

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

8 February 2011

(Extract from Book 2)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

Professor DAVID de KRETZER, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

Premier and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. E. N. Baillieu, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Bushfire Response, and Minister for Regional and Rural Development	The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, and Minister for Tourism and Major Events	The Hon. Louise Asher, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Finance	The Hon. R. W. Clark, MP
Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, and Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade	The Hon. R. A. G. Dalla-Riva, MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing	The Hon. D. M. Davis, MLC
Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. H. F. Delahunty, MP
Minister for Education	The Hon. M. F. Dixon, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. M. J. Guy, MLC
Minister for Higher Education and Skills, and Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession	The Hon. P. R. Hall, MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship	The Hon. N. Kotsiras, MP
Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development	The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister responsible for the establishment of an anti-corruption commission	The Hon. A. J. McIntosh, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads	The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP
Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing	The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs, and Minister for Energy and Resources	The Hon. M. A. O'Brien, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.	The Hon. E. J. Powell, MP
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry	The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC
Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. R. Smith, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water.	The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP
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, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mr Pakula, Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney.

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

Joint committees

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Leanne, 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 and Mr Tarlamis. (*Assembly*): Ms Ryall and Mrs Victoria.

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

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

President: The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

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

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. D. M. DAVIS

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

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

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2011

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Photographing of proceedings</i>	47
<i>General business</i>	89
CONDOLENCES	
<i>John Gould Miles</i>	47
NATURAL DISASTERS: AUSTRALIA	50
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
<i>Insurance: fire services levy</i>	81
<i>Manufacturing: government initiatives</i>	81
<i>Kindergartens: funding</i>	82
<i>Ovarian cancer: awareness</i>	82
<i>Planning: election commitments</i>	83
<i>Floods: victim support</i>	84
<i>Rail: Avalon Airport</i>	84
<i>Teachers: career opportunities</i>	84
<i>Wind farms: Chepstowe</i>	85
<i>Planning: outer northern suburbs</i>	86
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE	
<i>Answers</i>	87
STANDING COMMITTEES	
<i>Membership</i>	87
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE	
<i>Manufacturing in Victoria</i>	87
PAPERS	87
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Darryl Argall</i>	89
<i>Mary Nolan</i>	89, 91
<i>Royal Botanic Gardens: RHS Chelsea Flower Show</i>	89
<i>Callignee community centre</i>	89
<i>Victorian election: coalition candidates</i>	90
<i>Clifton Street Children's Centre: extension</i>	90
<i>Richard Trevaskis</i>	91
<i>Russel Bowman</i>	91
<i>Bushfires: Black Saturday anniversary</i>	91
<i>Liberal Party: Bentleigh branch</i>	92
<i>Australia Day: Northern Metropolitan Region</i>	92
<i>Floods: emergency service volunteers</i>	92
<i>Natural disasters: Queensland</i>	92
<i>Australia Day: City of Whittlesea</i>	92
<i>Supermarkets: home brand prices</i>	93
<i>Victorian election: Liberal Party candidates</i>	93
<i>Australia Day: Shire of Nillumbik</i>	93
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Responses</i>	94, 97
<i>Cairn Curran Reservoir: water release</i>	94
<i>Altona: beach renourishment</i>	94
<i>Alpine parks: cattle grazing</i>	95
<i>Rail: western suburbs</i>	95
<i>Ambulance services: Rochester</i>	96
<i>Northern Hospital: academic and research precinct</i>	96
<i>Geelong: arts precinct</i>	96

Tuesday, 8 February 2011

The **PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson)** took the chair at 2.04 p.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Photographing of proceedings

The **PRESIDENT** — Order! Members will be aware from notifications that a photograph will be taken of the chamber prior to the commencement of proceedings. I also indicate that photographs will be taken during the course of the initial proceedings as a matter of record of the new Parliament.

CONDOLENCES

John Gould Miles

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 29 December 2010, of Mr John Gould Miles and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Council for the province of Templestowe from 1985 to 1992.

It is not necessarily the usual practice to have a condolence motion of this type for a member who did not serve as a minister or leader, but there are some members in this chamber who served with John Miles who have requested the opportunity to say a few words.

He was a member for Templestowe Province from 1985 to 1992. Many of us on this side of the chamber knew John Miles and knew of his activities in and around Templestowe Province over a number of years. He was a committed Liberal, a committed community person, a management consultant and also a company director. He was a senior housemaster at Scotch College from 1954 to 1976 and the secretary of Teachers for Liberal Action from 1976 to 1977. He was a director and former president of the Hawthorn Lions International club. He was a keen tennis player and a life member and former captain-coach of Hawthorn-East Melbourne Cricket Club.

He was very active in the Liberal Party, having at various times served on the agenda committee as a state council delegate, on the administrative committee and at area conferences and policy committees. He worked with the Mortuary Industry and Cemeteries Administration Committee for a number of years.

It is interesting looking back over the contribution made by John Miles. I looked closely at his inaugural speech and found there were more similarities to today than members would imagine. His contribution drew attention to public transport throughout his region, the high proportion of car users and the extension of the Eastern Freeway. We still see many of those issues, which have flowed on from that period.

John Miles was a great ally and supporter of the United States, and he put that on record in his inaugural speech. Interestingly he chose to speak about South Africa in his inaugural speech; he was clearly moved to support the rights of an independent South Africa and a South Africa that had majority rule. That was certainly an important cause for him.

John Miles was a member of this chamber until 1992, but he was visible around Parliament House for a long period afterwards. He was active in and around the city, and you would often meet him in this chamber or in and around the parliamentary precinct.

As I have said, Mr Miles was a committed Liberal. It is of interest that he lost preselection in 1992 and ran for the seat of Melbourne at that time in an effort to remain in this Parliament.

John Miles's family and the community will mourn his loss. He was a person who served his community, the Liberal Party and this Parliament very well indeed.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — As has been said, John Miles served as the member for Templestowe in this chamber, starting that service in 1985 and concluding it in 1992, but he lingered around this Parliament beyond 1992. It was not uncommon for many of us to come across John as he roamed the corridors of Parliament House. He loved the place.

I served with John during the period from 1988 to 1992, and I found him to be a very affable person. In the conversations I had with him there were three subjects towards which he tended to drift. The first of those was education. John, being a teacher and also a senior housemaster at Scotch College during the period from 1954 to 1976, retained a strong interest in education, which was the subject of many of the discussions I had with him.

The second subject towards which our many conversations drifted was cricket. John was a very keen and very capable cricketer. He was a life member and former captain and coach of the Hawthorn-East Melbourne Cricket Club. John played alongside such great cricketers as, for example, Bob Cowper. Those

who have a penchant for the history of cricket would know that Bob Cowper was an Australian test batsman who at one stage scored a triple century for Australia. John and I shared a mutual admiration for players of that calibre, although I hasten to add that for John it was as a contemporary of Bob Cowper and for me as a very young fan.

The third subject of many of our conversations was the work that John Miles undertook on the Mortuary Industry and Cemeteries Administration Committee. John would proudly lay claim to have visited every cemetery near and far from where we stand here today. John was happy to engage in conversation about cemeteries and the mortuary industry in general with anybody who was willing to stand with him.

While I shared John's enthusiasm for the first two subjects I have mentioned, education and cricket, I would have to be honest and say my enthusiasm for the third was not as great as for the first two. Nevertheless, John was a great conversationalist and enjoyed the company of others. As I have said, despite serving for a short period in this chamber, his association with the Parliament of Victoria lingered beyond that time of service, and he was frequently seen around the place.

John was good company, and he achieved much in life. On behalf of my colleagues in The Nationals, we join others today in this chamber in expressing our sincere condolences to John's family and friends.

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — On behalf of the Labor Party I would like to add my support for the motion of condolence. I do not think the members on this side of the house met John Miles, unlike Mr Davis and Mr Hall; it is hard to say much about someone who is for us very much a person from the history books.

Mr Miles served the place for seven years. He clearly made a contribution, and those who knew him certainly appreciated the work he did. On behalf of the Labor Party I add my support to the motion of condolence.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — On behalf of my Greens colleagues I would also like to associate myself with this motion. In our short time here the Greens have met Mr Miles on many occasions around the precinct. He told us that he was reading what we were saying and keeping an eye on us, which could be interpreted a number of ways, but clearly he meant it in a very good spirit.

His first speech in Parliament, which I took the occasion to read today, contained nothing routine for a mere state MP from the eastern suburbs. He chose a

topic that had no particular interest beyond that of the general, and he spent most of his first speech addressing the issue of the pros and cons of sporting boycotts against the South African apartheid regime.

What he did in that speech was what we do when we are at our best: he debated a topic using facts that were agreed and using an objective that was universal — the end of the apartheid regime — but he reached a different conclusion to what people on the other side of the argument would have reached. He concluded by saying:

The best proof of progress towards non-racial sport in South Africa would have been for the world to see Springboks versus All Blacks in South Africa, with coloured players on either side.

That was 1985. In 1995 we saw exactly that, with what became one of the most iconic moments in sport and for that matter in South African politics. Nelson Mandela famously understood — as John clearly did 10 years earlier — that there are universal values that transcend mere politics; it was just that John was 10 years ahead of his time in recognising that.

Therefore we would like to offer our sincere condolences to his family, his friends and his close associates, and also to those like us who were just casual acquaintances but nevertheless were enriched by meeting him.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I rise briefly to make a contribution in relation to Mr John Miles. I wish to express my gratitude for having had the opportunity of meeting Mr Miles when I was starting in this place back in 2002. Much has been said of his life before and during his time at Parliament, but most of the time I spent with John was during my period in this place.

As a new member of Parliament I recall much kindness; he was certainly a gentleman to me. He provided me with wise advice at a time when I was just learning the ropes in Parliament, and I think any new member should take wise counsel from anyone who has a long and respected history in this place.

As has been discussed, John Miles was a former teacher at Scotch College. I dropped by there just this morning, and I will probably remember Scotch more for the fees than anything else, but that college is a good foundation for a member of Parliament. As we have heard, certainly his speeches were of a high calibre.

I always remember John as having an office in Parliament. Not many members would be aware of that,

but he had an office out the front of the Strangers Corridor and he also had an office out the front of the upstairs dining room. It was always great to walk past and see John there diligently working away. He would offer me wise counsel there and then, or he would catch me later in the library, where we would have a good chat and he would make sure I was on target.

Mr Barber talked about John Miles's involvement with South Africa. In fact upon leaving Parliament Mr Miles became the vice chairman of the Australian South African Business Council — an organisation that works to develop business connections between Australia and South Africa. Not only did he talk about South Africa in his inaugural speech but he continued to walk the walk after his period here. I hope John Miles would be able to see those strong foundations enduring.

John Miles was a distinguished parliamentarian. His record of public service, albeit brief, was I think seven years, which is the average period for most MPs in both chambers. His record of public service to the people of Victoria will never be questioned. He was a much beloved member of this house and a teacher and friend to me and to many. His gentle humour and wisdom will always be honoured and admired, and I extend my thoughts and prayers to Mr Miles's family. I also wish to offer my sincerest condolences as they mourn his passing and celebrate his remarkable life. I join with my colleagues in offering my condolences on the death of a wonderful man — Mr John Miles.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I wish to make some remarks about the passing of John Gould Miles. From 1985 to 1992 John Miles was a member for Templestowe Province, which covered the lower house seats of Eltham, Ivanhoe, Bulleen and Doncaster. John was the first politician I met when I was a fresh-faced young member of the Diamond Valley Young Liberals way back in 1990. Back in those days John had, apart from his office in Parliament, an electorate office, which he frequently cursed, as he had to go up the stairs during the rain; it was outside and up a concrete back alleyway.

John ran an efficient office. He staffed it with Vi Hurley and Kerry Ballard, now Kerry Jones. Back then all the Young Libs used to wonder about the obsession he had with cricket memorabilia in his office; of course, this is a point we are all now well aware of, having got to know John. John had an obsession with cricket, both playing and teaching it. This was a fact that became obvious at one Young Libs sports day back in the early 1990s when he took the bat and roundly punished any young man 30 years his junior who dared to bowl at pace to him.

He was one of those politicians who fostered and nurtured young political minds. Again, this was something most of us in the Young Libs, who only later found out that John was a teacher before politics, did not appreciate at first. He was there to educate, inform and guide, and he did an excellent job of it. John regularly attended Young Libs meetings, he regularly supported our functions as one of our local MPs and he was always there for political advice and comment. Some of his contributions at branch meetings about the political events of the day were legendary for their depth and, I would have to say, for their length!

John's teaching past, as I said, was a fact that remained largely unknown to me. However, at his funeral, former Manningham and Melbourne councillor Irene Goonan, a good friend of John's, told a tale that is worth repeating today. John loved the fact that he had taught many parliamentary members from both parties, including his leader Jeff Kennett and Labor's Jim Kennan. John often liked to relate a story about the late Jim Kennan. John, while speaking in Parliament, had come under crossfire at the hands of Jim Kennan. John replied with: 'I may still have your year 11 report card and could perhaps read it out in Parliament'. That summed up John's sense of humour.

Many members in this house would remember John as a constant presence around Parliament House years after he left office. I used to run into John and, as I said, he would be a constant source of advice and well wishes. I asked him a year or so ago if he had made a formal request to the then President as to whether he could have an office or at least a dedicated phone line put in place in the old upper house members clubroom for his sole use!

Never a boastful man and always a gentleman, John Gould Miles passed away leaving a mark on more lives than I think he would ever have realised, and I think he would be very humbled to hear what people have said about him today. His last few years did not feature any complaints about the illness that he carried; in true John Miles style, he just got on with what he had to do. John is survived by his sons Geoff and Tony and his five beautiful granddaughters. Rest in peace, John.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a heartfelt contribution to the condolence motion. My recollections of John Miles go back to 1983, when he was seen as an august and awesome figure in the Liberal Party. I remember admiring his approach and his style. I saw some elements of his character and his approach and loyalty to the Liberal Party as something both to admire and to emulate.

When he became a member of Parliament for the then Templestowe Province, I had the opportunity to serve on his electorate committee, so I had a working relationship with him for a good period of time. I know he was held in esteem by many people in the local community, both within the Liberal Party and in the wider community, especially the sports community. I remember the likes of Dean Jones, who was amongst those he could count as very good friends, always regarded him as an awesome opening batsman. When he was wielding a bat on the cricket pitch, John Miles was certainly a force to be reckoned with.

His passion for improving Australia's relationship with South Africa through better sporting ties was a major element of his contribution to society, world peace and international relations. He was a visionary and a very scholarly man who ably represented the past staff of Scotch College. He went on to pursue a career as a management consultant in business before entering this Parliament, so he had a very well rounded career.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to his former wife, Val, whom I knew; his eldest son, Geoff; his other son, Tony; and his five beautiful granddaughters, who will represent John Miles in the years ahead. Because I was not able to attend his funeral, I would like to say: may his dear soul rest in peace.

The PRESIDENT — I will make a few brief remarks in support of the motion before the Chair. I do not wish to elaborate on matters that have been covered by other members, because I concur with them entirely. The biographical notes that Mr David Davis advanced to the house showed the breadth of experience and the vigour of the life of John Miles, lived over many years. The one thing that occurs to me is that he was a man who was passionate about the things he did. He was passionate about his cricket, and he was passionate about football. Fortunately he was a very passionate Melbourne Football Club supporter, and we need more of that. He was also passionate about the Liberal Party and about many of the institutions of our democracy.

Perhaps born of his cricketing experience and his association with people from other countries, particularly commonwealth countries, he had a great interest in global affairs, especially those of commonwealth countries.

Mr Miles probably missed out on the best opportunity that a member of Parliament can have, which is to serve in a government, because he was unable to win preselection in 1992. But as a couple of speakers, including Mrs Kronberg, alluded to, he showed his great loyalty to the Liberal Party by contesting a seat

that we would not have expected to win, albeit in 1992 we came considerably closer to winning that seat than we had on other occasions.

Mr Miles was a man who displayed a great deal of loyalty. As has been indicated, he was a person who was always up for a chat. He was a well informed and very intelligent man and a person who was able to offer a great deal of good counsel to people he met in many circumstances. I am always reminded on these occasions when we have to deliver condolence motions that each person brings to this place a unique experience, unique knowledge and unique skills. The blend of those in this place is what makes our democracy and our institutions work so well. John Miles was an unassuming man, but he deserves the sympathy of this house and of all Victorians in recognition of the contribution he made to this Parliament and the state.

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

NATURAL DISASTERS: AUSTRALIA

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this house:

- (1) notes the extraordinary series of recent devastating weather events and natural disasters that have impacted so heavily upon so many Australians, particularly in Queensland, in Western Australia and the multiple events in Victoria;
- (2) expresses its sympathy to the families and friends of those whose lives have been lost and to those who have lost property, income and businesses, in particular in our farming communities — many of whom still remain isolated;
- (3) notes the huge damage done in Victoria to homes, community facilities, roads, bridges, infrastructure, town and rural levees, businesses, and particularly to the agricultural sector;
- (4) notes the ready response of the Australian Defence Force and federal government agencies to the Victorian government's requests for emergency assistance;
- (5) sincerely thanks all those emergency services personnel including Victoria Police, volunteers in the State Emergency Service, the Country Fire Authority, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Rotary, Lions and other community and service groups, the Victorian Farmers Federation, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other industry groups, and the many local government councillors, officers and council workers and businesses that have fought so hard

to protect communities and to assist those who have been affected;

- (6) commits to do whatever is possible within the capacity of government to provide relief and recovery services and assistance to see these communities rebuilt, with maximum input from local resources; and
- (7) undertakes to ensure that the preparation and response to the Victorian events are appropriately reviewed and that affected communities are given the opportunity to make submissions with a view to mitigating such events in future.

Firstly, I thank the chamber for the opportunity to move this motion. It is an important motion, and I know that many members on both sides of the chamber have electorates that have been directly impacted by the flood events that have occurred across this state through January and February and those that have occurred in other states. I pay tribute to the Queensland Premier's leadership during the events that have occurred in Queensland and note the devastating impact of those events. I know many Victorians are prepared to stand up and offer every support to Queensland in its time of particular need.

In Victoria, however, we have had our own enormous challenges. Our state is battling an extremely large flood. It is estimated that in particular the January floods have affected over 530 000 hectares of land or 2.3 per cent of the state. In fact the floods are not over, and it is important that the community understands that these floods are still a live and damaging event that is still unfolding. Communities and emergency services are still working very hard to protect people, property and livelihoods from floodwaters.

State personnel — including more than 4000 volunteers, staff from the State Emergency Service, 2000 Department of Sustainability and Environment staff, 1200 Country Fire Authority staff and volunteers and staff from other agencies, including the Department of Human Services — have been active in providing communities with the support they require. Major areas across the state were hit by the storm on Friday. The SES received more than 6000 requests for assistance on that day.

The direct and indirect consequences of the floods have been significant, and assessments of the damage caused by Friday's storm are still being made. It is clear that these major floods have affected 26 municipalities, 97 townships, 3000 properties and 7500 people. The damage assessment is a difficult process, and it will take time to fully determine the impact of the floods.

The Department of Treasury and Finance has made a set of estimates of damage to the state's assets and

losses to primary producers and small businesses caused by the floods that hit Victoria from August through to January, but it is necessarily incomplete and excludes the damage from last Friday's storm. On this estimate the total cost of the floods to the state government is likely to be around \$340 million, but I stress that this is not the final position. While it is too early to estimate the cost of the floods to the Victorian economy, it is clear that the Victorian and Queensland floods will have a significant impact across the state. They will impact on consumer sentiment, and increased costs — for example, fruit and vegetable prices — will add to cost-of-living pressures.

The commonwealth government has announced plans for a contribution to the flood recovery in the form of a levy. Rough estimates indicate that the levy will place an additional \$450 million burden on Victorian taxpayers. Some commonwealth infrastructure may also be deferred, and this would impact disproportionately on Victorian taxpayers. The assistance of the commonwealth in providing for Victorian communities is certainly appreciated, and we need to ensure that the issues that flow from these matters are dealt with.

The Premier, Ted Baillieu, is chairing a cabinet flood task force, of which I am a member, to coordinate the additional assistance that is required for families, businesses, communities and primary producers. It is clear that the task is to help those people affected by providing direct financial assistance. My colleagues will lay out the specific financial assistance that is being provided. The task force will also assist local governments. We have established a \$5 million local government clean-up fund, and further funding is available through the natural disaster financial assistance scheme. We will keep working closely with councils. Many councils in the north of the state are particularly vulnerable financially and have faced enormous challenges. I know that on the significant days in question staff from a number of councils were unable to attend and support others in the municipality because their own homes were under direct threat.

We need to support primary producers, small businesses and tourism operators. We have established a \$1 million tourism program and made available \$25 000 clean-up and restoration grants as well as low-interest loans of up to \$200 000. The Department of Primary Industries is also individually contacting more than 3000 farmers to assess the impact of the floods and work out what support can be offered to those farmers, many of whom are quite isolated.

We need to enable Victorians to help flood-affected areas through the Red Cross appeal. I pay tribute to the work that the Red Cross has done. I visited the Red Cross call centre, and it was remarkable to see how it was able to support Queenslanders. As the call rate diminished somewhat from the Queensland floods there was a flurry of calls coming in to its battery of telephones, manned by volunteers, relating to the Victorian floods. I pay tribute to that organisation and its volunteers. I note the swift decision of the Premier to enable public servants to assist in manning some of those telephone lines to provide support to the Red Cross. This was a critical decision that meant immediate support was available on those lines. Clearly they were trained people who were able to provide the support that the Red Cross needed at that exact moment.

We will need to become more disaster resilient in Victoria. I make the point here that in early February 2009, just two years ago, the state faced the devastating impact of bushfires. This chamber debated motions and discussed the impact of those devastating bushfires. It is important that bushfire communities are not forgotten and are supported in every step of their recovery program — just as those who are suffering from the impact of floods are strongly supported.

I note that in my portfolio area the challenge has been not only to provide urgent aid and support through the Department of Human Services-sponsored relief centres around the state but also to support the public hospital facilities that have been impacted. Some significant lessons have become clear to me as I have moved around northern Victoria and elsewhere.

It is interesting to note that in the old days hospitals were built on high ground in the towns. That is not always the case now, and the impact of flood on some of our public hospitals has been significant. Rochester hospital is a relatively new hospital. Previously the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, and I strongly advocated upgrading the hospital. We supported a modern hospital being built in Rochester, and I pay tribute to the work of the Rochester community in having the magnificent new hospital built. However, it is interesting to note that the floodwaters started to flow into the hospital. It has been built 300 millimetres above the 1956 flood level, but this was a bigger flood and the waters started to lap into the hospital, forcing its closure.

Clearly there are challenges that we need to think about for the future. We need to have better systems for moving people — often frail, aged people and vulnerable people — when an evacuation is necessary.

