

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 12 December 2012

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

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

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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

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Wednesday, 12 December 2012

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

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am advised and wish to inform the house that the Environment and Planning Legislation Committee and the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee will be meeting this day following the conclusion of the sitting of the Council.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Schools: Mernda

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the need for the construction of a secondary school in Mernda to service the existing residents and accommodate the growth of the population. The school site has been available for a number of years and the surrounding infrastructure is complete; it is in a central location which provides access to most residents by internal roads, bike and footpaths.

The petitioners therefore request that allowance be made in the budget of 2013–14 to begin construction of the school at the earliest possible date on the existing site at Breadalbane Avenue, Mernda, Victoria, 3754.

By Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (1049 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan).

Schools: Mernda

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the need for the construction of a state primary school at the Mernda South Primary School site located at Riverdale Boulevard and The Parkway at Mernda 3754 to service the existing residents and accommodate the growth of the population. The school site has been available for a number of years and the surrounding infrastructure is complete. It is in a central location which provides access to most residents by internal roads, bike and footpaths.

The petitioners therefore request that allowance be made in the budget of 2013–2014 to begin construction of a primary school at the earliest possible date on the existing site at the Mernda South location.

By Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (726 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan).

Housing: government policy

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the public consultation discussion paper put out by the Minister for Housing outlining the pathways to a fair and sustainable social housing system.

The petitioners therefore request that as a result of the consultation with public housing tenants, the minister resolves:

not to raise rents above the current cap of 25 per cent of tenant income;

not to privatise public housing by transferring public housing units from government ownership and management; and

to maintain public housing tenants' security of tenure so that tenants do not have to keep reapplying for housing.

By Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) (1137 signatures).

Laid on table.

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

PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICERS: PARLIAMENT HOUSE ATTACK

The PRESIDENT — Order! I take this opportunity to briefly inform members of the house that we have made contact with the hospital this morning in regard to the PSO (protective services officer) who was attacked and injured last evening. He underwent surgery last night, and I am informed that that was to repair a fracture to his head. He is currently in a serious but stable condition. The surgery went well. He is conscious and talked to family members this morning.

Arrangements have been made for his family to be transported to and from the hospital. I have indicated I would be happy to help with that transport if it is required and if police resources do not enable that to happen. Our thoughts and prayers are obviously with the PSO and also with his colleagues who have been offered support as well with respect to the incident of last evening. The police are continuing to investigate. If members have cars in the area that were parked last night, all the investigations have been completed at that part of the crime scene so members can access their cars.

As I said, our thoughts are very much with the officer and his colleagues, his friends and family. Especially when it is so close to Christmas, it is a really tragic thing. Members can be assured that every effort is being made at all levels to not only investigate thoroughly but to continue some work that was already being done in terms of security reviews around the Parliament.

OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Livability options in outer suburban Melbourne

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) presented report, including appendices, extracts from proceedings and minority report, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

The final report of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee on its inquiry into livability options in outer suburban Melbourne is a synthesis of the 80 written submissions we received, evidence we garnered from another 118 organisations and hearing from 209 individuals. Evidence was gained during the inquiry's hearings in Melbourne, site visits to each of Melbourne's 10 interface councils, in Perth and in Adelaide. It was also gained during the overseas study tour conducted in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto — the three Canadian cities that Melbourne competes with for the title of the world's most livable city. In Zurich the committee met with leading urban designers and planners. In London the committee examined models of affordable housing and gained particular insight into how a truly global city is responding to renewed population pressures and the realities of agglomeration.

Central to the terms of reference for this inquiry is the livability of Melbourne and in particular its outer suburbs. Melbourne's livability is essential for maintaining the standard of living and quality of life of its citizens. It is also important for our international standing and is an enhancement of our competitive advantage against other global cities.

The committee is grateful for the contributions made by witnesses and those who made submissions, as we received a considerable amount of high-quality, thought-provoking, often challenging and relevant information. The committee has made 50 findings and 132 recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at enhancing the livability of Melbourne's outer suburbs with respect to transport and other infrastructure provision, urban planning policies as they relate to housing and land use options, population growth and demographic change, housing affordability, social cohesion, the environment and open space, the provision of medical, health and support services and best practice in the urban renewal of established outer suburbs.

It is important to stress that this report contains a minority report. I express particular concern about information provided by a member of this house, Mr Brian Tee. He is not a member of the committee, and I question how he became acquainted with the material that I am now just tabling before the house. In light of the comments that have been reported in the newspapers today it is important to recognise that the Baillieu government provided our committee with the reference in February 2011, and the focus of our reporting on the livability aspects was conducted throughout 2011. For me that is proof positive of how much the former government neglected the people of Victoria, especially in electorates in outer suburban Melbourne that it represented. Any reflection on this report is a direct reflection on what the Labor government did not do over a period of 11 years.

With its present population of 4.1 million, in many ways Melbourne is managing fast growth relatively well, especially when one takes into consideration that many of the other cities ranked for their livability and referred to earlier have populations half, or even less than that, of that of metropolitan Melbourne and its outer suburbs.

However, according to much of the evidence received and from the results of our site visits it is very clear that whilst Melbourne currently holds the title for livability, its outer suburbs in the interface and growth areas are facing many challenges. The reality is that there is a widening gap between the measures of livability that metropolitan Melbourne enjoys, particularly in its inner and middle suburbs, and those of its outer suburbs. Many areas in Melbourne's outer suburbs are exemplary; however, the committee received confirmation that Melbourne's continual urban expansion is creating often marked differences in livability for those living close to Melbourne and those

living in the outer suburbs substantial distances from services and employment.

The remarkable growth of Melbourne's population in recent years, as well as the growth that has been forecast for coming decades, also highlights the need for a suite of options to enable the tailoring of increased residential densities in ways that preserve the character of Melbourne's suburbs. We should strive for vibrant and more compact, efficient settlement and development patterns, and this policy direction should be underpinned by a diversity of opportunities for living, working and enjoying culture. So as to not damage the future economic and employment prospects of those living in the outer suburbs, we need to be vigilant not to convert land set aside for employment. The conservation values of both prime agricultural land and natural systems need equal attention to ensure that we can continue to access and benefit from their valuable resources.

I wish to extend my appreciation to the work of my parliamentary colleagues Judith Graley, Cindy McLeish, Natalie Hutchins, respectively the members for Narre Warren South, Seymour and Keilor in the other place, and Craig Ondarchie, a member for Northern Metropolitan Region, for the considerable time and effort they invested in this inquiry and the development of the report.

This comprehensive report of 605 pages is the result of a very special effort on the part of the committee secretariat — namely executive officer Mr Nathan Bunt, research officer Dr Charlotte Frew and administrative officer Ms Natalie-Mai Holmes. The team members have worked assiduously, consistently extending themselves whilst managing the synthesising of a very large volume of information. They are to be congratulated for their hard work on the compilation of this report. In the early days of the reference the committee received support from Dr Vaughn Koops and Mr Keir Delaney, and more recently from Dr Rosalind Hearder and Mr Scott Martin.

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

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the report of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee on its inquiry into livability options in outer suburban Melbourne, which has been tabled today. Whilst it is quite a tome, it is well worth reading. It is not *Fifty Shades of Grey*, but I encourage people to read it because it is going to be just as exciting, I have to say.

I will highlight something that is of importance to me amongst all the things that are in this report, and that is the issue of respite care. Carers in this state have been left hanging on for a long time. In fact it was this government that recognised carers in legislation earlier this year. The report talks about having more respite care services. Carers have a tough life now, but they do not get enough respite care simply because not enough facilities exist; not enough services exist for them to get a break, to go to movies, to go to dinner, to have some time out — they simply do not exist.

This report calls on the government to provide more respite care for those who need it, whether it be in-home care, whether it be centre-based care or whether it be giving someone a break so they can go and do the shopping. I have been a carer myself, and I know that often the best-laid plans go awry because things change at the last minute. Part of this report that talks about livability talks about providing services and support for carers by way of respite care. I call on the government to acknowledge all of the recommendations in this report, and particularly the need for some support for respite care.

I also acknowledge my colleagues who are members of the committee: our chair, Jan Kronberg;, the deputy chair, Judith Graley, the member for Narre Warren South in the Assembly; Lucinda McLeish, the member for Seymour in the Assembly; and Natalie Hutchins, the member for Keilor in the Assembly. I also acknowledge our executive and secretariat team led by Nathan Bunt and Natalie-Mai Holmes, for a report which, whilst it is elaborate, goes into full detail about how we can make Victoria the most livable state and indeed Melbourne the world's most livable city again.

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Effective decision making for successful delivery of significant infrastructure projects

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

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

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

That the Council take note of the report.

In so doing, may I say it is a delight to table the 14th report in the 57th Parliament from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

Infrastructure expenditure matters. Large sums of public money are allocated to significant infrastructure projects each year. The Victorian budget papers for 2012–13 refer to \$5.8 billion of infrastructure investment, including \$2.7 billion of new projects. Overall, in 2012–13 there will be \$41 billion in public sector capital projects, including public-private partnerships under way in Victoria. If delivered well, infrastructure can enhance services to the public and improve the productivity of the state; if delivered poorly, potential benefits are not fully realised and significant additional cost can accrue to the taxpayer.

The reference for this inquiry was provided by the Legislative Assembly on 5 May 2011, and the terms of reference focused on the competencies and skills required to successfully deliver major infrastructure projects. The committee established the following two main aims for the inquiry: to develop innovative strategies for identifying and harnessing infrastructure competencies and skills, and to promote best practices and continuous improvement in the planning, management and delivery of significant infrastructure projects. The committee sought to draw on the specialised knowledge, experience and skills of public sector agencies, private sector organisations and academia.

The committee examined six of the state's more recent major infrastructure projects to identify lessons to inform the decision making and implementation of future infrastructure projects. The specific projects selected for review were all commenced under the previous government, and in some cases the current government is endeavouring to complete them. Positive performance was noted in relation to some of the projects reviewed; however, the committee's examination also highlighted that there were areas of poor performance on a number of projects.

The committee also heard testimony from both the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman about some instances of major infrastructure projects being poorly managed in Victoria. Their concerns have been expressed in a number of previous reports to the Parliament. The committee's recommendations are designed to address these areas and strengthen decision making and performance in future infrastructure projects.

The committee heard evidence that other jurisdictions, within Australia and overseas, have also experienced

difficulties with cost overruns and project delays. The committee has identified reforms in a number of these jurisdictions which it considers Victoria can learn from. One of the issues which has been brought to the attention of the committee, and has been the subject of significant international research, is the impact of optimism bias and strategic misrepresentation in the planning of major projects resulting in advice to decision-makers that is not objective and impartial. It is considered that methods such as reference class forecasting which uses similar projects as benchmarks, could assist in addressing the issue of overly optimistic and/or deliberately unrealistic project cost and delivery time frames.

Other reforms noted by the committee include the centralisation of key public infrastructure planning and procurement functions into dedicated, independent bodies, at arms-length from departmental structures, including central Treasury.

The committee's recommendations have, in part, been based on these better-practice reforms. The major changes recommended by the committee include: a new advisory body to recommend priorities for infrastructure investment in Victoria, subject to confirmation by the government, depending on available funding, including a formalised pipeline of future projects; a new body to be a centre of excellence for project development and delivery with overall responsibility for ensuring that Victoria has the necessary expertise and capability to deliver major infrastructure projects successfully — the transfer of appropriate experts and functions from some agencies to this new body will be necessary — and a strengthening of the oversight and accountability mechanisms, especially around the delivery of significant infrastructure projects.

The committee wishes to express its appreciation for the attention that has been given by all parties in the furnishing of submissions, the provision of evidence at public hearings and in written responses to questionnaires from the committee. In particular I wish to thank my colleagues on the committee for their bipartisan and collegiate approach, exemplified on this inquiry. It had great potential to be a challenging inquiry with a challenging outcome; however, I acknowledge the collaborative approach.

In particular I wish to thank the committee's secretariat, most capably led by the executive officer, Valerie Cheong, for its dedication in assisting the committee on a multiplicity of activities associated with this inquiry.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I echo the committee chair's comments and if members do not mind me saying so, I think it is a credit to the committee that we have been able to table in Parliament today a unanimous report, given the terms of reference and some of the difficulties encountered during the public hearings. It is easy to envisage how this report and the suite of issues contained within it could have torn the committee apart. The manner in which the committee chair in particular, but frankly all members of the committee, sought to shape the report in a way that allowed it to be accepted by all members is exemplified in the content of the foreword by the committee chair, into which, as members know, other committee members have had no input and do not have the opportunity to see until the report is tabled. On my reading of it in part, which we have just listened to, the committee chair has maintained that bipartisan and collegiate approach in his drafting of the foreword.

It was a very difficult inquiry. Whenever a government issues terms of reference to a parliamentary committee which effectively invites the committee to examine the conduct and performance of the former government, it is a matter that can be very challenging for a committee. It is also challenging when a bipartisan committee is trying to agree on the way forward to provide recommendations to Parliament and the government about how infrastructure ought to be delivered in the future. The fact that we have produced a report that we have all been able to endorse is a tribute not just to the committee but to the stellar work done by the executive of the committee, led by its executive officer, Valerie Cheong, and I commend the report to the house.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I too would like to endorse the remarks of the chair and deputy chair in relation to the bipartisan and professional manner in which this important inquiry has been approached, not only by the committee members; I also thank the secretariat, the many witnesses and the submitters who gave their valuable time to assist the committee in its deliberations and recommendations on the way forward.

As outlined by the chair, I think it is important when assessing anything as important as infrastructure delivery that one looks to the past for lessons learnt and that once those lessons have been learnt one then looks to the future. As has been outlined by the Deputy President, looking at the past can be a difficult exercise, particularly if things have gone wrong, and in some of these projects things had gone wrong; however, there is also the difficulty of looking to the future in relation to the role of the parliamentary committee.

A particular emphasis I would like to place on lessons learnt concerns the importance of understanding a business case and making sure there is a long-term view of the infrastructure delivery.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN — Given that the Greens have chosen not to be on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, I would urge Mr Barber to read the report and put his party members in a better place for the future of Victoria — that is, to make sure they understand the requirements of infrastructure delivery in this state.

In relation to this report, what we as a government will do is obviously a matter for the executive, but I would urge those who read the report to focus on the importance of understanding the need to plan for the long term, to build for the future and to fix the problems of the past.

Motion agreed to.

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Motorcycle safety

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) presented report, including appendices and extracts from proceedings, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

It is a great pleasure to present to the house the joint parliamentary Road Safety Committee's report on an inquiry into motorcycle safety. This report has been the subject of wide consultation, with 76 written submissions received, over 100 witnesses providing evidence in Melbourne and regional Victoria and people from riders to academics and road trauma experts being consulted throughout the hearing process. Information has also been sought from interstate and international jurisdictions. This report puts forward 64 recommendations, and I will highlight a few of those measures in the short time I have.

