to be difficult to implement going into the future. I think that is probably the best approach. The government overreached, and I think the best approach going forward is to go to the electorate and confess that these commitments are going to be difficult to implement.

There is no use carrying on about the previous government black hole, because we have the record. We have the runs on the board as far as economic policy is concerned. We are not dealing with the Cain and Kirner governments. We are dealing with the

Bracks and Brumby governments, which were very fiscally conservative governments. In 1999 the then Bracks opposition made a commitment to budget for an annual surplus of \$100 million. I am happy and proud to say that despite the global financial crisis the Bracks and Brumby governments stuck to this commitment of \$100 million surpluses every year. Again, that was even through the global financial crisis.

The previous governments and the people of Victoria were rewarded with AAA credit ratings throughout the 11 years that Labor governments were in office. Despite being a non-resource-based economy, Victoria dodged the global financial crisis without dipping into recession when the rest of the advanced economies throughout the world were almost in depression.

I recall in 2008 travelling to New York and London — financial centres of the world — when the US and Britain were talking about depression. When I came back to Australia I thought we were doomed and that we would be in recession or depression fairly quickly. But do you know what, Acting President? We never went into recession. At no stage did we technically go into recession at all, and that was some achievement by the Labor government. The former Treasurer is in the house, and his ability as a Treasurer had a lot to do with that as well.

If members do not want to take my word for it, I am happy to quote other institutions and organisations. I will quote from the Access Economics report *Business Outlook*, which is dated June 2010. The report says:

With apologies to the restaurant scene in *When Harry Met Sally*, we can only imagine that other state premiers —

must be envious and —

must look at John Brumby, sigh, and say, 'I'll have what he's having'. Victoria continues to chalk up enviable outcomes on key indicators.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, Acting President, the motion before the house is calling on the Liberal-Nationals coalition to honour its election commitments and to release costings of its election commitments. It does not say anything about the previous government or about any of the commentary around the previous government. I submit that this line of discussion from the member is not relevant to the motion before the house.

Mr Barber — On the point of order, Acting President, previous speakers, including members from the government side, have widened the debate extraordinarily to cover the actions of the previous

government. It is in that vein, I believe, that Mr Somyurek is responding.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I was going to respond to the initial point of order which was made before Mr Barber's point of order. That would have saved the member the trouble of getting to his feet to call another point of order, as I would have ruled that it was not a point of order. I was allowing Mr Somyurek to transgress somewhat, but I felt it was still within the context of the motion. On that basis I was going to allow Mr Somyurek to continue but to ask him to narrow his contribution to the motion. I also remind the chamber that its business was concluded at 1 o'clock this morning, so I am at a bit of a loss as to why Mr Somyurek would see fit to elongate his contribution to a point where I felt it was getting beyond the parameters of the motion at hand.

Mr SOMYUREK — Thank you for your guidance, Acting President, and I can assure the house that I do not wish to make my contribution any lengthier than it should be. However, I will finish this quote, because I believe it is pertinent that I do so:

Victoria continues to chalk up enviable outcomes on key indicators. That includes jobs, where the state has racked up the fastest growth in Australia. And it includes housing construction, where Victoria has made the best effort of any state to keep up with demand, and where the leading indicators in housing finance and building approvals suggest that the state will continue to outstrip Australian gains for at least a little while further.

And not only has Victoria managed to outperform on these and other measures but it has also managed to do that through both boom and bust. Remarkably, spending by businesses is now a bigger share of the state's economy than is true for Australia as a whole. That is a pretty impressive statistic amid the resource boom of recent years. Even the Victorian retail outlook appears a little healthier than that seen in NSW, thanks to good news on jobs and population.

There we have it, and not from a Labor Party apparatchik or from some left-wing think tank. This is straight from Access Economics. I am sure the members opposite will agree that Access Economics is a reputable organisation. If Access Economics is not good enough, what about what Mike Baird, now the Treasurer in the New South Wales government, had to say in an article on the 'Australian online' website of 9 May 2009:

The Victorian budget is the benchmark that other state governments should follow ... They have been able to deliver infrastructure, cut lead times and control expenses growth in trying circumstances.

I wish the opposition good luck in trying to convince the people that black is white or, in this context, that black is red.

Having established our economic credentials, I was going to go through some of the commitments that the Liberal-Nationals opposition made prior to the election, but I will not go through them all given that we did stay up till 1.30 a.m. or so last night. I will make my contribution fairly brief. It is fair to say that the coalition opposition, now in government, has made commitments with respect to teachers, police officers and community workers, and it has also made some commitments with respect to the way this Parliament should operate in terms of accountability and transparency. I am particularly disappointed in its rhetoric not being implemented in terms of the accountability and transparency of this government.

The coalition opposition consistently moaned and groaned about Labor ministers taking Dorothy Dixers — in fact it was one of its election promises to get rid of Dorothy Dixers — but government members are lapping them up at the moment. They are giving ministerial statements based on Dorothy Dixers. What they are actually doing is using the Parliament as an electioneering platform rather than as an institution to scrutinise the executive and keep it accountable. These are things that the coalition government was aware of when it was in opposition, but now that it has come into government it seems there is a new world order.

The government is undermining Parliament as an institution, despite the fact that it committed to changing the way Parliament would be run. An example of this, apart from the Dorothy Dixers, is the way the legislation committee has been given policy work to do. The legislation committee is a scrutiny committee; that is what it should be doing, and joint investigatory committees perform both a policy identification and policy development function as well as a scrutiny and accountability function.

What this government is doing is wasting the time and resources of the Legislation Committee by giving it policy work to do. The government's rhetoric and some of its commitments in opposition were good, but the fact is that it is falling well short in implementing its commitments in government. With that, I support this motion.

Debate adjourned for Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) on motion of Mr Leane.

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 13 April.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the letter from the Attorney-General dated 21 March 2011 in relation to the Council's resolution of 2 March 2011 requiring the production of documents in relation to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation.

On 2 March I moved a motion in the Council calling on the Attorney-General to table in this Parliament a range of documents relating to the staging of the grand prix, and in particular the 2010 event, including the cost-benefit analysis, the contract between the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and the government, any services that were provided to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation by government departments or agencies, and the fee paid to Parks Victoria. That fee seems to be a mystery and should be public knowledge, because the grand prix is staged on public land and the citizens of Victoria, who own that public land, should know what return they are getting for the damage that has been caused by the race each and every year for the past 16 years that it has been run at Albert Park.

As the motion states, I am asking the Council to take note of the letter that was received by the Clerk on 21 March 2011 regarding the resolution of the Council which supported my call for those documents on 2 March. The Attorney-General wrote:

The government is in the process of identifying documents that may be relevant to this resolution.

That is even though some of the documents are fairly plainly named as to what they are. He said:

As part of this process, diligent searches are being undertaken by all relevant government departments and agencies to ensure that all documents are identified.

Regrettably, the government is not able to respond to the Council's resolution within the time period requested by the Council.

That was two sitting weeks following the date of the resolution, 2 March.

Interestingly, the Attorney-General goes on to say:

This is due, in part, to the fact that the 2011 Australian grand prix will be staged shortly ...

The letter was sent and received prior to the staging of the grand prix, which has underwhelmingly now occurred. Somehow or other the fact that the grand prix was being staged was going to:

... delay the identification of documents held by government agencies involved in the staging of the grand prix.

I was quite prepared, though not happy, to understand that perhaps those departments were involved in some way with the staging of the grand prix — and the letter certainly seems to imply that they are — and probably are providing services to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation using taxpayers resources and money. The fact that the Attorney-General has referred to that implies that that might be the case, so I will be interested to see what documents come forward.

It is also interesting to note that on the day after the letter from the Attorney-General, the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Ms Asher, issued a media release saying that the government was going to conduct an economic impact assessment into this year's race. That is a welcome development, and I will be interested to see the results of that, because we all know that the race cost \$50 million last year; that figure is out there in the public arena. I am at a loss to see how it is ever going to cost less than that given that revenue is falling and the cost of staging the event is going up. If people like Mr O'Donohue want to look at me and assure me that this is possible, then let us see the documents, because this has been a long-running issue where the public has been denied the knowledge of what public money is going into this event and what benefit the people of Victoria are getting.