I pay tribute to the work of the volunteers, and particularly the staff at Rochester hospital, in evacuating a large number of people who needed to be evacuated very quickly from both the hospital and the surrounding nursing homes. There was the massive task of lifting frail and vulnerable people into a bus. That sounds simple on one level, but to actually lift somebody who is not ambulatory into a bus is difficult. These days those who work in hospitals are used to the assistance of mechanical lifting, and that is as it should be, but on this occasion no mechanical lifting assistance was available; people had to be lifted up steps, into a bus and moved out of the town — just as the floodwaters were starting to lap into the hospital. Floodwaters penetrated parts of the hospital, so there will be a significant clean-up.

I again pay tribute to the work of the team at Rochester hospital, the management and the staff, for their around-the-clock attention to protecting the residents and the patients and ensuring that the hospital itself was also protected. It is back up and running again, and that is a tribute to their actions and focus and the work of the department.

Charlton was perhaps the town most impacted on in terms of health facilities. The Charlton hospital is of 1970s vintage but is built on a lower level in the town. That hospital was flooded. Two days after the flooding I was there and saw the tremendous impact of the flood. It had barged through the hospital, in some places to hip height. The massive barrage forced the sewage back up, through and into the hospital. The damages to and the impact on the nursing home facilities and hospital in that town were tremendous.

It is very clear that that town was one of the places worst hit. All of the low-lying areas of the town were affected. Only a small area of higher ground was spared the impact of the flood. It went through businesses right down the main street, through the hospital and through all of the town's facilities. There was an impact on schools, and I want to make the point here that a number of schools around the state have been impacted, which has created a significant task for local communities and teachers.

In the case of the Rochester hospital, there was no power, the sewerage had gone and there was no primary care of any type available in the town. I pay tribute to the Department of Health for working with me and with Ambulance Victoria to deploy a primary care field tent in the town within 48 hours. That provided valuable primary care in the town, enabling doctors and nurses to treat patients.

The first day I went up there I met a family whose daughter had health issues which were relatively minor but still serious enough to require hospital attention, and they had to take her to Bendigo. There was a need for primary care support to be provided in the town as swiftly as possible. As I said, I pay tribute to Ambulance Victoria and the Department of Health for their rapid deployment of this unit — a mini-MASH (mobile army surgical hospital) unit if you want to call it that — which provided that support: a backup generator, safe water, storage for medicines and supplies and the capacity to provision a full primary care service, enabling nurses to provide outreach services.

In the town of Charlton, obviously there will have to be an interim arrangement as the capital works people and the department work through the steps of assessing the actual impact on the Charlton hospital and what is salvageable from it. There will be some portable units put on or near the site to ensure that care can be provided in the town whilst those assessments of the hospital are being made.

Even in metropolitan Melbourne the impact of the recent floods has been significant. The Alfred hospital was impacted quite significantly by the floods near the city on the weekend. I visited the Alfred on Saturday and had a good look at the impact on the operating theatre suite. It is interesting to again see the importance of having thoughtful design to minimise the impacts of these things.

The Alfred has a major theatre complex that has a roof that slopes back towards the main hospital building, so when a massive barrage of water comes through there is a bank-up of water there and a backup under the roof dripping down into the operating theatres. This has put the main operating complex out of action. I know that the staff and management have worked tremendously hard to get part of that theatre complex back up and running. They were able to maintain theatre support to the emergency department, which was critical, and now they have taken steps to start restoring some support to that theatre complex.

It is interesting that the new surgery centre on the corner of Punt Road and Commercial Road — we all know that building; it is a magnificent new centre, a very important addition to the capacity of the Alfred to provide treatment —

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Yes, you did, Mr Viney. I am not critical of that; I am supportive of that, but I do

make a serious point here. The ground floor of that building has been flooded twice since September, and there is an issue with drainage which needs to be dealt with. The designers of hospital buildings into the future need to look at such potential risks. It is important to look to the future in relation to these points and to learn what lessons we can.

In terms of my portfolio responsibilities, the issue of aged care is very significant. Commonwealth-funded aged-care support services and aged-care homes around the state have been impacted by the floods. Seventeen facilities accommodating older Victorians have been impacted. In January nine facilities across the Loddon, Mallee and Grampians regions were impacted, with 250 residents safely relocated to other locations.

I have visited a number of those locations. Horsham is a good example of how the impact of the floods on a number of aged-care facilities was minimised through the use of levees. Again I pay tribute to the work of hospital staff and their ability to protect their aged-care facilities. Staff were able to bring frail, older people into the main hospital at Horsham and provide them with the support they needed. I think there is a longer term question about how to ensure that privately run and not-for-profit aged-care facilities — facilities that are funded and regulated by the commonwealth — are able to have in place the emergency plans they are required to have. The story across the state is of an imperfect list of emergency plans in aged-care facilities, and we need to do more in that area. I will be communicating with my commonwealth colleague on some of these issues.

A version of this issue was raised at a ministerial conference on ageing which was held in Melbourne in December. At that meeting the discussion centred around the need to fully integrate commonwealth registered and funded aged-care facilities into state emergency planning and ensure that the preparation work had been done. This is one lesson that has come out of the bushfires, but it equally applies to the floods that have occurred through this period.

In February the floods required almost 320 residents of eight residential aged-care services across the greater metropolitan region to be relocated. Again, experience tells us that timely relocation needs to occur and that good emergency plans need to be in place so that emergency departments are able to respond in a way that means they can protect and support frail and vulnerable people at a time of need.

I make the point that the government is determined to ensure that former Chief Commissioner of Police Neil Comrie is able to review the flood predictions,

warnings and emergency response as well as clean-up and recovery. We are determined to make sure that this mechanism will get the best outcome into the future, and that the government will ensure there is parliamentary oversight to ensure that lessons are learnt and systems are improved so that the community can be assured that every step can and will be taken to ensure best responses into the future.

I pay tribute to the work of Premier Ted Baillieu and in particular to his calm and level-headed approach to managing this flood crisis. His approach has been about detail and preparedness. He has been ready to look for and to push to get the detail, and to make sure that the preparations are in place in every area. More can be done to make sure that the Bureau of Meteorology weather predictions are stronger and clearer and to ensure that communities are embraced and supported in every way.

The response of the emergency services and agencies has been magnificent. I pay tribute to emergency services workers for their efforts, and I also pay tribute to so many of my colleagues, both in this chamber and in the lower house, who have been prepared to work with and to support their local communities and to feed back information from communities to central agencies to ensure that problems are dealt with, that issues are tackled and that the right outcomes and results are achieved. Many of my colleagues have worked tirelessly through this period to support their communities, and they are continuing to work to ensure that information gets to central agencies so that those agencies can put in place the best measures to protect communities and provide assistance.

There is no doubt that the floods will have a significant impact on the Victorian economy, and we will need to work our way through the problems caused by that impact. However, I reiterate my strong personal thanks to staff at the Department of Health for the support they have given me through this period, and I again place on record my belief that the community can be very proud of the response of our emergency agencies.

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to support the seven-paragraph motion moved by the Leader of the Government. I will focus on the first five paragraphs, because the sixth and seventh will be picked up in debate tomorrow.

The first paragraph calls upon this house to express condolence for loss, whether it be the loss of life, amenity or property. It is a very broad motion which covers the weather events that are happening right across Australia. Obviously our thoughts are very much

focused on our own state and for members of this house on their own constituencies. All our electorates will have been affected by these floods, but clearly the north of Victoria has been affected far more than anywhere else in the state.

As the chair of the previous government's flood recovery ministerial task force I had the privilege of touring a lot of Victoria to visit many of those flood-affected communities. When you go through a flood-affected community a few things strike the senses quite strongly. Firstly there is the colour — entire communities have become brown from mud. You might also notice the looks of shock and fear on the faces of citizens, but as well you notice their resilience. You notice the smells, which in dwellings or small businesses can be due to wet carpet underfelt, but there are also the smells that come from dead stock, dead vegetation and sewerage systems that have been destroyed. All these things strike you as you go into communities that are dealing with and recovering from flood.

We also need to reflect upon the fact that there is no single response to flood. At one extreme is the flood that occurred in the community of Toowoomba in Queensland, where people were unaware that a flood was coming and found it hard to come to terms with as it happened. At the other extreme is the flood in Swan Hill in Victoria, which is in the lower reaches of a very slow-flowing river. The threat in Swan Hill is very real and in front of you; you can see it coming, and there is a lead-up period during which people can choose to prepare for it — or perhaps that can make it even worse. Flood preparedness involves maintaining levees day after day and hoping the hydrologists have got it right. Day after day there is uncertainty going forward. These floods have shocked us as a community, so it is very appropriate that we in this Parliament have an opportunity to talk about this big issue in our community — and a big issue it is.

Most Victorians were not exposed to the last iteration of floods, because the floods occurred in the north of the state, which has a small part of our population. It is interesting that when these floods occur in the city people in the metropolitan area of Melbourne are better able to focus on these events. We get a better indication of what our regional communities have been facing on a daily basis.

We have had several snap floods in Melbourne over the last few weeks. About three or four weeks ago on a warm day when it was raining, I went — perhaps foolishly — on a 104-kilometre bike ride. As I rode around the bike paths of Melbourne it struck me that

wherever we went, on every single bridge and footpath, citizens were out watching with awe and amazement. There is something hard-wired in us telling us that it is unusual to have floods. We are fascinated by and fearful of floods, and we are in awe of the damage nature can cause when it is unleashed. If that is what most people in metropolitan Melbourne have seen in the last few weeks, it has opened the eyes of all Victorians to what certain parts of the state have recently seen — in some cases again and again.

Some of the flooded communities in the north-west of the state, such as the Wimmera, where extraordinary floods went through late last year, and in places like Clunes and Creswick, were just beginning to recover from the first lot of floods when it happened again. Demonstrating resilience and strength is something that our regional communities are particularly good at. They have dealt with floods, fire and all sorts of natural disasters for a long time, but when they have planted crops and it looks like a good season, it is very tough even for resilient communities to deal with the destruction of those crops at the last minute.

As Mr Davis said, the floods are not over, and that is one of the tyrannies of where we are at present. We know about the water levels going down the Murray, we know the gradient is low, we know there is build-up and we have a sense of what may or may not happen. We have had a series of rain events again — it is wonderful how our language now describes them as ‘rain events’ rather than ‘storms’ — and hydrologists are now making strong predictions about where the water will be, but we do not know in any particular cycle how many more storms we will get in the next several months. What we do know is that communities that once had the security of parched soils and half-empty dams that could absorb the brunt of water coming through now have soils that are so saturated that any future rain events will be more unmanageable than before.

Perhaps it is not the time to have a debate about climate change, but we know from the records that have been kept since European settlement that floods and other seasonal events are not unusual. These phenomena are erratic and take place from time to time, but we could certainly say that over the last period of time they have become far more frequent and erratic than we have seen for a long time. It is one of those things about which we need to ponder, because our world is changing and our climate is highly unpredictable.

The floods are not over, and the affected communities will be looking for support from the government and the rest of the state. They will be looking forward to

how they will manage not just recovering from what they have experienced but also preparing and mitigating going forward. The first aspect of the motion covers that issue.

Sympathy for families and friends is important, and support is particularly critical. I recall that after floods hit Gippsland last year a number of communities were almost bewildered about what to do. Correctly, the focus of the media and the community was on the fact that Gippsland was in flood, and we did not want to get in the way of assistance being provided to people dealing with the floods. We did not want to go into communities that were not ready to receive tourists, but through not going back to some of these communities we can make the existing problem worse. Important economic recovery is hindered by the fact that communities are not being supported by outsiders. As a state, we need to look closely at how we can help these communities, and as soon as it is prudent to do so we should go back and visit and support those areas so that we can put some dollars back into pockets and let tourism in particular take off again as it so well could.

We also need to look at the extraordinary damage that has been done to some Victorian homes and communities. I had the privilege, firstly in my capacity as chair of the government task force last year and secondly having visited a number of communities this year, of seeing what is happening and listening to those affected to find out what we as a community can do to help. Today is not a time to talk about what governments can or cannot do; today is a time for sympathy and condolences for those communities. There is a lot for us to learn by working with those communities to discover what can be done. From the perspective of the Labor Party we send our condolences. We will certainly support flooded communities, and we need to learn lessons for the future from what has happened.

It is also important to note the work that has been done, as outlined very clearly by Mr Davis, by organisations including the Australian Defence Force, our police force and the State Emergency Service along with all the professional, salaried and voluntary supporters who have been there day after day supporting the affected communities. It can be particularly challenging for SES volunteers to get multiple, simultaneous calls for support. If someone’s job is to triage, they deal with the most important, critical issues first. There has been an enormous volume of requests for assistance.

Our support for those organisations and particularly their volunteers is critical, because this is about as tough as it gets. If your house has wet carpets and no power

and you ring the SES seeking support, you are ringing the same people from whom others may be seeking support for something far more severe and devastating. The call for support for the emergency services in Mr Davis's motion is something that we on this side of the house certainly agree with, and we support those emergency services going forward.

Mr Davis detailed some statistics about the number of towns and farms affected and the claims that people have submitted to the government. Particularly in relation to his department, there have been some extraordinary responses by the Department of Health for ongoing services, and that is the bread-and-butter of what we need to do.

What we have seen in Australia over the last few weeks is something that could be from a Dorothea Mackellar poem describing what Australia is like. In Victoria alone, three or four days ago we had flood warnings in the north-west of the state where Swan Hill was defending levee banks, while in East Gippsland we had bushfires — let alone looking further afield to Sydney where there have been heatwaves and in the southern suburbs of Perth where multiple houses have been burnt down. It says something about this great country of ours and how feeble we are in the face of the forces of nature.

On behalf of the Labor Party, I support the motion. Our communities need this support. We support the government in its efforts to assist those communities, and we support the motion today.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — The Greens also give wholehearted support to this motion, and we send our best wishes to the flood-affected communities. We will work with them to ensure that they recover speedily and well from the floods and sustain their vision for a prosperous future throughout the crisis.

This is the second major natural disaster that this Parliament has had to come to terms with in only four years. That has put great pressure on emergency services both internally and in those areas where communities have been affected by both fires and floods during that period.

The genesis of the flood was an amazing burst of rain that occurred at the headwaters of the Loddon and Campaspe rivers. When you look at the data from the Bureau of Meteorology it is amazing to see how intense and localised that one burst of rain was in addition to what seemed to be a broad zone of heavy rainfall along the length of the Wimmera River. It really was a

singular event in that way. But, as we know, it could equally have had a random effect on any other community around Victoria — and there has since been such an effect.

As well as the economic losses of production and property there are public assets to be rebuilt and ongoing impacts on human health and wellbeing. The latter could include the effects of dampness and disease. As we gather here today I would not expect the government to have a complete picture of the impact of the floods, but I am sure that will soon become clear in relation to housing, the economic effects, the environmental effects and of course the effect on our built environment and what that means for our responsibilities in the areas of building and planning. While that picture is rapidly emerging, I welcome the government's undertaking at paragraph (7) of the motion to ensure that there will be an appropriate public review at which all this information can be put on the table.

The flood-plain mapping indicates that large parts of northern Victoria are subject to inundation during events such as these. The scale of the flood would not have been any surprise to the responsible authorities. Although record-breaking river levels have been reported, we would expect to see the full data on river heights, volumes and the extent of the floods put on a government website as that information is collected and becomes available.

As in any major disaster, those affected and the general public deserve some exposure in respect of what happened, including information on the effectiveness of the emergency response and the clean-up or aftermath, as well as an indication of the preparation and actions taken to mitigate the effects; so information on both the prevention and the cure. We will be debating this matter again in a motion to be moved by the opposition, but I look forward to hearing more from the government about how it intends to conduct an appropriate public review at which the public will have the opportunity to make submissions.

Bushfires are terrifying events — in a way they are a vision of hell — but floods are different. Sometimes they are terrifying, but they are also a real test of endurance. You watch the water come up, you make preparations not knowing how far the water is going to go, and you see the water go down. Sometimes you see it come up again, but then, as you watch it go down, you wonder how long it is going to take to go down. In many cases there is a sense of isolation that goes with that, where you are in fact cut off from your neighbours and from the broader community. These are two very

different types of natural disasters, but both are worthy of the Parliament's full attention so that, as in the terms of the motion, we mitigate such events in the future. It is appropriate that all parliamentarians take an interest in this.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I rise to lend my voice to the motion put forward by the Leader of the Government. The floods that have risen to the greatest notoriety in the media and in the minds of Victorians over the last few weeks were caused by an amazing downpour which came in from the north-west of the state and, luckily for everyone concerned, in effect stayed in the west of the state. Had that downpour moved, as do most weather patterns, across to the east we would have had further communities under flood. We would have had the Goulburn and Broken rivers join the Murray River, causing further grief, pain and loss to communities such as Kerang, Echuca and also those downstream towards Swan Hill. We still do not know what lies ahead for places such as Boundary Bend, Mildura and Wentworth.

The areas in my electorate that suffered the most damage would have to be Charlton and Rochester. The damage in those two communities was significant. A smaller community, Newbridge, had its recreation reserve totally gutted. In that instance water was some 2 metres above the highest level previously recorded.

The Bridgewater caravan park was turned upside down with over 100 sites totally ruined. In the days after the Loddon River reached unprecedented heights, the Bridgewater caravan park looked like the aftermath of an apocalyptic war, with boats, vans and furniture sitting 4 or 5 metres above ground level up in the trees. It was just phenomenal.

In the township of Donald approximately 20 or 30 houses were inundated, along with 2 motels.

One of the hidden problems associated with these floods has been the fact that power has been out in many of our communities for a long time. Kerang was effectively isolated for a number of days, and I commend members of the public who rallied behind the various agencies to at least keep the Kerang electrical substation dry and operational, because had that substation gone under water it would have put out of operation about 400 to 500 dairy farms for a number of days, and had it blown without being turned off first it would have left those farms without power for a number of weeks, which would have caused even greater harm to the dairy stock.

We have also been very lucky in towns such as Pyramid Hill, where the houses were largely kept dry. However, the damage done to the town by those days of isolation is still to be reconciled, and that same problem has occurred in Swan Hill and Kerang over the last few weeks. Swan Hill was cut off, with the exception of access through to New South Wales. The State Emergency Service (SES) and volunteer effort at Warracknabeal has to be commended. That town's ability to rouse its community to action in the final days ahead of the peak is well known to have saved it from being inundated.

But I would like to spend the majority of my time talking about the experiences faced at Charlton, where more than half the town was inundated. Mr Lenders has described the situation very well in his recollection of the floods from two years ago: the brown colour that sweeps through the entire town, the stink, the stench, the shock on the faces, the weariness of all the volunteers, the frustration when volunteer efforts are not as well coordinated as everybody would have liked, the frustration when the volunteers want to take their trucks and their bobcats and other machinery and go home and make a living while people are saying there is still so much work that needs to be done — and so on.

Those members of Parliament who know a little about Charlton would know that it is a low socioeconomic town with an older demographic, and many of the people who have had their houses inundated are simply incapable of lifting the carpet or taking the furniture out to the nature strip to have it picked up. They are incapable of paying an electrician — they simply do not have the money to pay for one to come back in and reconnect their houses and fix up the fuse boxes that, even in good times, were some 70 to 80 years old and probably needed upgrading anyway.

Therefore we have quite a unique situation in Charlton, which has been heavily reliant on the volunteer effort. That is what was quite amazing throughout that first week and a half immediately after the water receded. It needs to be noted that many volunteers, not just people from the area but also people driving up from Melbourne, gave their time. People were moving in from some of the larger regional areas also to lend their assistance to this recovery effort. It was something that needed to be seen to be believed, and I want to congratulate all the people who played a leading role in that recovery effort.

In particular I want to thank Kay Cossar, who stepped up as a local volunteer to help organise the volunteer effort in conjunction with the Buloke shire. She was

assisted by Will Cummins as well as Russell Coxall and Peter Whykes. Those four individuals need to be seriously congratulated on the work they did. They were able to work in with people from the Department of Human Services, with the Buloke shire, with Mayor Leo Tellefson and with the CEO, Warwick Heine.

There was much work to be done and many people who needed assistance. Many hundreds of people out in the Charlton region had to be evacuated to nearby Donald. They spent nearly a week living in the recreation hall at the Donald sporting complex. It was only after volunteers had moved in and cleared the houses of ruined furniture and ruined carpets, put cleaning sprays through the houses and let them dry out that these people, having lived in Donald in makeshift accommodation for nearly a week, were able to move back in and try to restore some form of normality. It really was a huge effort.

The other part of this tragedy which has received scant comment has been the rural damage and stock losses. There have been substantial stock losses; thousands of sheep have been lost. Some of these stock losses represent years if not generations of improvements to bloodlines. Various farmers have effectively lost 10 to 15 years of continual improvement in their stock and bloodlines. To have them wiped out in one go is extremely cruel and cannot be measured simply in dollars. We need to be aware of the cruel nature of these losses caused by the floods.

Also there are the losses in fodder. Many exporters in northern Victoria have been enjoying substantial growth this year and were looking for a return in their yields and in their profits, only to have many thousands of tonnes of fodder ruined and spoilt. Tomato growers and vineyards have suffered significant losses and the poultry industry has taken a real hit, with one grower in the north of the state registering the loss of 300 000 chickens in one event. Not only is that an extreme loss of valued produce, but on top of that comes an incredibly expensive clean-up effort which has to be carried out as well. Literally thousands of kilometres of damaged fencing will have to be removed and then replaced, and the cost will be extensive.

On top of all of this we have the ongoing mental health issues that some of these communities will have to battle through. Some of these communities have been suffering through 10 years of drought and trying to make ends meet, and now they have been hit by these damage bills, stock losses and produce losses. The bottom line is that they have been hit yet again, so again we will need to be very diligent in watching the mental health of many of our communities, and more

importantly the individual mental health of these people.

Overall the members of the State Emergency Service need to be congratulated on the work they have done and the way they have gone about their work. Stories abound of SES volunteers whose own houses have been inundated but who have put aside their own interests and gone out to help other people. We sometimes need to take a breath and acknowledge the work they do.

The expectation of people within affected communities that the SES will be able to respond to each and every call is, in many instances, unrealistic, and that is especially so for some of our smaller communities that have been hit in these floods. They have only a small number of SES volunteers, yet the expectation is that those volunteers will somehow be able to turn back the floodwaters and protect the farm and the house. Sometimes that simply does not and cannot happen. We also need to do some work in relation to our expectation on the SES and the information its members are given. We need to consider somehow improving the accuracy of the information the SES has to deal with when it is talking to the various communities around the state. We certainly experienced that issue when we went to Rochester, where information about expected floods levels, passed on by catchment management authorities through the SES to the community, turned out to be inaccurate in the first instance.

As I said earlier, this has been a horrific few weeks for a large portion of north-west Victoria. We need to understand how lucky we were that that horrendous downpour did not swing around and fill up the Broken and Goulburn catchments, as that would have created an even bigger tide of water working its way down towards the Murray River. If we continue to get further rains throughout February, we will need to be vigilant and keep an eye on the water that is going to be coming down towards Wentworth and Mildura from the north.

I have not even touched on the flash flooding that has besieged most parts of Victoria, but certainly it has made a real mess, and there have been some isolation issues around Mildura.