To be clear, there is no recommendation as a result of this inquiry for an increase in mandatory protective clothing, the introduction of reflective or fluorescent vests or front numberplates, the removal of wire rope

barriers, licensing regimes or changes to the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme.

One of the greatest frustrations of the inquiry was that data collection and sharing between government agencies and departments is almost non-existent. Without proper data it is difficult to recommend actions relating to motorcycle safety. Data on such matters as the protective clothing worn by a rider, whether excessive or inappropriate speed was a factor, the type of power two-wheeler involved and even rider experience would have been helpful to our investigations. That is why recommendation 1 seeks to remedy this situation. It is:

That an independent office of road safety data be created, which will be responsible for collecting, collating, interpreting and publishing all data relevant to road safety ...

That will allow evidence-based policy to be developed.

Recommendation 23 is that a motorcycle safety awareness week be held annually in Victoria in conjunction with the Phillip Island MotoGP. At a time when motorcycles are top of mind in the community messages about sharing the road with this vulnerable group and also the measures motorcyclists themselves can take to manage the risks can be conveyed.

Recommendation 25 is that the motorcycle safety levy be abolished. According to the VicRoads website the funds raised by the levy to June 2012 are \$45 million. While VicRoads attests that \$42.7 million has been committed to or approved for projects, an answer to a question on notice relating to VicRoads on 6 March 2012 cites that \$4.5 million has been spent on black-spot programs. If this is the case, then only 10 per cent of funds has actually been expended while the balance remains only committed or approved. This would suggest that the funds have not been adequately allocated to road safety measures to improve the lot of motorcyclists and that the levy is therefore not achieving its goals. Ancillary recommendations suggest better use of the funds and transparency if this recommendation is not adopted.

Further recommendations call for improved consultation and communication between all road safety agencies, motorcycle organisations and stakeholder groups; motorcycle advocacy groups working towards greater cooperation; a crash reporting and investigation study based on the Motorcycle Accident In-Depth Study, also known as MAIDS, to be undertaken; a star rating system for protective clothing to be established; the benefits and risks of filtering, as distinct from lane splitting, to be reviewed; and a

hypothecation of funds derived from enforcement and their transfer to a specific road safety fund.

I would like to thank the secretariat staff, Kylie Jenkins, John Aliferis and Christianne Castro, for their hard work, great dedication to this inquiry and patience. I thank my colleagues — the chair, Murray Thompson, the member for Sandringham in the Assembly; the deputy chair, Telmo Languiller, the member for Derrimut in the Assembly; Bill Tilly, the member for Benambra in the Assembly; and Jude Perera, the member for Cranbourne in the Assembly — for the collegial way in which this inquiry was carried out. I look forward to our next inquiry proceeding in the same manner.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Learning Technologies in Government Schools,
December 2012.

Management of the Provincial Victoria Growth Fund,
December 2012.

Ombudsman — Report on the investigation into the governance and administration of the Victorian Building Commission, December 2012.

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 — Final Report pursuant to section 191ZD(1) of the Taxi Industry Inquiry — Customers First: Service, Safety, Choice, September 2012.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Ilona Legin

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — Ilona Eve Legin was born in 1981 to Dareton blocky Graeme Legin and his wife, Sue, a local nurse. Ilona was a winemaker who, as she put it, 'survived 12 vintages', and worked in Australia and in wineries around Europe and America. Ilona was a witty, inelegant, dry-humoured and very stylish woman who campaigned bravely in the last months of her life for better health-care services for the Sunraysia community.

Ilona confessed she was never a political person, even once accusing her father of being a communist for joining a trade union. Her personal experiences in Mildura's health system changed this, and she went on to become a local activist who inspired thousands of people in Mildura to stand up for the sacred institution

that is public health care without fear of retribution. Mildura Base Hospital is the only privatised hospital in the state. Ilona campaigned hard for its return to public ownership and for equitable health-care provision for people in the Mildura region. At a public rally attended by hundreds of people, Ilona stated, 'I may not have my health, but I have a voice; you all have a voice'.

Ilona inspired people living with chronic and terminal illnesses across the Sunraysia region and around the world. Asked in an interview what advice she would give to people who had been recently diagnosed with cancer, she said, 'Don't give up. Always have hope. There is always hope. Cancer can hurt you, it can kill you but it can't kill your spirit and it can't kill your hope — ever. It can't touch it, so to anyone who has just been diagnosed I say just keep going, keep fighting'. Ilona will be terribly missed by her family and members of her community. She is survived by her cat, George Clooney, and chihuahua Peppa.

RD Tint: showroom opening

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I wish to acknowledge the great work of Randeep Singh Waraich and his wife Preet in investing in a new showroom for their business, RD Tint, in Epping. It is a great statement about business confidence by this young couple, who started a tint business from their home garage and expanded the business so much that they had to move into a brand-new showroom in Epping which I had the privilege of opening on Saturday. I wish them well in their venture.

La Trobe University: research ranking

Mr ONDARCHIE — I wish to congratulate La Trobe University, which is now ranked third in Victoria for research. La Trobe University has been confirmed as one of the nation's leading research universities, climbing to third in Victoria based on the Excellence in Research Australia 2012 report released last week. La Trobe is the top-ranked institution in the nation for research in microbiology and is ranked equal top with just one other university in biochemistry and cell biology, and in veterinary sciences. La Trobe has nine fields of research well above world standard in specific disciplines, second only to Melbourne and Monash universities.

La Trobe's fields of speciality, such as science, health sciences and humanities, are well above world standard. This is a wonderful institution in the Northern Metropolitan Region that is taking great leaps forward in embracing the wider community as well. Its work in the community with people from diverse cultures

across the region is to be commended. We are finding more students from diverse backgrounds now entering tertiary institutions thanks to the great work of La Trobe.

I congratulate chancellor Adrienne Clarke, vice-chancellor Professor John Dewar, the council, David Ensor, the executive director, and the whole team at La Trobe University on a great job. I wish them well in 2013.

Eureka rebellion: 158th anniversary

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — The third day of December this year marked the 158th anniversary of the Eureka rebellion, a day when people from many nations made their stand for democracy on Ballarat Hill. It was a struggle for better and equal opportunities. A number of events were held in Ballarat to mark the day on which we remember the sacrifices of the men and women who fought for democracy. I had the pleasure of attending the Museum of Australian Democracy at the Eureka Centre which stands on the very ground where the Eureka rebellion took place. Guests at the event were treated to two songs from south-western Victorian singer and songwriter Shane Howard, whose great-grandfather was arrested by troopers during the rebellion but later released without charge.

The museum, which is due to be completed in May 2013, will be a truly impressive facility providing information and education on one of Australia's most important events in history. Funded by all three levels of government, including the former state Labor government and current federal Labor government, the centre is Australia's newest cutting-edge museum curated in collaboration with some of the best Australian and international historians and museum experts. The centrepiece is of course the 158-year-old Eureka flag, which will be housed in a purpose-built gallery. The museum will have interactive exhibits, two education spaces and a theatre. Bricks and mortar are important, but this museum is different; it is very contemporary, it has space for conversation and space for engagement and provides an opportunity for the public to explore the principles and delivery of democracy. However, the absence of members of the Baillieu government was disappointing and duly noted.

Ms Broad: conduct

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — Candy Broad, a member for Northern Victoria Region, has been spending an enormous amount of energy in recent times talking down regional Victoria, the very region

she is supposed to be representing. While the coalition has been busy supporting families in regional Victoria by working to deliver improved health, transport and education services, despite the federal government's savage budget cuts to state funding, Ms Broad has been trotting around the state spreading her message of negativity. She has even had the audacity to criticise coalition projects like the Bendigo hospital and the Wallan-Kilmore bypass, projects that the former Labor government failed to deliver during 11 long years in government.

Ms Broad's energy would be better spent on meeting with federal member for McEwen, Rob Mitchell, to fight for a better deal for Victoria, and in particular regional Victoria. She should be asking Rob Mitchell to fight for a reversal of the federal funding cuts to TAFE, child-care and health funding. Ms Broad needs to put Victoria ahead of her allegiance to the Labor Party.

Local government: differential rates

Mrs PETROVICH — I also want to speak about differential rates. I note last week's announcement by the Minister for Local Government, Jeanette Powell, that the consultation program to develop new guidelines for the use of differential rates by local councils is officially under way with the establishment of the differential rates ministerial committee. Labor and the Greens declined the invitation to participate in the committee, effectively turning their backs on the property owners affected by the impost of differential rates. These property owners include a number of Beveridge farmers who are currently being forced to pay almost \$50 000 per year in rates to Mitchell Shire Council after having a double rate imposed on them. Their repeated requests for the Mitchell Shire Council to explain the justification for the rate increase have been met with evasion and belligerence by council staff — —

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Christmas felicitations

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — On behalf of the Greens I take this opportunity to offer our best wishes to all parliamentary staff in this holiday season — they being library staff; Hansard staff; IT staff; organisational development staff; security and electorate properties staff; buildings and grounds staff; catering staff — including those who have left this year; the clerks; the deputy clerks and their staff; the assistant clerks; the papers office staff — I am one of their best customers; committee staff; Legislative Council attendants; and security staff and PSOs.

'PSO' stands for protective services officer, and the no. 1 job of the PSOs in this place is to protect all of us and the other people who have business here. They are not out there for show; they are not car parking attendants or tour guides — their no. 1 job is to ensure that this Parliament continues to function, without which we would not have a functioning democracy. We owe our support and best wishes to all of them, along with all the other staff I have mentioned, who have worked together to deliver this incredibly important — in fact central — responsibility we have here, which is to Victoria's democracy.

Government: achievements

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — It is timely to reflect on some of the successes the government has achieved in the past two years. None of them could have been achieved without a sustainable budget. Maintaining a AAA rating has been a major achievement of the Baillieu coalition government, because every other state has now been downgraded and Victoria is the only one left with a AAA rating. The Treasurer and the Premier are to be congratulated on this.

I reiterate some of the programs that have been implemented and some of the excellent work that has been done. There has been some excellent work within the portfolios for which Mary Wooldridge — as Minister for Community Services, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development — is responsible, and I have been privileged to be her parliamentary secretary. For example there has been a commitment to the national disability insurance scheme and the expansion of disability services. We are about to implement the state disability plan. There has been an apology for past adoption practices.

There has been a reduction in housing waiting lists and there have been new housing projects, both to the credit of the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell. There has been increased child protection through the Cummins report and a hefty \$60 million support package to go with that report. There has been the child abuse inquiry, instigated by the Attorney-General and Minister Wooldridge and under the excellent chairing of Georgie Crozier. There have also been the strategy to prevent violence against women and children, expanded services and stronger laws, as well as the excellent antiviolence action plan.

I congratulate the coalition government. We look forward to the next two years.

Springvale: men's shed

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I congratulate the Springvale multicultural men's shed on its successful launch a few weeks ago, and I thank the organising committee for all its efforts to make that event such a success. I acknowledge the attendance of my parliamentary colleagues Gavin Jennings and Hong Lim, the member for Clayton in the other place, as well as representatives from many and diverse multicultural groups, who were treated to live cultural performances on the night.

The launch, which was attended by over 180 people, was also an opportunity to raise funds for the project, which will be Victoria's first multicultural men's shed and will be located in Springvale on a site donated by the Springvale Uniting Church. The shed will provide an environment where males from all backgrounds can come together in a supportive environment to learn and celebrate each other's diversity while developing their knowledge and confidence to meet the challenges they face in day-to-day life. It will be responsive to the community and participants, modifying its programs as required to meet the needs of users.

The concept of establishing Victoria's first multicultural men's shed was developed by Springvale Uniting Church, in particular by the Reverend Paul Creasey. I wish to acknowledge the ongoing support from the City of Greater Dandenong, Cr Roz Blades, Cr Youhorn Chea, Jane Farrell from Service Stars, Cyndy Connole from United Voice Victoria, Tim Dionyssopoulos from Maurice Blackburn, Mary Gardiner and Reverend Paul Creasey from Springvale Uniting Church, and Sam Navarria.

Once operational, some of the activities at the shed will include social connection and interaction; men's health and wellbeing support; vocational assistance and development; emotional support; language classes; assistance with writing CVs; a community garden; cooking, nutrition and life skills classes; and cultural awareness classes for newly settled cultural and linguistically diverse men across all ages and communities. This is a great project, and I look forward to continuing to work with this team of dedicated people to advance it.

Mount Scopus Memorial College: St Kilda early learning centre

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, visited the Gandel Besen House early learning centre at Mount Scopus Memorial

College last week with both myself and the member for Caulfield in the Assembly, David Southwick, who has a very close relationship with Mount Scopus. Early learning is an important part of a child's early development and can be crucial in those formative years. I was pleased to see in a recent press release from the minister that there has been an increase in Victorian children attending kindergarten. The participation rate is now 97.9 per cent, which is a tremendous result.

Mount Scopus offers kindergartens at two locations, one in St Kilda East and one in Caulfield South. Our tour consisted of visiting a number of kindergarten rooms where the children were making preparations for Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday currently being celebrated, which goes for eight days and nights, commencing on the 25th day of the Jewish calendar month of Kislev. During the visit the children sang traditional songs and showed us their paintings and artwork depicting the menorah and other symbolic decorations of Hanukkah.

This kindergarten is one of many across our state that provide diverse learning opportunities. I am pleased that the Baillieu government supports diversity and parental choice for all levels of education and in doing so will continue to work in partnership with non-government schools to provide ongoing educational diversity. Thank you to Rene Israel, Bella Maevisky, Layla Sacker and all the teachers and children who gave us such a warm welcome on our visit, and again congratulations to the minister for providing additional funding and taking the lead in enabling ongoing parental choice in children's education.

Climate change: global impact

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — People everywhere are shocked by reports that the average global temperature continues to rise and is predicted to increase by 4 per cent to 6 per cent by the end of the century unless action is taken. Nations have not been effective enough in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the fear now is that the planet is on the road to an environmental catastrophe that cannot be reversed, even though it will not impact uniformly on all parts of the world.

The executive director of Global Carbon Project, Pep Canadell, has appeared on TV warning that greenhouse gas emissions will have risen 2.6 per cent by the end of this year, on top of a 3 per cent rise in 2011. Since 1990 emissions have increased by 54 per cent. The research, conducted by the CSIRO and the Australian Climate Change Science Program, came as reports appeared

that the permafrost in Alaska and Siberia is thawing for the first time in 11 000 years, releasing methane as well as carbon dioxide into the air from the peat deposits underneath the ice. The reality is that while we can reduce the carbon dioxide generated by human beings, we have no control over the greenhouse gases, including dangerous methane, being released from the thawing of the permafrost.

This brings us to the Doha Climate Change Conference that sections of the Australian media have gleefully trashed, ignoring the positives that managed to emerge. There is no shame in Australia standing with the 35 nations, albeit a minority, that recommitted to the Kyoto protocol and committed to financially support developing economies protecting the environment while improving their standard of living.