From my point of view — and I have never supported the race or the holding of the race on public land in Albert Park — I do not see any benefit. It was interesting that Ms Asher trotted out this old chestnut in her media release:

The Australian Formula One Grand Prix provides significant benefits for Victoria including the economic gains of attracting interstate and international visitors to the event, as well as encouraging future tourism and business investment by raising the profile of Melbourne and the state of Victoria ...

The Auditor-General in his 2007 report on major events, including the grand prix, came to the conclusion that the grand prix was operating at a net economic loss. We all know now that that loss has grown and grown every year since then. For the minister to say that there is an economic benefit when there is not is wrong. Of course there are some people who come from interstate and even overseas to see the event, but the Auditor-General also categorically said that there is no evidence whatsoever that it encourages future tourism to Victoria.

It is unfortunate that the previous government used to trot that out, and the current government is continuing

to do the same. There is absolutely no evidence. If there is evidence to show that is the case, let the government produce it. The only reliable statement that has ever been published on the matter is from the Auditor-General, who said there is no evidence that that is the case. But if the government has evidence, let it produce the documents and table them here to prove it is the case. I do not believe the evidence exists and neither does anyone else who has watched this event closely over the last 16 years.

In my contribution to the debate on my motion calling for the production of the documents I made the point that after this year the event is due to keep going for another four years until the contract runs out. If it continues to run at a \$50 million per year loss to taxpayers, that amounts to a quarter of a billion dollars spent on an outmoded car race — a tired old event, as I have described it.

I have also asked for information on the annual fee that is paid to Bernie Ecclestone, which is estimated to be over \$25 million. I do not know what economic benefit that fee provides to anyone except Mr Ecclestone. I am sure it just goes straight into his pocket. It was also interesting to read in the *Saturday Age* of 19 March, two days before the date of the Attorney-General's letter to the Council explaining why the documents were not forthcoming, an article quoting Mr Ron Walker as saying the race fee of \$25 million that is paid to his friend Mr Ecclestone would break the camel's back and could kill the grand prix. I cannot imagine that Mr Ecclestone is going to forgo his \$25 million fee, and even if he did, the race would still cost the people of Victoria \$50 million a year. The interesting part of that article was Mr Walker saying:

Revenue has started to fall for reasons we never ever worked out ...

Possibly because nobody is interested in the event, Mr Walker!

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I seek some clarification as to whether Ms Pennicuik's contribution is in relation to the letter from the Attorney-General, Robert Clark, that is now before the Chair, or whether her contribution is made up of a number of conjectures as to what she believes might be the government's response? My understanding is that this order of the day on the production of documents relating to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation relates to documents requested by the Council from the Attorney-General. Ms Pennicuik seems to be providing her interpretation of what the documents might be, and I seek clarification on that.

Ms PENNICUIK — Do I have to clarify this?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I am taking advice from the clerks, and it would appear that perhaps I have been a little bit too restrictive on Ms Pennicuik's contribution. But I ask that perhaps she confine her contribution to her request for documents in relation to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Acting President. As you would realise, this is on my motion to take note of the response that the Council has received to my initial motion seeking the production of documents, which was about the costs of the grand prix. I am just referring to relevant and timely comments that have been made in the community about the substance of the Council's resolution. However, I do not intend to spend all that much longer on it, as I am sure you will be pleased to know, Acting President.

I was talking about the revenue and the costs, which is apposite to the matter I was talking about and the reason I moved the motion in this Council for the production of these documents. The wider community wants to know what the revenue and the costs are regarding this event. We know the cost was \$50 million last year. I was saying Mr Walker was quoted in the *Saturday Age* article of 19 March 2011 as saying:

Revenue has started to fall for reasons we never ever worked out ...

I find it amazing that he made the comment that he has never worked out why the grand prix revenue is falling. The revenue is falling because there are fewer and fewer people attending and more and more free tickets being given away. That to me would mean that revenue is falling, but Mr Walker is a businessman and I am sure he can work it out for himself. He also went on to say:

You have to understand the international costs of staging the event have gone up ...

He quoted that when the race was first staged in 1996 —

... oil was \$8 a barrel. Now it's over \$100 a barrel, and it takes six planes just to transport all the equipment here. There are 150 staff who travel to Australia paid for entirely by Ecclestone.

If they are, let the documents be produced to prove it.

The fact that it takes six plane loads to get the grand prix goods, chattels, cars and drivers here is reason enough, in my view, for getting rid of the event. That is

an absolute outrage in terms of costs with absolutely no benefit to the people of Victoria.

As to the documents that the Attorney-General promised in his letter of 21 March, I concede he has not nominated a date by which he will provide them. He said the government would comply with the resolution of the Council 'as soon as possible'. Even if I were to take that in good faith, the race is past and here we are again in another sitting week and the documents have not appeared. Seeing that the Attorney-General has not put a date to it I would suggest 'as soon as possible' would mean 'now'. But as the Council will not be sitting again until Tuesday, 4 May, there must be plenty of time for the government to produce the documents that were requested in the Council's resolution of 2 March. It is a full two months until 4 May. I urge the government to produce the documents by the next sitting week. Otherwise I will probably have to move different motions in Parliament regarding their production.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The government is pleased to take note of the motion and the Attorney-General's correspondence to the Council dated 21 March. I note the comments of Ms Pennicuik about the time that has passed, but I refer to the Attorney-General's comments about the coincidence that the resolution occurred at the same time as the grand prix. The resolution was passed a couple of weeks before the grand prix, and we are now debating this motion just a matter of 10 days or so after the grand prix.

The motion seeking the production of documents was reasonably broad, referring to any subsidies in the form of sponsorships, advertising or corporate entertainment or other services relating to the 2010 event paid by government departments or agencies to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and any services provided to the AGPC by other government departments — for example, Victoria Police — relating to the 2010 event. In other words, Ms Pennicuik was legitimately seeking information from a range of government departments. But the impact is that obviously that involves a significant exercise to inquire of every potential agency and government department that may or may not be party to advertising, sponsorship or entertainment at the grand prix. I just make that point.

I also make reference to the press release from the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Ms Asher, which says:

The coalition believes that it is important to assess the current economic impact of the event, including the economic impact

of spectators, sponsors, the media, officials and race teams as well as the direct economic impact on the state of Victoria ...

The coalition government is committed to greater transparency of the costs and benefits of events that are supported by taxpayers funds.

We have already committed to releasing relevant data for this year's grand prix as soon as possible after the event, and the government intends to release the economic assessment ...

As Ms Pennicui acknowledged, that press release goes to some of the issues raised by the motion before the house with regard to greater transparency and clarity about the economic impact of the grand prix on Melbourne and the state of Victoria. The government is happy to support this motion to take note of the correspondence from the Attorney-General and welcomes the comments from the relevant minister about greater transparency and accountability with regard to this event.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition is also happy to support Ms Pennicui's motion. I particularly note that at the end of her contribution she flagged a potential follow-up motion about this paperwork.

Motion agreed to.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the letter from the Attorney-General dated 5 April 2011 in relation to the Council's resolution of 23 March 2011 requiring the production of documents in relation to alpine grazing and the metropolitan train timetable.

In speaking to this take-note motion I will be addressing only the part of the letter from the Attorney-General that relates to alpine grazing. It may be normal practice, but I am not quite sure why there are not two separate letters from the Attorney-General, given that the matters relate to two separate resolutions of the Council, not a single resolution. The call for documents on alpine grazing and the call for documents on the metropolitan train franchise agreement were not part of the same resolution. They probably deserve separate letters.

Nevertheless, I want to outline the situation given that we have a letter in front of us that refers to two resolutions of the Council. I am only going to be referring to one of them, the resolution of 23 March, which sought the production of:

... all correspondence and related documents between the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the University of Melbourne relating to the proposed research program on alpine grazing and the document *Department of Sustainability and Environment/Department of Forest and Ecosystem Science Research Program Charter*.