In the future we are going to have to be very vigilant. We are going to have to put in a lot of effort and make some tough decisions around where we put our levee banks and how we protect our communities. We have to work to ensure that we do everything we can so that our communities are not put through this in the future.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution in support of the motion. I welcome the opportunity to join with my parliamentary colleagues in expressing sadness in relation to all those who have been so badly affected by the recent devastating natural disaster, the floods that have occurred right across Australia and particularly in the electorate represented by Mr Drum, Ms Broad, Ms Lovell, Mrs Petrovich and me. Northern Victoria has been the area that has been most affected by the recent floods in Victoria.

We have had not only flash flooding but also the issue, one we are still experiencing, of the very slow rise in water that is taking weeks to reach its peak. Both come with their own set of challenges and their own unique devastations, whether it is from torrents of water sweeping by very quickly or very slow inundations. Of course, the slow water rising — and this is what has been experienced at Swan Hill and at Mildura — impacts very much on people's ability to be able to mitigate the effects of the flood. It stresses the levee banks and affects the sandbagging and other types of mitigation being used. Because the water just sits there for so long, it has a much greater capacity to be able to breach those flood mitigation measures.

Of course, the opposition is going to continue to support flood-affected communities. We have been visiting those communities, as has the government. The Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, along with Danielle Green, the member for Yan Yean in the Assembly, Ms Broad and I, together with many other members of Parliament, have been visiting and talking to people who have been affected by the floods. We are very interested to hear about what their needs are, material and financial, and we, like all members of Parliament, want people to be able to get their lives back together and back to normal once again as quickly as possible.

One of the most devastating occurrences during the floods was the death on 17 January of an eight-year-old boy, Lachlan Collins. He was playing with his brother and his sister in a swollen billabong off the Goulburn River when he fell from a pontoon and disappeared underwater. This was a devastating occurrence, and such a young life being lost during the floods sent shock waves through the community, particularly that of Shepparton. I want to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the Collins family for the loss of their very young son.

As I said, the flood has affected huge areas in northern Victoria. Twenty-seven municipalities, 97 townships, over 3000 residences, 289 buildings and more than

7000 people have been directly affected by the floods. To rattle off numbers like that, however, removes the human face of what is occurring to people as they cope with not only the waters but the devastation they bring to homes, property, crops, livelihoods and businesses and as they cope with the challenges of cleaning up afterwards.

Previous speakers have spoken in some detail about what that devastation means — what it means to have lost so much of your property, to see your home full of water and to see your treasured possessions ruined and having to be ripped up and thrown on the scrapheap at the front of the house. Then there is the problem people have in facing the clean-up. Cleaning up after a flood is a very dirty business. It is not nice clean river water that has been flowing through your house; it is water that is full of mud, dirt, sewage, germs and bugs. Dead animals have been in it, and it is potentially disease ridden.

It is a very challenging and quite a dirty business cleaning up after you have had floodwater through your property. I had some experience of this when my parents for some time had a place that backed onto the Goulburn River. They went through floods on a couple of occasions. They were very well set up for the floods and had quite a bit of warning that the floods were coming. Nevertheless, the water got into the house and we had to clean up afterwards, even if we did have time to put our fridge, our freezer and our washing machine up high enough to make sure they did not float away or get damaged. There is a huge cost personally, financially and emotionally for these people individually and of course a big cost to the community generally when they are devastated by such a flood.

Like Mr Drum, I want to talk a little about what the flood has meant to the agricultural sector and the losses it has experienced. Throughout northern Victoria, whilst there are townships where businesses have been affected, there have also been agribusinesses that have been affected. Many thousands of cattle, sheep and poultry have been simply swept away in the flood or injured. An enormous amount of fencing has been lost or destroyed and crop losses have occurred. Grazing pasture has been lost and hay that was recently brought in has been ruined. There have been very big losses which represent very big dollars for our agricultural sector.

Not only that, farmers have gone through many years of drought. For many of them it was going to be a good year; they had good crops. Some were lucky enough to be able to get some of their crops in before the floods came; others lost the whole crop. Crops that were going

to pay bills and pay back some of the loans farmers had taken out during the drought were simply swept away. That is not to mention the impact the flood has had on the grapevines and the permanently planted fruit trees. With some of these permanent plantings it is not just about the loss of this year's crop, it is about the loss of many mature trees that in years to come might have gone on to be good producers. This flood has killed them. That is going to have a huge impact on the orchardists and on the availability and price of fruit in the future.

The impact the flood is having on our agricultural sector now and in the future in northern Victoria cannot be underestimated. We will feel this impact for years to come. Individual farmers, of course, will be feeling it for many years to come when they have to repair and restock and look at how they are going to keep their businesses going.

Many relief and recovery centres were set up across Victoria, and I want to acknowledge the excellent work carried out by the many agencies, particularly the SES (State Emergency Service), which was the main body that responded to the flood emergency, as well as the Country Fire Authority, Victoria Police, the Red Cross, which other members have spoken about in some detail, and ambulance services across Victoria, including St John's Ambulance. I also acknowledge the many sporting and service clubs which came to the aid of people who were affected by the floods. Of course we should not forget the many Victorians who made a financial contribution to the Red Cross flood appeal. We also saw Australian Defence Force personnel from the 4th Brigade army reserve unit spend time in flood-affected communities around Swan Hill offering their assistance.

I also acknowledge the excellent work done by officers of local government in flood-affected areas. They have played a very important and significant role in the relief and flood recovery effort. They have formed a pivotal point of contact in addition to providing information to people, and I want to recognise the fantastic efforts by all councils in those local areas. Council officers, along with many SES personnel and volunteers, were also directly affected by the floods. They had homes, businesses and farms that were also being affected by the floods, but they were out there rendering assistance and supporting others, and I want to acknowledge the work they have done. I thank the many volunteers who pitched in to help, not only those from local communities but also the people from surrounding areas who made themselves available. People have come from Melbourne and from interstate to northern Victoria to give assistance and support.

Housing people who have been unable to occupy their homes because of the flooding has also been a really big issue and will continue to be an issue in northern Victoria.

I join other members of this chamber and the government in supporting this motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to support the motion before the house. I will echo some of the comments of previous speakers, including the Leader of the Government, in reflecting on the irony of the recent anniversary of Black Saturday and now a motion before us in relation to flooding in Victoria. It has been a very difficult start to 2011 for many people not only in Victoria but also throughout Australia with the floods and weather events in Queensland, the fires in Western Australia and the challenges that we have endured here in Victoria. In recent years the Eastern Victoria Region has suffered from fire on many occasions. I had thought that the electorate I share with Mr Viney, Mr Scheffer, Mr Hall and Mr Philip Davis would escape the floods on this occasion, but unfortunately over the weekend some of the western part of our electorate was inundated.

The Koo Wee Rup swamp region is a highly productive agricultural region. It is the home of the asparagus industry in Australia, and it also supports dairy, potato-growing and other farming enterprises. The swamp was drained many decades ago and is supported by a network of drains and channels that have been developed and maintained over those decades. There are natural river courses that run through what was the swamp, including the Bunyip River. This network of drains and rivers eventually sees water discharged into Western Port bay.

Unfortunately over the weekend that system struggled to cope with the volume of water it had to deal with, and an evacuation notice was issued for the township of Koo Wee Rup. Although fortunately it was not required, at the time it appeared that the Bunyip River would burst its banks and Koo Wee Rup would be inundated. I understand from a briefing I received on Sunday that it came very close to that occurring. Notwithstanding the township was spared the worst so far as inundation goes, many farmers in surrounding areas, particularly potato farmers, suffered significant losses. Many asparagus farmers have also suffered significant losses, although given the stage of the season I understand that potato farmers may be the worst off.

I want to congratulate our forebears who developed the Yallock diversion, which is situated at Cora Lynn and

comprises a drain that was constructed to relieve pressure from the Bunyip River. It was developed over many years and only completed relatively recently. We can thank those who had the foresight to build it for the fact that the Bunyip River did not break its banks, which could have resulted in much worse flooding. Parts of Nar Nar Goon, Cora Lynn and the surrounding areas suffered significant water inundation on properties, and the clean-up and economic loss will be significant.

Like others I pay tribute to the volunteers and those who help out in these situations. On Sunday I visited the emergency evacuation centre at Cranbourne and the emergency evacuation centre at the Cardinia Cultural Centre in Pakenham. The Red Cross, the police, the State Emergency Service and others who gave their time and pitched in really helped to make a bad situation not so bad. I pay tribute to them for their efforts.

Unfortunately, flooding also impacted parts of the outskirts of what is now south-eastern metropolitan Melbourne. Outlook, a longstanding organisation in Pakenham, suffered significant water inundation, and the impact is likely to be significant. Parts of Officer were flooded, and parts of the residential area of Pakenham were also flooded. The impact of the floods is significant, and the losses are yet to be calculated. I am pleased to lend my support to the motion, and in doing so I thank all those who contributed to the clean-up and to the evacuation on Saturday night.

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I rise to express my support for the motion before the house, in particular in relation to paragraphs 1 to 5 of the motion. I wish to endorse the expression of sympathy to the families and friends of those whose lives have been lost and to those who have lost property, income and businesses, in particular our farming communities, many of which still remain isolated. In relation to points 6 and 7 of the motion, which commit the Baillieu government to a range of actions, I look forward to holding the government to account for those commitments. I am sure the government intends to keep all of them.

I wish to focus my remarks on the Northern Victoria Region, which is the electorate I represent and which comprises almost half of the state. I wish to recognise the victims and all those affected by the flood situation, which is ongoing. It is a fact that the Northern Victoria Region has had more than its fair share of challenges over the past 15 years. The list includes many long years of drought and bushfires, including almost all of the bushfires in recent memory. Now we have had a

succession of floods, and in between times there have been other challenges, like locusts, which are still a problem. I want to express my condolences and sympathies and to acknowledge the forbearance shown by so many families, businesses and communities across northern Victoria. After those families, businesses and communities had picked themselves up after a succession of these challenges, it is very hard to imagine what it must have been like to have another event take place.

To give one example, the caravan park in Rochester has been flooded four times since September last year. This business, for which the shire is the committee of management, has been affected by visitors not being able to stay in the caravan park. It also supplies low-income housing as well as short-term housing for seasonal workers. The floods have been a huge challenge, and this is just one example of the many challenges that families, businesses and communities have had to face time and again within a very short period of time.

As my colleague Kaye Darveniza said, these floods have been particularly cruel, given the hopes and expectations — particularly of the farming community and the businesses that depend on the farming community — that were raised when good rains were experienced in the middle of last year. Expectations rose about the product of that good season, only to have them greatly diminished as a result of the impact of floods.

Having visited many flood-affected communities and spoken with their members over recent months, I pay tribute to the efforts that so many community members have made to help each other. It was outstanding to see the lengths to which people have gone and the distances that people have travelled to help out across so many communities that have been affected in my region alone.

I also pay tribute to the people who have come to help out from all over Victoria, including from the metropolitan area. Those people include tradespeople who have just shown up with their tools, members of sporting clubs who know people in affected communities because they have played in many sporting competitions with them, members of service clubs and people from such organisations as Loddon Mallee Housing Services, which sent teams to help out.

In another small but important example of the lengths to which so many Victorians are going to help out both in person and by donating money, the Turkish community has made a donation to the Shire of

Gannawarra to help people affected by floods, and the mayor set off to receive that donation yesterday. That is just one of many outstanding examples of the lengths to which people across the board have gone to help out.

All that is in addition to the efforts of agencies, their staff and volunteers, such as the State Emergency Service, the Country Fire Authority, Victoria Police, the Red Cross and Centrelink. I have spoken to Centrelink staff who have been repeatedly sent to Queensland to help out and have also been sent to communities across northern Victoria to provide income support and assistance to people affected by the floods. I do not know how some of those people are still standing, given the hours they have been working. I acknowledge those efforts, which are just some examples of the extraordinary work that people have been putting in.

I also express my appreciation to the many flood-affected communities which have welcomed the Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, the shadow minister for emergency services, Danielle Green, and other members of the opposition team, including myself, as we have gone around to express our support and indicate our willingness to help in whatever way we can. Given that these flood-affected communities have a hell of a lot on their plates, it has been outstanding to be welcomed so warmly by them.

There is no doubt that many Victorians have acted in an extraordinary way and with great generosity. However, people who are helping out and donating money eventually need to go home, to go back to work to earn a living and to take care of their own families and communities. In addition to the impact of floods on families and businesses, there have been massive impacts on community facilities and infrastructure that are well beyond the capacity of people helping out to fix and replace. That is why governments at all three levels need to step up and provide the resources required to meet this massive challenge.

In particular I acknowledge the efforts made by local governments in Northern Victoria Region to help themselves and each other. As a small example, in the relief centre run in Charlton by the Shire of Buloke I was initially taken aback to run into a team from the Mildura Rural City Council; I thought they were quite a long way from home. That is just one example of many councils and shires helping each other out in the longstanding tradition of these self-reliant and resilient communities.

Many rural shires — Buloke, Loddon, Campaspe and Gannawarra, just to name a few — are responsible for large geographic areas and extensive road assets but

have small populations and limited capacity to raise revenue. They will need a lot of help from the state and federal governments for a long time to come. I am confident these shires will continue to punch well above their weight as they assess the damage. I believe the Shire of Gannawarra was endeavouring to have its first council meeting for quite some time this week so that it could begin to assess the damage — and that is just one example. However, it is unrealistic to expect these shires to deal with this issue without a lot of assistance over a long period from the state and federal governments.

In supporting this motion today, this expression of sympathy and support, I would also like to underline the case for a commitment to support over the long term — well after the crisis has passed, well after many of the helpers have done their bit and gone home — and for governments, state and federal, committing to the long haul for these small, rural communities which have done such an outstanding job in doing everything possible to help themselves.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I also rise to support the motion. In doing so, I would like to give the communities some heart that this Parliament is committed to taking steps to mitigate the effect of any future rain events on their communities. I also would like to thank the lead agencies involved in responding to the flood events, particularly the SES (State Emergency Service), CFA (Country Fire Authority), Red Cross, Salvation Army, Rotary, Lions and Apex clubs, and many, many others who have been involved in both the response and after care for these communities.

I mention the Creswick Bowling Club in particular, which is in my region. It has been flooded three times. We have a lesson to learn from that, because its pleas last year for support and assistance in the provision of appropriate drainage systems went unheeded, and thereby the impact on the community and in particular the facility was significantly greater from those last three events.

As one of the members for Western Victoria Region, which covers 75 000 square kilometres, I will localise my comments to that region particularly and to the impact the floods have had on the communities in my region, but more importantly we need to focus on what steps we can take to mitigate any future flood events. I would also like to acknowledge local councils. They have been the Anna Blighs of the local community, particularly the mayors. They have had to respond not only to their community but also to the wider public —

to communications and media representatives and others from outside their shires and municipalities.

I would like to identify those areas with which I have been particularly involved over the last three weeks. I first became involved in the floods at Horsham, particularly south Horsham, as did my counterpart. Sandbagging is an opportunity for people, whether or not they are from the community, to get involved. It is a point of contact with the local communities. Certainly sandbagging was one of the first points of contact. It involved the whole community. There were football clubs and netball clubs, and people from Collingwood and Essendon. People from East Gippsland had left their homes to come across to the other side of the state, even though significant fires were burning in that particular region and placing the area at some risk. You got a feel of a community bonding, and I can assure those who regularly go to the gym that 2 hours of sandbagging gives both the body and soul a significant workout. It provided a dual advantage.

Dimboola was another town that I visited. Again I would like to pay homage to the Apex and Lions clubs, which played a significant supporting role by providing both food and water. For those who were in that region it was a wait-and-see game. I can assure members it was not an easy waiting game. Some residents had to wait 48 hours to 68 hours to see if the water rose to the point where their homes were submerged. I thank particularly those community groups that not only kept us fed and watered but also provided support during that time.

I also acknowledge Warracknabeal, one of the other places I spent a bit of time in, and the entrepreneurial skills of some local community members there. They provided significant resources and intelligence with the provision of levee banks around Warracknabeal that subsequently saved many, many homes in that town.

I refer to Skipton, a little town on the north-west aspect of the Corangamite shire. Not many residents there were affected, but those in the low-lying areas were certainly affected. I cite the particular example of the owner of the Skipton Art Gallery, who was flooded not once but twice. Apart from suffering a bereavement in my family and then coming up to Melbourne yesterday, I also had the owner of that art gallery in tears, saying she had been flooded not only once but twice, and the prospect of being flooded again was a very real one. I raise that issue because although we think about the immediate impact of a flood or rain event, we must be mindful of the after-effect. That person who was begging for help, in tears and looking for support

exemplifies many others in the community who we will have to support in the future.

I make mention of Charlton, as have others, because that is a town that has been significantly impacted by the floods, as have many other towns in the north which are not in my region. I visited a family of six — a wife, husband and four children — who had their house totally destroyed by the floods. In fact when I was there the repair people were removing the plaster, the electricians were removing the wiring and the roof was being repaired. Their circumstances were unfortunate — they were fortunate in that they were able to access both Centrelink and Department of Human Services payments, but they were unfortunate because they were unclear about exactly what their insurance policy stated and whether it would cover them in the event of a flood.

I bring to the notice of this chamber that we need to be mindful of insurance, the words within insurance policies and the misunderstanding of people who take out those policies as we deliberate what steps we can take post floods.

I draw to the attention of the house that people in Carisbrook had little time to evacuate. The water rose within 10 minutes and was gone in 20 minutes, and it did significant damage to a number of houses right across the lower regions of Carisbrook. We should be mindful of the need to have appropriate early warning signals so community members can make a decision, as early as possible, about whether to evacuate or make provision for mitigating the impacts of drought.

I would also like to acknowledge the work other agencies have done, particularly in respect of the primary or rural industries. Much has been said about the damage to the rural industries, but looking at it firsthand — and I hope many members have been out to these areas — you can see the damage to the minor roads that are absolutely critical to the access of primary producers or farming businesses or agribusiness. Many crops have been totally ruined. I met a group of farmers just outside Rupanyup, and many had lost 10 kilometres of river frontage fencing. While that might sound like not a lot, when equated to a replacement price it is in excess of \$100 000 per person, or per farmer. Also many have lost chickpeas, which are high-value crops, and lentils and beans that have been valued at in excess of half a million dollars.

The impact to the rural community has been significant. I am pleased to see the government response in providing both initial reconstruction grants and

subsidised loans through Rural Finance. Obviously as time moves on these will be continually reviewed.

I acknowledge the work that BlazeAid has done in helping with the volunteerism by replacing fences. I also acknowledge the work the Victorian Farmers Federation has done in helping coordinate fencing volunteers.

Only on Saturday I was in Charlton at the crisis centre, and it was interesting and pleasing to see the number of volunteers not only lining up to help clean out the residential houses and provide support for those communities but also to go out into the broader community to help deal with much of the infrastructure that has been destroyed by the floods.

I would also like to briefly acknowledge some of the work that has been done by some of those people. There are too many people to name individually, but they are usually the unsung heroes. I have mentioned the main agencies, the SES and CFA in particular, but they have been assisted by the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Lions, Rotary and Apex clubs. There are many others who do it in a voluntary sense, and I am talking about the individual community-minded people who give up their time to help not only at this particular time but also into the future.

I would like to finish where I started off. I would like to acknowledge the good work of many people in the community in responding to the floods, and I would like to acknowledge the way that the government has responded, particularly through financial support, and the many organisations that have helped. I would like to stress again that during this post-flood-event period we will have to work to make sure that we mitigate not only the financial impact but also the psychological impact on these communities.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I also welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on the motion moved by the Leader of the Government. In following my colleague from Western Victoria Region I imagine I will have some similar observations to make about some similar locations.

The floods have had a significant impact on many parts of Victoria. The motion talks about the serious and severe weather events that have occurred across Australia in recent weeks and the extent to which this is affecting Victorian communities. I think it really affects all of us with our very large electorates.

It is important to note that as we participate in this debate in the house there are parts of the state which are still subject to major or moderate flood warnings and

the damage bill is still being assessed in a great many parts of the state. The flooding and severe rain that affected many parts of western and northern Victoria, as previous speakers have referred to, occurred a number of weeks ago, and that damage bill is much closer to being able to be assessed. However, the events of last Friday that impacted on the south-eastern suburbs in particular but also across many parts of Melbourne are much more recent, and so the assessment of damage is still a work in progress.

Mr David Davis's motion notes the extraordinary weather that we have had and urges all members to express their sympathy on behalf of the communities that we represent to those people interstate who have experienced significant losses — in some cases loss of life and in other cases loss of income and damage to property and business. The motion also notes the support and assistance that Victorians have received from federal government agencies, and I would like to add my sincere thanks to the many organisations, the SES (State Emergency Service) in particular, that have led the charge in terms of the response. Many other community and significant volunteer groups in Victoria have also developed quite some expertise in crisis management — perhaps unfortunately; it is the kind of thing you really do not want to have too much experience in — and we have some wonderful people with great expertise who really step up and lead their communities in times of great adversity. The motion also talks about ensuring that a proper review occurs.

There are many parts of western Victoria that have been impacted by the flooding, and these represent the length and breadth of our electorate, from Allansford in the south-west to our almost easternmost corner in Kyneton and to many communities along the Wimmera River and much further south, such as Bacchus Marsh, Beaufort, Clunes, Creswick, Ballarat, Horsham, Dimboola, Jeparit and Skipton, which I had occasion to visit with Ms Tierney the week before last to see the devastation experienced there.

Many people have been impacted upon not once but twice, and in some cases three times, and we need to be particularly cognisant of the impact of this on those communities. Significant flood damage was experienced in Creswick in September. Many people there worked furiously to meet the deadline of Christmas — certainly we all work a bit furiously towards that all-important deadline — to get the place sorted and things back to normal for the end of December, but then in early January they were suddenly impacted upon again, and by mid-January they found themselves back at the beginning, where

they had been not so long before. The emotional toll that this places on people is particularly challenging.

I would like to make a few comments about some of the observations members of the opposition have made and suggestions we have put forward in terms of the response. The opposition has urged the state government to provide financial support to enable local councils to defer rates, to support local government with additional engineering expertise and to build on the local government clean-up fund. The Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, has had a bit to say about the nature of the proposed review. We have also proposed an extension of the landfill-levy waiver to all affected councils. When these natural disasters or events that perhaps have some relationship to climate change occur we find that they have a disproportionate impact on our rural communities. In smaller shires local councils have a particular role in response and emergency management — one that they do particularly well — but it always seems terribly unfair when the smaller organisations with smaller budgets and less personnel to be dealing with these things are hit the hardest.

I would like to make a couple of additional observations based on discussions I have had with people in our electorate. I received feedback that the VicRoads website was not as consistently up to date as it could have been. In this day and age of course we all like our information to be available immediately. There were a great many roads affected, and indeed there are still a great many roads affected, but I certainly had it put to me that there were plenty of instances where the provision of information lagged a little way behind the reality on the ground — for example, saying that roads were closed when they were in fact open.