Jack Melbourne and Natalie Templar

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — It was a great pleasure last Tuesday, 4 December, to again host the Harold Bould Memorial Award presentation in my electorate office in Pakenham. The purpose of the presentation was to acknowledge the 2012 award recipients, Jack Melbourne and Natalie Templar, Jack being a student at Pakenham Secondary College and Natalie being a student at Beaconhills College. I wish them all the best for their training and their walking of the Kokoda Track next year. It was also terrific to have all the previous winners there on the day, as well as veterans of the 39th Battalion and members of the Pakenham RSL and the Koo Wee Rup RSL. It was a great day, and I wish Jack and Natalie all the best for their training and trip next year.

Olinda Recreation Reserve: facility funding

Mr O'DONOHUE — It was also a great privilege on 30 November to announce on behalf of the government an extra \$250 000 towards the HillTop project in Olinda. This was added to the \$100 000 that had already been announced in July, together with the contribution from the Yarra Ranges Shire Council of \$1 million and the \$350 000 raised through the fantastic efforts of the local community, including \$250 000 from the Bendigo Bank. It means this project will be a reality. It is a great win for the local community. It is a great partnership between the community, the shire and the state government.

Yarra Riverkeeper Association: cruise

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — On 5 November, along with other opposition MPs, I went on a cruise of the Yarra River organised by the Yarra

Riverkeeper Association, a not-for-profit organisation that actively advocates for the preservation and protection of the Yarra River and its surroundings. The tour began at Burnley Harbour in Richmond and continued upstream to Johnston Street, Collingwood. It was fascinating to view the Yarra's ecosystem. The Yarra River is of course an integral part of Melbourne, and it is imperative that it is protected and enhanced. I thank Ian Penrose and the Yarra Riverkeeper Association, of which I happen to be a member, for providing me with a unique opportunity to view the Yarra River from the passionate perspective of its knowledgeable keepers.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria: reference group

Ms MIKAKOS — On another matter, on 10 November I attended a Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) youth reference group meeting to discuss various issues relating to Victoria's youth, including the Baillieu government's savage cuts to TAFE and youth mentoring and body image programs, amongst many others. The reference group is a diverse group of young people working in partnership with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria to represent young people in Victoria. They advocate on a range of issues and the group provides a much-needed forum for young people to make their voice heard.

I congratulate the co-chairs of the youth reference group, Adriana and Tim; the youth engagement officer, Leo Fieldgrass; the YACVic young media spokesperson, Nic Kimberley; and all members of the reference group on the work they do in advocating for our young people with government. I was very impressed with all the members of the reference group, and I wish them well in the future.

GOVERNMENT: PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed from 28 November; motion of Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan):

That this house notes that the Baillieu-Ryan coalition promised the people of Victoria in 2010 to 'fix the problems' and 'build the future' but has failed to successfully plan, build or deliver on its promise during the past two years, in particular —

- (1) cost of living pressures on families have increased with higher taxes and charges levied by the Baillieu government, which is now the highest taxing and spending government in the history of the state;
- (2) health services have been cut and promises that were made have not been delivered on;

- (3) education services and school construction have been cut and promises that were made have not been delivered on; and
- (4) after two years in office, the Baillieu government has no jobs plan;

and that this house calls on the Baillieu-Ryan government to plan for the future, build both infrastructure and human capital and deliver on its election commitments.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to speak on Mr Lenders's motion, which refers to promises that the Baillieu government made in the election campaign and that have been broken. I have been surprised in recent times that the Premier has been quoted by different media outlets as saying words to the effect of, 'We' — as in his government — 'have delivered on everything we said we would do'. I am very surprised the government would say that sort of thing. If members of the Baillieu government think they can all of a sudden shy away from the promises they made pre-election, I have got to put them on notice: they are dreaming.

It has inspired me to draw up my own A to Z of Baillieu government broken promises. The problem with that is there are not enough letters in the alphabet we commonly use. I had a brief discussion with my good friend and colleague Mr Tarlamis about the Greek alphabet, and he assures me that I could borrow some from there, so Mr Tarlamis and I might have a crack at doing one in Greek and English. I understand Chinese Mandarin has an endless number of characters you can use, so after Mr Tarlamis and I have a go at our joint one we might move to get some advice from our good colleague in the other house who would assist us in Mandarin.

I will proceed with my A to Z of the Baillieu government broken promises. Let us start with A:

- A is for anticorruption commission that will be broadbased and up and running by mid-2011.
- B is for build a rail line to Doncaster.
- C is for cost of living pressures on family budgets will be eased.
- D is for deliver an annual families statement to Parliament.
- E is for ease traffic congestion.
- F is for freedom of information: ask and you will receive.
- G is for gas to 13 townships across country Victoria.
- H is for highest paid teachers.
- I is for implement all the bushfires royal commission recommendations 'lock, stock and barrel'.
- J is for jobs — more jobs. Yes, there were jobs for two extra ministers, but we are struggling to find more jobs past that.
- K is for keep the target to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20 per cent by 2020.
- L is for link Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo with a rail line.

M is for more learning opportunities in the tertiary education sector.

N is for not sack any public servants.

O is for open and transparent 'no spin' government.

P is for PSOs on every major regional train station.

Q is for question time: eliminate Dorothy Dix questions.

R is for rail line to Tullamarine airport.

S is for Southland train station.

T is for T5 fluorescent lighting: fund local councils to replace energy guzzling streetlights.

U is for upgraded mental health services, disability services and community services.

V is for Victorian streets will be made safe.

W is for waiting lists: hospital waiting lists will be slashed.

X is for Xerox machine in the Frankston electorate office: the promise was for accountability, not accounting.

Y is for young Victorians being trained in skills will be a priority of a Baillieu government.

Z is for zero, the number delivered so far of the 800 hospital beds that were promised to be delivered in the government's first term.

Members should feel free to question this list, but it was derived directly from Liberal and Nationals electoral material produced in 2010 or from comments made in 2010 by the now Premier, Ted Baillieu.

As I said from the outset, if Baillieu government MPs and the Premier think they can go around and do a Ninja mind trick on everyone and say, 'We have delivered on everything we said we would do', they are dreaming. Just on the statement, 'We have delivered on everything we said we would do', I cannot remember — and I am happy for any government MP to correct me on this if I am wrong — the coalition, when in opposition and campaigning to come into government, promising to destroy the Victorian TAFE system; I cannot remember it saying it was going to do that. Let us not have anyone get up and say, 'We promised what we said we would do'. I am happy to go through the document with any government MP in the future.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — It gives me great pleasure to respond to Mr Leane and his cheer squad — his giggling Gertie on the backbench, Ms Pulford — and some of his alphabetical nuances. In fact I am surprised Mr Leane got from A to Z; I congratulate him on his capacity to get through the 26 letters.

I am more than happy to take up as much opposition time as possible on this, given that it was a motion brought to this chamber by Mr Lenders. I have to say that in a past role I always worked well with Mr Lenders. He was very passionate about the portfolios he represented, particularly agriculture and WorkSafe, areas in which I had similar interests. Bringing forward a motion like this in opposition

business allows the likes of Mr Leane to pontificate and have some fun in relation to what he suggests are unfulfilled election commitments, but it also allows us to spend considerable time going through those commitments that have been fulfilled by the Baillieu government as well as its achievements.

In the next 4 hours, or less, if I am so inclined, I intend to take considerable time going through a number of achievements and commitments that have been fulfilled by the Baillieu government in the first two years of its tenure. I will also concentrate on a number of the commitments that have been fulfilled in Western Victoria Region, which I represent. Mr Lenders should sit back and enjoy this.

Mr Lenders — Are you going to start with the X? Start with X for Xerox machine.

Mr RAMSAY — Will I start from A? I will start from A, as that is where we started when our tenure of government began on 3 December 2010. The situation we inherited from the Labor government — and it has been well categorised — involved a considerable debt; a struggling surplus; an at-risk AAA rating; a desalination plant, which was not completed at that stage with a forecast cost for payers of water rates of more than \$2 million a day over 27 years; and the costs for the Melbourne market relocation, which was being negotiated when I was president of the Victorian Farmers Federation, which had blown out to \$250 million at the time. I am not sure what the current figure of the cost blow-out is now, but I am sure it is considerably more. There were also the costs for the myki ticketing system that had blown out by \$1.4 billion and which had to be reviewed and rejigged; broken down road and rail systems in regional Victoria; a lack of maintenance in schools; councils struggling to maintain or support their assets let alone improve or increase them; and an all-time low in the productivity rate of the public service. It was a pretty gloomy start to the Baillieu government's tenure.

We said we would maintain our surpluses, keep our AAA rating and reduce public service staff, given the costs in relation to the public service represented nearly 50 per cent of the total budget, through natural attrition and voluntary departures. We tried to stem the loss of revenue, including the loss of \$6.1 billion in GST revenue over four years making a total loss in revenue of \$7.6 billion. We said we would look for savings of \$2.2 billion in the 2011–12 budget, and we said we would make a number of tax reforms. The fire services levy is the largest and most major tax reform the state has seen. This was something the Labor government could not and would not do. As members know, the

reformed fire services levy will be introduced by 1 July 2013. We have provided \$20 million worth of concessions to veterans and pensioners, and it is indicated that the savings to businesses will be around \$45 million.

We have also reduced land transfer duties payable by first home buyers by 50 per cent to encourage the housing market and investment in land purchases. We have maintained the second lowest payroll tax of any jurisdiction in Australia. However, this tax is an impost on business and, because we are the Liberal Party, we need to continue to pursue the removal of this burden on businesses that is a tax on employers employing workers.

I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about the election commitments that have been fulfilled in my electorate of Western Victoria Region given Mr Lenders has given me the opportunity to do so. The \$93 million worth of upgrades to the Geelong Hospital were strongly endorsed by the Geelong community. Also endorsed was the \$5 million for the radiotherapy services in Warrnambool; the recently announced creation of 70 jobs at Bombardier in relation to the purchase of 40 new V/Line trains; and the \$408 million in school capital grant works across Victorian schools in the first two budgets. The Ballarat District Nursing and Healthcare centre, for which I strongly lobbied, was recently successful in being granted \$1.8 million to upgrade its facility. I had great pleasure in announcing on behalf of Peter Ryan, the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, \$800 000 to go towards the Leadership Ballarat and the Western Region project. Over two years I have met potential leaders who have gone through that course and have taken on many leadership roles in the Ballarat district.

It was pleasing to see CBD security cameras — we allocated \$200 000 towards them — being installed in the Bridge Mall precinct and at the bus interchange at Little Bridge Street in Ballarat where some antisocial behaviour was happening. I had great pleasure in attending the opening of the Ballarat regional soccer facility with Hugh Delahunty, the Minister for Sport and Recreation. We provided \$2 million towards the facility which provided the stadium pitch, fencing, change rooms, first aid, officials' rooms and a community function space. As the second storey is being planned, further works and funding will be required.

In June last year I was pleased to be with Peter Walsh, the Minister for Water, to announce \$1 million towards integrated water cycle management, which involves a feasibility study to create a plan to harvest stormwater

for non-drinking purposes in Ballarat. I was also pleased to see the extension of funding to the regional office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Ballarat. It started in 2011 and is now being fully utilised by the public and different stakeholders.

Our candidate for the lower house seat of Ballarat East, Ben Taylor, at the last election lobbied for the Yarrowee River upgrade, which involved cleaning up the river and included installing litter traps, weed removal, tree planting, creating bike and walking trails, installing lighting and conducting beautification works. We look forward to having the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Mr Ryan Smith, in the area shortly to see the finished works in relation to that river.

It was announced that Creswick Bowling Club would receive \$300 000; this was an important announcement to the over 100 members of that club who were impacted by three floods throughout the period of September 2010 to March 2011. We were also able to attract another \$600 000 from Regional Development Victoria, which will enable the bowls club to relocate to the Doug Lindsay Recreation Reserve and be moved away from a high-risk area that has the potential to experience ongoing flooding.

I had great pleasure in opening the 150-year celebration of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens. The Baillieu government gave \$50 000 to build a dry-stone wall and memorial gate to celebrate the 150th year of the gardens. I encourage anyone who has time to spend in Buninyong to visit the gardens. It is a retreat where there is a good use of the natural habitat. There are windmills, farmlands, rocks, water and native grasses.

We doubled the number of paramedics in Daylesford. I was in Daylesford the other day. We looked at the location of the new police station site, which is another Baillieu commitment. I am pleased to say that we have allocated \$2.5 million for two police stations in Ballarat. One is for an upgrade at Ballarat North, which is shovel-ready, and I look forward to seeing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Ryan, there soon to look at the works that are continuing. There has also been a rejig of the Sebastopol police station, where a new hub, an emergency service centre, will be created to provide a range of services for the growing western corridor in Ballarat.

It was also pleasing to be at the old Sebastopol Secondary College site, where we announced funding of \$10 million, plus a further \$8 million, for what will be known as the Phoenix P-12 Community College, which will incorporate a demolition and rebuilding

of the Midlands senior classrooms and the building of open plan learning spaces. Of that \$18 million, \$10 million was allocated in the 2012 budget. I was also pleased to be able to hop on a bike and test out the new BMX track upgrade at the Marty Busch Reserve at Sebastopol, for which we allocated \$60 000. This was to upgrade track and race facilities to a state standard.

It is pleasing to see work starting on the \$38 million western link road. This road link from the Western Highway to Remembrance Drive will continue ultimately to the Midlands Highway and Geelong. We have allocated \$2.5 million for planning in the 2011 budget and \$35.5 million for construction works in the 2012 budget.

I am pleased an announcement was made about a helipad, 60 new beds and an ambulatory care wing for Ballarat Health Services at a total cost of \$73.4 million. I congratulate my parliamentary colleague David Koch, who chaired a working party with key stakeholders to look at all the options for the helipad site. It was appropriate that due diligence was done in relation to a preferred site, and I congratulate Mr Koch for reaching an outcome where we could make a recommendation to the Minister for Health and where the minister, in conjunction with Ballarat Health Services, could announce a preferred site, as well as funding for 60 new beds and construction of the ambulatory centre and the cancer care centre. If anyone goes to Ballarat and has a look around the health services, they will see it is a hive of activity in relation to upgrades and reconstruction. The Baillieu government has put significant money into the upgrade of Ballarat Health Services with the helipad, the new beds, the ambulatory care centre and the cancer centre.

We allocated \$1.6 million for Ballarat trains to start and finish at Wendouree station. So far 68 services a week travel from Wendouree, and we are also providing two protective services officers for both the Wendouree and Ballarat stations.

In regard to the Ballarat-Buninyong Road, I note that the member for Ballarat East in the other house continually goes down to the main road with a little placard around his shoulders demanding that we upgrade this road, despite the fact that for 11 years he sat in his little office down in Little Bridge Street not being able to put one cent into the road. I was with the general manager of VicRoads, western region, only last week, and we looked at the second stage of the upgrade of that road. It is being done in stages to minimise the impact on traffic along that route; traffic is growing, and it is an important investment to upgrade that road. I am pleased to see that in just one year and a half the

Baillieu government has done more than the member for Ballarat East could do in 11 years.