In moving the motion I asked that those documents be tabled yesterday, 5 April. In speaking to the motion, which the Council supported and which became a resolution, I made the point that some of the documents that referred to alpine grazing and the correspondence between DSE (Department of Sustainability and Environment) and the University of Melbourne are on the public record and have been published on the website of the *Age* newspaper. I am not sure, probably nobody is, if they are all the documents relating to the correspondence regarding the proposed research program on alpine grazing, but I am seeking the full set of documents. I also made the point that the document headed *Department of Sustainability and Environment/Department of Forest and Ecosystem Science Research Program Charter* was referred to in correspondence that is on the public record, so I have also asked for that to be tabled.

I made the point at the time this motion was passed by the Parliament on 23 March that it seemed to me that this was not going to require the government to go to a whole lot of departments searching for a large number of documents. It was not an onerous task for the government. There is another letter, similar to the letter talked about in a previous motion, where the Attorney-General told us that as part of the process:

... diligent searches are being undertaken by all relevant government departments and agencies to ensure that all documents are identified.

I am perplexed by that statement. Perhaps that process refers to the train franchise, because we have a letter that refers to two resolutions, but I would not have thought there was any requirement for government departments or agencies to be involved in this matter. The only government department involved is DSE, and the other entity is the University of Melbourne — that is it. Multiple departments and agencies, as referred to in the Attorney-General's letter, are not involved. The Attorney-General says he will 'respond as soon as possible'. I cannot understand why those documents could not have been tabled in this Parliament yesterday, 5 April.

It is interesting that this saga continues. In speaking to the original motion I raised the notion that the government looked for scientific backup only after moving the cattle into the alpine area. I raised the issue of the integrity of our universities and the importance of

preserving their independence in carrying out research without fear or favour. The implication in some of the correspondence that is now on the public record is that that was not the case. It is important for the people of Victoria that we clear up this matter.

In today's *Age* we read that the person who was originally named as the leader of the government's research program will now not take part. One of the reasons, as reported in today's *Age*, is his concern about the lack of scientific rigour and design in the process put forward by the government. Many people have asked how the government can make a scientific assessment. Even if you accept that there is a need for more research in this area, which I do not — there is enough research to show that there is no benefit and that a lot of damage is done by having cattle in the alpine area, which is why they were removed — if you want to design a scientific research program, you need to do a baseline study first. The government has undermined that basic scientific premise, and now it cannot do a before and after comparison.

This is not so much about the issue of alpine grazing as it is about the independence of the University of Melbourne and about clearing up what went on with regard to the discourse between the DSE and the University of Melbourne. It is about the public of Victoria being able to see how the university and government agencies conduct themselves in research programs with regard to the charter.

I have given notice of another motion regarding this resolution of the Council. As I have said, I hope the documents requested by the Council will appear on 4 May, after the coming break of four weeks. If they do not, I will proceed with my other motion about this important issue. Members should make no mistake about this; it is an important issue about the independence of tertiary institutions to be able to conduct scientific research without fear or favour and with scientific rigour.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The government is happy to join this motion to take note of the letter from the Attorney-General dated 5 April. I note that, whilst the letter responds to two motions passed by the Legislative Council on 23 March, the date and time for the production of the requested documents was 12 noon yesterday. We are not talking about a significant period of time since the request was first made. In the debate on alpine grazing I raised the short time between the passage of the motion and the requested date for the production of documents, which was yesterday. We are not talking about a huge effluxion of time.

The motion with regard to cattle grazing asked for all correspondence and related documents. Those related documents were unspecified. There may or may not be a lot of related documents — I do not know; I am not privy to that information — but it may be broader than Ms Pennicuik suggested in her contribution. The Attorney-General made the point that the government is responding to these resolutions. His letter states:

... diligent searches are being undertaken by all relevant government departments and agencies to ensure that all documents are identified.

... The government will respond as soon as possible.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition also supports Ms Pennicuik's motion to take note of the Attorney-General's letter regarding alpine grazing and metropolitan train timetables. We concur with many of the sentiments she put forward in her contribution.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Auditor-General: Local Community Transport Services — the Transport Connections Program

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I wish to make a statement on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Local Community Transport Services — the Transport Connections Program*. The audit summary gives an outline of the Transport Connections program (TCP). It says:

The TCP is managed by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) in partnership with the Department of Transport (DOT), Department of Human Services (DHS) and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). This partnership approach recognises the complex nature of transport disadvantage, which can affect participation in everyday activities. It also acknowledges the need for cooperation between government departments, local agencies and the community to develop sustainable solutions. The TCP has provided funding and support to 32 projects covering all rural, regional and outer metropolitan municipalities in Victoria.

Under 'Conclusions' the Auditor-General says:

The TCP was designed to build capacity for local communities to work together on overcoming transport disadvantage. There is, however, little evidence to demonstrate the extent to which access to local transport has been improved because of the program's weaknesses in governance, oversight and monitoring.

... DPCD did not effectively coordinate with DOT and other partnering agencies in managing and overseeing the TCP. Limited community engagement and weak oversight by local

steering committees, and by DPCD, was evident at three of the four projects examined. DPCD did not resolve emerging issues in a timely manner ...

... DPCD cannot demonstrate the extent to which desired outcomes have been achieved.

In his findings the Auditor-General says:

DPCD designed a sound governance and accountability framework for the TCP, but did not effectively implement it ...

However, inadequate community engagement, including inadequate oversight by the local steering committee and DPCD, was evident for between 18 months and two years at three of the projects examined.

The recommendations made by the Auditor-General include that the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Department of Transport should strengthen and better document grant assessment processes to all the areas. He also recommended that the Department of Planning and Community Development should strengthen project governance and accountability by better monitoring, establishing reliable arrangements for ongoing, effective cross-government coordination between departments for the Transport Connections program and enforcing the accountability requirements of funding agreements.

Recommendation 3 is:

The Department of Planning and Community Development should strengthen the Transport Connections program evaluation framework by further developing arrangements to measure and progressively report on the achievement of project and program objectives.

It seems that what went on over the period 2006 to 2010 was that the previous Labor government took a good program and made a mess of it. For a number of years in this chamber we heard how well this program was running. What the Auditor-General's report shows is that a program that was put in place to help people in small regional towns have a better way of life and better access to major regional centres and services has effectively been bastardised by inaction, lack of care and lack of interest. The previous government effectively put in place a good idea and let it run down.

What the government will endeavour to do is make sure that the Department of Planning and Community Development, in conjunction with the Department of Transport, takes up the recommendations of the Auditor-General. It will ensure that the Transport Connections program is better monitored and that the government has a much more hands-on approach in

achieving the outcomes that the Transport Connections program was designed to achieve.

It is worth noting also a new program that was launched in the past six weeks, the Melbourne Medical Companion project. People who would normally not be able to travel from the regions to Melbourne and back for medical appointments will be given assistance through having a medical companion. That program will work in conjunction with Transport Connections and Travellers Aid.

Auditor-General: *Motorcycle and Scooter Safety Programs*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a statement on the report published by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office entitled *Motorcycle and Scooter Safety Programs*. I read this report with interest, as I was an enthusiastic bike rider in my youth. Indeed nearly all my brothers rode a motorbike or a scooter at some stage in their early adulthood. When I recall the experience of bike riding in the early 1960s I do not remember feeling safe on the road. Although I found the experience of travelling on a bike pleasurable, death and injuries were not too far from my mind at that time.

I note with interest the Auditor-General's evaluation of a road safety program designed to educate today's bike riders about the dangers of speeding and reckless riding on our roads. The program was designed with the primary purpose of reducing the injuries and fatalities amongst the bike-riding public. It is a fact that more than others on our roads bike riders are likely to be killed or receive head injuries due to their proximity to the road and their lack of protection against the elements within the environment of a crash.

However, surprisingly, there are more bike riders today than ever before. Many road safety strategies have been tried. They include the Arrive Alive series of advertisements aimed at instilling into the brains of riders the distinct possibility of death being a direct consequence of reckless or dangerous riding on the highways and byways of Victoria. To be fair, it is also not always the bike riders who are at fault, but in a serious collision with a motor car it is always the bike rider who comes off worse.