I welcome some of the initial work that has been committed to by the government and the work that will be done to support our agricultural communities in consultation with the Victorian Farmers Federation. I hope the government works with the commonwealth around the issue of insurance. I am aware that the federal Assistant Treasurer, Bill Shorten, has indicated he would like to see a plain English summary on insurance policies made available to assist people in having a clear picture of what they are getting and what they are not getting when they sign up for their insurance. Of course we enter into these things hoping for the best, but we want to know what we are covered for. I think that summary would provide people with greater confidence and certainty in such events in future. That is perhaps something the government and the commonwealth can work towards improving.

I note that in addition to some of our very valuable agricultural land, a great deal of public land has been affected. I have had questions raised with me about the process for developing the order of priority of repair to damaged public land and facilities. I am not clear how repairs will be prioritised. Perhaps further government speakers might be able to shed a bit of light on that, because there are a great many facilities on Department of Sustainability and Environment land.

The Leader of the Opposition made reference to the impact on tourism. As was the case after the Black Saturday fires, a great impression has been formed by our 24-hour media cycle that regional Victoria is a disaster zone that is not safe to go to, that a whole lot of roads are closed and that there is great chaos. This is of course not the case. Regional Victoria is a fabulous place for people to visit. Visitors from Melbourne and further afield — from interstate and overseas — play an important part in supporting our local economies.

I note that the *Age* of 6 February published an article suggesting the Great Ocean Road needed stabilisation works of the order of \$500 million. That is a significant amount of money. The article quoted Todd Blake, the general manager of the Victorian Tourism Industry Council, who suggested that as we increasingly experience climate change greater reinforcements of that road will be required. The Great Ocean Road is an incredibly important icon and an incredibly important part of the Victorian tourism industry. It has 8 million visitors a year. The Grampians are similarly important to the tourism industry.

I would urge the government to consider ways in which this important part of our regional economy can be supported by campaigns stating that people are ready to do business and receive visitors and by providing accurate information about what roads are open. This is something that was done in the aftermath of the Black Saturday fires, and I think there is a good case now for a similar support package for the industry, though it is but one of many that have been horrendously affected.

I would like to thank the volunteers, especially the SES in its role as coordinating agency, and the staff at all the local councils that have been impacted upon. I believe there are some 25 of them, which means a large number of people in a significant number of organisations have been involved. I am sure that, like me, many members have heard many accounts of how council staff have had to stop sandbagging at their own dwellings to coordinate activities for other people in the communities in which they live.

During the debate on this motion we should pause for a moment and contemplate the effects of the floods on people who have almost been impacted upon. Obviously these people are not as seriously affected as those who have had tangible damage done to their properties and businesses, but people in many communities have been on tenterhooks as they waited for many days — in some cases weeks — wondering when and at exactly what point the floodwaters would peak. This has been an incredibly trying period for them as well.

Finally, I urge the government not to drop the ball on the response to climate change. Victoria has taken a national leadership role in the climate change mitigation debate in this country. Much of this action enjoyed bipartisan support in the last Parliament, and I urge that it continue.

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — In rising to speak on this motion I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the flood-affected communities of Victoria and to the flood and cyclone-affected communities of Queensland. Within days of the second anniversary of Black Saturday we can only wonder how much more these communities will be forced to bear. After 11 years of drought and bushfire it worries me and a number of other people that many communities have been affected by three flood episodes in as many months. I say to the people in those communities that our thoughts, help and assistance are with them in the long term, not just the short term.

My journey through Victoria's flood-affected communities showed me that the north of the state has experienced greater devastation than was immediately understood from media reports. I commend the Baillieu government for its quick action in providing assistance, which was noted and much appreciated by the people in those communities. The Baillieu flood package has been implemented expediently and via a range of applications. For those who have not been able to go home and for those who need different types of assistance, the packages to assist with that recovery are extensive and agencies have been activated very quickly.

Circumstances remain difficult for many families, communities and businesses, because they are still experiencing the impact of the floods. Many communities in the northern region have not yet seen the full effect of the floods. I say to the people affected that when they are able to lift up their heads from their immediate problems we will be there with a helping hand to hopefully get them back on their feet.

At this point in my contribution I would like to highlight an issue raised by the previous speaker, Ms Pulford — that is, as part of that extensive package there has been a waiving of the landfill levy. The areas affected include the shires of Loddon, Northern Grampians, Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields, Horsham, Gannawarra, Mitchell and Moyne. That measure will provide great assistance in the immediate future to the people in those communities for their cleaning-up process.

Before these current floods I was fortunate to have the opportunity to view the impact of last year's floods with my parliamentary colleagues the member for Benalla in the Assembly, Bill Sykes, and the Minister for Environment, Ryan Smith. We toured extensively through the Benalla region, including Whitfield, and we were able to see the impact of severe floodwaters on some small areas. Just outside Whitfield, at a place called Gentle Annie, the bridge had been moved by the floodwaters. That highlighted to me the difficulties that local communities and shires have in maintaining the rural road and bridge network. It is onerous for cash-strapped shires with very low rate bases to keep up with ordinary road maintenance. As I have travelled around since that time it has become evident that in many cases people have repaired their roads three times. This is an ongoing issue and one the government is mindful of, and as part of our recovery package we will be assisting where we can.

It is interesting that the suffering of the community at Castlemaine has not made the headlines in any great way. Some 200 houses were inundated in that area, and many roads and bridges were severely affected. Newly formed walking paths and other infrastructure that have been funded by the government have been washed away.

In the Loddon shire I was astounded to see the damage to the facilities at Newbridge Recreation Reserve a short time after the floods. Facilities such as these are the central hubs of such communities. They are where the netball, tennis and football seasons kick off, and the social interaction that ensues is very important for the health of those communities and for their social fabric, making them sustainable places to live. I saw rainwater tanks in trees where goalposts had disappeared from, and fences that had become twisted piles of rubble. When we look around at what has been impacted upon and make plans for the rebuilding process, we need to focus on those areas which are integral points of community focus, just as we did after the fires of Black Saturday.

One concern the Baillieu package addresses is assistance for businesses. Many businesses have had to close because of health regulations. People are having to wait until the damage caused by water dries out before they can repair their businesses. One issue that concerns me is the recovery of our farming communities, which is going to be long and arduous. The fact remains that many people are unable to insure fencing, and thousands of kilometres of fencing have been destroyed.

I would like to congratulate Kevin and Rhonda Butler from BlazeAid. I had a little bit to do with Kevin and Rhonda during the fires. They are from Kilmore, where my electorate office is located, and they and their team of volunteers have established a model which works. In a very short space of time they have been able to rally the troops. When I saw them last they were based in Bridgewater. Prior to recent events in Victoria, Kevin had already undertaken to assist with fencing in Queensland. These are ordinary Victorians who have stood up and put their efforts into recovery, just as they did during the fires.

Many people in fire-affected areas have been able to re-establish their sense of place. An interesting aspect of the recovery process is that sometimes people need to mark out an area that has been affected by a disaster so that they can find a starting point from where to clean up. Without doing so, recovery can seem psychologically and physically impossible.

I would like to commend BlazeAid for the work it has done. When I visited Bridgewater last week, members of the group had at that stage done 80 kilometres of fencing with an army of grey nomads who arrived from interstate and from all over Victoria. They were camped out on the Bridgewater football oval and had plans to move their operation far and wide. They were enthusiastic, and they deserve our commendation.

Another thing I acknowledge today is the real issue of post-traumatic stress. We also saw evidence of that after Black Saturday. Coming after 11 years of drought, a succession of floods, bushfires and the financial hardship faced by many of these communities after the ongoing drought, the people affected by this event need our understanding and consideration because they are a bit shell-shocked. There is counselling available for these people, but it will take some time because, as is the way with rural people and communities, they get on with it and put one foot in front of the other. They are endeavouring to rebuild, but sometimes it is difficult for some people to seek counselling. I urge those working in the affected communities to observe people and

ensure that those who may need some assistance get a bit of a helping hand.

I will not say too much more except that my thoughts are with the communities and I hope, after praying and dancing and whatever else we had to do to get some rain, that the rain eases for a while. In my inaugural speech I recited the full version of Dorothea Mackellar's *My Country*, and in recent days we have seen all the far reaches of that poem exhibited in Victoria and Queensland. I commend the motion to the house.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I also rise to support the motion before the house. I begin by thanking the many people who have worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for many weeks now, not only during the most recent floods but also during the floods that preceded the ones we are recovering from at this time. As mentioned by other speakers, our rural communities have gone through enormous difficulties because of the droughts, bushfires, floods, locusts, floods, fires and floods again. The predictions are for even more rain to follow.

This time we have been placed in a situation where rural communities have demonstrated again how they manage to come through very difficult times with enormous resilience. We have been able to protect many of our towns and much of our property. The damage in terms of the rural food sector is enormous, and it will take a long time for that sector to recover, not just in terms of crops but also in terms of livestock, where we are seeing cases of disease. The damage to businesses in smaller communities has also been marked. In some cases the reopening of businesses will take some time, and in other cases unfortunately businesses will not be able to reopen at all. Those examples of damage are obvious, but there are a number of communities where individuals are really starting to show signs of mental anguish as a result of the extremes being faced by the citizens of this country.

As mentioned by previous speakers, particularly Ms Pulford, the electorate of Western Victoria Region has also had a number of flood situations. Those have occurred in the towns of Clunes, Creswick, Bacchus Marsh, Beaufort, Delacombe, Dimboola, Skipton, Jeparit, Horsham, Stawell and Maryborough. We also had the evacuation of parts of Halls Gap on Friday because of landslips, and we have also had landslips along the Great Ocean Road. The Princes Highway has also been cut in many places, in particular the two-week closure around Panmure and Kyneton.

Whether members live in western Victoria or not they would be familiar with those sorts of towns. There are hundreds of much smaller communities with names that are not familiar which have also gone through enormous hardship in the last few weeks, particularly small towns very close to the Grampians where there has been no real warning or time to prepare for floods. They have been inundated and have not had the capacity to deal with the immediacy of the problem at hand. Local councils, whether they be Horsham, Hindmarsh, Moyne or Corangamite, have put in an outstanding effort. I also thank the employees of those shires for their dedication beyond the call of duty. Yes, they get paid, but nevertheless they have been working on 24-hour rosters to make sure that everything possible is being done in those communities.

When talking about extremes what comes to mind for me are two photographs I have. They were taken by an artist who lives in Dimboola; her name is Jenny Parkes. One photograph is of the bed of the Wimmera River about 18 months ago. It depicts the last remnants of water in a patch behind the township. It shows cracks in the earth. It is in a frame, and you see it as you enter my office; I have it there as a constant reminder for those who live in the electorate of Western Victoria Region, who often get a fair bit of rainfall, about what drought means to those communities that have been suffering with drought over many years.

The other photograph is one that I have at home, and it depicts one of the great-great-grandchildren of the Haby clan in Dimboola. He is around six years old, and in the photograph he is stretched out on his stomach on the sandy bed of the Wimmera River, just playing there. Again it is a reminder of the extremes we experience in our communities.

I was in Dimboola last Thursday to witness the damage that was wrought by the Wimmera River flood, in particular the damage to the weir, the debris in the river, which is quite dangerous, and the roads that have been damaged. The people of Dimboola have demonstrated time and again that due to their local knowledge, know-how, drive, sheer hard work, and their ability to work closely with the agencies, they have essentially been able to save their town. The sandbagging that occurred and the location of that sandbagging was instrumental in ensuring that there was minimal damage to Dimboola. Four houses were inundated past their floorboards. There were roads washed away and as I said, there are issues with debris and the weir, and also with the Jeparit weir. It is a testament to those in the township and district that they came forward and worked so hard.

We know that one thing works in Horsham, and that is that its flood map is a testament to the people who pulled it together, including the catchment management authority, because it ran the test in terms of a 1-in-50-year flood incident which was upgraded to a 1-in-100-year flood incident. In lots of ways people should be very proud.

Horsham had a fair bit of time to prepare and a fair bit of media attention — everyone saw photographs and film footage of parts of the main street of Horsham, the Capital Horsham motel and the aquatic centre. I had the opportunity to meet with a number of officers of Horsham Rural City Council, including Cr Mandi Stewart, Angela Murphy, Tony Bawden and David Eltringham, the general manager for technical services, whose knowledge is invaluable to that community when it comes to emergency situations. I also thank David Tepper for hopping in the car and showing us a whole range of different sites outside Horsham that warrant a lot of attention in the future.

I also want to mention Skipton. With Ms Pulford and Joe Helper, the member for Ripon in the other place, I had the opportunity to meet with Matt Makin, the mayor of Corangamite Shire Council, and with the CEO. We met on the banks of the river, or creek, and that in itself spoke a thousand words to us. Half of the footbridge that was once in place was strewn on one side of the bank, and on the other side was the remainder. A number of community assets were affected by the floods, including the rail trail, the museum, the community hall, Stewart Park, Jubilee Park and a number of memorials. Eleven businesses and 13 homes were affected by the floods.

It is those sorts of smaller communities to which we need to pay some attention; they cannot operate if their only supermarket is not open, their only takeaway shop is not open or their only hotel is not open. We are very fortunate to have an art gallery in a town the size of Skipton. I am concerned about the potential for that gallery not to reopen, and I am sure that all of us representing western Victoria will work tirelessly to get those sorts of businesses up and running as quickly as possible.

I draw the attention of the house to an article in the Warrnambool *Standard* of 26 January by the mayor of the Corangamite shire, Matt Makin, entitled 'Floods bring clarity to our values'. The article is a very human story about what it is like to be working in communities in that local government area, what people are doing, what they are saying and their motivations. He then went on to describe coming home late after being at a community meeting and sitting at the end of the bed

where his three-and-a-half-year-old son was dozing off to sleep; he wrote about feeling settled that his family had at least a home, a bed and dry carpet under their feet as the children dozed off. That in itself brings out the human nature of what we are subjected to when we are under enormous pressure, and also what we can endure and bring to our sense of humanity.

I thank not only local people but all those who have worked very hard over the last few weeks and, in many parts of Western Victoria Region, over the last few months. I know a number of issues have arisen, and I will address them later during this week.

There is an urgent need to get flood mapping done beyond what is already there. There is a need for more timely recovery avenues. There also needs to be more informed information about flood peaking. There needs to be a re-examination of the use of local government labour and how local government employees at the moment are only paid for overtime and not the time in between. Also, the quotation process needs to be examined in terms of streamlining.

I thank other people who do not live in western Victoria but who came to the aid of the people there. They got in their cars and came up to places like Skipton, including members of the North Melbourne Football Club, who by their presence and activities added to the boost in morale for those in the township.

It is also important that we keep an eye on the mental health of those people who have gone through a number of incidents in the last few months. We also need to ensure that we keep encouraging our younger people to put their hands up to volunteer. A number of people in the Red Cross around Horsham were doing 20-hour shifts. We need to get younger people involved. We need to build on their interests when they come into a recovery centre, rather than have them just turning up in an ad hoc manner. We want them to truly be leaders and advocates for their local communities in future emergency situations.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Who would have thought that two years after Black Saturday we would be debating a motion relating to a flood crisis that has affected vast parts of Australia.

The crisis that occurred in Queensland was looked on by Victorians as a somewhat vicarious experience. We were certainly sympathetic, and many of us made donations immediately — I went and donated my \$100 — but we were unaware that the ricochet effect was going to impact on our own state as well as on our own lives and of course on other parts of Australia. The

communities of the south-eastern suburbs have been recently affected by flooding, and there are still homes and businesses under threat of flooding.

We have seen significant attention focused on the city of Casey, and in particular Narre Warren and Hampton Park, where some 200 homes were in waist-high water and where a number of evacuations have taken place. An emergency centre was opened in Cranbourne to accommodate many of those who have had to evacuate Koo Wee Rup; Bangholme is under threat as we speak; and representatives from the City of Greater Dandenong have recently informed me that waters are rising from approximately ankle height to knee height, and elevating as those great surges of water are now coming in through our inland waterways.

It is also my duty to express my sympathy to the families and friends of those whose lives have been lost — as is certainly the case in other parts of the state and nation — and to those who have lost property, income and businesses, including of course in our farming communities, the effects of which will ricochet throughout Australia and in fact affect every single family, not the least of which will be through the impact on the cost of living.

There has been significant damage to homes, community facilities, roads, bridges, infrastructure, schools and towns in Victoria. In the south-east a number of schools have been dramatically flood affected. Across the state the list of flood-affected schools includes Cardross Primary School; Charlton P-12 College; Cranbourne Carlisle Primary School, which is in my area; and Hampton Park Secondary College. Ironically Hampton Park Secondary College was to be the venue for a *Casey Cares* concert, which was organised by one of the arts enthusiasts, Cr Wayne Smith, in support of the flood-affected families and communities of Queensland. When he was organising the event he could not have known that his own community would become flood affected. They have had to relocate from that area to a venue in Cranbourne. That concert is happening on the 12th of this month, so if members want a good night out and at the same time want to spend their money to help the community, they should consider attending that concert. I will be more than happy to meet them there.

Other affected schools are: Lyndhurst Secondary College, Red Cliffs East Primary School, Rochester Secondary College, Strathaird Primary School, Wyndham Park Primary School, St Joseph's School in Rochester and St Joseph's Primary School in Charlton. I believe there are a string of other schools that have been affected, but more mildly. In addition, road

damage or flooding has resulted in changes or closures to many school bus routes, and that has posed additional challenges to schools resuming the school year.

Therefore, as part of my responsibilities as parliamentary secretary assisting two ministers I advise that those matters are on watch. Whether it be Victoria Police, volunteers from the State Emergency Service, the Country Fire Authority, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Rotary, Lions clubs and other community and service groups, industry groups such as the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry or local governments, everyone is pulling together in a time of need to try to salvage what we can before we go in for the big assessment and the fix. On behalf of my affected communities I thank all those who have given of their time and in some instances risked their lives to assist those who have been affected.

Even my own street — Liberty Court in Dingley Village — was flooded. I arrived home early from the parliamentary retreat to find the entire court in knee-deep water. The house was under an enormous threat of flooding. My house had nearly flooded a month beforehand, which had given us somewhat of a wake-up call and an opportunity to clear the blocked drains. All of them had been blocked, and it has now cost us several hundred dollars to unblock them. Dare I say that things like blocked drains are often significant contributors to the flooding of suburban roads, and I understand that has been typical of much of the suburban experience.

We unblocked the drain in Liberty Court with the help of my next-door neighbour, a young man named Patrick Bolst who had completed half a plumbing apprenticeship. He got nearly into the drain and unblocked it, and literally within a few minutes the entire street cleared, which probably saved half a dozen homes from flooding. We were very grateful.

Unfortunately my house was probably the most challenging. Six of us were having to bucket water using a wheelie bin for something like 4 or 5 hours in order to save it from flooding. Of course there was quite a bit of damage to the garage and some external damage, but fortunately the house did not flood. This just gives a small inkling of what people who are dramatically impacted upon are going through.

The reality is that it is very hard to fight Mother Nature. The adversities that Australians have experienced — the fires and the floods — have moulded the Australian character and the culture of banding together and

helping each other in adversity. That is the only way you can mitigate and minimise the impact and devastating effect of Mother Nature. There are some practical things we can do, and hopefully as a result of this debate, as we express our condolences in this chamber, we can take some lessons out of this and minimise the effects of what will no doubt be a decade of very wet weather, given climate change. Hopefully we can minimise future damage.

These floods will bring very substantial costs for individuals, to businesses and the economy, hopefully in the short term rather than the long term, because the reconstruction efforts will no doubt be a significant economic stimulant. Obviously there will be a lot of work to get through. No doubt the insurance cost and the loss to businesses, facilities and infrastructure will be substantial. We cannot even hope to quantify that at this early stage.

I refer to the most recent information from the Bureau of Meteorology. Senior forecaster Terry Ryan said:

It's the worst flood in western Victoria in their history as far as our records go in terms of the depth of water and the number of places affected ...

The number of places affected in metropolitan Melbourne is also high. Partly that is because of the significance of run-off and the increased density of suburban Melbourne and the diminished amount of land that can absorb run-off. These are problems I think we will need to factor into the development of our physical environment.

It was not until the downpour began to subside that we understood the damage the accumulated water had caused as it rushed through our waterways. An example is the Patterson River, which broke its banks down in Carrum. I understand there was also some destruction of the sewerage system. It is quite frightening to see some of this on YouTube. Members should feel free to google it and have a look at the devastating effect of Mother Nature on places such as the Patterson River.

There is significant concern that the failure to desilt some of the inland waterways, which were previously drains — we engage in a pretence to make them feel more like creeks — will over time exacerbate the flooding. As I said, all of this will be among the lessons we will learn as to how we can manage the threat of floods and inundation.

The closure of roads across the south-east has been phenomenal. Traffic in the south-east has always been very bad — dare I say that was probably one of the significant election issues. It is not so much the public

transport, because many parts of the south-east do not have effective public transport. The roads infrastructure is, however, already stressed, and with many of them closed down a lot of communities have been left isolated.

I will give members a little feel for the extent of the closures by naming affected roads. There is the South Gippsland Highway near Pound Road; the Princes Highway outside Fountain Gate; Webb Street, Narre Warren, which is still under water — and I understand some trucks are trying to pump water out but that battle is not won; Glasscocks Road, Narre Warren South; Halleur Road, Harkaway; Hessel Road, Harkaway; Power Road, Endeavour Hills; Pound Road, Clyde; the Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road in multiple places, including a railway underpass in Narre Warren and near Casey Central; Golf Links Road; the Hallam Valley main drain area and Fullard Road area; Thompson Road, Bangholme, which was cut in six places; Centre Road, Narre Warren; Edithvale Road, Chelsea Heights, which was completely flooded over by the Seaford wetlands and has been closed for a number of days; Hallam Road, Hampton Park; Heatherton Road, Dandenong North; Frankston-Dandenong Road, Dandenong South; Shrivies Road, Narre Warren; and the Lower Dandenong Road, which is the Labor Party's de facto Dingley bypass, or the 'ding-a-ling bypass' as I call it, which had to be shut down because it was unsafe.

It was interesting that the drains on Old Dandenong Road had been placed in the wrong spots. The water was subsiding in the lower parts of the road, but the drains were higher up. To me that makes no sense. That you can get this basic engineering so wrong is beyond belief. Also affected were Centre Dandenong Road, Governor Road, Chute Street, Boundary Road and roads in the Waterways estate, which is under threat of flooding. The Narre Warren Country Fire Authority station was also flooded.

There has thus been substantial damage to infrastructure. Heavy rains have already played havoc with our roads, causing erosion and lots of potholes, and these floods are going to cause substantial losses.

Melbourne Water and drainage systems have also not been able to cope with the south-east run-off. In the Kingston area, as I mentioned before, sewer overflow relief structures were activated, and still there were some reports of sewer overflows in private properties. The risk to health from disease is there and needs to be monitored carefully. Council drains in Mordialloc and Chelsea could not drain into Melbourne Water drains due to capacity having been reached, resulting in

flooding in the local drainage network, local road closures and so on. In the city of Greater Dandenong the eastern contour drain overflowed into Willow Lodge Village and the Pillars Crossing and was within 200 millimetres of breaking its banks and charging into the bayside suburbs. These are just some of the examples, of course; there are many other examples of the effects of the inundation and unusual rain events across south-east Melbourne.