It is also pleasing to see the Ballan District Health and Care redevelopment, for which we allocated \$2 million. This is a redevelopment to include seven transitional care beds, an improved 24-hour emergency stabilisation centre, a new X-ray imaging facility, a new palliative care centre and two weighted inlier equivalent separation-funded acute public beds. With the improvement of the school and the hospital in Ballan as well as the hospital, that community is very appreciative of the significant investment the Baillieu government has made in that town.

Only last week I was pleased to be with Minister Ryan to officially announce the site for the Country Fire Authority station at Mount Helen. We purchased the site some months ago, and we are looking forward to building a shed that will house two fire tankers and a roll-on unit at Mount Helen, which will provide a fire service, particularly for the high-risk area around Mount Helen. Once again we have seen the member for Ballarat East jumping up and down demanding that the Baillieu government build a fire station, yet for the 11 long, dry and drought-filled years of Labor, there was no sign of any willingness to invest even one cent into fire facilities at Mount Helen. Again the Baillieu government has done that in less than two years.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — We also upgraded the historic Ballarat fire station. I do not know if Mr Lenders has had the opportunity to pass through Ballarat recently. We allocated \$700 000 to improve a very historic fire station, which was known as the Barkly Street station, and to build a truck storage shed at the rear.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Now that Mr Lenders has interjected it might be an opportunity for me to talk about the time I took out of my very busy electorate duties to attend the Rural Press Club of Victoria lunch, where the guest speaker was none other than the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews. There was seating for about 100 people, but only 32 people attended, of whom 13 were Labor MPs dragged to attend from across the state with 10 of their staffers. There were also 4 reporters. In attending I think they were quite pleased that I actually filled the room a bit. As I walked in I thought this is a Labor Party conference, it could not be a rural press club lunch. The member from Gippsland came across to Ballarat. Other members

came from the top, the far west, the south. It was not only MPs; their staffers had to come along as well — either because they had not been fed for some time or because they thought here was an opportunity to have a free lunch.

Nevertheless, despite a very attentive and political audience, I was there to actually hear what the Labor Party might offer as a regional blueprint for Victoria. While I sat there for the 25-minute presentation, of which 20 minutes was spent criticising the Baillieu government — and Mr Lenders has again taken the opportunity to do that today — after a whole range of rants and criticisms we finally got to the last 5 minutes of Mr Andrews' presentation, discussing what things the Labor Party might do for regional Victoria. Do you know what they were? One was to get rid of the Regional Growth Fund — to get rid of the billion-dollar Regional Growth Fund — and replace it with a dysfunctional Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, which has a very similar name to the fund that Labor previously had which placed significant restrictions on investing in regional Victoria.

The big announcement of the Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, who pulled in his MPs from all over Victoria, was to say, 'We're getting rid of the Regional Growth Fund' — the billion-dollar Regional Growth Fund that is there to support regional Victoria through a whole range of infrastructure.

The second announcement was so powerful that I cannot actually remember what it was. After that 30-minute presentation I came away scratching my head and thinking that here was an opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to tell the rural press club and rural Victorians what the Labor Party stood for in rural Victoria, and the only thing I came away with was that Labor wanted to get rid of probably the most important asset that rural Victoria has, and that is the Regional Growth Fund.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — I am not sure whether Mr Lenders came away embarrassed or ashamed or disillusioned, but I came away all of those things, thinking that there is not much the Labor Party can offer Victoria and rural Victoria based on the presentation that Daniel Andrews gave that day.

I just want to talk about some things that have played a significant part in the success and prosperity of regional Victoria over the last two years of the Baillieu government. There was the very important \$100 million investment into 40 rural councils. They

are getting \$1 million per year, unattached to and separate from their normal budgets, to provide for roads and bridges. I cannot tell the house how important that is. For the 23 rural councils in my region — and I meet regularly with all of them — that investment, although it is not an overly large one considering their budget, has been one of the most important investments the government has made in its history to local councils so they are able to invest directly into the prime assets of their roads and bridges.

But while the government has been investing in roads and bridges we have seen the result of an ad hoc wind farm policy by the previous government that was providing planning permits across Victoria to satisfy its Greens colleagues, without any community consultation and without any appropriate conditions on the permits to support councils where there has been significant road degradation in light of the construction, maintenance and ongoing work of wind turbines.

I have raised in this house a number of concerns over a two-year period about the impact that those permits issued under the Labor government are having on communities across rural Victoria. They have divided communities. Once lifelong friends in little local communities are now fighting amongst themselves. The road networks have been deteriorating, and councils like the Shire of Moyne have been left with bills of potentially \$80 million to be able to rebuild. The wind generators themselves are throwing money around to community groups to try to garner this support. There have been suggestions by many constituents who come to my office that the proximity of those turbines is having a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of those people who have to live next to them.

Labor really has created a significant problem in rural Victoria. It has created a monster amongst local communities that traditionally have got on very well and supported each other. It has created a huge divide — a chasm — in rural communities because of its ad hoc approach to planning permits on wind energy across rural Victoria. Until we can substantiate the health impacts, the noise impacts and the non-compliance of the generators, we are going to have people like Ann Gardner, Shelley McDonald and others who are affected particularly by the Macarthur wind farm coming to me and pleading for help to see if those generators and the wind farm policy of the Labor government can be challenged in respect of the impact that they are having on their livability.

A Senate inquiry is under way to look at those very issues, and I certainly look forward to seeing what the response to that will be. I am disappointed that

Mr Lenders has seen fit to bring this motion to this house. I am disappointed that this has been an ongoing practice of Mr Lenders to consume the opposition business day by spending unconstructive and unproductive time criticising the Baillieu government.

The list of achievements by the Baillieu government over its two-year term is extensive. In my electorate of Western Victoria Region it has fulfilled nearly 98 per cent of commitments. The achievements are extensive. We have maintained a surplus, we have maintained a AAA rating and we are reducing the cost of the public service with as little impact to the workforce as possible. We are investing heavily, with \$5.8 billion going into infrastructure. We are supporting regional Victoria through the Regional Growth Fund with \$1 billion over eight years. We are supporting local councils, with over \$100 million a year going to 40 rural councils to support direct investment in roads and bridges.

We are, as we said we would, increasing the number of police, given that law and order reform was a strong part of our election platform. We are providing PSOs (protective services officers) on designated railway stations at high-risk times. We are investing in schools, with over \$78.4 million, mostly in backlog maintenance, to which the Labor government did not commit. We are making significant investments in Princes Highway west, where a considerable amount of work is being done at the moment. I am pleased to say that the Minister for Roads, Mr Mulder, has advised me that the works are on time and on budget. I am also pleased that we have agreed to fund the duplication of Princes Highway west from Winchelsea to Colac, and we look forward to the federal government signing off on that project. The Western Highway works are continuing at a great pace, particularly in the area around Beaufort, and again I have been advised that the works are both on time and on budget.

I am also pleased that our Landcare groups are being well supported with Landcare coordinators — another commitment by the Baillieu government. That is responsible environmental practice and community support for the Landcare groups, of which the Landcare coordinators are a critical component for success.

Mr Barber — What about the carbon farming initiative, do you like that one too?

Mr RAMSAY — What I am not so pleased about, now that Mr Barber has raised this issue, is the lack of opportunity for on farm forestry. If we forget the soil carbon initiatives, what would provide the most benefit for many land-holders across rural Victoria is the

opportunity to voluntarily offset or set aside remnant native vegetation, not at a cost to them, as well as the opportunity to invest in farm forestry, rather than the policy the federal government has implemented with an accelerated and artificial investment through tax rulings involving managed investment schemes (MIS) for forestry.

The outcome of that, as we have seen in Western Victoria Region, particularly in the rich agricultural, sheep growing, wool growing and food growing areas, is a proliferation of blue gums, which, from my point of view, has not only decimated the landscape but many of the companies involved have gone into liquidation. Consequently the trees have never reached their full potential and are now being logged for best price at best product. I commend my colleague the federal member for Wannon, Dan Tehan, who has been active in the federal coalition opposition in looking at removing those MIS tax-driven initiatives from that policy platform. We have that in common with Mr Barber. I am disappointed that the coalition did not see fit to stop that ruling on that particular investment. While the coalition took it off non-forestry activities, for some strange reason the party continued it for forestry.

Nevertheless, there are opportunities in rural Victoria to invest in not only agriculture but also other products, and I will say more about that later in a statement on a report. The committee chair, the member for Caulfield in the Assembly, David Southwick, did an excellent job on the report on agricultural education and training, which is a very important component of productivity in rural Victoria.

In closing, I believe the state is in good shape in relation to the commitments the Baillieu government has made. In its brief two years it has delivered on a substantial number of the commitments announced pre-election. I look forward in the next few years to seeing significant growth, prosperity and investment by stakeholders who have confidence that we have a government which can deliver, which provides sound fiscal management and under which, certainly in regional Victoria, there has been significant investment to allow for job growth and potential opportunities.

I also congratulate Mr Guy. I understand there are now three good guys —

Hon. M. J. Guy — Four.

Mr RAMSAY — Four? I am one short; my apologies. We have prospective planning ministers for many decades to come, which is good news. Mr Guy might like to take a leaf out of the book of his

parliamentary colleague, Mr O'Brien, and perhaps look at minimising further damage. On that note I oppose the motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I make no comment and neither endorse nor otherwise comment on Mr Ramsay's remarks. I congratulate Mr Guy and his family on the arrival of their baby.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is hard to follow Mr Ramsay's act. Mr Ramsay's only enthusiasm was around the birth of Mr Guy's child, and I congratulate Mr Guy on that; it is a wonderful achievement. But I must say to Mr Ramsay that the rest of his presentation was a bit underwhelming, and I suspect that is what the electorate is finding in relation to this government and its capacity or willingness to deliver on its election commitments.

You only have to look at my electorate in eastern Melbourne to see what has become sort of a wasteland of neglect. While in opposition, government members made a number of promises around education, health and public transport, but when they were elected, these all but disappeared. I will name just a few. Ringwood North Primary School was promised \$3 million to help rebuild, but not a cent has been delivered. The member for Kilsyth in the other place, David Hodgett, said he supported the promise of a rebuild for a deaf facility and primary school in Ringwood East. Mr Hodgett said:

The coalition is very supportive of the rebuild of the Eastwood Primary School and deaf facility which is an excellent example of integrated primary education for children who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Despite that commitment, two years on there has been no action. There was \$60 million promised for the Ringwood rail upgrade, but there has been no allocation of funding and no work has commenced. Let us look at the city of Knox, where Boronia K-12 College was promised \$15 million to construct new classrooms and provide specialist training spaces. After two years it has received less than a quarter of the money, which means that many of these students are in inferior facilities, which were identified as such by the government when in opposition. However, since it came to government there has been no concern for these students.

There was a promise to make Rowville police station a 24/7 operation, and two years on that still has not occurred. On a promise to widen High Street Road between Stud Road and Burwood Highway there is still nothing. Let us have a quick look at the city of Whitehorse, where Blackburn Primary School was

promised \$3.8 million to upgrade its facilities, and after two years the school has not been allocated one cent. In October 2011, again when the Liberal Party was looking for people's votes, the member for Polwarth in the Assembly, Mr Mulder, who is now the Minister for Roads, said that the first level crossings to be eliminated would be in Mitcham and Rooks roads in Mitcham, yet after two years no work has been started on either of those crossings.

In the city of Manningham, Templestowe College was promised \$5 million to upgrade its facilities, only half of which has been provided. The local member for Doncaster in the other place, who is now the Minister for Mental Health, promised a detailed \$100 000 feasibility study which would examine the availability and accessibility of local and regional health, youth and community services. It was a grand promise for a feasibility study, but again two years on we see nothing. It was a promise in opposition to consider the needs and gaps, which has delivered nothing. Not only do we not have the feasibility study to determine whether there are any gaps, or where those gaps are, but we are a long way from plugging any gaps if there are any, because there is no feasibility study.

In the lead-up to the election, the local member for Bulleen in the other place, Mr Kotsiras, who is now the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, promised traffic lights at Fitzsimmons Lane, and again nothing has been delivered.

When you look back over the last two years at the government's quite specific and clear promises for Melbourne's eastern suburbs while it was in opposition, you see there has been either complete failure, complete neglect or a mediocre attempt to move on those promises. No explanation has been offered. There is no communication and no engagement with the community about why this neglect has been in place and why there has been this failure. I think many in the eastern suburbs are finding this government completely underwhelming because it has failed to deliver on its promises. Therefore with those few words I wholeheartedly support the motion by Mr Lenders, and I congratulate him for bringing this to the attention of the house.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make my contribution to the debate on the motion moved by Mr Lenders. I do not think the Baillieu government has a case to answer. The proposition put to us here in this motion, that cost of living pressures on families have increased with higher taxes and charges levied by the Baillieu government and that it is now the highest taxing and spending

government in the history of the state, is a lot of hyperbole. I emphasise the word 'hyperbole' seeing as the Prime Minister does not know how to pronounce it.

In his contribution in the last sitting week Mr Lenders drew extensively on George Orwell's work *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the character Winston Smith. One of the things we can point to is that Labor governments have a tendency to suit themselves and rewrite history. There are fine examples of those who have chosen to rewrite history: the Soviet Union, North Korea, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the socialist Republic of Venezuela increasingly, the Obama administration, socialists, communists and the masters of brainwashing and the suppression of truth all around the world.

When Mr Lenders was speaking I made the comment that I felt he was hopping from lily pad to lily pad on a pond, hoping not to sink with his argument. I felt that he was seeking to project the image of being well read after presiding over 11 years of maladministration, malfeasance and poor outcomes and leaving the state in a lot worse shape than it was in when those opposite took over. Any incoming government should make the pledge, hand on heart, that it will, should it come upon the rocks electorally, leave the state or nation in a state that is better than when that government came in. That is the quest for us all.

During its period in office, and with respect to a lot of its new projects, Labor has become the master of rebadging — I have said this once before — and of reannouncements. There has been reannouncement after reannouncement. Many of the people in Victoria had high expectations for projects and planning to continue. The simple fact is that we were like Mother Hubbard going to the cupboard, because when we got to the cupboard it was bare. Promised programs and projects had no funding beyond 1 July 2011. It is important to underscore just what a parlous state the Baillieu coalition government inherited. We set out to build, which was in marked contrast to Labor, which announced projects for which there was inadequate funding.

There are strident examples of Labor's black holes. One project I can remember is the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, which is adjacent to the Austin Health complex. The centre is an important part of the health services for people in the north-eastern part of Eastern Metropolitan Region. We had to come up with the \$45 million to remove the strands of black plastic blowing in the wind as they hung off a concrete skeleton of a building and provide all the means of making the building operational and habitable.