The previous Labor government did what it could in terms of rider education, with some success, although for the families of those injured it will never be enough. In 2008 Victoria Police recorded that up to 2790 injured motorcycle riders and passengers attended hospital and that there were over 2000 Transport Accident

Commission claims, of which the majority of claimants were successful.

Statistics show that speed and inexperience are the major factors in the deaths of motorcycle and scooter riders on our roads. That is coupled with the fact that there is little or no protection afforded to a rider who is hit by an enclosed motor vehicle. Road safety agencies must continue to promote road safety as a top priority for bike riders. It would be pleasing to think that one day the message will finally sink in that only due care and proper rider education is the answer to accident-free riding for a growing population of new bike riders.

Auditor-General: *Managing Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Treatment Services*

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I have mixed feelings in speaking on the *Managing Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Treatment Services* report by the Auditor-General published in March. I suggest that in the election campaign members of the coalition went to the people with our concern about the huge increase in the number of incidents involving alcohol-fuelled violence and the ramifications and problems they are causing a whole range of people, including nightclub owners. As I have said in this place before, it is important to understand that the owners are working to serve alcohol responsibly so that alcohol-fuelled violence incidents do not happen.

One of the things I know the nightclub owners have been looking into is reported in the annual report of the City of Stonnington in my local electorate, which is also the local electorate of Mr Lenders and Ms Crozier. In Chapel Street particularly we have had a number of incidents of alcohol-fuelled violence. The council, nightclub owners, traders and residents are working to try to come up with some way of addressing the issue. Nightclub owners tell me that they serve water or soft drinks to the people who are the designated drivers, only to find that they are tottering from the bar with cans of coke and other soft drink to give to their mates who have come with a hip flask full of rum. They are trying to do a whole range of things at that micro level to make a difference to what is happening on our streets.

Another major problem is what they call ‘uploading’, where young people go and buy very cheap alcohol at the supermarket chains, and because it is cheap they can drink an excessive amount so when they turn up to the nightclubs they do not have to rely upon paying for expensive drinks.

These are issues to have a look at and to be cognisant of, but to have such a comprehensive report as the Auditor-General’s is very pleasing. It is important to have a look at some of its recommendations. These recommendations are recommendations that I think all of us must look at, and we must be very certain that the whole community works constructively together to see what we can do to reduce the incidence of the inappropriate use of alcohol and deal with alcohol at that level.

Having said that, it is very important to look at it on a much broader spectrum where we have people who have major alcohol and drug-related issues. We know that many people have dual diagnoses with alcohol issues, drug-related issues and multiple use issues. These are people within our community whom we need to spend an inordinate amount of time with to try to help break those cycles, because once they have these dual diagnoses with drug and alcohol-related issues there tend to be mental health issues and economic issues. When we go to parts of our electorate — and I notice Ms Pennicuik is here now; she is also from Southern Metropolitan Region — we find places like the Sacred Heart Mission, which deals with people who are alcohol and drug-affected and have dual diagnoses. They are people who have become homeless and who have very complex needs, and these needs must be addressed.

I am very pleased that the Baillieu government has addressed some of the drug and alcohol problems right at the outset. In its first 120 days in office it has introduced tough new penalties for drunken behaviour. At one level that is a really important area. We have a multitude of areas where drugs and alcohol are concerns for our community. As I suggested before, it is literally on the streets with our young people through the alcohol-fuelled violence, but it is also much more systemic with people who have major drug and alcohol and mental health problems. I believe that as a community and as legislators we must remember the recommendations of this report and do our level best to make certain that the laws we make in this place reflect these types of recommendations so we can address this issue.

Five minutes is not very long to talk on one of these reports, and there is so much to be said in this area. I would like to flag that this is the introduction to what I will have to say next time on this issue, because it is such an important issue for us as legislators and for us as a community. I will be speaking on this report again in the next sitting week.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee: state government taxation and debt

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the government response to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee's final report on its inquiry into state government taxation and debt. Acting President, I am sure you will not confiscate it if I use it as an aid, but I have never before seen a report that is an A4 page that is two-thirds full. While it makes it easy for a member of Parliament to read the report, I think sadly it is a reflection on what the current government thinks of the work of parliamentary committees.

It is interesting that the chair of this committee at the time of the inquiry was Christine Campbell, the member for Pascoe Vale in the Assembly, and the deputy chair was our current President, Bruce Atkinson. The committee put a lot of time and effort into a report to the government on a range of things, and the government's considered response to the work of a parliamentary committee was five paragraphs on an A4 sheet of paper.

Going through the government's response said, it said it got the committee with the report, that it did not think the previous government — and it is always the previous government — had cooperated enough with the committee. The government said it did not think the committee had received much cooperation from the Victorian government, the commonwealth government or the Commonwealth Grants Commission, a very topical body. The government was disappointed that the committee did not talk about state debt. The response goes on to talk about, yadda yadda yadda, that the government will go and do a review of Victoria's competitiveness, of course using the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, which was set up by Labor, but there is no acknowledgement of that fact, and it says in relation to recommendation 8 in the final report that the government believes Victoria should have some more GST revenue.

That is essentially the government's response to the hard work of a parliamentary committee over many months — in other words, it is quite contemptuous. But there are a couple of things that arise out of the report which are worth commenting on in the context of the debates we have had in this house in the last few days.

Firstly, there was a long discussion about the Commonwealth Grants Commission and where Victoria stands. Let us put the record straight: when the Bracks government was elected Victoria got 82 cents back from every GST dollar that was charged in this

state — a legacy of Jeff Kennett. After the Bracks and Brumby governments that was over 90 cents — in fact I think the final figure was 92 cents in the dollar back. Almost every year during the governments of Steve Bracks and John Brumby we got a bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger share of GST revenue.

What happens when there is a change of government? There is a reverse to that, and of course straightaway this government has to blame someone else. We had 11 years of increases for Victoria and all the services that could be provided, but as soon as there was a change of government the new government started bleating about what the commonwealth has done. It is interesting that there is no acknowledgement that 10 years of Labor saw the Kennett legacy of 82 cents in the dollar being increased by 10 per cent. There is no acknowledgement of that, but there is massive bleating when under its stewardship the revenue goes down.

Let us talk about why the revenue has gone down. Where has it gone to? The leading protagonist to take money away from Victoria has not been the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard; it has been Colin Barnett, the Liberal Premier of Western Australia, who has been ripping up every federal-state agreement until he gets his way and more revenue for Western Australia.

I suggest to the government that if it wants to start addressing the issue of getting some more money for Victoria, rather than blaming federal Labor perhaps it should take on its Liberal mate, Colin Barnett, and start saying, 'We are putting Victoria ahead of the Liberal Party'. The interesting challenge will come when we have Barry O'Farrell, the Premier of New South Wales, starting to throw his weight around. How Mr Baillieu stands up to Mr O'Farrell will be interesting because they will have to start standing up to their Liberal mates rather than blaming Labor governments.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I say in response to Mr Koch's interjection that I know who the Prime Minister is — it is Julia Gillard.

Under the Bracks and Brumby governments we went from a GST of 82 cents in the dollar, which Jeff Kennett got for Victoria, to more than 92 cents, which is where the previous government left it. Who is standing in the way of Victoria at the moment? It is Colin Barnett who is standing in the way of Victoria at the moment. Who is fighting for Victoria at the moment? Ironically it is John Brumby and Nick

Greiner who are standing up for the traditional states. It is not Ted Baillieu or Barry O'Farrell.

When we go through this very scanty report, we see it talks about the need for tax reform. It is quite fascinating to note that when the Kennett government left office the top rate of land tax was 5 per cent. When the Kirner government left office it was 3 per cent. The Kennett government put it up to 5 per cent and the Bracks and Brumby governments put it down to 2.25 per cent. Looking at what stamp duty was, Labor inherited 5.75 per cent and brought it down to 4.9 per cent.

If we go through a series of state taxes and charges, we can see it was Labor that led the way, Labor that cut them and Labor that delivered jobs to Victoria. All we hear from the other mob is bleating about finding someone to blame, but we see no action. Those opposite have been in government for four long months, and all we hear them do is identify problems; we do not see them setting out plans for the future. Even in this report, where is their great plan for Victorian taxation? Set up a plan.