I would like to commend the efforts of all of those who have been involved in the response, including the Australian Defence Force, obviously; the Royal Australian Air Force, which has been involved elsewhere; and the State Emergency Service, which has been assisting my flood-affected communities. The inconvenience and devastation suffered by many businesses will be hard to rectify and will leave many families hard-pressed, so the government assistance package that has been announced is very welcome. In addition there is the \$5 million that has been made available for clean-up, with a further \$1 million contribution to the public appeal being coordinated by the Red Cross.

The government launched the Victorian floods appeal that will apportion donated moneys to small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit organisations that can apply for up to \$15 000 in clean-up and restoration grants. Bayside councils will probably also wear a significant cost of the clean-up as those floodwaters empty out onto the beaches. Grants of up to \$1067 per household for personal hardship and a range of other assistance measures will be available, but in the meantime we need to learn something from the experience. We need to mitigate and minimise the threat of inundation and rain events in the future. That is why this debate is so important.

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

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I welcome this opportunity to say a few words on Mr David Davis's motion. The floods that have devastated vast parts of the continent in recent weeks, along with Cyclone Yasi, have severely impacted on the lives and property of countless individuals and communities. While the most severe impact has been in Queensland and northern New South Wales, the Victorian floods in recent weeks have also taken their toll. I express my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and to the families of those people who are still reported as missing.

I pay tribute to those who have been affected by the floods and commend the strength and incredible resilience of all those communities that have struggled to protect their homes and property. I also commend the work of the State Emergency Service; Victoria Police; personnel of the Australian armed forces; local, state and commonwealth government departments; and the members of the many voluntary organisations that make such a valuable contribution during emergency situations. I also commend the many individuals and communities who have worked hard to protect homes and property.

Whilst there has been consistent flooding for some months across north-western Victoria, Gippsland was spared until late last week when the state was affected by the westward movement of Cyclone Yasi. The floods that hit last week were sudden, and many residents of Koo Wee Rup, Cora Lynn and Bayles left their homes as the Bunyip River rose to its highest level in 40 years — that is, since the 1971 floods. Pakenham and Narre Warren were also affected, as were many parts of metropolitan Melbourne. Relief centres were opened at the Cranbourne sports complex and at the Cardinia Cultural Centre in Pakenham. As many people would know, the Koo Wee Rup hospital was evacuated, and patients were moved to other facilities on higher ground.

The damage caused to the potato, broccoli and asparagus harvests is immense, and small farmers, particularly those with single holdings, will be very badly affected. Mr Davis indicated that up to this point the cost of the floods is estimated to be around \$340 million and rising, and that is a very high cost. I understand the assessment of the damage in west Gippsland will take a little time as it is only really in the last few days that these floods have made their impact, but what is clear is that these communities and the local economy will be reliant on government support to a significant extent.

The high humidity, together with the rain that flowed into Victoria over the last week or so and brought the floods, emanated from the westward movement of Cyclone Yasi that devastated Queensland. It is astonishing to reflect on the power and enormity of that category 5 cyclone. I read that the whole of Cyclone Tracy, which brought down Darwin, could have fitted into the eye of Cyclone Yasi. As it moved west and developed into a massive low-pressure system, a current of warm air was sent from inland down through western New South Wales and into Victoria, bringing the humidity and rain. I guess this is a reminder of the fact that we live within a single weather system that is shaped by continental and global forces. While the

meteorologists tell us that no single event can be directly attributed to human-caused global warming, the trend of recent events is consistent with the predictions that have been made.

Today I express my sorrow and my concern for those who have suffered as a consequence of the floods across the country, in this state and in west Gippsland, and again I commend the remarkable efforts of all those who have given help to individuals and communities.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I rise to contribute to the debate on the motion before the house today, and I congratulate the Honourable David Davis for bringing this important motion before the house. Natural disasters — including floods in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, bushfires in Western Australia and Gippsland, and of course Cyclone Yasi that hit the coast of Queensland and whose tail end caused some devastation in Victoria over the weekend with rains and severe wind storms — have been a feature of our summer and even the latter part of last year with floods in September and December.

The floods in Victoria, particularly the January floods, were largely in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. Much of my electorate was completely under water during January. This was amazing as it followed such a long period of drought, when many of these communities had no water whatsoever. To see a map of where the water was lying was just incredible.

At the outset of my contribution I would like to express my condolences to the Collins family of Shepparton, who lost their young son, Lachlan, who slipped while playing in a flooded billabong during the January floods. The loss of Lachlan affected not only his family but also the entire city of Shepparton. I am sure it also affected the entire community of Victoria as people reflected on how easily lives are lost in water and how dangerous floodwaters can be.

I express my sincere condolences to the Collins family and also to the community of the Mooroopna Primary School. Its principal, Steve Rogers, has been sensational. He was on holiday at the time but immediately broke it and came home. That primary school has suffered from the loss of several children in the last couple of years, and Steve has been a great leader and has led the school community through those tragedies.

As I have travelled through my region over the past few weeks I have been amazed that areas which for the past 10 years have suffered so badly from drought are now

under water. Rochester was one of the first towns to be affected by the January flood. It is an area which for the past decade or more has battled drought. Year after year many of my visits to Rochester have been to sit with irrigators to talk about their zero allocations. When I was in opposition I took shadow ministers to hear the sad stories of how the zero allocations were affecting the region. It is heartbreaking that this year, which is the first year that irrigators had an allocation and a year that was shaping up to be a good year, the season's crops have been completely devastated because of too much floodwater.

Rochester was cut off from Shepparton, so I was unable to get there on the Friday or Saturday of the flood, but I spent a lot of time on the phone to the local newsagent, Mick Baker, who is a good friend of mine. As the water rose he kept me informed about its level and about what he was doing and where people were able to move within the town. Mick wrote a tremendous poem that I meant to bring with me today to read out, but unfortunately I do not have it with me. It is a poem from the heart. It is a thankyou to the volunteers who came to Rochester to assist in the recovery from the floods. I apologise to Mick that I do not have the poem with me. He did not know I was going to read it in the Parliament, but it is so terrific that I wanted to do it. I am deeply sorry I do not have it with me.

Mr Davis spoke about the Rochester hospital and the inundation of parts of the building and the impact the floodwaters had on the residents. I congratulate the staff of the hospital, who safely evacuated their residents. I was at the hospital on the day when some of the residents began to return to their home, because it is not only a hospital, it is also an aged-care facility. The staff were making it as easy as possible for residents to return. When I first arrived they were making huge signs to put up that said, 'Welcome home'. It was tremendous to see the spirit of the hospital and aged-care staff and also of the residents and how happy they were to return to the facility. It is a wonderful facility, and I fought very hard to ensure that it remained in Rochester.

But much more than just the hospital in Rochester was devastated by the floods. Schools, the kindergarten, the child-care centre, the maternal and child health centre, homes and businesses were also affected. People have really suffered in that town. I visited the local kinder, the maternal and child health centre and the child-care centre to see firsthand the devastation that had been caused. The local child-care centre had had to have a grader come in to remove all the topsoil from the yard in order to remove the contamination that comes with floodwaters — floodwaters are not just river water;

they contain a lot of sewage and other debris and contaminated material. The top level of soil in the yard had to be removed to ensure that it was no longer contaminated, and while it was intended that the centre would reopen with a limited service, the children would not have been able to go out in the yard for quite some time. The maternal and child health centre had damage to its floor; the tiles had lifted, and the kindergarten had also been inundated and there was damage to its yard and contamination of much of its outdoor area.

I spoke with local business people about the impact on them, and most importantly, at the local relief centre I spoke with many of the residents whose homes had been inundated. I congratulate the Shire of Campaspe for the way it handled the relief and recovery processes in Rochester. While I was at the Rochester relief centre not only were there people from government departments and the Shire of Campaspe but also the Shire of Moira had sent across people to assist with servicing those who were suffering because their homes had been inundated.

As a local member I visited many of the shires and towns affected by the floods in northern Victoria, and if I was not able to get to all of them at least I spoke with the mayor or the CEO to ascertain what assistance was needed in the area. During my visit to Charlton I was shocked to see the devastation the floodwaters had caused. The local hospital and aged-care facility was completely inundated. When we walked through it, just a couple of days after the floods, it reminded me of a scene from the *Poseidon Adventure* where survivors are going through corridors trying to get to the bottom of the boat, which had become the top. It was quite eerie. The lights were off, and there was still water on the floor. I hasten to say it was not only water but sewage that we walked through. Amongst all of that there were reminders that it was someone's home. Whether it was a sign on the door that said 'Ivy's room' or a picture on the wall, there were constant reminders that people's homes had been inundated and that it would be impossible for them to return for quite some time. I congratulate the staff of the Charlton hospital and aged-care facility, who evacuated their residents and patients to safer places.

While I was in Charlton I had an opportunity to speak with many of the local businesspeople who had only just re-established their businesses after the September 2010 flood. Many thought their insurance would not cover them for flood damage or, if they did have insurance, that it would not cover them for the extent of the damage they had suffered. As a former business owner I empathise, because I know what it is like to have your business flooded.

I spoke to the local newsagent, who was in the middle of stocking up with back-to-school supplies. I know what it is like in a newsagency in January when you are trying to get your back-to-school products out to families. He had managed to save a lot of his supplies, but not only had 1 metre of water gone through his newsagency — and you can imagine the mess with wet and soggy papers and magazines — but also 1 metre of water had gone through his house. He had a sick child, and the family was really struggling to get itself back up. They were operating; they had friends with them who were helping them clean up, and they were selling newspapers and magazines from the footpath, but as a former newsagent I know about the devastation and the amount of clean-up and recovery that it takes to get a business up and going again. I was pleased to be able to contact the Victorian Authorised Newsagents Association and to speak to its CEO, Peter Cowley, to get him to contact Jason and Cindy and assist them to get new shopfittings that were not swollen from being in 1 metre of water.

The agricultural losses from the floods will amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. We know that in the January floods alone there was a loss of livestock, with 6106 sheep reported as dead and a further 1822 missing or injured. Almost 2000 kilometres of fencing was destroyed, while 83 000 tonnes of hay and silage and more than 51 000 hectares of pasture and 41 000 hectares of field crops were affected. The agricultural losses will run into hundreds of millions of dollars, and for many farmers, particularly those in northern Victoria, this comes on the back of more than a decade of drought.

As I said before, in a season which farmers thought was going to be their first good season after many hard years, to have it completely washed away by flood must have been devastating. We will continue to work with them in the recovery phase. People in northern Victoria always say to me, 'We are resilient, we are country people', but they have had more than their fair share of hardship and disaster, and they deserve a decent break. The Baillieu government is committed to working with these communities to ensure that they can recover from the floods.

The floods were a natural disaster, the extent of which many of these towns had never experienced before. John Lenders and Kaye Darveniza spoke of the smell of floods. Those of us who live on rivers and have experienced floods — I live on the banks of the Goulburn River and saw floods in 1974, 1975, 1983, 1993 and last September — will never forget the smell. As I said, much floodwater is not just river water; it is contaminated with other things, including sewage. The

smell of the water stays around. It soaks into wooden fences; it gets under houses and into garden beds. While it is dry, it is fine, but for months afterwards every time it rains that smell comes back. You never forget the smell of a flood. I feel sorry for the people in Rochester, Charlton and the many other towns that have had water through their homes, because it is a dreadful mess to clean up and the smell hangs around — they will remember it for many years to come.

I commend the local communities, and in particular the local government authorities which showed leadership during these adverse circumstances. I express my gratitude to emergency services personnel, both professional and volunteer, who once again turned out to support their communities or travelled to provide assistance to flood-affected communities. As I mentioned before, Mick Baker, the newsagent in Rochester, wrote a poem thanking those people who were not from Rochester but who came to Rochester to assist. Whether they be volunteers from the State Emergency Service or the Country Fire Authority, professionals from Victoria Police or other organisations, or people who just turned up, such as some Liberal Party members of Parliament who turned up to support communities and help with the clean-up and recovery process, our communities are grateful to them all. As I also mentioned, local government authorities that did not have huge flood impacts sent their personnel to help. I saw staff from the Shire of Moira at the Rochester recovery centre, and I know that local government officers from — —

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

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Some good always comes out of adversity. I recently saw on TV a gentleman from one of Victoria's flood-affected communities making that very point: that despite the fact his community was enduring a great deal of hardship from the impact of floods, adversity had pulled a lot of people together and their forces were collectively marshalled to respond to the flood situation facing their community. We have seen that in many instances where natural events have caused adversity in small communities. People collectively get together and engender a great deal of community spirit to help each other in their time of need. That is something good that flows from those situations.

I am pleased that that spirit of goodwill is also evident in the house this afternoon. That is not unusual at times like this. When parts of Victoria suffer from natural

disasters, we have repeatedly seen both sides of the house collectively acknowledging the problem and making some constructive contributions on what is needed to address the problems of the people we represent in our various electorates.

This afternoon, as well as commending the Leader of the Government for moving the motion, I extend my thanks to the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Greens, who supported the motion before the chamber. The people of Victoria would also acknowledge that members on both sides of the chamber have put forward some worthwhile, thoughtful and considerate suggestions as to the impact of the floods and the needs of Victorian communities. That is something to be welcomed.

Like my colleague from Eastern Victoria Region Mr O'Donohue, a week or two ago I thought our region had been somewhat spared from natural disasters this year. Alas, our thoughts were premature. It was only this weekend that significant areas in our region, particularly around West Gippsland — Koo Wee Rup, Cranbourne and the immediate locale of those areas — sustained severe flood events. On top of that, just a week ago parts of East Gippsland were significantly affected by a natural disaster in the form of a bushfire. I am afraid the Gippsland region is well used to natural disasters such as bushfires and floods, and they have not been spared on this occasion, although I would be the first to acknowledge that the people and communities in the northern and central parts of Victoria have been far more severely affected by floods over the last three or four weeks.

The Leader of the Opposition made a good point about the different extremes of flood events: how some suffered from flash flooding, which can have a severe impact, while others — and there are still Victorians in this position — have faced the threat of flood over many weeks. That sort of thing occurs with bushfires as well. In some communities the impact of bushfire is sudden, while in others the threat of bushfire has lingered for many weeks, and the impact on these communities can be just as severe. When you look at serious bushfires in East Gippsland over recent years, you see some people have suffered severe physical and mental health problems as a result of the long wait they faced with bushfires approaching them, and I can only imagine that people in Victoria and other communities have gone through and are going through a similar awful experience waiting for floodwaters to reach them.

I join my colleagues in this chamber in expressing my sincere condolences to those people who have lost

property and, in some cases, unfortunately also incurred personal suffering.

As Minister for Higher Education and Skills and Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession I want to make a comment about the role of the education department and its position in addressing some of the needs in education as an outcome of these floods. All sectors of flood-affected communities have suffered, and education is one of those. Many schools have been inundated by floods in various communities around the state. Today some are still not open for business, and that needs to be acknowledged. At least 10 schools in Victoria were unable to open today.

The schools that were closed yesterday included Cardross Primary School in the north of the state near Mildura, Cranbourne Carlisle Primary School, Hampton Park Secondary College, Irymple Secondary College, Lyndhurst Secondary College, Red Cliffs East Primary School, Strathaird Primary School and Wyndham Park Primary School. As has been mentioned before, some of the other schools such as those at Charlton and Rochester — significant communities where schools had been flooded and which incurred significant damage — have, I think, reopened. I am not absolutely sure. If they have reopened, it is only because of the huge effort of local people to get them ready for schoolchildren to be back at school.

While most Victorian schoolchildren have been able to attend school, some have experienced great difficulty. In some cases they have been temporarily relocated, such as where interior damage has been caused to schools. It has been a big effort by all concerned to get many of the affected students back to school. I might also add that damage to roads and infrastructure has had an impact on school bus services; so many children have been inconvenienced by the need to rearrange school bus services to accommodate their getting back to school.

In terms of a response, I want to thank the staff from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development who have worked diligently to ensure that schools are reopened in a timely fashion for students to be able to attend. That includes staff from both regional offices and the central office, but those in local school communities are the ones I want to thank in particular. Invariably it is the principals, the staff and the parents of the children who attend those schools who pull together, who have pride in their local school and who collectively do everything they possibly can to get that school back in business and open for their children to attend.

From the department's point of view, in terms of meeting immediate needs I know that, for example, flood grants of up to \$1000 per student have been made available through State Schools' Relief to cover the cost of books and uniforms, and those grants are organised through school principals. In some instances there has been a need for drinking water and sanitary supplies for schools and children's centres where those supplies have been cut; again, that has been attended to. There has been an extension of the kindergarten fee subsidy to eligible families who have been affected by floods. There have been grants made available to maternal and child health services to cover clean-up costs. Most facilities for early childhood services are not owned by the government; in many cases local government or community organisations own and run those preschool services. Through my department \$500 000 has been made available to support rapid training to allow more people to quickly gain the skills needed to assist with the recovery and reconstruction effort of some facilities. For people who have an immediate need for some sort of training facilities, money is available to assist in their recovery and reconstruction efforts.

One can only admire the collective efforts of a whole range of organisations and individuals who find the time and who come to the fore in times of need. I admire each and every one of those people. This motion lists just some of those from various organisations. I join other members in this chamber in thanking and congratulating them for their efforts — their selfless efforts, in many cases — in being out there and assisting their fellow Victorians. As the minister responsible for the department of education I particularly want to thank all those employees of the department and in particular those school communities who have contributed in the time of need. It is a difficult situation for all Victorians, but we will get there. We will support each other. That has been demonstrated in the past, and it will be demonstrated again with these flood events in Victoria. Collectively we will be there to support our fellow Victorians through their time of need.

I congratulate all those who have been directly involved and join my colleagues in this house in supporting this motion. In so doing we at least acknowledge and in part demonstrate our support for all those people affected.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — As a member of Parliament whose electorate has been severely affected by the flooding in so many different ways, I rise to speak in support of the motion and commend it to the house. I would also like to express my sympathy to the people affected in Queensland and New South

Wales, in particular those who have lost family members in these tragic events.

In supporting the motion I wish to thank and acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by all sections of the community. In my opinion it has been a true whole-of-community response. It is not just the government; in many cases there has simply been no government because it has been individual farmers and individual residents doing the best they can. There has been local initiative at work on the ground, working with the authorities to come up with solutions as quickly as possible in light of the unfolding event.

The single point that I have taken away from my experiences of visiting many of the flood-affected communities in my electorate is the importance of central authorities listening closely to local residents and, vice versa, the importance of local residents knowing and respecting the important role played by central agencies, in particular with their knowledge of what is happening to the floodwaters as they are moving through the different areas. In supporting the central agencies I have seen tremendous work done by the SES (State Emergency Service), the CFA (Country Fire Authority) and other state government agencies, including the police, VicRoads and ambulance and defence force personnel, who have been working together. I have seen the police in Dimboola and Skipton working quietly with local residents to ensure that the ordinary road rules we all live with and respect in our day-to-day lives are enforced in this situation so that whilst lives may be saved in the floodwaters they are not lost travelling from one event to another.

I would also like to acknowledge paragraph 5 of the motion in support of the work of our tremendous volunteers in the SES, the CFA, the Red Cross, the Rotary and Lions clubs and the Salvation Army, as well as the many hospital boards, football and netball clubs, bowling clubs, service groups and individual volunteers who have worked tirelessly time and again. Often they were called out after they believed their duty was over, in some instances only to find that whilst they had been working to save other people's properties their own properties had been affected.

I represent a large electorate, and by way of example I wish to mention some of the communities I have been involved with. I was particularly inspired not only by the efforts of the Dimboola SES and CFA, with whom Mr Ramsay, a member for Western Victoria Region, and I were able to spend some time sandbagging, but also more importantly by the way in which the whole community worked together. This was shortly after the experience of the Warracknabeal situation, where there

had been some stress about whether or not levee banks ought to have been constructed, and I was most impressed by the way in which the SES controller, an individual by the name of Butch Schultz, and other members of the SES calmly talked to the local residents and the SES volunteers in a circle and explained the reasons they would have to do what they would have to do.

Most importantly, they were able to explain that they would not know when the waters were about to peak, they would not know precisely how long the flood event would go for and they would not know which properties would necessarily be affected. Butch Schultz maintained, though, that the important thing was that they would all work together to pull through the event. The community members respected that, and that is what they did over the ensuing day. Again, I can only report my anecdotal knowledge that at least one house and the football club were saved by their activities. I am sure a lot more will be revealed in the fullness of time.

Last weekend, when many of us thought the initial phase of this event would be over, I saw a similar activity conducted by the Skipton SES controller, Ian, who had to chair a meeting of members of an initially very dispirited but ultimately resourceful community, who had to again roll their sleeves up and begin sandbagging the town of Skipton. The police also handled both the community meeting and the subsequent preparation of the town for another potential inundation. I am glad to report that in the main those sandbagging activities have worked.

I have no wish to single out affected communities, but some others I have seen which were important to my experiences were the communities of Stawell and Halls Gap, which have experienced not only the flooding events but also a loss of tourism. The economic consequences of these events can often be forgotten in the immediate recovery, but properties that are not necessarily inundated by water can be affected as a result of loss of activity. I know the community of Halls Gap is holding another community meeting tonight to endeavour to work together with the SES to formulate a local response to rain events that will potentially occur in the next few days, weeks and months that will enable whatever safety measures are needed to protect life and property to be reconciled with the need for the Halls Gap community to function as an important tourism centre, in particular for the upcoming jazz festival this weekend, which the community hopes can be conducted and draw many much-needed visitors to the region.

I would also like to acknowledge the particular impact upon the farming community, the members of which are very important food and fibre producers. In this I acknowledge the important contributions by the Leader of the Government, David Davis, by Damian Drum and by the other members of the Western Victoria Region who have spoken in support of our farming community. Not only have many farmers been impacted in their individual businesses, being their farms, but they have also had their livestock, crops, dairies, fencing, machinery and — it is increasingly forgotten — their own homes cut off or flooded.

I was fortunate to briefly see many of the farms from the air when flying from Stawell to Kerang through the courtesy of a very courageous and resourceful farmer, Mr John Smith, from Kerang. In seeing these flood-affected areas one gains a glimpse of the enormity of the impact upon our farming community. Many properties can be seen from the air with the house or the dairy surrounded by water, machinery overturned, hay bales smashed against fences and roads and bridges completely submerged.

Given the impact of these events upon our farming community, I believe that we in this Parliament and this government ought to do everything we can in the rebuilding of not only parts of my electorate but the whole of Victoria to ensure that the long-awaited goals and aspirations of these communities — in particular the construction of roads and bridges and the rebuilding of their infrastructure — can occur in a timely planned and sustainable manner, not only so that these communities can provide the very important food and fibre resources for all the consumers in the state but also so that they can in turn attract more population into their areas, particularly the areas that for a long time have had an absence of the very thing they are now overly blessed with, that being water.