As far as cost of living pressures outside of the extraordinary burden inflicted on Victorians and Australians in general by the carbon tax impost and the related cost on everything, we have provided a \$1.2 billion package in the budget of 2011–12 to ease the cost of living. That is broken up into elements such as \$500 million in stamp duty cuts for first home buyers, pensioners and farmers. Stamp duty paid by the first home buyer will be cut in successive stages, and I was pleased to join the Treasurer, Kim Wells, at the announcement of the first tranche of stamp duty reductions on 1 July. Before 2014 first home buyers will benefit from a 50 per cent cut in stamp duty.

The Baillieu coalition government knows that people in Victoria are suffering from cost of living pressures, and it is responding directly and in a balanced and prudent manner. That is a signature of this government and of all Liberal and coalition governments in the past, and it is exemplified by the outstanding performance of the current government of Victoria, of which I am a very proud member. Each one of us can look Victorians in the eye and say, ‘We are fiscally prudent, we have a steady hand on the tiller and we will deliver for you. We will deliver on our election promises, and we can continue to do things in a responsible manner. We won’t be swayed by things or by a rush of blood to the head. We will continue to provide prudent and responsible government and, importantly, the best possible return on investment for taxpayers dollars’.

If members look at the median price of a Victorian house, they will see that the 50 per cent cut in the stamp duty actually amounts to a \$14 000 saving. That is a lot less money that people will need to go to the bank to borrow to cover the cost of stamp duty. It gives Victorian families the opportunity to perhaps complete the house and finish it off with furnishings, paving, external buildings, soft furnishings and so on, making it a beautiful home setting earlier than might otherwise have been possible.

It is important to stress too that lots of Victorians are under the impression that if they are injured, sustain an injury in an accident or are ill, they can call for an ambulance. It comes to take care of them and to transport them to a hospital. They think that the ambulance is a free service and are quite stunned if and when a bill arrives. How important was it that, as a means of encouraging people to take up a subscription to the ambulance service here in Victoria, we provided a 50 per cent cut in ambulance membership fees? This is a really important incentive and a really important initiative. It may be a small thing in the scheme of things when we are talking about multibillion-dollar projects and multibillion-dollar packages, but it is

something that is directly relevant for the average householder here in Victoria when they are confronting their bills and subscriptions on an annual basis.

The weather is a lot warmer and we are thinking about how we might be cool. How important is it that we have extended the electricity concession for winter to an all-year-round concession? People can now afford to keep themselves warm in winter and cool in summer. We have already experienced a number of days with temperatures over 35 degrees, and it is really important for people who are ill or disabled, the aged — and the frail aged most especially — little children and babies to be kept in a comfortable ambient temperature and to be able to afford to switch on their air conditioners. We have also enabled water and sewerage concessions to keep pace with increasing costs.

These measures go to the heart of what we are offering the people of Victoria — reductions in their day-to-day burdens and the things that confound, worry and frustrate the average person. They are real factors.

It is important to note that when we came to government not only did we have to clean up after 11 years of malfeasance and maladministration, poor decision making and project overruns in Victoria —

Mr Tee — You’ve always got on an excuse. You’re always blaming someone else. When are you going to stand up and take responsibility?

Mrs KRONBERG — I am proudly standing up and taking responsibility right now, echoing what our policy platform has done and the momentum of delivering on our election promises with great pride and a lot of excitement. It is called delivering on your deliverables.

Mr Tee interjected.

Mrs KRONBERG — The paucity of Mr Tee’s threadbare argument in the chamber today is profound, as we have become accustomed to over the last six years of my experience in dealing with him.

The challenges facing Victoria when we came to government were thus: global and economic factors resulted in a softer economy and importantly — and I want this to resonate — significant reductions in government revenue. Compared with the estimates made in late 2010 Victoria has lost — and wait for this — \$6.1 billion in GST revenue over the four years from 2012–13. Admittedly much of this is due to slower consumption growth, but some is due to a reduction in Victoria’s share of the GST, and here we start to shine a light on the malfeasance of none other

than the Gillard government. What a disgrace our Prime Minister is. Her electorate is in the increasingly stressed western suburbs of Melbourne. As a Victorian she has turned her back on them and continues to turn her back as she provides ongoing appeasement strategies to maintain her power base. Sell yourself to anybody!

Revenue and estimates from stamp duty and estimates from GST on land transfers have been reduced by — wait for this; it is another amazing figure, right in the stratosphere — another \$7.6 billion, which we have had to accommodate. That rips the guts out of our budget. Let us go through it again: \$6.1 billion in lost GST revenue, and revenue estimates of GST and stamp duty from land transfers reduced by \$7.6 billion over four years. This represents an average of \$1.9 billion a year, or around 7 per cent of Victoria's revenue from state taxes and GST.

What would the Labor government have done with this mess? Can members just imagine? We talk about the United States facing a fiscal cliff on 1 January 2013. If the voters of Victoria had not seen fit to throw out Labor, what would it have done with this slump in receipts? What would we be staring down? Faced with these challenges we took decisive action from the very beginning. We have restrained expenditure growth, and we have created a stronger medium-term fiscal position. These measures required difficult decisions, and the mantle of the decision-maker is sometimes a difficult one to wear.

The 2012–13 budget delivers further targeted departmental efficiencies, and savings will be made in a range of program areas. Some of the reform we see is in departments, where often the left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. That led not only to disappointment but also to a lot of Victorians not being well served by the services upon which they depended. The government is constraining expenditure growth to an average of 2.9 per cent over the forward estimates period, compared with revenue growth of 4.4 per cent, which is prudent.

Before finishing my contribution it is important that I shine a light on a matter that will cause Victorians anxiety and perhaps suffering — the commonwealth government's savage cuts to state health funding halfway through the financial year. The Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health said there would be no cuts to the commonwealth's December payment, but the December payment is over \$15.3 million less than the November payment, and the cuts will continue inexorably, slice by slice, each month for the remainder of the financial year until \$107 million is clawed back

by the federal government. We know the federal government's reputation is resting very much on attaining a surplus in next year's budget, so it is thrashing around, looking for cuts wherever it can just to squeak over the line in May 2013. These cuts are disgraceful.

The justification for the cash grab is based on a concoction of demographic data. I am a little bit boned up and authoritative on demographic data, because in the report I have just tabled from the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee there is a great slab of demographic data from the 2011 census that provides a lot of analysis. I challenge the federal government's proposition that the Victorian population fell by 11 000 people. I do not know what the people who concoct these figures are on. What are they smoking? How do they arrive at these results and, importantly, how do they look people in the eye, dare to show up at work the next day and put their hands out for a salary after concocting figures and lying to the Australian people and, indirectly, to the Victorian people? We know they are all about malfeasance, but this reaches new heights.

The commonwealth government's own Australian Statistician has called it out, producing figures that confirm that Victoria's population had grown — wait for it — by 75 400 people in the year when the federal government claimed it had fallen by 11 000 people. This is extraordinary. You cannot put this down to a typographical error; you cannot put it down to the people who proofread the report. This is a complete lie. We are used to lies from the federal government, and we were used to lies and poor performance from the former Victorian government. The funding basis will be permanently lowered in the future because of that flawed population calculation. I feel I need to make a biblical reference at this point. If you are going to build a society or a government and want to have credibility, you build upon the rock and not upon the sand — the sand of ephemeral figures dreamt up at 3.00 a.m. when somebody is indulging in a bong.

Over the next four years — up to the financial year of 2015–16 — the federal government will be stripping \$1.6 billion nationally from the national health agreement and \$475 million from Victorian hospitals. I hope the people of Victoria remember this. This is an outrageous bid by the federal government to prop up its own promised surplus by ripping money from Victorian hospitals and, importantly, Victorian patients.

We think this midyear cut is both thoughtless and irresponsible, because health services have already set their budgets and will now have to accommodate this

brutal slashing. This will have a direct impact on patients and front-line services. We know staffing will be affected. We know that there will be longer waiting lists for elective surgery and that the number of people on waiting lists will increase. I am almost moved to tears by the impact of this Christmas offering from the federal government and the fact that members of the state Labor opposition have done nothing to defend the people who will be added to the elective surgery waiting lists. What a Christmas offering, and what a disgrace it is that this Victorian Labor opposition has not defended the people of Victoria by putting pressure on its federal counterparts to overturn this skewed proposition.

The \$1.3 million cut is equivalent to losing the funding for over 20 000 elective surgery procedures or reducing elective surgery volumes by between 20 and 25 per cent. The Baillieu government has increased health funding by \$1.3 billion compared to what it was the year before it came to office and increased the acute health budget by \$376 million — overall a 4.2 per cent increase. This is in stark contrast to the mindset of and the betrayal of the Victorian people by the state Labor opposition. It is such unconscionable conduct.

Labor often talks about job creation and asks what the Victorian government is doing about job creation. I know a little about how ratings agencies evaluate the performance of sovereign governments and corporate entities, not only here but in other parts of the world. The reconfirmation of our AAA rating and the fact the state of Victoria has been judged to have a stable outlook by ratings agencies is proof positive that not only do we know what we are doing but we are also doing a fine job by all measures and all recognised forms of scrutiny on a global basis.

Unfortunately this is in contrast to other states in the commonwealth of Australia that have had their ratings downgraded. We know a downgrading by a ratings agency creates significant pressures. Any borrowings that have to be repaid will have to be repaid with more onerous conditions and a higher interest rate burden. If one loses one's AAA credit rating, the first rule of holes applies. The first rule of holes is that if you are in a hole, then you stop digging.

Mr Tee — So why did you double the debt?

Mrs KRONBERG — We have actually stabilised state debt. We have the endorsement of the ratings agency, which is proof positive. In addition, we have slowed down the growth of expenditure.

In terms of providing a more productive economy so more jobs are created and people come here to invest, we have underpinned our stable outlook with a AAA rating, we have undertaken the biggest tax reform in 20 years with the property-based fire services levy and we have reduced WorkCover premiums — they are now the lowest in Australia. That is key to attracting investment and jobs, increasing the employment base and creating forward momentum in this state.

We are also leading the case for the national inquiry into construction costs. I cannot overstate how important that is because Victoria is such an expensive place to build, and this has a direct impact on the affordability of housing. There is a whole range of things on that list that I will not be able to go through. However, we have covered off in terms of excellence in providing realistic programs through prudent fiscal management and changing the economy with our new manufacturing strategy. We are leading the nation in food and fibre exports. We have new investment in the aviation industry. We have an improving motor vehicle manufacturing industry, and we are providing supply chain support. We are supporting jobs in Alcoa. We have an action plan for the timber industry.

Basically we are still sorting out the Labor disasters. We have an outstanding contribution to make in future building for this state, providing better transport, safer communities and a stronger, more cohesive community. In terms of health and community services we have made massive reforms and introduced cost-saving measures. We are delivering in education and early childhood development, the environment and water management and, importantly, with the passing of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission legislation last night, governance and integrity. Integrity is a word that is alien to the ears of Labor members of the former government and the current opposition. Proof positive is every time they open their mouth and every time we open a newspaper that reports on their actions as destructors of the Victorian economy. I rest my case. I cannot possibly support Mr Lenders's motion.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — The \$64 million question is whether Mrs Kronberg actually believes what she has just said or whether it is all just government spin. It is a little rich taking a credibility lesson from someone who promised before the election to eliminate graffiti. Here we are getting a stiff talking-to about the Christmas offering from the federal government. For thousands of Victorian public sector workers and for many hundreds of people working in the Victorian TAFE system, or what used to be the Victorian TAFE system, the Christmas offering from

this government is nothing short of appalling. I am pleased to join the debate on Mr Lenders's motion.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Ms PULFORD — In doing so, I thank Mr Ramsay for his attempted filibuster and for sharing the contents of his diary with us. Mr Ramsay and I share an electorate, but it would appear that we live in parallel universes, because his experience of this government in our electorate is pretty different to my experience of this government in our electorate.

Mr Lenders's motion goes to a few key points: cost of living pressures, health services, education services and the government's spectacular failure to develop a jobs plan for Victoria — so spectacular a failure that we got sick of waiting and developed our own.

Mr Ramsay — No-one knows what it is!

Ms PULFORD — Mr Ramsay should take a few moments, jump on the internet, grab — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PULFORD — Go and have a look at it. It is a comprehensive piece of work. It goes to significant sectors of employment right across Victoria — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PULFORD — Just a bit defensive now, aren't you. Government members know we have a better jobs plan. They are members of the government. You would think that with all the resources available to a government it would be able to come up with a jobs plan.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I would appreciate it very much if Ms Pulford would address her comments through the Chair, and it may assist members on my right if they ceased interjecting at the same time.

Ms PULFORD — Acting President, you are taking all the fun out of the morning, but I direct my comments through the Chair. There are many, many areas in which this government has failed to live up to expectations. I commend Mr Leane for his alphabet soup of government failure, but there are a few areas I would particularly like to highlight. The government promised to link Geelong to Bendigo via Ballarat with a rail service. There is not much sign of that happening. If I could borrow from the language attributed to the member for Northcote in the other place as reported by

the media a week or so ago, 'You can't catch a feasibility study to work'. I certainly do not think I will be able to catch a feasibility study to Geelong or to Bendigo anytime soon. That is one of the things the government has gone terribly, terribly quiet on.

The Minister for Health, who is not known for being terribly quiet, has gone terribly, terribly quiet on the second public hospital that was promised for Geelong, and he has gone terribly, terribly quiet on stage 2 of the Warrnambool hospital. The government is just hoping that if it makes a whole lot of noise about the former government and a whole lot of noise about the federal government, people might not notice that it is actually responsible for running the show in Victoria — and has been so for two years now.

The government is rapidly running out of excuses. In question time yesterday we saw Mr Davis really struggling to answer a question from Ms Mikakos. There was no scope to blame the former Labor government and no scope to blame the federal government, so literally the best he had was, 'Ms Mikakos, I do not accept the premise of your question'. Is that even a thing people really say? It was like it was a media interview cliché.

The government has made many, many promises on which it has failed to deliver. I note that Mr Ramsay mentioned the policy of placing protective services officers (PSOs) on every regional railway station. It is quite a departure from what the government has said previously. I know the initial election commitment was to place PSOs on each station, and then a bit after that it was a station in each of the four regional centres. Where I live in Ballarat that means two PSOs on one station rather than four across two stations. Then the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister Ryan, indicated that the PSOs would be deployed on a needs basis, which made even two look a bit dicey. But Mr Ramsay assures us that we are back to four, so we will be keeping an eye on that. The government is certainly mixing the messages on that.

The government also promised to make Victorian teachers the best paid in the nation — again just a spectacular exercise in misleading a significant number of people in Victoria who make an enormous contribution to the future of the state by teaching young people in our schools. The coalition said it would 'make Victorian teachers the highest paid in Australia'. We could not be further from that.

Teachers are taking industrial action. There have been extraordinary cuts to education — \$550 million over two years. First there were cuts to the Victorian

certificate of applied learning coordinators, the effect of which we are now seeing in enrolments; and then there were the cuts to TAFE, that flow on to our secondary schools in the way that vocational education and training is delivered in schools. Schools right across Victoria are grappling to cope with this massive change.