Auditor-General: *Managing Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Treatment Services*

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's *Managing Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Treatment Services* report, about which I spoke to the house in the last sitting week, but there are some further findings in this report that I would like to address. There are areas of further concern. Page viii of the audit summary states:

Thirty-one internal reviews have been conducted since 1999, many on the same theme ... While these reviews have to some extent informed current strategies for AOD services, the great majority of review findings have been subsumed by still further review activity. In this way review has stifled reform rather than being the springboard to improvement.

Eleven years and 31 reviews — that is symptomatic of the Brumby government. Review after review is not what Victorians expect; they want delivery of the services Mr Lenders just referred to. This report sets it out quite clearly and shows this was just one of those areas that was reviewed constantly. The previous government did little to improve services to the state of Victoria or Victorians, and it failed to plan for the future. It was a government that let down the people of Victoria.

The Baillieu government now finds itself charged with the enormous task of fixing Labor's mess. In saying that, no-one believes that managing drug and alcohol prevention is an easy task or that there is a simple

answer to the problem. I am sure we would all agree that it is a complex and difficult problem. However, at some point over those 11 years I would have thought that the previous government would have made some progress on this issue. As the report states, 'review has stifled reform rather than being the springboard to improvement'. This is Labor's great shame.

The report also focuses on treatment and service types. On page 55 it states:

The redevelopment of the alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment system during the mid-1990s established the broad treatment types which make up the fundamental approaches to AOD treatment.

Mrs Coote spoke about recent alcohol-fuelled violence, but I want to speak about the 1990s when I had some experience in dealing with such issues firsthand. Recently I met with Jane Rowe from the Mirabel Foundation. Many will know the work of the Mirabel Foundation; it was established 13 years ago to assist children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental illicit drug use. Many of the stories are heartbreaking, but many are of hope. The number of orphaned or abandoned children in this state is far too high. The Mirabel Foundation supports hundreds of children every year.

I refer to the 1990s and my days at the Royal Women's Hospital when I was a midwife on a ward that looked after drug or alcohol-addicted women. I recall newborn babies of drug-addicted mothers suffering withdrawal. I remember their intense crying, which was due to their being in great pain, and their need for intensive attention and special care, sometimes for weeks on end. Anyone who has looked after a neonate of a heroin addict or seen the effects of foetal alcohol syndrome will understand that these babies are at a great disadvantage. No matter the type of drug addiction, many of these babies could end up in the care of the Mirabel Foundation at some stage of their childhood, and some may end up in similarly disadvantaged circumstances as their parents.

I return to the report. It is simply not good enough that after 11 years there has been no improvement in the outlook for many people with drug and alcohol addiction. One of the recommendations in the report concerns the need to address the longstanding fragmentation of the service provision across the 105 service providers that make up the treatment service system remains. This is something the government should address. This government, unlike the previous government, does have a plan to address the fragmentation of service provision.

The 2022 health plan for Victoria will go a long way to ensuring that service providers are supported, that the continuum of drug and alcohol dependence is addressed and that those who have been affected will have a chance in the future to contribute in a productive and inclusive manner to the Victorian community.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee: state government taxation and debt

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I wish to make a contribution on the government response to the final report of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into state government taxation and debt. I looked on the other side of the paper and I could not find any of the detail. This flimsy little number from the government is incredibly disdainful and disrespectful of the work of a number of our colleagues who were members of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee in the last Parliament which conducted this inquiry and presented it as a finished piece of work in September 2010. I note that our Presiding Officer, Mr Atkinson, was a member of the committee, as was the Leader of the Government, Mr Davis, and other colleagues.

A good deal of work was undertaken. This inquiry was undertaken in the context of a much larger discussion about taxation revenue which took place across the commonwealth. The report provides some useful insights on the direction Victoria ought to take to ensure that the impact of taxation does not inhibit investment or productivity and that it is effective in meeting our revenue needs.

There is no shortage of worthy causes about which people would like the government to make expenditure-related decisions. I am sure every member in this place can think of a couple of hundred worthy projects off the top of their heads.

The committee made eight recommendations. Recommendation 1 is:

That the Victorian government consider, as part of its review of fire services funding arrangements, introducing a levy on motor vehicles sufficient to fund the proportion of fire services expenditure related to motor vehicle-related incident responses.

A number of other recommendations include details of the Victorian government's interaction with the Council of Australian Governments and the work the Commonwealth Grants Commission does. This has been the subject of some discussion in this house and in the public arena in recent weeks.

With regard to the fire services levy, on April Fools' Day there were numerous reports, including radio reports, across Victoria saying that on the previous day, 31 March, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, had signalled the government may have to increase the fire services levy. That is just a little bit different to what the coalition was saying before the election. What the coalition said before the election was also different in terms of teachers wages and any number of things. The Liberal Party and The Nationals said one set of things to the Victorian people before the election that was distinctly different to the types of things they said to the Victorian public on a whole bunch of matters of importance. With regard to the fire services levy, the government in its dithering way has probably missed the opportunity to introduce this increase for the next round of the rating period. I know this issue is of great concern to many communities across Victoria. I urge the government to stick to its word regarding the fire services levy. I hope those reports on 1 April were some kind of crazy April Fools' Day joke, although I am concerned that is not the case.

With regard to the Commonwealth Grants Commission and recommendation 8, the government will continue to fight for Victoria to receive a fair share of GST revenue. A fair share of GST revenue is something all Victorians would expect their government to fight hard for, but I noticed government members, when asking Dorothy Dixers during question time today, took the opportunity to blame the Commonwealth Grants Commission for the government backtracking on election commitments and for short-changing Victorians in a whole bunch of different areas in terms of service delivery. Frankly the Victorian people deserve a little better than that. If the government wants to say one thing and do another after the election, it should have the courage of its convictions to make that case rather than continually relying on this excuse or any number of excuses. This is an excuse the government was trying to use regarding the regional rail link, though I welcome its backflip on that issue in recent days.

But the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee has done some good and helpful work for Victoria. It is a shame the government has treated this report with such disrespect and disregard.

Ombudsman: investigation into the failure of agencies to manage registered sex offenders

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I have spoken previously on the Ombudsman's report of February 2011 entitled *Whistleblowers Protection Act*

2001 — *Investigation into the Failure of Agencies to Manage Registered Sex Offenders*. The more you read this report, the more consternation arises in you. The matters raised and the consternation expressed by the Ombudsman in this report are so disturbing that I feel compelled to report further to the people of Victoria on what has led to a crisis of confidence in the system designed to shield Victorian children from known sex offenders.

When picking up on the theme of failure that pervades this report, you can see Victoria Police's failure to inform the Department of Human Services was only discovered when a review of its registry was conducted in January 2010. Victoria Police is now on full alert, and it has commenced an audit of files dating back to 2004. Victoria Police found that the sex offenders register contained 899 registered offenders who had had contact with a child since 2004. Alarmingly, Victoria Police failed to report 376 of those cases to the Department of Human Services, including one case dating back to 2005. As a result one child was reported to have been exposed to contact with two separate offenders.

This is symbolic of something that I spoke about for four years in terms of how the former Labor government went about the business of government in this state — that is, it upheld and underpinned a silo mentality where agencies and departments did not, could not or were not instructed to have some understanding of the relationships and inter-workings between each agency and/or departments.

Furthermore, it is yet another example — and the Ombudsman reports on this — of a failure of the delivery of IT systems. There was a complete lack of implementation ability to put in information technology architecture so these silo organisations knew what was going on. There are frightening examples of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing.

I feel at this time it is important to record some of the criminal histories of the offenders as an illustration of the risk they pose to Victorian children. A male offender followed a 12-year-old boy to an empty house and forced the child to commit an indecent act. This offender was then convicted of committing an indecent act with a child under 16 years of age and false imprisonment. In another example a male offender approached a 15-year-old girl at a bus stop and forced her to accompany him to a nearby park where he sexually assaulted her. The offender was convicted of sexual penetration of a child under 16 years of age.