It is a great irony for many of these farming communities that whilst there have been concerns about water allocations the farming communities have been the ones saying, 'Please spare us your thoughts about our irrigation excesses, as you put it. We are worried about water coming; please make preparations for that water'. Some of those communities along the river have not had water for 10 years. In fact over the long term, or even the short to medium term, these communities can again flourish once they have recovered from this ordeal. We look forward to a resurgence in tourism activity, to young people and young families staying in the area and to health and education being invested back into these communities to help them rebuild.

I would like to pay individual tribute particularly to an event that I had the pleasure to be a part of, which was the relocation of one of the residents of the Sunnyside Lutheran Retirement Village in Horsham. I pay tribute to the staff of Sunnyside and the Horsham City Council for allowing us to participate in this event. This resident was a particularly important resident to me, being my 100-year-old great aunt, or the sister of my grandmother. Her name is Lillian Isabelle Baker, or Belle Baker, as she is known. Over a period of about three to four days she had been calmly evacuated from her residence at Sunnyside. She was then permitted to be the first resident to re-enter the nursing home, and she was escorted by none other than the Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Ted Baillieu. Aunt Belle took the greatest pleasure from escorting the Premier into her room. He was somewhat shocked and aghast to see that it was full of Collingwood Football Club memorabilia. I had not had a moment to brief him on that aspect of this important relocation.

In thanking the communities and supporting the motion I would also like to acknowledge the significant preparation that the communities have had, the self-sacrifice of the SES and other members of the emergency services and the calmness, patience and good sense of humour — Australian humour — that have carried many of these communities through these difficult times. We do not know when this flooding event is likely to conclude in the sense that more rain is possible, and these communities may well be asked to brace themselves for more rain again. Anecdotally I know that as the rains continue, people with local knowledge are working with government authorities as information comes to hand.

In particular I take this opportunity to announce to the house that the Premier and the state government have announced that a comprehensive review of the flood warnings and emergency response efforts will be undertaken in the wake of the flooding. The review of the 2010–11 flood warnings and response efforts will examine the adequacy of flood predictions and modelling; the timeliness and effectiveness of warnings and public information; the emergency services command and control arrangements; the adequacy of the evacuation of people most at risk, including those in health and aged-care facilities; the adequacy of clean-up and recovery efforts; the adequacy of service delivery of federal, state and local governments; and the adequacy of funding provided by state and federal governments for emergency grants.

I commend the government and opposition members who have spoken in support of this important motion. It is important that we are all unified in our conduct of

this activity. It is also important that the government acts in a timely manner to respond to the issues that have been raised. I commend the motion to the house, and I thank all members for their support for the motion.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It is now more than 100 years ago since Dorothea Mackellar wrote *My Country*, a poem Mrs Petrovich referred to earlier and read comprehensively in her maiden speech to this house some four years ago. Dorothea Mackellar wrote of drought, fire and flooding rains. What we have experienced over the past six or seven weeks — maybe two months — is clearly nothing new to Australia. Unfortunately drought, fire and flooding rains are what we have come to expect. They usually happen at times when we do not expect them, but inevitably they will come, and as Australians we have to accept that.

I refer to the scenes of flooding in Werribee last Friday night. My friend and colleague Mr Elsbury was at the Wyndham Park Primary School on Friday night. He showed me some of the photos he took of second-storey classrooms that were close to being totally under water. That is what I call a fairly hefty flood. Those scenes brought back memories of a time when I was a child travelling through floods in and around Werribee. At that time places such as the area where the housing developments of Point Cook now stand were inland seas. I remember seeing kilometres — or miles — of cars crawling along in the hope that at some stage their drivers might be able to get out of the water.

Again let me say that what we saw last weekend is nothing new. I remember a time in the late 1960s where there were scenes of cars being picked up and thrown by floodwaters in Elizabeth Street in Melbourne. I remember the Myer bargain basement becoming a 74-lane Olympic-sized swimming pool — a quite extraordinary scene. We have seen these flood events before in Melbourne.

Let me also make a very important point. As a government, as a community and as individuals we should be prepared, because these things have happened before, they have happened now and they will happen again. There is nothing surer. If you could get a bookie to take odds on them, you could make a good deal of money, but it would be a very brave bookie indeed who would take such odds. The conditions that we have experienced over the past couple of months are a part of living in Australia — it is as simple as that — and we have to be prepared to deal with them.

We have all been shocked by the television footage from Queensland and horrified by the loss of life in Rockhampton, Ipswich, the Lockyer Valley and Brisbane itself. At times we have felt devastated by some of the stories we have heard. I was particularly affected by the incident involving a baby who was swept from its mother's arms as the mother was being winched into a helicopter. I cannot begin to imagine how that mum must be feeling now and how she will ever be able to cope.

We feel for all those Victorians who have endured flooding — in many instances there have been multiple bouts of flooding — and we have also been deeply saddened by the loss of life. We know how tough it will be for those who have severely damaged homes or have lost their homes altogether. Some people have lost their businesses or are struggling as a result of their businesses being affected by the drought. Farmers have also lost their crops. Some people have lost everything and in the next 12 months are looking at the very real prospect of having no income at all, so it will be a very tough road for them.

Then just as we were recovering from the Queensland floods and the first bout of floods in Victoria, along from nowhere came Cyclone Yasi, a huge cyclone which devastated large parts of northern Queensland. Thankfully it was not nearly as bad as some people predicted, but it did cause a lot of damage to some places in northern Queensland and it will cause a lot of suffering to a lot of people. The end result of that cyclone was the floods in Victoria at the end of last week and over the weekend.

Sometimes you think to yourself that Mother Nature has got it in for us. Time and again when you see these things happening across Australia — including the bushfires in Western Australia at the moment — you have to wonder what we need to do to get on the right side of the powers that be that run these things. Nevertheless, as I mentioned before, there is a lesson from all of this and that is that these natural disasters will happen. They are a part of our lives, and we must prepare for them.

I am pleased, as Mr O'Brien announced only a moment ago, the Victorian government is setting up a review of the 2010–11 Victorian floods, which will be headed by a former Chief Commissioner of Police, Mr Neil Comrie. He is someone I have considerable time for. He was a very good Chief Commissioner of Police, particularly when compared to some who have come since. It is very good indeed that he has agreed to take on this position. I am sure that this review will come up

with the sorts of answers we need to ensure that we are able to handle these sorts of floods in future.

I do not wish to be political at all in this debate but I cannot let it go without congratulating the government and particularly the Premier. As we know, Mr Baillieu was elected Premier at the end of November and the floods hit almost immediately. He was thrown in, if you will pardon the pun, at the deep end and has handled the job extraordinarily well. Both he and the government have provided the sort of real, practical support that was needed on the ground for so many people who were suffering throughout Victoria. The task ahead is to make sure that suffering is minimised in a whole range of ways and the Premier has already indicated very clearly what is needed to provide that sort of support for the people who are in need.

Briefly, in the time I have left I pay tribute to the emergency services whose members have done an extraordinary and brilliant job. Whether they be from the ambulance, police or firefighters from either the Country Fire Authority or Metropolitan Fire Brigade, they have all done a brilliant job and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude. They deserve every accolade.

Then there are the volunteers. How we would get by as a society without our volunteers, I do not know. We would be in more strife than the early settlers; there are no two ways about that. There are thousands of volunteers out there working for no pay throughout the day and night to provide food, bedding, shelter and a range of support mechanisms for people who are desperately in need. Most of those volunteers we will never know. They will not get a Medal of the Order of Australia, they will not be featured on the nightly news and they will not get a write-up in the newspapers. They are doing this because it is the right thing to do and we, as a Parliament, should acknowledge those people who are putting themselves out in this way and congratulate them on the job they are doing. It is not just north of the Tweed where we see courage and grit. What we have seen here in Victoria over recent times is truly a display of that in a magnificent way.

In circumstances such as these, Australians really come to the fore. It is part of being Australian to face these sorts of catastrophes, but it is also part of being an Australian to stand up and offer our fellow Aussies the sort of support they need. I want to assure those affected very badly by the floods and also the cyclone in Queensland that they will not be forgotten but will be supported and we will stand with them now and beyond.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to support this motion. Once again, Australians, whether they are from Queensland or northern New South Wales, the victims of the floods or the agencies and their supporters, have shown the indomitable spirit that exemplifies the people of our country. My contribution is made on the basis of some personal experiences. Before I make my contribution focused on the suffering in the flood crisis here in Victoria, I share my experience of the flood crisis in Queensland.

I own property in Clayfield, in suburban Brisbane. I spent several days here in Melbourne very fearful that the property I own would be inundated. I am very pleased to say that it missed inundation although neighbouring areas closer to the Brisbane River were flooded. When I had no other resources available, to find out what was really happening in that area, when everybody had so much to worry about, I turned to the local member of Parliament, Tim Nicholls, the Liberal member for Clayfield and the shadow Treasurer in Queensland. I formally thank Tim Nicholls because he made daily visits to the street where my property is and gave me daily reports by text message. That provided a great amount of relief as my family was very anxious and not able to deal with it in any other way.

The horrors suffered by the people of Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Ipswich and the Lockyer Valley and the stories of the bravery, courage and indomitable spirit of Australians will forge stories and legends. We are in awe of the way the people of Brisbane organised themselves. Everyone seemed to turn out with the bucket-and-broom brigade to clean up properties.

When it came to Victoria's turn, we were no less caring and community oriented, giving our all to people we did not know. Members of this Parliament travelled great distances to see tasks through and support the local members of Parliament whose areas were directly affected. I am proud that there were a number of members of the coalition — and I am sure members of the opposition also — who contributed in that way. Whilst it has been a very difficult experience and people in many towns are still suffering, it has been a wonderfully galvanising time for Australians to show what they are really made of.

I thank the emergency services — all the volunteers, members of the State Emergency Service and Country Fire Authority — other government agencies and members of local councils, the Red Cross, church groups, community groups, sporting clubs and so on for their contributions.

It is really important to note, which I do with a measure of pride, as it has been mentioned previously, that the Premier today announced an extensive review to examine every aspect of flood mitigation management and recovery to identify the best way to deal with major flood events in the future. Whilst the rest of the state is still reeling from the flood crisis, I am sure it will give people a measure of comfort that this government is responding, is on the ball and is doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done.

I would like to bring the focus back to some of the problems that affected the Nillumbik Shire Council last Friday night and Saturday. Just yesterday we commemorated the second anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires and remembered the incredible damage they wreaked. In Nillumbik shire 43 people perished in the fires, and many homes and properties were destroyed along with much infrastructure. The Nillumbik Shire Council is still reeling from accommodating its responsibilities in terms of recovery from the Black Saturday bushfires. Whilst dealing with those matters it has, since the weekend, had to respond to problems related to the floods.

The Nillumbik Shire Council received 200 calls about flooding problems, including calls regarding places where the floods had closed a number of creek and river crossings. The Nillumbik shire encompasses the Plenty River as it terminates at the Yarra River and also Diamond Creek. There were problems at crossings from St Andrews right through to Eltham. Main Hurstbridge Road was closed at Diamond Creek. Six private properties were flooded, and, just to add to the suffering of the shire, there was damage to public infrastructure. There were road closures for bridge repairs at School Road and Mittons Bridge Road, St Andrews. The bridge on Brougham Street, Eltham, had to be closed for repair and for flood-borne debris to be cleared. A number of six-foot bridges over Diamond Creek were damaged and will have to be repaired. Some of these will be closed for a number of weeks. Shared bike and walking trails along Diamond Creek will have to be closed, and over 20 kilometres of trails will have to be cleared of silt and debris. Over 250 kilometres of unsealed roads have been badly eroded and will require repair and regrading, including most roads in the fire-affected area of the municipality. Other damage includes water damage to the Eltham library and the Diamond Valley sports centre, blocked drains and drainage pits. The council has the task of clearing debris from ovals and reserves, and it will have to replace garden beds and playground mulch.

This is a snapshot of what is being dealt with by the Shire of Nillumbik. It might surprise a number of

members to hear this, because the problems people have had in that part of the Melbourne metropolitan and outer suburban areas have not been extensively reported. The point I would like to make is that these floods have touched much of metropolitan Melbourne, and the expense of and time for recovery will clearly need to be dealt with and responded to. There is a lot to recover from.

I commend the Nillumbik Shire Council and its staff for putting this information together in a timely fashion so that I could incorporate it here today. I commend the motion and urge members to support it.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Insurance: fire services levy

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to Mr Rich-Phillips as the minister representing the Treasurer. The Baillieu government was elected with a lot of fanfare about fixing the problems. I ask the minister representing the Treasurer: given that the previous coalition government did nothing about the fire services levy for seven years and given that the coalition in opposition said it would act instantly to fix the problems, will the government stick to the time line of the previous government to have a white paper released with time lines and details by the end of February?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his question. As Mr Lenders notes, the substance of the question is a matter for the Treasurer. With respect to the government's commitment in relation to the fire services levy, we have committed to undertake a review of the mechanism that is currently in place and we will come back to the Parliament with a proposal for a new mechanism.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I specifically asked the minister representing the Treasurer if the government would meet the time line of a white paper by the end of February. I ask the minister if the answer is yes or no.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — Mr Lenders suggests a time frame which he purports was his government's time frame. The reality is that there has been a change of government. These matters are being dealt with in a different way,

and the Treasurer will release the government's position when he is ready to do so.

Manufacturing: government initiatives

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, and I ask: can the minister outline to the house the Baillieu government's commitment to manufacturing in Victoria and explain how this plan compares to alternative policy approaches?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I jump to my feet and thank the member for his question. The government takes manufacturing, exports and trade very seriously. Through our stronger industry and more jobs policy we have a clear commitment to ensure that industry, and particularly the manufacturing sector, is given top priority by the government.

We see significant advantages in that process. We know the workforce within the manufacturing sector exceeds 312 000 people. It has a significant share of workforce participation in the state. It is important for us to rejuvenate manufacturing in this state to restore Victoria to its rightful place as Australia's industrial powerhouse and to generate investment, opportunities, innovation and creativity in a sector which unfortunately has been let down by the former government — now the opposition.

The member asked what we are doing. Obviously the Department of Business and Innovation is a pro-business department. It is a department that will be focused on ensuring that we grow the sector and that we do not let it decline like the former government had. We have seen Victoria's share of national merchandise exports significantly decline from 20 per cent when the previous government, now the opposition, took office to 9 per cent when it lost office. We see the government's aim as being to strengthen that mix and to strengthen Victoria's economic advancement to ensure that we are able to grow and develop the industry, and the manufacturing sector in particular.

We know that times are tough and we know that it is important to understand there are overseas pressures with the dollar. There is a significant skills shortage because of the lack of investment by the Bracks and Brumby governments. The particular question asked was: how does our plan compare with the previous plan?

It was interesting to note that Mr Lenders got up before and asked about time lines, and when we were going to

deliver our time lines. I seem to recall a certain minister sitting in this chair right here saying, 'In December 2006 we are going to announce a Victorian manufacturing statement'. Guess who announced it 700 days later? It was Mr Lenders, who now sits here and wants us to deliver within his time frame when he could only deliver a manufacturing statement 700 days late. On top of that, it did not deal with issues about the sector; it was just platitudes and had no plan whatsoever.

It is the height of hypocrisy from an opposition which in government took Victoria from the premier manufacturing state to a state where all we got were glossy brochures, spin and rhetoric. It was a government that was more interested in itself than it was in the development of the manufacturing sector.

I am very proud to be the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade. I will be focused, as will our government, on growing economic development in this state, unlike the former government, which was more interested in itself, in spin and, more importantly, did not meet its own time lines.

Kindergartens: funding

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Ms Wendy Lovell. In the minister's response to my question on kindergarten capital funding on 21 December last year she referred to a severe shortage of kindergarten places in growth corridors. I point out that the city of Casey experienced the most babies born in 2009, and the Casey council alone has 68 kindergartens and preschools. The city of Greater Geelong is one of the top five areas experiencing a baby boom, and that city alone has 63 kindergartens and preschools. How will the minister's policy of funding only \$15 million over four years for expanded kindergarten rooms across all of Victoria address the demand for more kindergarten places in growth areas like the city of Casey and the city of Greater Geelong?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — The shadow minister is sounding like a broken record. She asked me this question or a similar question in the last parliamentary sitting week, as well as 79 questions on notice that are very similar. In fact, the heart of this question goes back to the failure of the former government to plan for kindergarten services in Victoria. It had 11 years to plan for the needs of Victorian children, and it failed to do so. It knew that Victoria was experiencing a baby boom and that we

would need additional facilities, but it failed to plan, and that has left Victoria running short of facilities.

Unlike the former government, the Baillieu government will deliver on its promises, and we will deliver for Victoria's children. The city of Casey has a current grant of \$200 000 for the Lynbrook Kindergarten. There are three grants for the city of Greater Geelong: there are two \$200 000 refurbishment grants for the Allanvale Preschool Centre and the Ocean Grove and District Preschool; and \$1 million for the Ocean Grove Children and Family Centre.

In addition to this, election commitments will deliver three additional services in Geelong — at Grovedale, Barwon Heads and Torquay — and we will open another round of children's capital funding later this year. We will deliver for Victorian families.

Supplementary question

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I can assure the minister that I will keep asking this question until I get a satisfactory answer and she fixes this issue. The minister referred in her answer to —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I cannot hear Ms Mikakos. I am not sure that the minister can hear her, nor am I sure that Hansard can hear her.

Ms MIKAKOS — The minister referred in her answer to a commitment of \$3.5 million in funding for one electorate — that is, the marginal Assembly seat of South Barwon. How will the minister allocate the remaining \$11.5 million across Victoria's remaining kindergartens, particularly in those growth areas, as I mentioned, of the city of Casey and the city of Greater Geelong?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — As I mentioned in my answer, a range of children's capital program funding will be announced later in the year. The grants will be allocated on the basis of need. I welcome the shadow minister continuing to highlight the Brumby government's failure to deliver children's services in Victoria.

Ovarian cancer: awareness

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I ask the minister to advise the house of what the Baillieu government is doing to raise awareness of ovarian cancer.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her question and her interest in these types of health matters, which are very important for Victorian and Australian women. More than 1200 Australian women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the forthcoming year and about 800 women will lose their lives to that disease. In Victoria alone 340 women are diagnosed and 230 women will die from ovarian cancer each year. It is difficult to detect at an early stage, and there is currently no valid or reliable screening test available. In 75 per cent of cases ovarian cancer is diagnosed late, so raising awareness of ovarian cancer in the community among women, their families and, importantly, general practitioners is a very important step in combating this disease.

The government is proud to have recently announced a \$50 000 grant to Ovarian Cancer Australia to support its important work in raising such awareness and to ensure that women with ovarian cancer are well supported. This is done in partnership with BreaCan, a Victorian government-funded information and support service for women with breast and gynaecological cancers. Together with Ovarian Cancer Australia, the pilot will be an important model for supportive care for women with ovarian cancer in Victoria. This model will inform best practice.

I encourage members of this chamber to become aware of the importance of the early detection of ovarian cancer and to work in a collaborative way to achieve best practice. I thank the member for her question and her interest in these topics.

Planning: election commitments

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer the minister to the Liberal Party election commitment to abolish the Growth Areas Authority and to his comments to the *Age* on 19 January when he said that the GAA would not be abolished, and I ask: why did the minister break this election commitment? Why the backflip?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — How nice of Mr Tee to ask me a question, given that this is the first I have had from him as the Labor Party spokesman on planning! How nice of Mr Tee to ask me a question about election policy! What we saw from the Labor Party after 11 years was nothing on policy — nothing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. J. GUY — It had 11 years to come up with policy ideas, and at the last state election the Labor

Party came up with nothing. Our policy on the Growth Areas Authority will be implemented, very clearly. We have four years to implement our policy agenda, not seven weeks. We have four years to implement a policy agenda, and those opposite want us to do so in seven weeks when they failed to do so in 11 years.

There is a very simple difference on the issue of planning. Given we are growing at 115 000 people per annum, the coalition issued an election document that was concise and comprehensive, and Labor issued nothing.

Supplementary question

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In addition to the commitment on the GAA, what other election commitments is the minister going to breach in his planning portfolio?

Mr Finn — That is pathetic. Bring back Justin!

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — President, I have to take up Mr Finn's interjection. We could bring back Justin, but unfortunately — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will not have members referred to by their Christian names. It is Mr Madden.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Thank you, President. We could bring back the former Minister for Planning, but of course his legacy, in terms of broken promises, comes from a party that said it would be open, honest and accountable when elected in 1999.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, the supplementary question was about government administration, and nothing in Mr Guy's response has referred to administration by the current government. It is purely a political sledging of a previous government.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Yes, it is amazing when the shoes are transferred to other feet! Mr Lenders makes a valid point in the sense that the standing orders do not invite members, in either posing questions or responding to them, to become involved in political debate or in ridiculing other members and political parties. It is important that in responding to questions ministers relate their answers to government administration and to the activities that they propose in government where an opposition member has sought some comment.

In the context of these early days, robust interjections and some toing and froing in questions and answers are to be anticipated. However, by and large the point of order is fair. I invite Mr Guy, having had his slather and whack by virtue of taking up an interjection, which of course is unparliamentary, to now respond to the question.

Hon. M. J. GUY — To quote the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, the member is just a sooky la-la. If he cannot wear it, he should not give it. The coalition will keep all its election commitments and it will keep all its commitments in the planning portfolio. We issued a comprehensive portfolio going into the 2010 election; the Labor Party issued a blank piece of paper, which summed up its vision for Victoria.

Floods: victim support

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My question without notice is for the Minister for Housing. I ask: can the minister inform the Legislative Council of actions being undertaken by the Baillieu government to assist Victorian flood victims with interim housing?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank Mrs Petrovich for her question. I note her ongoing concern for the people of northern Victoria and other parts of Victoria who have been affected by floods. Housing plays a key role in the government's emergency recovery plans, especially for large events such as the 2009 bushfires and the recent floods. We provide emergency accommodation and plans and also coordinate interim accommodation options for people whose homes have been destroyed or severely damaged.

In January the government responded rapidly and effectively to the needs of public housing tenants and the wider community by providing emergency accommodation to those who could not return home and undertaking a rapid clean-up and repair of the 71 public housing properties affected across the Loddon Mallee and Grampians regions.

The government has allowed agencies to use the Housing Establishment Fund for emergency housing. So far \$75 000 has been spent assisting more than 70 people with accommodation and a further \$100 000 has been approved for further assistance. To assess the longer term interim housing needs, the government has been proactive by telephoning the 5000 recipients of the Department of Human Services emergency grants to assess their outstanding housing needs.

Rail: Avalon Airport

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry. I refer to the government's commitment to provide \$50 million for a railway line to the privately owned Avalon Airport, and I ask: what co-contribution will the government require from the owners of Avalon Airport before it contributes \$50 million of taxpayers money?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry) — I thank Mr Pakula for his question, but I point out that it falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Public Transport. I suggest that he direct his question to that minister.