There was the debacle that was, and continues to be, the cuts to the conveyance allowance. The Victorian schools plan has been axed, which means there are schools right across the state — around 500 or so — that had every reasonable expectation that they would be part of a 10-year rebuilding program. They have now been left to rot by this government. Members have — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Mr Ramsay, a 10-year plan to modernise every school in the state, 5 years of which was acquitted — 525 schools had been done — is not ‘nothing’s been done’; it was a program that was under way that was scrapped by this government because it does not care about public education.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I ask Mr Ramsay to cease interjecting, but I request respectfully, once again, that Ms Pulford direct her remarks through the Chair.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you for your assistance, guidance and forbearance, Acting President. I move on to health. Mrs Kronberg expressed her dismay about what she described as a lack of funding to Victoria’s health system. I note that she failed to mention her support for the Victorian government’s budget, both in the party room and in the Parliament, and the \$616 million of cuts this government has brought to bear on Victoria’s health system. When \$616 million is being ripped out of the Victorian health system it is little wonder that we have seen an extraordinary blow-out in waiting lists, and it is little wonder that the promised hospital beds cannot be found and cannot be identified. It would appear it is because they do not exist.

Even services like funding for rural midwives have been cut. Of all the things to cut! What is that about? Cutting support for midwives and support for women in rural communities across Victoria is just plain nasty.

There has been \$616 million taken out of health. The National Centre for Farmers Health in Hamilton is on its knees. Mr Davis claims that it is a federal

government funding responsibility. Well in excess of 80 per cent — I think it is 87 per cent — of people who have been provided with health assessments by the National Centre for Farmers Health are Victorians, and they have been provided with that support by Victorian funding. It is the Victorian government’s withdrawal of funding for the National Centre for Farmers Health that is putting its very future at risk.

To Mr Ramsay’s credit, I accept that he supports the work the centre has done. He has advocated within government for funding of the centre to continue. But I am terribly concerned about Mr Davis saying, as he does with everything else, ‘This is somebody else’s problem. This is not my problem’. I certainly wish Mr Ramsay well in his ongoing advocacy for the National Centre for Farmers Health because it ought to be allowed to continue its work.

Mr Lenders’s motion refers to the government’s failure to develop a jobs plan. This is a terrible dereliction of duty by this government. Its inability to create an environment of investment confidence is a disgrace. Returning to Mrs Kronberg’s observations about the Christmas gift from the federal government, there is probably nothing greater that a government can do to support its people than provide the right environment for the creation of jobs. The Labor Party has a plan to create jobs in Victoria, unlike this government.

The motion also refers to cost of living pressures. This government promised to fix the problems, build the future and reduce the cost of living. But in so many areas, like its shonky promise to young farmers on stamp duty and grants to promote first home owner construction in regional areas, the government is just placing more and more pressure on families managing their budgets. The government’s very direct ability to influence the cost of living includes things like motor registration fees, which have gone up; every fee and charge has gone up.

If Mr Lenders were here, he could probably go into quite some detail about water bills. The overcharging of Melbourne water customers is an absolute scandal — \$177 per household. This government has been a horrific disappointment for Victorians. In so many respects this government is nothing like what it promised it would be before the election.

The government’s reckless actions in education pose a great risk to the future of young people right across Victoria — in vocational training, in schools and even in the early years. This is terrible, because a government has a great responsibility to ensure that young people are given every opportunity. We, as

members of the former government, used to very proudly declare whenever the opportunity presented itself that education was our government's no. 1 priority. I am not sure what this government's no. 1 priority is.

Like many Victorians I am baffled about the point of this government. This government said it would fix the problems and build the future, but it has failed to articulate at any point what it sees as the future for Victoria. Frankly, in terms of fixing the problems, the biggest problem that needs fixing in Victoria is this government and its inactive Premier.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am always delighted to see the opposition bring forward motions for debate in this chamber that enable government members to talk about the things that have been done over the last two years and, importantly, to also remind Victorians about the 11 years of mismanagement of this state — in finances, services, lack of investment in infrastructure and lack of accountability — they endured under the Bracks-Brumby regime as a result of which many opportunities were missed to deliver for a growing population. I consider some of these motions to be Dorothy Dixers, and I thank Mr Lenders for bringing this motion forward.

The slogan 'Fix the problems, build the future' could not be more apt. That is exactly what the government has been getting on with doing. First and foremost we have had to deal with a range of legacy issues. I will not list all the problems we need to fix, but myki comes to mind, smart meters come to mind, the desalination plant — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — Yes, you fix it as best you can, Mr Barber, given the parameters, the financial constraints and the huge legacy of issues left — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — Mr Barber has had his turn. The previous government threw good money after bad — for example, blowing \$3 billion in the pokie machine auction which was overseen by the then Treasurer, Mr Lenders, who now has the audacity to bring this motion before the chamber. Can you imagine how much we could have purchased with \$3 billion in terms of the backlog in infrastructure or on improving services for a growing population? Can you imagine what could have been done with the \$2 million a day that is being spent in payment for the desalination plant?

Unfortunately not all the problems can be fixed. As a result of the former government's mismanagement, we have been left with a huge financial millstone around our necks and with having to navigate a large quantity of quicksand. But we are doing the best we can to build the future. First and foremost we are dealing with the legacy issues. The Baillieu government has dealt with some difficult issues since coming to government. As I mentioned before, it has made some very difficult decisions around myki, the regional rail link and Webb Dock. It has also been very supportive of the state's export push. That is an important part of fixing the problems.

The government's focus has also been on boosting infrastructure, growing jobs and improving services. Stabilising and improving Victoria's budget and economic management is critical to being able to deliver in other respects. The Victorian coalition has made sound progress in demonstrating responsible economic and financial management. We are the only state to date to retain a AAA rating. That is a triple tick for Victoria.

Tough decisions have been made to reduce unnecessary government expenditure. We hear members of the Labor government, which wasted millions and billions of dollars, bleat about the measures that had to be taken as a result of its financial mismanagement; we hear that on a daily basis. We hear Labor organising petitions in order to draw attention to some of the difficult decisions that we have had to make.

We have made a concerted effort to improve public service efficiency and productivity. That is about getting better bang for our buck and getting better value for taxpayers dollars. We have maintained a budget surplus, despite the federal government's constant failure to support Victoria and Victorians by withdrawing funds that ought to be made available to Victoria. Whether it is investment in health, roads or education, Julia Gillard and the federal government have taken a punitive approach to Victoria and Victorians for daring to vote for a Liberal-Nationals government.

The Gillard government is bitter and vindictive. Many opposition motions that have been debated have a direct overlap with the difficult position the federal government continues to put Victoria and other states in. There are many big-picture issues such as the national disability insurance scheme, the Gonski review and a range of other worthy reforms that have huge price tags. The funding for those reforms has clearly not been enunciated by the Gillard government.

As I mentioned before, the desalination plant is going to cost us somewhere between \$18 billion and \$23 billion over the next 27 years. A billion dollars a year for 20 years is a lot of dough and represents a lot of infrastructure and a lot of services. The previous government's mismanagement has forced this upon Victorians. It has left a legacy of hardship as a result. We are having to fix this, and this is a part of the debate on this motion.

Recognising the importance of the federal government's funding support is critical. A commitment has to be made to explore options for longer term state taxation reform, maintenance of the budget and the operating surplus, and continued expenditure restraint. Budgeting and economic management are the absolute cornerstones of responsible government. This government is getting on with the job.

Boosting employment through an investment in skills and improving productivity and competition is also a very strong theme. A strong commitment has been made to cut red tape. There is a target to reduce red tape by 25 per cent by 2014. There is industrial relations advocacy to support more flexible hours in various sectors. Encouraging better workplace relations is important to our future. The recruitment of additional teachers and allied reforms, including those affecting overtime, will be required to ensure that we have a first-class education and training system. There are also very important reforms to vocational education and training that are included.

We have seen outstanding support in flood recovery. We have had to cope with natural disasters that regrettably are part of this state's past and future. We have seen responses in terms of not only delivery on the ground but also a new emergency management plan that was released only yesterday by the government to ensure that when there are emergencies there is always someone at the top who is responsible for operations.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Places Victoria: former chief executive officer

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning. I congratulate him on becoming a parent for the third time. I want to ask him about the circumstances surrounding the departure of Mr Sangster from Places Victoria. In particular I want to ask whether Mr Sangster resigned or whether he was pushed. In other words, was his departure voluntary?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr Tee for his warm wishes for my contribution to population growth, which I know will not please everyone in terms of population growth — —

Hon. P. R. Hall — It's sustainable.

Hon. M. J. GUY — But it is sustainable — that is correct — and it is certainly planned population growth.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Mr Lenders may say I am not good for much, but I am good at creating boys, so I cannot give him affirmative action. In relation to Mr Tee's question, as he can imagine, in every circumstance like this involving a statutory authority I have appointed a board to appoint all of the staff, including the chief executive officer. My understanding is that there was discussion between members of the board and Mr Sangster in relation to the future of the organisation, given that there was downsizing at one stage, which has been announced. Mr Sangster had spoken to the board members, and he felt it was his time to move on. That is the position of the board, and obviously I endorse the board.

I want to place on record my appreciation of Sam Sangster; I get along very well with Sam Sangster and have for some time. I think Sam did an exceptionally good job at VicUrban and in transitioning to Places Victoria. I have no doubt he will be able to make a contribution in the future, hopefully to the state and no doubt in the urban renewal and urban development industries.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I offer my apologies to the Minister for Planning for not passing on my congratulations.

Supplementary question

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — By way of a supplementary question, is the minister able to provide any information in terms of the severance payments that Mr Sangster received as part of his departure?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I do not know the details of Mr Sangster's departure package. I assume that material will be, as members could imagine, in summary form as part of an annual report. Having said that, I am happy to see what material is available and see if I can ascertain any of that for Mr Tee.

Hospitals: federal funding

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Honourable David Davis, the Minister for Health. Will the minister advise the house on any recent developments in the dispute with the commonwealth government over the commonwealth's unprecedented cut to Victorian hospitals of \$475 million?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I first welcome Mr Guy back and congratulate him on his magnificent news.

Hon. M. J. Guy interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Yes, that is right. He is one of the 11 000 people that the federal Treasurer thinks are leaving Victoria. He is obviously having more children, but the federal Treasurer thinks that the number of people in Victoria has fallen by 11 000.

I note Mrs Kronberg's question. I know she and others in this chamber are concerned about the \$8.4 million cut to Eastern Health being administered by the commonwealth government directly through the pool.

Mr Jennings — That is a lie.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I will explain to Mr Jennings.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that that was inappropriate and unparliamentary language. I expect him to desist. He has not been asked to withdraw, but normally I would have quickly advised him to do so if a member had raised an objection.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The cut has been administered by the commonwealth by putting less money in the pool. I note that the federal minister is reported in the *Sunraysia Daily* as saying:

Victorian health minister ... says the commonwealth has cut funding to local health services. That's plain wrong.

I thought it would be important for the chamber to have the exact figures for the payments into the pool. On 7 November \$278 410 660.80 was paid in by the commonwealth. Some in the chamber may wish to look at some of these figures. These are the Reserve Bank of Australia payment slips. I am not imagining that the Reserve Bank has made an error in its payments here. On 7 December \$263 081 512.24 was paid in. Members in the chamber may wish to have a good look

at the payment slips from the Reserve Bank and see whether the federal Minister for Health is being fully truthful with the Australian and Victorian people. It is clear that a cut has been administered by the commonwealth government. The Reserve Bank figures do not lie; here are the deposit slips. Members should look at them and see if they think the federal minister is in Noddyland or whether she simply does not understand the facts.

I know Mrs Kronberg, like many members in this chamber, is concerned about the impact of these cuts. The federal minister is in Victoria today, and I hope she has got a \$107 million cheque burning in her pocket to hand over and pay either directly or through the pool or through the Reserve Bank. I do not mind how she pays it, but the \$107 million is needed to plug the gap from her cut this year. It is going to hurt hospitals. It is going to damage the ability to treat patients and provide the services that are needed by Victorians.

I note that Martin Parkinson, the head of the Treasury at a national level, has written to the Treasury secretary in Victoria. He repeats the farrago of nonsense that is coming out of Canberra, the farrago of nonsense about population. He is reported in the *Age* today as saying that the Victorian population is growing more slowly. Bizarrely, the figures from his own department show that it is falling by 11 000 people. A table provided by the federal Treasury, his own department, shows that the population of Victoria in 2010–11 was 5 585 566.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — No, these are his numbers; it is his Treasury's table. It shows 5 574 455 — 11 000 people fewer. Members in the chamber might want to look at Mr Parkinson's own Treasury table. He says the population is growing more slowly — —

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

Planning: Moolap wetlands

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy. The minister has received a referral for a possible environment effects statement (EES) on the Moolap wetlands area down near Geelong. It has endangered saltmarsh vegetation, and it has also been referred to the federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Half the land subject to this proposal, and half the works in fact, is Crown land — in fact some of it is in the bay. How can it be that a proponent is putting forward a proposal for

development that is occurring on government land without the government having first approved and said that it will support the proposal in principle, and has the government done so?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr Barber for his question. I do not know the details of the issue he is raising, so I will take it on notice and get him a proper written reply.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I am not sure if the minister has turned his mind to the referral yet, but given that the ultimate approvals required are overall mostly planning approvals and given that this proposed residential canal development on an endangered wetland is clearly unacceptable in line with the major objectives of his planning scheme, why does he not simply reject the development up-front, rather than forcing all of us, including the proponent, to go through an EES process when his government, it seems, does not even yet know whether it wants this development to go ahead on Crown land?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — There are quite a few what ifs, hypotheticals and possibilities in all that. I just say again: I am not particularly aware of the intricacy of the details of that development and the proposal, and therefore to give Mr Barber a proper reply, as I said, I will take the substantive question on notice and make sure he has that answer.

Building industry: regulation

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is also to the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, and I ask: can the minister advise the house what action the Baillieu government has taken to bring forward greater transparency in the regulation of Victoria's building industry?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr O'Donohue for his question, and indeed it is a very timely question because I note the release of an Ombudsman's report today, which is entitled *Own Motion Investigation into the Governance and Administration of the Victorian Building Commission — December 2012*. The Ombudsman, as the report details, has gone back a number of years — three to three and a half years — into the operation of the commission and looked at some of the issues that have featured not just in the media but also through a range of sources and areas over the last 12 months in particular.

The government is committed point blank to an industry that is well regulated and that has a regulator that is focusing on its core job as a regulator. As I have said before in this chamber, the days of the Building Commission engaging in largesse and wild corporate sponsorship are over. The days of the regulator of the Victorian building system engaging in hospitality at sporting events that cost tens of thousands of dollars — as the Ombudsman has found — are over.

Before I entered politics I worked for the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. It is a very good grounder for coming into politics when looking at an issue such as the Building Commission, for it is indeed a regulator. The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority is also a regulator. There are regulators around this country who do their job strictly and by way of the legislation that is afforded to them.