The Ombudsman states that investigations conducted by the Department of Human Services confirmed there were a number of cases where Victoria Police had failed to report disclosures by offenders to the DHS where children had been exposed to unsupervised contact with offenders. The Ombudsman selected two disturbing cases to report on as they provide stark accounts of circumstances involving children that were not reported to the DHS by Victoria Police in a timely manner. In the time available I will apprise the house of one of these accounts. The case study states:

The registered offender had been convicted of two separate sexual offences against children under the age of 16 including the sexual penetration of a 15-year-old child. He was in a relationship with a woman who had a four-year-old child and disclosed to his Victoria Police case manager that he was having ongoing contact with the child. The Victoria Police case manager for the offender failed to report the offender's contact with the child to the department on at least two occasions.

Where was the head at this time? The case study continues:

After the case was identified in the audit, a joint visit between department staff and members of the local Victoria Police sexual offences and child abuse unit ... was undertaken. Serious concerns were identified for the child and the offender was immediately requested to cease contact with the child and leave the home.

Talk about being asleep on your watch.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Auditor-General: *Local Community Transport Services — the Transport Connections Program*

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a contribution in statements on reports and papers on the Victorian Auditor-General's report entitled *Local Community Transport Services — the Transport Connections Program*. Over the last four and a half years I have got to know this program quite well. I think Transport Connections, along with the Small Towns Development Fund, are two most significant programs which bring about real differences in communities, particularly smaller communities.

Transport Connections is a unique program. It brings together state government departments, local government, private transport providers, schools, community groups and residents to find local solutions to local problems. Transport Connections helps communities work on projects together to improve local transport. It also provides funding to set up working groups, employ coordinators and develop a

range of transport initiatives. But Transport Connections does not just find short-term solutions to transport issues; it also helps create sustainable changes to the way small communities operate their local transport services. Transport Connections is an \$18 million program that was set up by the former Labor government specifically to address transport disadvantage.

One of the main reasons Transport Connections works so well is that it is within the hands of the community to develop. The initiative provides a real opportunity for local people to plan their own local solutions. The communities know what they need and the best way to cater for these needs with local Transport Connections programs, and that is why this program works so well.

Transport is consistently rated by people in rural and regional communities as one of the most significant barriers to accessing services, employment and social networks. That was reinforced and reiterated time and again during the inquiry of the joint parliamentary Rural and Regional Committee, of which I was a member, into regional disadvantage at the end of last year. It was demonstrated by a number of communities that transport connections make a difference in ensuring that those sorts of access issues are reduced.

A person's ability to access social activities as well as the services they need really depends on the availability of transport to get them to where they need to be. Adequate transport, not just a connection that happens every once in a while, is also critically important so people get into a routine of being able to go about their lives in a meaningful way.

The programs were originally built for smaller rural townships so that members of each community could go into the larger towns to shop, attend medical appointments and do a number of other things. The success of these programs means we also have town buses. We have town buses that operate in Hamilton and in Colac as well as a number of other regional centres and that connect up with other Transport Connections routes.

There are Transport Connections programs that not only link smaller communities with the next smaller community up the road and then the regional centre but also fit in with the timetable of the regional rail. That means people can make not only short journeys but also longer journeys to places like Warrnambool or Melbourne. During my term we have had a number — from Woodford to Warrnambool, Timboon to Cobden, and to Bannockburn, Teesdale, Shelford, and the list goes on.

My purpose today is to highlight the importance of Transport Connections and to take this opportunity to urge the government to, in its forthcoming budget, maintain and extend this important program which is critical for significant areas of regional Victoria. I know that everyone involved in Transport Connections in Western Victoria Region has had a very positive experience with all of the programs.

Budget sector: midyear financial report 2010–11

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the 2010–11 midyear financial report, incorporating the quarterly financial report no. 2. With the state budget looming next month I take this opportunity to remind the government of the bountiful surplus, as is evidenced in the report, of \$481.8 million that the previous government left behind. This report relates to the July–December 2010 period and the Brumby Labor government was in office for most of that time.

The report shows that as at the end of the December 2010 period the Brumby Labor government had a budget surplus of \$481.8 million, which is way in excess of Labor's commitment when in office to always exceed a \$100 million surplus. The report is quite important given that the government has set out to mislead the Victorian public by putting about a furphy — the argument that there are budget black holes. From looking at the report it is clear that the Brumby Labor government left the state budget in a very healthy position.

I recall the Premier admitting as much when he first took office. I quote from a report in the *Age* of 1 December last year, which quoted Mr Baillieu as having said:

The preliminary advice we now have received is that there are no surprises in the financial position ... so we will be proceeding with our commitments ...

Early on after this government came to office we saw that it admitted that its Treasury briefings indicated to it that the budget position was very strong. Since that time we have seen it set the scene politically by claiming that there are black holes when there are not, as a pretext to taking an axe to the budget and cutting important services to Victorian families.

We have heard promises from this government to fix the so-called problems, but now we are seeing it scrambling to fabricate excuses for broken promises. These broken promises include making Victorian teachers the best paid in Australia, supporting

community sector workers in their wage claim and continuing the Victorian schools plan to refurbish or rebuild every Victorian public school.

The Minister for Community Services, Ms Wooldridge, said a lot about the child protection system when she was in opposition, but now she is in office all she is concerned about is having an empty in-tray. Her office has asked her department not to send her briefs about urgent child protection cases, which is an appalling state of affairs.

We have seen clearly fictitious excuses about black holes being used to stall important projects like the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and the relocation of the wholesale fruit and vegetable markets to Epping. It is interesting that after a public outcry the government has in fact found the money to complete the Olivia Newton-John cancer centre, proving its original claims of black holes to be a furphy. It is a travesty that the government is playing politics with important projects such as this. The positions the government is taking are causing anxiety for many people in the community, in this case people suffering from cancer. In the northern suburbs we are seeing a lot of anxiety now about the future of the relocation of the wholesale fruit and vegetable markets, because that project will deliver thousands of jobs to Northern Metropolitan Region.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — Perhaps Mr Ondarchie should be advocating on behalf of his constituents on this project. We are seeing a lot of government excuses for not delivering on promises. These are fictitious excuses. No black holes were left. The only black holes we have seen are those in the government's pre-election promises. The midyear financial report confirms that Labor left Victoria's finances in a very healthy position.

Budget sector: midyear financial report 2010–11

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — Acting President, I start by congratulating your daughter on her graduation yesterday.

I am speaking on the 2010–11 midyear financial report, one that members opposite claim shows that they left Victoria in a very healthy position. They talk about record revenue, and they go on and on about the healthy state in which they left the Victorian economy. The denial over there is gobsmacking. Let me tell the house how they got this money. They removed the 50 per cent cap on land tax increases. Land tax revenue increased

from \$378 million in 1999 to \$1.4 billion in 2010. Land tax increases have hit small business and affected jobs. The coalition is now working to reduce pressures by cutting stamp duty for first home owners by 20 per cent for properties up to \$600 000 and increasing this cut to 50 per cent by 2014–15.

The previous government gained significant income from stamp duty on transfers of land. This revenue increased from \$1 billion in 1999 to \$3.7 billion in 2010. To put that in perspective, for a \$524 500 home in Melbourne the stamp duty was \$23 440, in New South Wales it was \$19 903 and in Queensland, \$9608. Since 1999 insurance tax revenue has increased from \$532 million to \$1.5 billion, and members opposite claim this revenue was supportive financial management.

Let me tell the house about supportive financial management in terms of the debt. Debt has gone from \$3.2 billion in 1999 to \$35 billion in 2010. The myki project was three years late and the cost has blown out to over \$1.4 billion. The regional fast rail project was originally estimated to cost \$80 million and has now blown out to \$839 million, a 1000 per cent increase for only a marginal improvement in travel times. The smart meters project was originally estimated to cost \$800 million and has blown out to \$2.2 billion. The desalination plant is going to cost Victorians \$24 billion over the next 28 years. There is more and more again. The West Gate Bridge strengthening has had a cost blow-out of \$86.5 million, and the total project is going to cost in excess of \$362 million. Yet members of the Labor Party talk about responsible financial management.