Supplementary question

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will give Mr Pakula an opportunity to frame a supplementary question, but given the response that was made and the fact that his supplementary needs to be responsive to the answer provided, I think he is going to find it fairly difficult.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — Let me point out to the minister that he is responsible for the aviation sector, and he would be aware that Jetstar and Tiger Airways currently run a modest number of flights in and out of Avalon Airport. I also point out that this policy was in the aviation policy that the current government took to the election. Given that this project has clearly been described as feasible by the government and given that it is committed to it, what new business does the government believe will need to be attracted to Avalon Airport, in an aviation sense, to make this railway viable?

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is an excellent question. Perhaps Mr Pakula might ask it tomorrow, because it is not a supplementary.

Teachers: career opportunities

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, and I ask: can the minister advise the house of the career opportunities for new teachers at the commencement of the 2011 school year?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — I thank Mrs Kronberg for her question and her ongoing interest in the area of education. I know she would have been particularly keen to ask this question and learn the answer, given

that last week I was able to visit some new teachers in her electorate.

By way of background, Victoria employs around 41 000 teachers in government schools and substantially more than that number in non-government schools in Victoria. This year the Victorian government will employ about 1700 new graduate teachers, who will join the workforce in Victorian government schools. Of the new graduates I have met — and it has only been a small number so far — and of the many teachers I have met over the years, I have been impressed with the quality of new graduates who serve the Victorian community very well as teachers in our schools.

Last Wednesday I had the opportunity to visit Montmorency Secondary College in Mrs Kronberg's electorate. I know she works hard for that school community. I might add that the local member for Eltham in the Legislative Assembly, Steve Herbert, also has a good relationship with that school. I had the privilege — —

Hon. M. J. Guy interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Mr Guy was mentioned in dispatches, I might add. I had the pleasure of meeting seven new graduates who are about to commence working in the teaching profession at that school. It is interesting to note that of those seven graduates, five were directly out of university while two were of a more mature age and had had industry experience before changing professions to become teachers.

When you talk to these young people you cannot help but be impressed by their enthusiasm and preparedness to accept the responsibilities that all teachers take on when they stand in front of a classroom. I am sure those graduates will do extremely well in their professional careers. I agreed with those teachers to meet them again during the course of the year, so I will have ongoing contact with that group of seven and learn from their experiences about how they fare as teachers in our school system. They come, as I said, from different backgrounds: five came directly from university and two came with industry experience.

I am pleased to say that the Baillieu government is continuing a number of programs initiated by the previous government to recruit and attract teachers. By way of example, one of those is the Teach for Australia program, and in January this year I had the pleasure of attending the graduation of the second cohort of 36 teachers who have undertaken that program. It is a program that provides the opportunity for some of the

best and brightest young graduates to commit to teaching in some of the hardest-to-staff schools in our state. Through an ongoing accelerated teaching program and with a mentor, they gain teacher qualifications while they are working in various hard-to-staff schools around the state. Again I shared the stage with the Prime Minister and the federal education minister in welcoming this year's cohort from Teach for Australia.

As I said, we have 41 000 teachers in Victorian government schools, and I am sure they enjoy the support of all members. We commend them for the job they do. In particular I wish the 1700 new teachers who will be starting in Victorian government schools well, and I am sure those wishes are extended on behalf of all of us in this chamber.

Wind farms: Chepstowe

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. In contradiction to his party's stated policy of returning decisions on wind farms to local councils, the minister recently called in an application for a three-turbine wind farm at Chepstowe. Given that the minister has not yet put the elements of his wind farm policy into the planning scheme, I ask: will the development be assessed under the current planning rules for wind farms — that is, the ones we have now — or under some other plan which will contain some new rules which he will implement at some time in the next four years, in no great hurry?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — As Mr Barber would know, that is an application that has been called in from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. As a consequence, I have called in that application to have a recommendation provided to me from my department, which will then be a decision made by Governor in Council. That application, which is yet to be heard by representatives of my department, will be dealt with on a fair basis for those who are in favour of the application and those who obviously have an issue with the application. But it is one where I will provide a recommendation to Governor in Council and one which I will not pre-empt.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I did not ask the minister to pre-empt it; I asked him to make a very simple statement that it would be under the concurrent planning scheme rules. Given that, can the minister outline to us a bit further the process for his decision? In other words, will any kind of advisory

committee be appointed? Will the hearings be in secret? Who will get to make submissions and in what form, and who will actually make the decision?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — As I have said, this is a very clear process. This is not new. When an application is at the stage that the Chepstowe application was at with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, when it comes back to the department or when the minister makes a determination then the Governor in Council will make the final decision on a recommendation from the minister, who is provided with information by the department. That is not a new method of determining an application. But what it does require is a fair, reasonable and balanced approach to the determination and the recommendation that is then provided to the minister and then provided by me on that recommendation to the Governor in Council.

Mr Barber — How will I know — —

Hon. M. J. GUY — All the material that is there to provide a recommendation will be released publicly, so Mr Barber will see quite openly and transparently the recommendation that is provided. Obviously I am happy to make that public because this government believes in transparency. I simply say that I am not going to pre-empt a decision. Mr Barber may wish me to, but I will not be doing that.

Planning: outer northern suburbs

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) My question is to the Minister for Planning. I ask the minister: can he advise the house what new opportunities the Baillieu government has created for people to move to Melbourne's outer northern suburbs, including to areas north of Broadmeadows?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — It is a wonderful question from a member for Western Metropolitan Region. Indeed, it is wonderful to hear about the growth that is occurring in Melbourne's outer northern suburbs and more importantly the seriousness with which this government takes the issue of housing unaffordability. The last government had 11 years to address housing unaffordability but did very little.

The precinct structure plans I brought forward and approved at Greenvale North and Greenvale West on 24 January will provide 2500 homes for 7000 new residents. As Mr Elsbury quite correctly says, it is a terrific area of Melbourne. There may be many people who might want to move from Brighton, for example, into the area to acquaint themselves with the new area

of Broadmeadows. As a member for the local area I even invite Mr Pakula to move from the eastern suburbs to his electorate — to the new area that this government is bringing forward in the outer northern suburbs, in places such as Greenvale.

At the end of the day, as I said, this government believes in solving our housing affordability problems as best it can. We have a program of land release that will be adhered to, to bring land to market quicker than the previous government did and to address affordability issues at their root causes. One of those causes is government delay. It beggars belief that this arrogant, perverse, born-to-rule, nanny-state, government-knows-all attitude of the Labor Party still pervades its mindset, this view that we should be constricting land at a time of population growth. The Labor Party still does not get that in times of population growth you need land to match and that indeed you need other strategies such as urban renewal, which are areas that this government is acting on and has acted on in just seven weeks of office.

After 11 years the people on the opposite benches — I say again, on the other side — should realise that this is a serious issue. This is an issue that Melburnians take with the utmost seriousness. Labor may not care that our children will not be able to buy a home; it may not care that Frank Maguire and others will not be able to move into the lower house electorates of Broadmeadows and Yuroke. But this government wants to give people an opportunity to live in growth corridors — good areas of Melbourne that will be defining suburbs for the future. They will be areas where our children and our children's children will be able to live. Labor did not care when former planning minister Justin Madden locked up land at a time of population boom. Labor did not care when Melbourne 2030 set Melbourne to become the most unaffordable capital city in Australia, which is a disgraceful legacy of the Labor Party.

After just seven weeks in office this government has acted with decisiveness to get to the root cause of housing unaffordability, and one of the key issues is land supply. It is an issue that the people opposite might want to bleat about and to talk up their own record, but at the end of the day they had a failed administration that did nothing about housing affordability. This government is acting very decisively and clearly, which is why after six years of doing nothing this government brought forward the Greenvale precinct structure plans for approval in January.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 1–79, 94, 96.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Membership

The PRESIDENT — Order! I advise the Council that I have now received from each of the parties nominations for membership of the Council standing committees. They came from the party leaders prior to the convening of Parliament today.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I move:

That:

- (1) The following members be members of the standing committees as follows:

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, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mr Pakula, Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney.

Legal and Social Issues References Committee

Ms Crozier, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mr Pakula, Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney.

- (2) Each committee hold its first meeting on Wednesday, 9 February 2011, at 8.00 p.m. or earlier at the conclusion of the sitting of the Council.

Motion agreed to.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Manufacturing in Victoria

The Clerk, pursuant to section 36(2)(c) of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, presented government response.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency — Report, 2009–10.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 —

Minister's Order of 13 January 2011 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Bells Beach Surfing and Recreation Reserve.

Minister's Order of 29 January 2011 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Phillip Island Nature Park Reserve.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 — Statement of reasons for seeking leave to appeal pursuant to section 65AB(2) of the Act.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice pursuant to section 32(3) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 110/2010.

Major Sporting Events Act 2009 — Major sporting event order of 20 December 2010 in relation to key cricket matches to be played from 2010 to 2015.

Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 — Summary of Primary Returns, February 2011 and Summary of Variations notified between 15 September 2010 and 7 February 2011.

Office of Police Integrity — Report under section 31 of the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004, 2009–10.

Ombudsman — Report on the Investigation into allegations of improper conduct by a councillor at the Hume City Council, February 2011.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 —

Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Alpine Planning Scheme — Amendment C15.

Campaspe Planning Scheme — Amendment C64.

Casey Planning Scheme — Amendments C126, C139 and C144.

Colac Otway Planning Scheme — Amendment C12.

Darebin Planning Scheme — Amendment C120.

- East Gippsland Planning Scheme — Amendment C91.
- Frankston Planning Scheme — Amendment C70.
- French Island and Sandstone Island Planning Scheme — Amendment C2.
- Glen Eira Planning Scheme — Amendment C77.
- Glenelg Planning Scheme — Amendments C58, C59 and C62.
- Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — Amendments C193, C194, C219 and C224.
- Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — Amendments C141 and C144.
- Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme — Amendment C68.
- Horsham Planning Scheme — Amendment C52.
- Hume Planning Scheme — Amendments C111 and C141.
- Kingston Planning Scheme — Amendments C99 and C110.
- Knox Planning Scheme — Amendments C54 and C97.
- Latrobe Planning Scheme — Amendment C40.
- Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendments C158 and C181.
- Moirra Planning Scheme — Amendment C55.
- Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendments C92, C102 and C114.
- Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Amendments C101, C103 and C105.
- Mount Alexander Planning Scheme — Amendment C44.
- Moyne Planning Scheme — Amendment C34.
- Nillumbik Planning Scheme — Amendments C58 Part 2 and C73.
- Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Amendments C77, C85 and C86.
- Southern Grampians Planning Scheme — Amendment C6.
- Strathogie Planning Scheme — Amendment C53.
- Towong Planning Scheme — Amendment C20.
- Wellington Planning Scheme — Amendment C69.
- Whitehorse Planning Scheme — Amendment C138.
- Wodonga Planning Scheme — Amendments C62 and C74.
- Yarra Planning Scheme — Amendment C113.
- Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendment C101.
- Primary Industries Department — Report under section 30L of the Surveillance Devices Act 1999, 2009–10.
- Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 — No. 151/2010.
 - Criminal Procedure Act 2009 — No. 1/2011.
 - Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — No. 3/2011.
 - Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 — No. 149/2010.
 - Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — No. 152/2010.
 - Residential Tenancies Act 1997 — No. 150/2010.
 - Sentencing Act 1991 — No. 2/2011.
 - Supreme Court Act 1986 — Nos. 147 and 148/2010.
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 123, 147, 148, 150, 151 and 152/2010 and 1 and 2/2011.
- Proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing operative dates in respect of the following acts:**
- Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment Act 2010 — Sections 68 to 70 and 107 — 1 January 2011 (*Gazette No. S502, 20 December 2010*).
 - Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2010 — Section 70 — 1 January 2011 (*Gazette No. S502, 20 December 2010*).
 - Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 — Part 1, sections 4 to 6 and 8, Part 3 (except section 17) and the Schedule to that Act (except Parts 2 to 9, section 229, Part 12, Divisions 1 to 5 of Part 13, sections 271, 272, 279 and 280, Division 3 of Part 14, sections 285 to 288, 289(3) and (4), 290 to 292, Divisions 5 to 7 of Part 14, Divisions 1 and 2 of Part 15, sections 322 and 323 and Schedule 2) — 1 January 2011 (*Gazette No. S502, 20 December 2010*).
 - Fair Trading Amendment (Australian Consumer Law) Act 2010 — 1 January 2011 (*Gazette No. S502, 20 December 2010*).
 - Occupational Licensing National Law Act 2010 — Parts 1 to 3 (except section 6 of Part 2), and the Schedule to that Act (except Parts 2 to 5, sections 99(3)(g), (h) and (i), Division 1 of Part 8, section 137, Division 3 of Part 8, Division 2 of Part 9, sections 150 and 153 and Division 5 of Part 9) — 1 January 2011 (*Gazette No. S502, 20 December 2010*).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

General business

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — By leave, I move:

That precedence be given to the following general business on Wednesday, 9 February 2011:

- (1) the notice of motion given this day by Mr Tee relating to the flood disaster in Victoria; and
- (2) notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Mr Barber relating to the provision of HRL Ltd documents.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Darryl Argall

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — On Australia Day Darryl Argall was made a Member of the Order of Australia. Mr Argall was nominated for his longstanding commitment and contribution to local government, land management and water conservation, in particular the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline project. Darryl Argall is a vigorous advocate for his community, and he certainly wasted no time showing me every corner of the Hindmarsh shire when he was the mayor and I was a brand-new member of Parliament. His love of and enthusiasm for his community has been duly recognised, and I send him my heartfelt congratulations on this occasion.

Mary Nolan

Ms PULFORD — Mary Nolan is a remarkable mother turned campaigner and, since Australia Day, a member in the general division of the Order of Australia. Mrs Nolan's son Chris suffered a multi-organ collapse in Vietnam in 1996, resulting in a significant acquired brain injury. Supported by her husband, Jack, with Chris's family and many friends, Mrs Nolan founded the groups What Does Chris Want and Inability Possibility. What Does Chris Want campaigns for more special-purpose nursing home accommodation for young people, while Inability Possibility provides information and support to patients with acquired brain injury and their families.

In her spare time Mrs Nolan hosts the Meredith Music Festival, which is a cultural highlight in our region that is enjoyed by locals and visitors alike and has brought great benefits to Meredith for 20 years. Mary Nolan's tireless campaign for better support and

accommodation for Chris and other young people requiring nursing home care is inspirational, and I congratulate her on this Australia Day award.

Royal Botanic Gardens: RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — I had the pleasure of attending the launch and packing of the container for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show on 1 February. To represent Australia at such a prestigious event is no small achievement.

I would like to commend Dr Philip Moors, Jim Fogarty and their hardworking team for their efforts and dedication that made the project a reality. I felt privileged to be there and get a sneak peek at a few elements of a design that has been a closely guarded secret for many months. The containers being dispatched represent an opportunity to share some of Victoria and Australia with the millions of people who visit and watch the Chelsea flower show. No doubt it will inspire more and more visitors to want to see more of our amazing state.

The fact that the Royal Botanic Gardens have been chosen as one of only eight show gardens to get a spot on Main Avenue just goes to show the kind of creativity and skill we have in Victoria. It is a first for Victoria and for Australia. The Victorian government is proud to support the gardens and applauds its staff in protecting and enhancing some of our most beautiful and threatened species.

As we looked at the two 20-foot containers it was a little difficult to imagine the full scale and success of this project. However, in many ways the contents of the containers represent some of Victoria's natural assets — something the government is committed to protecting and enhancing. I am proud to say that some of it came from my own electorate of the Northern Victoria Region, including mudstones from Mansfield and fire-affected timber from Flowerdale.

Our commitment includes continuing to support the gardens as well as ensuring our policy and approach to environmental sustainability is targeted and effective. It is about ensuring that future generations throughout Victoria get to enjoy the beauty of our state for many years to come.

Callignee community centre

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — Last month I had the honour of joining with members of the Callignee community, Latrobe City councillors, the

member for Morwell in the Legislative Assembly, Russell Northe, and other distinguished guests including a consul of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr Abelian Prajnaya Yodha, at the official opening of the new Callignee community centre.

As everyone knows, Callignee was destroyed in the 2009 fires and a number of community members tragically lost their lives. Those of us who have not experienced devastation of this order cannot know what the people of this community have been through. So it was with great feeling as well as joy that the community and its guests gathered after two years to officially open their new and magnificent community centre that was built from the resources provided by state and commonwealth governments, the Latrobe City Council and donations from many local businesses and community organisations.

Everyone was delighted and honoured by the presence of the Indonesian consul, Mr Abelian Prajnaya Yodha. The government and people of Indonesia, Australia's closest neighbour, donated over \$1 million to assist fire-affected communities in Victoria. I also take this opportunity to thank the member for Morwell, Russell Northe, for his generous acknowledgement of the work of former Premier John Brumby and the former Labor government in their unstinting support for the community at the time of the fires and over the two years that have elapsed since then.

Victorian election: coalition candidates

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — President, as this is the first moment I have risen to my feet in this Parliament I should congratulate you on your election as President. I also congratulate the Premier and Deputy Premier on an outstanding election result — a result which my colleague on the other side of this house the Leader of the Opposition will have taken great exception to, because things have changed remarkably. It was the former Leader of the Government in this place, the current Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lenders, who was the architect of the 2002 policy which then oversaw the implementation of the reform of this chamber, the result of which was, as I understood it at the time, essentially an aspiration on the part of the Labor Party to frustrate the opportunity for the coalition to ever win a majority in this house. Well all I can say is: how did it go, John? How did it go?

I would like to congratulate Brad Battin, the new member for Gembrook in the Legislative Assembly — an outstanding young man who will make a great contribution to the Parliament of Victoria; Tim Bull,

The Nationals member for Gippsland East in the Legislative Assembly, who again will be a great contributor to the Victorian Parliament; and particularly Edward O'Donohue and Peter Hall, my colleagues in this house. In particular I congratulate Edward O'Donohue, who was elected fourth of the five members in Eastern Victoria Region, because, after all — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you.

Mr P. DAVIS — There was a swing to — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Mr Davis.

Clifton Street Children's Centre: extension

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — Last Thursday I was pleased to attend, with the member for Northcote and the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the opening of the Clifton Street Children's Centre extension in Northcote. The centre's extension was jointly funded by the City of Darebin with a commitment from the then Brumby Labor government of \$500 000.

I am particularly proud of this achievement by the Brumby Labor government as this centre will now be able to provide 98 kindergarten and child-care places. It also houses a family services hub that includes a maternal and child health centre, early intervention and support services for children with special needs and community rooms to support activities such as playgroups, parent meetings and other community services. While Minister Lovell was happy to do the official ribbon cutting at this event, her government is yet to show any real commitment to Victoria's kindergartens. Sadly, the Baillieu government's commitment of providing only \$15 million for kindergartens will probably mean that this is the last kindergarten expansion in Northcote for sometime.

As we know, Victoria is experiencing a baby boom, and this is causing additional demand for more kindergarten places. In respect of the Council of Australian Governments agreement that Victoria has signed up to, which increases kindergarten hours for four-year-olds from 10 to 15 hours, Minister Lovell's approach now appears set to ditch this commitment. The minister needs to spell out whether her government is committed to delivering these additional kindergarten hours. An amount of \$15 million will only cover about 50 of Victoria's 1755 kindergartens. It seems that under the Baillieu government more Victorian children will miss out on a kindergarten place. Our children deserve better.

Richard Trevaskis

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I rise to pay my respects to the life and memory of Richie Trevaskis, who lost his seven-year battle with multiple myeloma on 21 December 2010 — the day after his 80th birthday.

Richie was many things to many people: a civic leader, a respected businessman, an active Country Fire Authority volunteer, a Rotarian, an Apexian and a loved and respected member of our community. He was a man I was proud to call my friend and mentor. For 62 years Richie was actively involved in the fire brigade in Shepparton. In his younger years he was a champion on the competition ladder, and thanks to a life membership he remained connected to the fire brigade until the day he died.

He served as a councillor between 1965 and 1984 and as mayor between 1979 and 1981 in the then City of Shepparton. During that period he juggled his council commitments with his other activities, including Apex and Rotary, developing the airport and of course his beloved fire brigade.

For me personally Richie was a great mentor who encouraged me in my community participation and spent many Sunday mornings in early 2002 encouraging me to stand for Parliament. I extend my sincere condolences to Richie's wife, Gwyneth, and to his two daughters, Carolyn and Kristine. Richie will always remain my favourite fireman.

Russel Bowman

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — On behalf of the Greens members of the Legislative Council and all our staff, I would like to say a few words about Russel Bowman, or, as we called him, the Patron Saint of the Clueless.

When we came in new to this big, old building, we turned to Russel for advice. He knew everything, like where things were kept and who to talk to about what we needed. And when it came to parliamentary procedure, he was often better than the handbook.

When I was elected in 2006 it took seven months for an electorate office to be assigned to us, so Liz and I worked out of the Parliament House office. We would see Russel every day. He was always cheerful and ready to tell a bad joke, which I always tried to remember as my husband loves bad jokes. I always thought Russel's office summed him up: it was full of strange and wonderful things he had collected over the

years that had special meaning to him. It was also the place to get a quick sugar fix from his jar of lollies.

It was clear to us how much he loved his family and the pride he had in his children. He enjoyed his role as grandfather, and not a week went by without him showing us a photo. There were quite a few historic objects in this building that have been saved by Russel, and quite a few of them ended up in our office.

Russel was one of those remarkable people, and he will be badly missed; I think that one of the songs that was played at his funeral, *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* from *Life of Brian*, summed Russel up completely.

Mary Nolan

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My best wishes go to Mary Nolan on being awarded the Member of the Order of Australia for service to people with acquired brain injuries.

In 1996, at the age of 28, Chris Nolan, a lawyer working in Hanoi and the son of Mary and her husband, John, suffered a severe brain injury leaving him unable to move, speak or see. On returning to Australia, Chris Nolan was placed in an aged-care facility. The facility provided Chris with clinical care but was unable to provide him with appropriate social stimulation and emotional support.

Mary's fight to improve her son's care situation has been both inspiring and unparalleled. For the past 15 years she has been a leading voice advocating for the accommodation rights of young people with severe disabilities. Her contribution has resulted in many tangible improvements. Mary formed the What Does Chris Want action group to address ways to improve Chris's quality of life. The approach developed has now been made available to young people in similar situations. Her work has resulted in the Council of Australian Governments making \$244 million available to address accommodation issues for young people requiring full-time care. Part of that funding resulted in a 10-person accommodation facility being built to house young people with severe injuries in Victoria. However, there is much more to be done for those struck down at such an early age.

Congratulations to Mary for her dedication on behalf of her son Chris.

Bushfires: Black Saturday anniversary

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I would like to take this opportunity to join with so many other Victorians who have taken time out to remember the

devastating Black Saturday bushfires which just two years ago yesterday erupted across our state. This was one of the worst natural disasters our country has experienced, with 173 people losing their lives, some 500 people being injured and more than 2000 homes being destroyed. The resilience and determination of those affected has seen the rebuilding of many homes rebuilt over the last two years, and communities have come back to life. The blackened stumps and charred forests are showing green again, but the second anniversary also sheds light on the fact that for many people the physical as well as the mental and psychological scars will be with them for a very long time.