This government recently took action to launch the Victorian Building Authority, a process in which we are going to engage in a range of consultation, including the building, the plumbing and the architects industries over the next few months. But importantly, we want the new authority to focus on being a regulator first. That is so important for confidence in this industry.

Today, Deputy President, I can tell you that I have instructed the building commissioner to end sponsorship of all major events until further notice and to rein in hospitality and travel expenses until further notice. We will be examining the recommendations made by the Ombudsman in his report, with a view to implementing those recommendations should that be able to be done.

With regard to the auditing of processes for the builders mentioned in the Ombudsman's report, we will go back and examine those builders and ensure that they are fully audited. Indeed, we will be looking back further to the years 2000–09, a period not entirely looked at by the Ombudsman, to ensure that the reports and findings of the Auditor-General — first raised in 2000, then raised again through the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission in 2005 — are examined and taken into account.

This government is committed to an industry that is well regulated and an industry that has a regulator that is focused on being a regulator first and not an industry participant. It is exceedingly important that we note the findings of the Ombudsman's report and note the criticisms the Ombudsman has made of the operation of the commission. We should note the behaviour of some of the personalities on the commission over the past decade, and move on from that with a strong and

positive building commission. I note that the only person to date that has been criticised by my political opponents is Mr Kefford, the commissioner, who the Ombudsman finds is cleaning up the mess that he inherited as the new building commissioner.

I simply say in conclusion that this government is committed to having a regulator that is a regulator first and not an industry participant. We are acting today to ensure that the industry is well regulated and has a transparent building regulator in the Victorian Building Authority, which will come into place through legislation next year. I welcome the Ombudsman's report. I will examine all the recommendations thoroughly and quickly to ensure that Victorians can be sure that their building industry regulator is the best in Australia.

Planning: ministerial intervention

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is also for the Minister for Planning. I refer to the promise to provide the annual statement on ministerial interventions, which would contain a list of external lobbyists with whom the minister has met regarding projects that he has called in. Indeed yesterday there was tabled a list of some 176 interventions, but only for 4 of those did the minister disclose meetings with lobbyists, and I ask: why has the minister failed to make any disclosure in relation to the other 172 interventions?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I think Mr Tee is getting mixed up between an intervention and a call-in. An intervention is where you have the minister intervening, either through the council or others who have asked for intervention in certain instances. For example, of the 172 that Mr Tee referred to, a lot of those were in fact councils writing to me and asking me to either approve a rezoning that they have put forward or indeed a Growth Areas Authority recommendation on a precinct structure plan. There were only four instances — three from VCAT (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal) — where I have actually intervened or called in myself. This contrasts with the previous minister, where there were nearly 40 in the last year.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I am in a very jovial mood today, Mr Ondarchie, so I am trying to be as happy as I can.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I ask the minister to answer the question, rather than responding to interjections from his own side.

Hon. M. J. GUY — What I would simply say is that on the four that I have called in I have provided all the information that was stated would be provided. Of the 172 others, many of which were requests from councils, this is a different measure or indeed a different circumstance to a ministerial call-in from VCAT, which is what is traditionally referred to as a call-in.

Supplementary question

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister — except that his election commitment was in relation to interventions. The document he tabled yesterday was called 'Use of ministerial interventions'. The document says, 'In total there have been 176 interventions'. This fabrication in relation to call-ins is a recent invention. These matters relate to important interventions around Cape Paterson and around the tower of power in St Kilda. Will the minister reconsider his position, and will he honour his promise in relation to interventions, not just the call-ins from VCAT or indeed from Heritage? That is what the community expects; that is what he promised. The community wants to know about the minister's meetings in relation to those sorts of matters. Will he reconsider his position?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — For Mr Tee's benefit I might also advise him of some of the Labor Party politicians who have come to me over the last two years seeking section 20(4) interventions. There is a difference. I will again explain to Mr Tee the difference between a section 20(4) intervention from VCAT, which is a ministerial call-in or indeed one that is referred on from a council. But a number of people on Mr Tee's own side — indeed on his own frontbench — have come to me, written to me or emailed me, asking for ministerial intervention on planning matters, some of whom have said to me, 'Minister, I want you to intervene'.

If Mr Tee is very comfortable, I will let him go back to his shadow cabinet first and ask his colleagues if they are comfortable with the Minister for Planning outing them — on a question that he has asked me — by revealing how many of them have asked me to intervene in planning matters, and in fact some doing it in the last sitting week, and two in particular who have asked me to override councils and intervene, and they have put it in print. Mr Tee can ask his colleagues if they want me to make it public.

Higher education: regional and rural students

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to address my question without notice to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Honourable Peter Hall. Can the minister advise the house of any recent developments in the initiatives of the Baillieu-Ryan government that will increase the rate of participation and attainment in higher education in regional Victoria?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr Ramsay for his question and for his obvious interest in this particular subject. Members will know that on a number of occasions I have spoken about my desire and that of my government to address that disparity in participation in higher education between students in rural areas and students in metropolitan areas. Indeed, we are making some progress, but small progress.

If you look at the 2011 figures, you will see that 39 per cent of those students who completed year 12 in non-metropolitan secondary schools are now enrolled in university, whereas if you look at the comparative figure for students who attended a metropolitan school and completed their Victorian certificate of education, you will see that 57 per cent of those are now at university. As I have said before, nobody has ever been able to convince me that students who live in non-metropolitan areas are any less intelligent than their cousins in metropolitan areas.

There are reasons why that disparity exists. One of those is the cost of living away from home. That is a significant deterrent for young people to pursue education to their capabilities. One way of addressing that — it is just one way, not the total way — is to provide greater opportunities for students to be able to live at home in their regions and study at a higher education level. Consequently, coming to the election we put on the table the regional partnership —

Mr Lenders interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Lenders started interjecting before Mr Hall had actually begun speaking and he has continued it for the last minute and a half. I would like him to give Mr Hall an opportunity to respond to the question.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Thank you, Deputy President. I was about to talk about the Regional Partnership Facilitation Fund, which was an initiative of the Baillieu government upon election. It was a \$20-million fund, funded through the Regional Growth Fund by my colleague, the Deputy Premier, Mr Ryan. It provided a

chance for consortiums of providers to come together in partnership to deliver programs that would lead to a greater participation in higher education programs by students in regional universities.

The first round of funding was announced last year when \$10.4 million of that total of \$20 million was expended. Seven successful projects led to around 900 immediate enrolments either directly in higher education courses or pathway programs that have led to higher education qualifications.

Last week I journeyed to Mildura to visit Sunraysia Institute of TAFE where I opened the subsequent round of the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund grant program. The second round component provides total funding of \$9.6 million, which gives institutions the opportunity to put forward projects ranging from \$250 000 up to as much as \$3 million for innovative programs which will lead to higher education opportunities for students living in regional Victoria. I encourage, therefore, providers and consortiums, whether they be universities, TAFE institutes, adult education providers or industry and local government, to put together partnerships and to submit programs for consideration by the Baillieu government in this second round of \$9.6 million in funding. Applications are now open and details are on the department website. Applications will close on 15 February, and I would be delighted to receive applications from all around regional Victoria for this particularly important program.

Teachers: enterprise bargaining

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — My question is for the attention of the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, Mr Hall. What will be the impact of the ongoing teachers dispute and the Australian Education Union (AEU) industrial action on school camps scheduled for term 1 in 2013?

Mrs Peulich interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! It would be good if members of the government did not interject before Mr Hall started speaking. I have just corrected Mr Lenders on that matter, and it would be a courtesy to the member's own minister.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — In response to the question from Ms Pulford, I am not quite sure whether she was asking me for an opinion when she phrased her question in terms of asking me what I think the effect will be, or whether it was a hypothetical situation, so I

will answer the question in this way, because I know I am not allowed to cast a view, an opinion or an idea, otherwise that would be a hypothetical situation.

Let me say that I think the Australian Education Union has done itself a gross disservice by putting in place industrial actions which, in particular, have prevented the written commentary reports for students of this year. Not only do I think it has done itself an injustice and a disservice to its own organisation, but it is also an injustice to students and parents of students — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Why don't you fix it?

Hon. P. R. HALL — Mr Pakula asks why I do not fix it. We have always been available. This government has never withdrawn from negotiations. It is the AEU that has walked away from them. At all times we have demonstrated a willingness to participate in those discussions. It is reprehensible that students are being made the political pawns in this argument between government and the AEU. I do not mind the AEU having a crack at me. I do not mind the opposition — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The interjections are getting a little out of control. If the minister responds to interjections, it invites further interjections. Perhaps it would be best for our proceedings if that did not occur. I ask members to listen to the minister and allow him to complete his answer.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I was saying that I do not mind the AEU having a crack at government, that is part of the role. I do not mind the opposition having a crack at me either, but when students in Victorian schools are used as political pawns in an argument then that is reprehensible.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! It is unfortunate for Mr Leane that I have my hearing aid on in my left ear, although with the volume of his interjections I probably do not need it.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I commend those AEU members who in fact did write comments for students. There were a number of them around the state who wrote comments on school reports. It should not be forgotten that there are teachers out there who put students first, beyond their own immediate interests.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! That is enough from Mr Drum. Mr Drum was in my line of sight; I have corrected people I could hear, and I could see Mr Drum. There is to be no pointing and no talking when I am on my feet. I ask all members to desist with their interjections.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I commend those teachers who defied a directive from their union and in fact did write commentary on reports for students. It is not too late for others to reconsider because school does not finish until the end of next week. I encourage other teachers to follow the lead of those who have written reports.

The government stands ready to resume negotiations with the AEU at any time. We are continuing to negotiate with the Australian Principals Federation and more than happy to re-engage with the AEU on these matters. Again, the AEU needs to reflect upon its forecast projections of industrial action next year which might limit extracurricular activity for school students. It would be doing itself a disservice. Have an argument with government, by all means, but do not implicate students and parents.

Supplementary question

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — Given the minister's apparent concern about the impact on school reporting and extracurricular activities like school camps, will the minister now commit to personally attending negotiations so that this dispute can be resolved?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — The practice has always been that professional negotiators are employed in the face-to-face negotiation process — —

Ms Darveniza interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!
Ms Darveniza!

Hon. P. R. HALL — That has been the practice of the previous government, and we have adopted exactly the same practice, in the same way. I meet with teachers, I meet with educational professionals every day of the week and continue to do so.

Ms Darveniza interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! This is the last warning to Ms Darveniza; I have warned her twice now.

Hon. P. R. HALL — The practice of negotiation is being undertaken by professional teams from the department, from government and from the teacher unions.

Federal Minister for Health: Victorian visits

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health, and I ask: is the minister aware of visits to Victorian health services by the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, and would he explain the purpose of such visits?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank Mr Finn for his question and for his strong advocacy for Western Health, and I note Western Health is another health service that faces a significant cut under the federal arrangements — of the order of \$6.5 million. However, as members in the chamber will understand, funding for our health services comes from a number of sources, some private, but mostly government money now paid through a pool.

Some federal money goes into the system and some state money goes into the system. The state amount is overwhelmingly greater and growing as time goes on. The most recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures show that the federal contribution to our health services fell from 42 to 39 per cent.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The last AIHW figures show the federal component fell from 42 to 39 per cent — the most recent AIHW figures show that. Let me be quite clear with Mr Finn, though, the federal health minister is visiting Victoria today and I welcome that visit. I am hopeful that she has in her pocket a cheque for \$107 million, which would plug the hole created in the system.

Mr Jennings — On a point of order, Deputy President, I just want to go back to the question that Mr Finn asked and ask whether it is within the competence of a state minister to attribute the purpose of the visit of a federal minister to Victorian health services? I thought the question was not within the competence of the Victorian minister to answer in the first place, and his answer is amply demonstrating that that is true.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I will not uphold the point of order, although I think there are some issues associated with asking a minister what might be in the mind or intent of a minister in another jurisdiction. With regard to that, I suggest that the

minister needs to be cognisant of his obligation to be responsive in relation to state administration.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — As I was explaining, the system is jointly funded — —

Mr Jennings — On a further point of order, Deputy President.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I advise Mr Jennings that I have ruled on the point of order and ask if this is a further point of order.

Mr Jennings — On a further point of order, Deputy President, and it does relate to that matter in that if the member had asked the Victorian minister what was in his mind, then I suggest that you would have ruled the question out of order, because the minister's opinion is not relevant and should not be asked for in this place. Therefore I cannot see how on earth a member in this chamber can ask a Victorian minister what is on the mind of a federal minister, given that they cannot even ask what is on the mind of the minister in question.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — On the point of order, Deputy President, the minister has written an article in the Geelong newspaper today outlining the purposes of her visit, and I am relying on the published reports and what I understand was the result of a meeting today. I think when the federal minister met with officials at Barwon Health today, they were hopeful she would have \$4.9 million to plug the hole.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I advise the minister that that is not on the point of order. That was just debating the point.

I will not uphold the point of order on the basis that I do not think it was asking for the minister's opinion, although I agree it was close. There is a prior ruling from President Gould in 2004 which may be of assistance. In relation to a matter raised about a federal government policy or issue, she ruled that so long as the answer was related to the effects of federal policy on Victoria and was within the bounds of the minister's portfolio responsibilities, it was in order.

I think my earlier ruling on the member's first point of order was to give the minister advice that he should stick within those grounds, and having now been advised of the previous ruling I continue to be confident of that position. Therefore my ruling on Mr Jennings's first and second points of order is that whilst I acknowledge there is some validity in the concerns he raised, so long as the minister stays within the bounds of his portfolio administration, then I will allow the question.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The federal Minister for Health has visited Geelong today and met with officials at Barwon Health. While I do not have a report on that as such, I am aware that no additional funding was provided. Hopes were dashed at Barwon Health, and I think people in the community of Geelong and region will be very unhappy that the federal minister was not carrying a \$4.9 million cheque.

The federal minister is also to attend a meeting of board chairs, and at that meeting she will be asked very directly about the cuts visited on Victorian health services halfway through the financial year. One of the purposes of the new system was to provide — in the words of the secretary of the federal Treasury — a stable and secure basis for funding and to provide budget certainty. Let me be quite clear, this is a cut halfway through the financial year to the health services budget, because the amount going into the pool from the federal government will impact directly on budget certainty and predictability.

The money paid into the pool by the federal and state governments sets the parameters for the pool. If the federal government cuts the funding to the pool, there is less money — and you cannot get blood out of a stone. You cannot squeeze more than is there. That might be a Labor approach to economics and to budgeting, that you just keep spending, even though the amount coming in has fallen short. I know it is the federal government's approach; it has never returned a budget surplus. I know Mr Parkinson will be working hard to deliver a surplus as the new federal Secretary of the Department of Treasury. I hope he does it, but I know he is like a man grasping at straws.