Essentially revenue raised by the Labor government came straight out of the pockets of hardworking Victorians, whereas this government is going to take significant action to support Victorians. All I have heard bleated across the chamber today is, 'Don't talk about the black hole. Don't tell them the truth. Don't talk about the debt we left. Don't talk about the fact that the Olivia Newton-John wellness centre — —

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Listen to Cleopatra, the Queen of Denial. She will not accept that that is what her government left for Victorians. It funded half the Olivia Newton-John wellness centre. It built a concrete shed and provided no money for the fit-out. This government has fixed it. This government will support cancer-affected Victorians and their families. We will support homebuyers by reducing stamp duty. We will look at land tax. We will do a whole range of things to

support Victorians who have been ignored by the till-takers across the other side of the chamber. ‘Give us the money!’, they said, but they refused to acknowledge the debt they have left for Victorian taxpayers, their children and their grandchildren to repay over many years. Former government members should hang their heads in shame. They hold this report up as a trophy of their time in office. It is a damning report, given the debt left to Victorians — and we will carry it, each and every one of us, along with our children and our grandchildren, for many decades to come — by an irresponsible Brumby Labor government.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Racing: jumps events

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Racing, and it concerns the future of jumps racing in Victoria. The minister has made a number of statements on the record in regard to jumps racing, the most recent being his media release of 4 April entitled ‘New season, new future for jumps racing’. In that release he talks about the start of the jumps season at Warrnambool being ‘the start of a new future for jumps racing’. He also talks about the government’s strong commitment to boosting jumps racing across the state and about the extra \$2 million the government is putting into jumps racing. He claims that jumps are a vital part of the racing industry. The media release also contains the statement that the government is ‘keen to see the Victorian jumps racing industry grow’.

All of that was before the three falls which occurred yesterday at Warrnambool, one of which caused Casa Boy to be destroyed. All of the minister’s rhetoric seems to suggest that the government is committed — —

Mr Koch — The day before yesterday.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Sorry, Mr Koch is right; it was the day before yesterday. However, all of the rhetoric suggests that the government is strongly committed to the future of jumps racing no matter what, and Dr Napthine did seem to confirm that in statements to the media today. The interesting part of all of that is that Racing Victoria Ltd is an independent organisation charged with managing racing in this state, and RVL has set down key performance indicators (KPIs)

designed to determine whether jumps racing has a future in Victoria. In January 2010 RVL set down KPIs covering starters, falls and fatalities. In September last year the KPIs were narrowed to focus on the issue of fatalities. The KPIs state that the number of fatalities should not exceed 0.65 per cent of all starters in jumps races.

What I am seeking from the minister is clarification on two matters: firstly, is the government committed to the future of jumps racing in Victoria no matter what, as the minister said today and as is claimed in numerous media releases and other statements, or is it a matter for RVL and only RVL to determine; and secondly, is the future of jumps racing secure no matter what, or is it dependent on the KPIs set by Racing Victoria being met?

Road safety: government initiatives

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I would like to draw a matter to the attention of the Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder. We are all touched by the road toll. On Saturday, 26 March, my sister-in-law, an ambulance officer, was called out to a single-car collision on Bulban Road, Werribee. The scene she encountered on arrival there was devastating. Two young people lay dead on the road while two others who had suffered serious injuries lay close by. My sister-in-law did her job to the best of her ability. She worked for over an hour on one of the survivors before they were transported to hospital. Unfortunately, even with all of the work she did, the person she worked on so diligently passed away in hospital.

My sister-in-law described the situation as a great waste and lamented that kids keep getting killed on our roads. Although I did not know them, two of the deceased attended my former school, Hoppers Crossing Secondary College, while the sole survivor is still a student at that school. Parents lost their children that morning, and people lost friends. The police continue to investigate the incident, but the effect of this crash has been borne by many in our community.

On Monday of this week a young man was cleared of a charge of culpable driving following a devastating incident on the West Gate Freeway on 9 December 2007. In that case four young men were killed. It was alleged that two vehicles may have been racing when the driver of one lost control and the vehicle hit a tree before bursting into flames. Unfortunately lives are lost on our roads, but many of these incidents are avoidable. Speed is certainly an exhilarating experience, but the risks, not only to those in the vehicle, can be ignored only by the foolish.

As a government member I am pleased the coalition will be introducing legislation to provide for tougher penalties for hoon drivers who pose a risk not only to themselves but also to members of the general public. Strategies employed by the Transport Accident Commission over the past 22 years have yielded reductions in the road toll, but even so the number of deaths on our roads remains too high, especially among people under the age of 30, who comprised 35 per cent of the road toll, or 98 deaths, from 31 March last year to 31 March this year.

I urge the minister to continue the coalition government's worthwhile initiatives to educate young Victorians about the serious nature of taking control of a vehicle. I also beg young people across our state to ease up on the roads: the thrill of speed or pushing a car to its limits is temporary, but the rest of your life is much more significant.

Schools: Western Metropolitan Region

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — As a member for Western Metropolitan Region, the most economically and socially disadvantaged region in our state, I am deeply concerned at what appears to be the coalition's attitude to education — at both state and federal levels. Only a year ago Mr Baillieu and Mr Dixon, now the Premier and the Minister for Education respectively, promised that classes at Altona P-9 College would be extended into years 10, 11 and 12. Yet that has not happened, and the community is devastated. In fact I doubt if anything has even been discussed within the coalition regarding this school and others, except to tell them they will get nothing.

We have already read in the media that the promises made by the former Labor government to fund much-needed renovations and upgrades to Strathmore Primary School and Niddrie secondary college are in danger. I mean no disrespect to the new minister, but I am talking about communities which need what we promised in government, and they should not have to wait years longer.

Added to that is the threat by the federal Leader of the Opposition to slash funds across the nation, and it is no wonder that parents and whole school communities are in fear. To quote the federal Minister for Home Affairs, Brendan O'Connor:

There are 1116 projects across Victoria currently under way, all of which Mr Abbott has threatened to abandon.

This must affect my region and the school projects that the communities desperately need. These school projects are critical to the future welfare of Western

Metropolitan Region. They seek to offer our young people some of what the children of wealthier families on the other side of the Yarra have had for decades. I ask the Minister for Education to make a decision on each of these schools and to advise his colleagues in Canberra to leave our schools alone and support their funding.

Castlemaine: hospital redevelopment

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The adjournment matter I wish to raise this evening is for the Minister for Health, Mr Davis. I have been made aware in no small way by the member for Bendigo West in the other place that when I raised a number of matters for the Minister for Health —

Mr Lenders — Where is the Minister for Health? He was going to be here every night.

Mr JENNINGS — I am not quite sure where he is. He is probably doing good work on behalf of the people of Victoria. Let us give him the benefit of the doubt. Let us actually hope. Let us call upon him to do so.

Mr Lenders — He told us for 11 years we had to be here.

Mr JENNINGS — Words quite often come cheap. What I am interested in is the opportunity to ask the government to deliver on its undertakings. That is something that I did yesterday in question time. I asked the Minister for Health to confirm a number of commitments that were made to the Victorian people at the last election, and I included the funding of a major capital program for the Bendigo hospital. The minister outlined an extensive building program that he said straddled three election cycles, which may come with some degree of concern to the citizens of Bendigo and surrounds.

The member for Bendigo West in the Assembly then took me to task, because it might have been construed that I failed to ask about a commitment by the government to the Castlemaine hospital, which was an undertaking that was made about a week and a half before the election. A commitment was made for a \$10-million redevelopment proposal for the Castlemaine hospital. The hospital, as I understand it, provides a great service to the local community but is at a later stage of its asset depreciation and would probably appreciate the \$10 million. It understands that this may not be the full extent of its capital requirements in the years to come, but nonetheless it would appreciate the earliest delivery and availability of those funds, and it would be seeking from the minister a

commitment that that funding envelope will be provided at the earliest opportunity to enable that work to take place to improve the quality of services for the people of Castlemaine and surrounds.

I look forward to the minister satisfying that undertaking and working through that issue at the earliest opportunity with the community.