The fire-affected areas, the majority of which were in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region, held many commemorative services. The communities chose in the main to do their remembrance and commemoration in a very private and personal way. I know that many Victorians, including those in this chamber, join with the fire-affected communities in remembering this very important anniversary.

Liberal Party: Bentleigh branch

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — The state election held on 27 November 2010 saw the election of Elizabeth Miller to the seat of Bentleigh in another place. May I take this opportunity of congratulating Elizabeth and wishing her every success in her parliamentary career.

At election time all branch members and supporters of all political parties and independent candidates work exceedingly hard, and it reminds us of how fortunate we are to live in such a healthy democracy where we can be participants in election campaigns without fearing for our lives or those of our supporters and families. Not many countries in the world have such a system and we must treasure it.

The new Liberal member for Bentleigh in the other place would not have been successful if it were not for a strong campaign run by now Premier Ted Baillieu and the Liberal Party Secretariat under the guidance and direction of Tony Nutt and Damien Mantach, and underpinned by huge support from the Liberal Party Bentleigh team. Jeff Antcliff, the electorate chairman, and Peter Norman, the campaign manager, ran an excellent local campaign, but Bentleigh was won for the Liberal Party a long time ago.

There have been several Liberal Party branch members who kept the Liberal flame burning for a long time, and last night at a meeting they handed over the reins to a

new generation. I speak of Thelma Mansfield, secretary of the Bentleigh branch for 34 years, and Peter Grove, president of the Bentleigh branch for 16 years. There are many others who worked tirelessly and my thanks go to them as well, but the new member for Bentleigh and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Thelma and Peter. We could not have done it without them.

Australia Day: Northern Metropolitan Region

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak about a special event that I attended on Australia Day 2011 along with parliamentary colleagues Anthony Carbines and Colin Brooks, members for Ivanhoe and Bundoora in the other place, and the Honourable Matthew Guy.

The Australia Day celebrations and citizenship ceremony were held at the Banyule City Council offices. I saw all the flags displayed and thought to myself that it would be wonderful if our country's flags were flown from all households in Australia in a show of unity and celebration. I would like to thank the mayor, fellow councillors and the officers of Banyule council for making Australia Day 2011 a memorable occasion.

Floods: emergency service volunteers

Mr ELASMAR — The recent floods in Victoria have touched us all. My family has a property in the Horsham region, and I know my own anxiety was high when the flood warnings were being broadcast every hour. I want to thank the State Emergency Service for its magnificent efforts in ensuring that no lives were lost and that all necessary precautions were taken to minimise property damage in the flood-ravaged areas.

Natural disasters: Queensland

Mr ELASMAR — I also want to express my heartfelt sorrow at the Queensland floods and the devastation in the wake of Cyclone Yasi. I congratulate the Premier and the Prime Minister for their sterling leadership during this terrible time for Queenslanders.

Australia Day: City of Whittlesea

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I would like to report to the house on my visit to the city of Whittlesea on Australia Day. Despite its hardship of two years ago, the city continues to find clothing, furniture, books and associated help for the flood victims of Queensland and Victoria; it is an amazing community.

I wish to congratulate Graeme Hunter, Whittlesea's Citizen of the Year. Graeme has lived his entire life in Whittlesea. He is a member of the Whittlesea Agricultural Society and was made a life member in 1993. He has been a member of the Whittlesea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management since the early 1990s and is its chairman. He is a founder of the Whittlesea Country Music Festival, which is on this weekend — I invite members to attend. He has been a member of the Whittlesea Country Fire Authority since 1964 and is a church elder at the Whittlesea Uniting Church. In addition to all that he runs his family's cattle farm and cartage business.

The Senior Citizen of the Year was Kevin McCormick, the Young Citizen of the Year was Grant Trewella, the Access and Inclusion Citizen of the Year was Alex Fabiani and the Environmental (School) Class of the Year was Epping Views Primary School. I wish to record my congratulations.

Supermarkets: home brand prices

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — Anyone who has been to Coles or Woolworths in the last few weeks would know of the decision by the retailers to slash the price of their home brand dairy products, and it seems more of this is on the way in regard to baked goods. This has been described in some circles as a win for consumers, but in the longer term I am not sure that will be the case.

The retailers have enormous market power, far more than the multinationals that Coles CEO Ian McLeod talks about, and they use it ruthlessly. Many of the manufacturers who supply branded products — like Pauls, Pura, Devondale, Western Star and the like — also supply Coles and Woolies home brand products. So the retailers saying they will not cut the price paid to suppliers for branded products is hardly the point. As supply contracts expire, the substitution to home brand products will inevitably impact on the price paid to manufacturers, the security of hundreds of Victorian jobs and the viability of primary producers as well. If the dairy suppliers got together and agreed not to sell to the retailers at a price below X, they would almost certainly be prosecuted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission for collusion and would more than likely be convicted. But the behaviour of the retailers looks a little bit like predatory pricing, and perhaps it is time the ACCC took a look at that as well.

Victorian election: Liberal Party candidates

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also wish to congratulate all of those colleagues who

were elected or re-elected to the 57th Parliament, and in particular those candidates and members of Parliament who I have had a direct association with, in particular the newly elected Liberal members for the lower house electorates of Carrum, Mordialloc, Frankston and Mount Waverley — all of whom defeated well-resourced Labor incumbents.

In addition, I would like to congratulate and thank all of the candidates for lower house electorates in the city of Casey. They worked extremely hard putting in an outstanding effort on behalf of their communities, and of course without the largesse to match the incumbents. In particular I would like to commend the work undertaken by Michelle Frazer in Narre Warren North, Gary Rowe in Narre Warren South and by one of my standout candidates, Cr Geoff Ablett in Cranbourne, where a margin of 12 per cent was sliced and diced, leaving the seat on a 1.87 per cent margin. It was a fine effort on a shoestring budget, against some fairly nasty campaign tactics, including the regular cutting out, using a Stanley knife, of his face from his billboards and corflutes around the electorate. That was quite a sinister addition to a campaign and one which I had not witnessed before, quite clearly signalling the desperation of opponents who had done an insufficient amount to be confident of their own re-election.

I would also like to commend the efforts of our candidate in Mulgrave, Courtney Mann, our candidate in Dandenong, Dale Key, the candidate for Clayton, Justin Scott, and the candidate for Lyndhurst, Tony Holland, and to thank all of their volunteers, their supporters, their campaign teams and their families. It was a fine effort with an outstanding result for my lower house colleagues in the south-eastern metropolitan region as well as my upper house colleagues.

Australia Day: Shire of Nillumbik

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — On Australia Day I had the great pleasure of attending the awards and citizenship ceremony at the Nillumbik Shire Council. I wish to congratulate the award winners and the new citizens here in Australia. The Young Citizen of the Year award was taken by Lani Campbell, who was recognised for her work as youth ambassador for Zaidee's Rainbow Foundation, which was founded to open up discussion and knowledge of organ donation.

Mrs Irene Schoon, Senior Citizen of the Year, was recognised for her provision of support, information and training on hearing loss for the community over the past 22 years. Mr Gary McDermott took out the

Volunteer of the Year award after achieving a successful record in attracting volunteers to provide critical support to the Nillumbik community health service.

Community Group of the Year for 2011 was Friends of Diamond Creek Hurstbridge, a group with a wonderful record of work in environmental protection and restoration.

The Citizen of the Year was the well-known and highly respected Mr John Haines. Mr Haines served his country as an officer in the air force. He went on to shoulder many responsibilities at the Eltham RSL, the Eltham Rotary club and the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia. Mr Haines is a proud Australian, a community contributor extraordinaire and a man so many in the community hold in great esteem. He is clearly a touchstone and source of inspiration for many.

Each person who has received an award is to be congratulated for their service to the community over many years. We salute them, wish them well and trust they will be able to continue to make an ongoing contribution to inspire others.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Responses

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised on 21 December 2010 by Ms Pennicuik, Mr O'Donohue, Mr Tee, Mr Finn, Ms Broad, Mr Drum, Ms Tierney, Mr Leane, Mr Scheffer, Ms Pulford, Mr Pakula and Mr Somyurek.

Cairn Curran Reservoir: water release

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The adjournment matter I raise this evening is for the Minister for Water. I recently visited Baringhup, on the banks of the Loddon River, with a local farmer, Mark Yarwood, and Cathy McCallum from the local Landcare association. I went up and visited them at Baringhup because my colleague Maree Edwards, the very effective new lower house member for Bendigo West, asked me to come and meet with these electors of hers who had some issues with Goulburn-Murray Water.

To give the context, what happened was that Goulburn-Murray Water released 80 megalitres of water into the Cairn Curran Reservoir in a day. Historically the most that had ever been released from that dam was 48 megalitres, and because the water was released there was carnage — that is the only way to describe it — downstream. What we saw was that the sand from a sand-based river had been gouged out and spread over Mr Yarwood's crops, which had been destroyed. Along his kilometre of farmland at least a metre of farmland had descended into the river, probably another metre was going to go, and the bank of the river had moved.

The citizens are realists. They know there are floods and they know floods need to be mitigated, but they were seeking some transparency from Goulburn-Murray Water as to why, with the hydrology reports that are now available, with a dam that was 93 per cent full and with a six-day weather warning that 100 to 200 millimetres of water was going to fall in the catchment, the authority did not release water earlier. Yes, it may have inundated some of the crops, but it would not have gouged the river.

This is a classic triple-bottom-line effect — that is, it is about the economic effect on farmers, the effect on the whole social amenity in the area and what such an event has done to the environment of the river. The residents all know that La Niña is real and that extraordinary weather problems are occurring, but they also know that on 14 and 15 January, when the dam was 93 per cent full, an excessive amount of water was released. When they asked the authority for an explanation of why that had been done, what the policy foundation was for doing so and who made the decision not to release the water earlier, they hit a brick wall. Ms Edwards and I sought a briefing from Goulburn-Murray Water, but we were told we could not have it until the authority briefed the minister.

The action I seek from the minister is that he arrange forthwith a briefing for the residents, Ms Edwards and me on what the policy is for releasing this water so that we learn the lesson and this situation does not occur again.

Altona: beach renourishment

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. The matter concerns a visit I made last week on a very warm day to Altona Beach. Whilst that might be a very enjoyable exercise on most occasions, on this particular day it was not for the reason I would have liked. At the beach I met a local

resident, Mr Bruce Ewen, and his wife, Carol, who are clearly very civic-minded individuals. They are concerned about the ongoing works at Altona Beach and the apparent inability of the government to complete those works.

Altona Beach is a great spot. Anybody who has been there will know that it is one of the premium beaches, if not the premium beach, in the western suburbs, and it serves not just people in Altona and its surrounds but also those right through to Footscray and beyond. If people in the western suburbs want to go to the beach, they go to Altona. However, with the current works that were begun by the previous government — an upgrade to ensure that standards are maintained — we have an extraordinary situation where two-thirds of the beach is in pristine condition but there is a point at which the beach becomes a moonscape. It is an extraordinary state of affairs, and it makes no sense at all that the government or anybody else would ignore the rest of the beach when the two-thirds that has been worked on is in very good nick.

As a result, on a warm day — of which we have had not many, but a few, this year — there have been situations where many cars have been parked up one end of the beach, which causes enormous problems around the pier, on Pier Street and around the park. On a warm day at the other end of the beach, which is rocky and less sandy than the part that has been worked on, no cars are parked. They would readily be parked there if the beach was of a suitable standard.

I agree with Mr Ewen; I think he has made an extraordinarily good point. I believe Altona Beach deserves to receive the same treatment right along its length, not just along two-thirds of it. I ask the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to accompany me, to meet with Mr Ewen and other interested locals, and to examine for himself the condition of the beach. I walked that beach with Mr Ewen last week, and I ask the minister to come to Altona Beach with me to do the same thing at his earliest convenience.

Alpine parks: cattle grazing

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, regarding cattle grazing in the high country.

I am aware that the coalition is committed to reversing the 2005 decision of the Bracks government to ban cattle grazing in the high country. The commitment was well known in East Gippsland and in many areas of regional Victoria, because the coalition — especially

The Nationals candidates — pushed the commitment very strongly in the expectation that the policy would attract the votes and support of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria and those who support the objectives of that association. I strongly suspect the policy was not well known amongst urban voters; if it had have been better known, it would have given a number of environmentally aware voters pause for thought.

The new government has wasted no time, and during the second week of January cattle were reported to be moving back into the Alpine National Park. The explanation that came from the government was that this was part of a scientific study to assess whether or not cattle grazing in the alpine uplands would reduce bushfire risk. The Victorian National Parks Association said that permitting cattle grazing in the high country for so-called scientific purposes was the Victorian version of Japanese whaling. On the other hand, Mark Coleman, the president of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, welcomed the move, saying it was a step forward.

As I understand it there is a clear, expert consensus around the issue of the damage that cattle cause in the Alpine National Park by trampling around water catchments, which damages water quality and causes threats to flora and fauna, including some species that are threatened by extinction. Overall there are negative impacts on biodiversity, and noxious weed species are encouraged. The minister will have seen reports last week which list endangered species, including the alpine tree frog, which has been scientifically identified as existing in the very areas that the cattle have been permitted to graze in. In the face of these multiple and interrelated environmental factors, how is it that the minister can possibly justify further investigation into only one element — that is, whether cattle grazing might help mitigate fire in some areas?

I also note that the government is saying that its election commitment was to investigate a scientific study into the impacts of grazing, not restore it. A very good program on the ABC indicated that the cattlemen did believe in it.

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

Rail: western suburbs

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The matter relates to the proposed train timetable changes on the Werribee and Williamstown

lines. It is unfortunate that the first major public transport announcement of the new government was one that appears to deliver cuts to train services in the west. In fact it looks like the western suburbs are to be hit the hardest.

The west is the most car-dependent area of Melbourne and the area least serviced by public transport. It is the most socially and economically disadvantaged region in Melbourne, yet we face the threat of further cuts to our train services. We have the highest levels of population growth and yet we have the poorest public transport, and we face the threat of further cuts to our train services. Our roads are already heavily congested and petrol prices continue to rise, yet we face the threat of further cuts to our train services.

The west does not need cuts to train services — we need more trains. However, it would appear that there will be a halving of the off-peak services to some western suburbs. Werribee and Williamstown services will not be taking commuters to their city loop stations, and off-peak services on the Werribee line will be halved and no longer run through the city loop. The Altona line will have cuts to peak hour services, resulting in the frequency of trains being every 22 minutes. No trains will run directly to Altona, Seaholme and Westona during off-peak periods.

Extended public transport is urgently required to bring the supply and quality of services available in the western suburbs up to the same level as other regions of Melbourne. In opposition, members of the Liberal Party had plenty to say about fixing our public transport system. Now that they are in government they have the opportunity to deliver, but it would appear that instead they will deliver cuts to our services. The slogan during the campaign was that the ALP neglected the west, yet only seven weeks after the election of the new government we already have cuts to services. The action I ask of the minister is that he outline how the proposed new train timetables will have any net benefit for the people of the western suburbs.

Ambulance services: Rochester

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My matter for the adjournment is for the attention of the Minister for Health, who is the minister at the table. Over the last few months Rochester has been hit twice by floodwaters from the Campaspe River. In January this year the floodwaters inundated many houses as well as some businesses. One of the buildings in Rochester that was inundated and damaged by the rising Campaspe River was the Rochester ambulance station. The inundation and water damage caused the ambulance

station to temporarily close, and it has had to continue its operations from nearby stations.

Over the last few days some members of the community have asked Paul Weller, the member for Rodney in the Assembly, when the ambulance station will reopen. Some people have actually suggested that there may be some doubt that the ambulance station in Rochester will reopen at all. On behalf of the member for Rodney, Paul Weller, I ask the Minister for Health to give the community of Rochester the assurance it needs that the ambulance station will be operational as soon as it is repaired following the damage inflicted on it by the rising Campaspe floodwaters.

Northern Hospital: academic and research precinct

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health. I raise my concern that the academic and research precinct proposed at the Northern Hospital will not proceed under his government. The Northern Hospital has one of the busiest emergency departments in our state and has an increasing number of admissions. It is a hospital in a growth corridor and will need to expand in the future. It needs to attract and retain more doctors and other health staff. The hospital has identified a way to attract more staff. It has proposed an academic and research precinct which would enable doctors, nurses and allied health staff to receive training on site, with a view to continuing their employment at that hospital.

I understand that both the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University have previously committed \$7.2 million to this project, and Northern Health itself has committed \$5 million. The federal government committed \$14 million in its budget last year, but that funding was contingent on state government funding. Labor initially provided \$3 million for this project and during the election committed a further \$11 million to enable it to go ahead. However, to date the Baillieu government has not committed a cent to this important project.

I am aware that the minister is soon to visit the Northern Hospital to have discussions with management there. I am certain that this matter will be raised. I call on the minister to urgently commit funding to the academic and research precinct at the Northern Hospital to ensure that this important project proceeds.

Geelong: arts precinct

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister

for the Arts, and it relates to the coalition government's \$30 million promise to rejuvenate the Geelong arts precinct. That commitment comprised \$15 million for GPAC (Geelong Performing Arts Centre) and another \$15 million for the Geelong central library. However, it was revealed in the *Geelong Advertiser* just days after the coalition won office that only half of this funding commitment would be honoured in this term of government, with the other half being made available only if the coalition is voted in for a second term of government.

It is my understanding that the coalition has not confirmed whether it will honour the \$30 million commitment made before the election. I take this opportunity to voice my support and push for certainty on this matter. I ask the minister to come clean with the people of Geelong. Geelong is the second-largest city in the state. It has a rich cultural history with amazing artists that deserve an upgraded facility. I ask the minister to put a stop to the uncertainty, speculation and guesswork about Geelong's art precinct and the library and announce whether the \$30 million promised by the coalition leading up to the election will be delivered in this term of government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms TIERNEY — That shows you never visit GPAC, because we have refurbished the entire theatre.

Responses

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Tonight I have received seven matters on the adjournment. The first matter was from Mr Lenders regarding water. My colleague Mr Hall, the minister representing the Minister for Water in this chamber, will respond to that matter. He has indicated some knowledge of and interest in that matter.

The second matter was from Mr Finn for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and related to Altona Beach and works that are needed on that beach. Mr Finn said two-thirds of that beach is pristine — and I can vouch for the good condition of much of the Altona Beach area — but some parts need considerable work and the previous government seems to have ignored that matter. Mr Finn sought that the environment minister, Ryan Smith, accompany him and a local resident, Mr Ewen, to visit Altona Beach and undertake a close examination of the matters. I undertake to pass this matter on to the minister. I have no doubt that he will quickly accompany Mr Finn and Mr Ewen on that investigation.

The third matter was from Mr Scheffer, also for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith. It relates to cattle grazing in the high country. Mr Scheffer did not seek any action, and I note that the minister may choose to respond or not, as he sees fit.

The fourth matter was from Ms Hartland relating to public transport in the west, the Werribee and Williamstown lines and timetable changes that have been made recently. I will refer that to the Minister for Public Transport for his close attention and response, but in doing so I make the point that the changes are a direct result of a contractual agreement by the previous Labor government with Metro Trains Melbourne. I will refer the matter on.

The fifth matter was from Mr Drum relating to a health matter in my own portfolio area — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank the minister for waiting for interjections to cease; it is important that he has done that. I appreciate the courtesy of the other ministers in being here tonight along with the minister at the table. Recognising the busy workloads of ministers, it would be excellent if that practice could continue into the future. The house owes the Leader of the Government the courtesy of listening to his responses to matters that have been raised by members. Members would be better off listening to those answers rather than there being a barrage of comments across the chamber.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Drum's matter concerns my portfolio; it relates to Rochester and its ambulance station. The Rochester township has endured a terrible battering through this period, with several inundations, which have had an effect on not only the town, businesses and the hospital but also the ambulance service. It is an existing single-paramedic branch. Two paramedics work on an eight-six roster — that is, eight days on, six days off, with one day of double up and overlap. There is a 10-hour shift and paramedics are on call overnight. There is the support of an ambulance community officer available.

The government is committed to supporting Rochester and its ambulance service. The ambos have done a great job in northern Victoria, and they have played significant roles in response to the floods. I pay tribute to them. I want to make it very clear to Mr Drum and to the communities in northern Victoria, and in Rochester in particular, that no changes have been proposed with respect to the branch at this stage. As I have indicated, the station was inundated and it will require significant

repairs. Ambulance Victoria is currently looking for alternative accommodation while the repairs are taking place. The government is making a strong commitment to that ambulance branch, to the town and to supporting the paramedics who have made a significant contribution to northern Victoria.

Ms Mikakos raised the matter of the Northern Hospital and its academic and research precinct application, which was made to the commonwealth government. She is correct that there was support from the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University. There is one significant thing that Ms Mikakos forgot to tell the house, and that is that her government, the former Brumby government, did not prioritise the Northern Hospital. The federal government made a decision to fund the Northern Hospital without state support. There are a number of these cases.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The former government did not do that at the time when the federal government indicated that it was its priority. Ms Mikakos indicated that it was not a priority of the Brumby government. Unfortunately that timing has meant that the precinct did not get that support at the time when the federal government made the decision.

Ms Mikakos — I was asking what the government is going to do.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The member was indeed, and I am making the point that the history is quite significant. The Brumby government should be judged on its record rather than its rhetoric. The opposition says a lot now, but when it was in government it chose not to fund the Northern Hospital. I agree with Ms Mikakos that the Northern Hospital is under some pressure and that there has been significant growth in that area. The emergency department and other parts of the hospital need support. I understand the need for research support in that location and elsewhere around the state. One way of retaining doctors is to work with hospitals and universities and offer a package of support. We are very aware of the concerns of the Northern Hospital, and I have spoken to the chairman of the board about those matters. I make the point that the former Brumby government chose not to prioritise the Northern Hospital research precinct, and that is disappointing.

The seventh matter was raised by Ms Tierney, and it concerns the Geelong Performing Arts Centre precinct and a promise made by the coalition during the

election. I am determined to pass that on to the Premier, who is the Minister for the Arts, and seek his response.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — One of my duties in this chamber is to represent the Minister for Water and, as it happened, I was in the chamber tonight for the adjournment debate. I am happy to take on board the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition. It concerned a decision of Goulburn-Murray Water about the timing of the release of water from Cairn Curran Reservoir. Cairn Curran is a spot well known to me. It was a popular watering and fishing hole for me when I was a kid. I visited Cairn Curran less than 12 months ago, and it was less than empty. It is pleasing that, with the recent rains, it has stored water for use by the local communities.

However, as Mr Lenders described, there are some serious management decisions to be made when times of rain and significant rainfalls are expected. While that decision rests, appropriately, with the water authority, I think the questions Mr Lenders asked are appropriate ones, and I am sure they will receive the due attention of the Minister for Water, Mr Walsh. I will pass those concerns on to him and ensure that Mr Lenders gets a response.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.43 p.m.