Shire of Macedon Ranges: ministerial visit

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Honourable Richard Dalla-Riva, Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, and it relates to part of my electorate, the region of Macedon Ranges, which is located right on Melbourne's doorstep. The website of Tourism Macedon Ranges says the Macedon Ranges is:

a picturesque region of fertile river valleys, rolling hills and tree-clad ranges. From Gisborne to Kyneton, each town is a thriving community buzzing with its own artistic, historic and culinary energy.

It has been a well-kept secret, but I am afraid it is one that is out now. We have plenty of rural charms, with bluestones, cobblestones, historic architecture, rolling farmland, out-of-the-way hiding places and dramatic landscapes that change with the seasons. We host world-class events, such as the recent Leonard Cohen concert at Hanging Rock, food and wine festivals and the renowned Hanging Rock and the Kyneton races. All of these combine to make the Macedon Ranges region an exceptional part of Victoria, and it is just a short drive from Melbourne and other major towns in the state. As you can tell, I am very proud of my home.

The towns of the Macedon Ranges — Kyneton, Woodend, Gisborne, Romsey, Lancefield and surrounds — have thriving industry in them. The area has many beautiful restaurants, wineries, accommodation and tourist attractions such as Hanging Rock and Mount Macedon along with industry, manufacturing of truck trailers, meat, beer, wool, glass, fine china and ceramics, horse studs and the CSL farm, and many hobby farms and innovative small businesses, including those promoting various means of sustainability. I take pleasure in inviting the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade to visit our region as soon as possible to allow us to showcase our products to him.

Water: savings

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The adjournment matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Water, and I am delighted that

Mr Rich-Phillips is in the chamber because as the Minister for Technology he may also find it very interesting.

We have had fairly phenomenal rains for the last little while in Melbourne and Victoria, but, as we all know, with our population growing by 2 per cent per annum and with climate change, there is nothing reliable about our water supply other than that the desalination plant will deliver a third of Melbourne's water into eternity.

My issue for the Minister for Water is that there are some fantastic new technologies that are out and about at the moment to try to reduce water usage. While I am not spruiking any particular firm, I wish to discuss one company in Brighton, in my electorate, that I visited the other day. I urged Ms Asher, the member for Brighton in the Assembly, to come with me around the electorate we represent and meet some small businesses. The business I visited was Clean Technologies Group. It has done some amazing things in relation to commercial laundries and the amount of water you can save in hotels or in cooling plants. It is just one of many innovative companies out and about in Melbourne and regional Victoria that have all sorts of solutions for saving water.

I met with Avin Liebermann and Peter Ortika from the company. They took me through a lot of the proposals they had, but they were hoping to be able to meet with some members of the government. I think government members should be meeting all sorts of companies that are out there with innovative plans, particularly as Minister Walsh has scrapped Target 155, which means we have lost one of the cheapest and most effective ways of reducing our water consumption. That program brought water consumption per head down to the lowest level since World War II. When we had behavioural change among a whole generation of teenagers and other people, and Target 155 involved all the various initiatives that helped them save water, I find it quite ironic and a very false economy for the Baillieu government to get rid of that.

The action I seek from the minister is that he get out and about among some of the innovative companies that exist in our great state, companies that show more effective ways of using water. I am quite happy to take not only Mr Walsh, the Minister for Water, but also Mr Rich-Phillips, the Minister for Technology, and particularly Ms Asher, who is the member for Brighton, to some of the businesses in the Brighton electorate to show what great things can be done in Victoria but most importantly to get back into the mindset of the government that saving water is an important long-term goal for Victoria and that we can all do our bit.

Target 155 was one part of it, but so too is developing new technologies and being at the cutting edge. That is good for jobs, good for saving water and very good for Victoria.

Responses

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — Mr Pakula raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Racing relating to the government's commitments around jumps racing and Racing Victoria Ltd, and I will pass that matter on to the Minister for Racing.

Mr Elsbury raised a matter for the Minister for Roads in relation to the government's hoon drivers legislation and the need to educate young people about the dangers associated with hoon behaviour on our roads. I can say to Mr Elsbury that as a former shadow minister responsible for the Transport Accident Commission, that is a matter I am acutely aware of, as is the government. Our approach to road safety is focused on better roads, better drivers and better vehicles. The point Mr Elsbury makes about the need for young people to be better aware of the dangers associated with our roads is particularly significant to a number of portfolios in the government, and I will certainly pass on that matter to the Minister for Roads.

Mr Eideh raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education in relation to a range of schools in his electorate and funding commitments around those schools, and I will pass that on to the minister.

Mr Jennings raised a matter for the Minister for Health in relation to the Bendigo hospital and commitments for the Castlemaine hospital. I will pass that on to the minister.

Mrs Petrovich raised a matter for the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade with respect to the Macedon Ranges. She went to great lengths to promote the products and industries that exist in the Macedon Ranges, in her electorate, and she has invited the minister to visit that region so she can showcase those products and industries to him. I am sure the minister would be very keen to take up her invitation, and I will pass that on to him.

Mr Lenders raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water with respect to clean technologies in the water sector. Mr Lenders has invited the minister to meet with companies that are developing technologies in the water area.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — I will get to that. I assure Mr Lenders that the Minister for Water is regularly engaged with companies and other participants in the water industry, as is the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, the member for Brighton in the other place. She takes a particular interest in small business. As Minister for Technology I am also engaged in meeting with companies that are offering a range of technology opportunities. I will pass the matter on to the Minister for Water. I can assure Mr Lenders that the minister is already well engaged with the sector.

Finally, I have one written response to an adjournment matter that Ms Tierney raised on 24 March.

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, I wish to raise the matter of a couple of outstanding adjournment responses. One relates to a matter I raised on 9 February regarding the Melbourne wholesale market relocation. I did actually raise this on a previous occasion. The response is now 26 days outstanding. I was advised to write to the Leader of the Government, which I did on 23 March, and I am yet to receive a response on that matter.

In relation to the matter I raised on 1 March regarding the Olivia Newton-John cancer centre, I take the announcement made on Monday as a discharge of my adjournment matter on that issue.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — I note that Ms Mikakos has regarded the second matter as discharged. I will follow up the first matter regarding the Melbourne wholesale market and ensure that a response comes back.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL: EXTENDED SITTINGS

The PRESIDENT — Order! I take this opportunity to indicate to members my concern about the extension of the sitting last evening and the impact that such extended sittings have on the staff of the Parliament when they occur without prior notice to allow for arrangements to be put in place to ensure that staff, and members for that matter, are looked after satisfactorily. I am conscious of my responsibilities as Presiding Officer and as the manager of all of those people.

I am advised that it is likely, based on the judgement of both sides of the chamber, that tomorrow's sitting will also be extended past 10.00 p.m. That will no doubt be determined during the day, perhaps by negotiation between the parties or by a decision of the house. But in

the event that in future we extend proceedings beyond 10.00 p.m. — in my judgement it is likely that it will be not just until 10.15 p.m. or such like but in fact for a longer period — it is my intention to call a halt to proceedings at 11.30 p.m. to allow the staff and members of Parliament to have a break.

I would appreciate the courtesy of having the parties determine at an early stage what they believe the likely sitting time might be so that I am able to advise the dining room staff, and hopefully they will then be able to provide some sort of light refreshments and tea and coffee to staff and members of Parliament, given that they will be working for extended hours. As I said, it will be my decision to call a halt to proceedings at 11.30 p.m. on those occasions. In the past it has sometimes been 12 o'clock, which I regard as being too late. It will be 11.30 p.m. in the future.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The PRESIDENT — Order! I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of Dr Rosemary Laing, Clerk of the Australian Senate, who will be speaking at a briefing tonight and discussing a range of matters in terms of the conduct of, and her role in, the Senate. I am sure that will be of interest to a number of members. I certainly hope members who are in a position to do so will attend the briefing by Dr Laing.

I also acknowledge in the gallery a former President of the Legislative Council, the Honourable Rod Mackenzie. It is good to see him in rude health and back in the chamber. Welcome.

House adjourned 6.20 p.m.