Mr Jennings — On a point of order, Deputy President, I draw to your attention that you have created for the minister an opportunity to answer his question in accordance with his responsibilities and the effects of the Victorian health system, and he is now talking about the capacity of the Secretary of the Department of Treasury in Canberra to deliver a surplus. I do not think he has kept within the guidelines that you have created for him.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I uphold the point of order. I gave the minister some guidance in relation to how he should answer a question that was seeking his opinion about a minister in another jurisdiction and what might be in their mind. Whilst I thought the question was on the edge, I allowed it but gave the minister some guidance as to how he should answer it. I might also add that I believe he is verging on debating the question and that is invoking interjections, so if we are going to have order for the

remaining 30 seconds of the minister's response, I suggest he cease debating the question and answer it specifically in relation to the guidance I gave him in relation to this question.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Deputy President, I thank you; I did stray just a little bit there. I will return to what I think was the purpose of Mr Finn's question, which was to seek information about what the federal minister might be doing in Victoria. As I said, she is to meet with board chairs following a letter that was sent to the Prime Minister by board chairs that sought the intervention of the Prime Minister to turn these cuts around and to stop them. I hope the message comes through to the federal minister loud and clear at that meeting that the impact on our boards, whether it be Bendigo — —

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

Teachers: enterprise bargaining

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession. Last week in Ballarat at a rally of striking Victorian teachers Simon Ramsay spoke to the rally and said words to the effect of, 'We are listening to you, and I will personally pass on your concerns to the Premier'. The very next day — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — On a point of order, Deputy President, following the earlier points of order I do not know if Mr Leane is seeking to caricature or act in some way. I am not sure he was there, and I am not sure he would know precisely what mode Mr Ramsay may or may not have — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I advise members that I am trying to rule on the point of order. There is no point of order. Mr Leane is to continue.

Mr LEANE — The very next day the Australian Education Union state council moved resolutions to extend its industrial action into next year out of frustration with the government's stalling negotiations. I ask the minister: how did events turn so that one of his own MPs was giving teachers assurance to the point that the next day the teachers were angrier, and what is the minister doing personally to see that there is an agreement reached with teachers?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — It is always a great surprise to see what sort of question comes from Mr Leane. His

question wandered around and a number of questions were superimposed into a statement from Mr Leane today, but he asked particularly about Mr Ramsay. Mr Ramsay does a fantastic job in representing his electorate. He comes to speak to me about concerns that have been expressed by his constituents. He has chatted to me about this particular issue. He is doing a fabulous job, and the people in the western region of Victoria should be thankful for such a great member.

Supplementary question

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — If the minister cannot inform the house of what he is actually doing to try to facilitate an agreement with the teachers, can he at least inform the house of where Simon Ramsay fell short in advocating the teacher's position so that in the future if any other government MPs want to have a crack at it, they might be more successful?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I will allow the question. Obviously everyone could see that I was giving it some consideration. It may have been worded slightly unusually, but I think it is in order for a member to ask a question of a minister as to what lessons might have been learnt from something a member raised. Perhaps it was not asked in those terms, but that was the effect of the question, so I will allow the question.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — It is almost like comedy hour with this particular question. What I think Mr Leane asked me was where Mr Ramsay fell short in the conviction of his conversation with me. He did not fall short at all by any means. As my colleague Mr Guy mentioned before, members of Parliament have conversations and make representations to ministers all the time. I receive many from both sides of the house. From a backbench position I did exactly the same. One thing we do not do is disclose fully the nature of all those conversations. I am not going to make it a practice now or in the future to disclose the content of those conversations which people have had with me in my role as a minister.

I say good on Mr Ramsay for making strong representations to me. He and all of my backbench colleagues are always chatting to me about these issues, and I welcome that input from them.

Biotechnology sector: investment

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My question without notice goes to the Minister for Technology, Gordon Rich-Phillips. Can the minister report on any

recent progress in the life sciences sector that highlights why Victoria is a prime location for industry to invest and grow in?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr Drum for his question and for his interest in the life sciences sector, which is a growing sector of the Victorian economy and one that this government is very keen to support.

Last month I was pleased to be in Dandenong at Ego Pharmaceuticals, which is in my electorate and is a major player in the life sciences sector in Victoria. I was pleased to be at Ego Pharmaceuticals in Dandenong to open its new global distribution centre. Ego Pharmaceuticals is a 60-year-old family business which has been operating in Braeside over that period of time. It is now a global player in the provision of pharmaceuticals, particularly around skin care, both to the retail market as well as commercially to hospitals. It is a company that now offers around 120 separate product lines and is experiencing sales growth of the order of 14 per cent a year. It is an incredibly successful, family operated business in the south-east, and it is now exporting around 30 per cent of its total production.

I was delighted to be in Dandenong South last month to officially open its new 6600 square metre global distribution centre. This represents a capital investment by Ego Pharmaceuticals of around \$1 million and will create 50 new jobs in the Dandenong South area. This is on the back of already strong jobs growth by Ego in the last five years, which has expanded its workforce to around 320 people, including 180 here in Victoria, as it has expanded its international network. It is a company that is looking to expand its manufacturing this year with an investment of around \$6 million in new manufacturing at the facility in Braeside. It is a company which undertakes its research and development here in Victoria, it is a company which undertakes its manufacturing here in Victoria and it is a company which undertakes its global distribution from here in Victoria. It is a great success story in the biotechnology sector in Victoria, and it highlights the reason Victoria continues to lead Australia in that sector.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 435, 468, 8699, 8705–7, 8722, 8737, 8744–50, 8767, 8771.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I raise with the Leader of the Government that I have a number of outstanding questions on notice. Some are questions on notice to the Leader of the Government in his capacity as Minister for Ageing: 8587, 8602–8681. There are also questions on notice to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development: 8476–8484 inclusive, 8591, 8595 and 8596. I ask for an explanation as to why these questions are now overdue, particularly as some of them date back to June.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I am pleased to follow up on the answers, both to the questions to me as Minister for Ageing and the ones to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. I note the length of time that the previous government took to answer questions, and I know that some questions were more than three and a half years overdue. But I will assiduously follow them up and ensure that they are answered.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I also have some matters I ask the minister to follow up in terms of unanswered questions: 8708–8710 to the Premier from 9 October; 8705–8707 to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security from 9 October; 8688 to the Premier from 6 September; 8521–8550 to the Premier from 14 August; 8199 to the Premier from 7 February; 8088 to the Premier from 11 October 2011; 963, 970, 973, 980, 981, 996, 999 and 1012 to the Treasurer dated 28 June 2011; and 605 and 606 to the Premier from 6 April 2011.

There is also a series from 5 April 2011: 367 and 414 to the Minister for Planning, 430 to the Premier, 435 to the minister as Minister for Ageing, 442 to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, 447 to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, 448 to the Minister for Planning, 449 to the Minister for Ports, 451 to the Minister for Racing, 460 to the Minister for Water, 463 to the Premier, 466 to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, 468 to the minister as Minister for Ageing, 481 to the Minister for Planning and 484 to the Minister for Racing. As I said, they are all dated 5 April 2011.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank Mr Pakula for raising those questions. He has listed a number of ministers. Some are for me and other ministers in this chamber but others are specifically for ministers in the other chamber. I will follow them up. If he wishes, he may hand me a list; that would be helpful. Otherwise I will retrieve the numbers from *Daily Hansard*, imagining also that he has written to the specific ministers. Has he written to them?

Hon. M. P. Pakula — No.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — It is common practice to write to the relevant minister to inform them — —

Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — It is indeed in the standing orders, but I am dealing with practice too, Mr Rich-Phillips; however, I accept your point about the standing orders. Notwithstanding that, I will pass these matters forward.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I indicate for the benefit of the minister, given that he is being so helpful, that I have just had handed to me a number of answers to outstanding questions he might want to cross off the list: 435, 468, 8705, 8706 and 8707.

GOVERNMENT: PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Prior to question time I was speaking on the topic of the coalition government fixing the problems and building the future, reiterating some of the legacy issues that were left us by the Bracks and Brumby governments as a financial millstone around our necks as well as around the necks of future generations, the consequence of which will be less infrastructure, fewer services for a growing population and fewer roads. We saw the crocodile tears shed on the opposition benches about our having to impose some sort of financial discipline on expenditure, partly because of the legacy the former Victorian Labor government left to us and partly because of the punitive attitude of the federal Gillard Labor government towards Victoria and its denial and withholding of various funds. Today during question time we heard, for example, about the toll on our health system as a result of the federal Gillard government withholding hundreds of millions of dollars that will directly impact on service provision in our hospitals, including those in the South Eastern Metropolitan Region.

I have spoken briefly about a number of our platforms or themes. One of those is boosting infrastructure, growing jobs and improving services. I started to enumerate some of the ways in which we have been trying to boost employment — through investment in skills, improvement in productivity and competition. I will now take up where I left off by also referring to the active part the Premier has played, in addition to leading the government, with Victorian firms to develop new export opportunities in India and key

emerging Asian markets through a new international engagement strategy.

We have read a lot about the trade mission to India, the trade mission to China, which was the biggest ever in the history of this state, and the forthcoming trade mission to the Middle East. As I mentioned, this includes Victoria's first-ever dedicated tourism campaign in China. We also have a \$58 billion manufacturing strategy. That sector has been very dramatically impacted on by measures such as the carbon tax, supported by the Greens, which is a Gillard government impost that is hurting the manufacturing sector, which is in transition. I pray, as do many people across the south-east, that a Tony Abbott-led government will be elected federally and that the scrapping of the carbon tax will mean an immediate reduction of 10 per cent in energy costs, which was a very substantial increase in the cost of living not only for households but also for businesses and for manufacturing in particular.

There are other examples: we have tried to secure new tourism and business events for Melbourne and we have continued our strong support for existing major events. The Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Louise Asher, has been doing a sterling job in this regard. We also need to make sure our industries are best placed to deliver projects on time and on budget by investing in the skills of our people; this was an area of particular weakness for the former government. The top priority has to be creating a balance sheet that opens up opportunities to invest in new major infrastructure projects that will benefit Victorians now and well into the future. This is a theme that has been occupying the mind of the government.

We need to continue to tackle housing affordability. The Premier has been leading some of that through the Council of Australian Governments, where he has pushed for an inquiry into the construction industry, because we believe all Victorians should have the opportunity to fulfil the great Australian dream of owning their own homes. Buying a home is the largest investment most families will make, so it needs to be at the front and centre of public debate. We have given financial support to the Regional Growth Fund. Major planning reforms by the Minister for Housing may boost economic activity. The Greens like to stymie any prospect of economic activity on a range of fronts, including opposing any sensible reform to areas such as the suburbs that are plagued with tips with a negative impact on amenity in and around the Kingston green wedge.

We have seen a 3 per cent cut in employer WorkCover premiums. The coalition has been supporting expanding markets, growing the economy and increasing exports. That is all absolutely necessary for Victoria's financial wellbeing. We are also pushing for reforms to lower costs in the construction sector, as I mentioned, and we have been challenging the campaign of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union while Labor, and in particular the Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, has been silent on the illegal boycotts by the CFMEU.

A set of reforms to the taxi industry is proposed in the report that was released today. The government is taking the extra time to make sure that its reforms are thoughtfully considered and that they address the significant issues that impact on that sector in general, and in particular on consumers, taxi licence owners and operators. The government has also announced the development of a major new 6000-home suburb, removed the ban on Easter Sunday trading and raised questions — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmar) — Order! I think it is the right time to break for lunch. We will come back at 2 o'clock.

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

Mrs PEULICH — Before the break I was going through a very long list of actions that have been taken by the Baillieu coalition government to boost employment through investment and skills, improve productivity and increase competition. I spoke about the announcement of the development of a new 6000-home suburb, as well as the ban on Easter Sunday trading. I also mentioned that the national reforms to occupational health and safety have been opposed by the Victorian state government as another impost on competition. Regrettably, when it comes to the Council of Australian Governments and the harmonisation of laws and practices, Victoria, which from time to time is at the leading edge, often ends up losing ground.

Another key priority for the government is infrastructure investment, including transport infrastructure to accommodate a growing population and to ease congestion. For the south-east this was a significant election issue. Boosting employment through investment and infrastructure is obviously important. I was pleased to see in the last budget a substantial boost for the south-east, including three grade separations, one of which is on Springvale Road. This has been welcomed in an area that is essentially the hub of industry in my region. I look forward to that being completed. It is going to not only generate jobs

and ease congestion but also help industry achieve greater efficiency in terms of fuel expenses, time and wear and tear on vehicles, and the resulting cleaner air will improve environmental outcomes.

The Baillieu government has dealt with some difficult issues since coming to government. I mentioned before, and I will not recap, the decisions around myki, the regional rail link and Webb Dock. However, there is \$5.8 billion worth of investment happening now, with \$40 billion worth of projects under way in Victoria, including significant funding for the road infrastructure component. The infrastructure investment includes expansion of port capacity, grade separations and a comprehensive cancer centre.

I was very pleased to hear about the other hospital expansions and rebuilds, including the Monash Children's hospital at the Monash Medical Centre. It is likely to cost \$250 million and will be built with funding soon to be announced. It will be welcomed by the entire south-east. Bendigo Hospital, the Ballarat and Geelong hospitals and other hospitals being built and expanded are all necessary investments in infrastructure to deliver improved health services, which are being squeezed by growth in population.

Some 600 Regional Growth Fund projects are proceeding; many have already been completed. Planning has begun for the regional rail project, which is very exciting news for the regions as well as for the entire state. The east-west link and the progression of the Melbourne Metro tunnel project are necessary pieces of infrastructure, and Avalon Airport is another example.

The government has placed investment in infrastructure at the forefront of its strategy to boost employment. The business community is aware of the government's infrastructure priorities. Obviously most people believe that there needs to be more investment, especially given the ground we have lost over 11 years. In the city of Casey alone there was close to \$1 billion of infrastructure backlog by the former government.

Mr Barber — One billion?

Mrs PEULICH — Close to it. The Labor government left behind a backlog of about \$800 million, which it did little about. We have a priority, which has been identified by the City of Casey, to finish the duplications of what were previously country roads but now carry city volumes of traffic. Then of course we will look at additional infrastructure that may be required or that is required.

Mr Barber — And public transport?

Mrs PEULICH — Public transport is a component of that. A necessary part of that component will be looking at how to improve services, and to date there have been improved services.

Mr Barber — Have there?

Mrs PEULICH — Yes, there have been, Mr Barber. I am talking about the railway lines in particular. The priorities are road, rail and port development, as well as the development of other forms of transport. As I said, building a new port in the south-east is important. All of these things augur well for the state. The coalition has poured \$160 million into road and bridge funding for 40 regional councils. It has supported the replacement of the fire services levy on insurance with a property-based tax, which has been crucial in responding to the recommendations of the bushfires royal commission. It is a necessary reform. A lot has been happening in the state.

Underpinning that is the need to improve services. The government made a very good start in keeping election promises to vulnerable people in particular by taking a whole-of-government approach to service delivery and reforms, particularly in a tough economic climate. The government has already met many of its pre-election commitments to raise service standards in areas such as health, education, public transport and law and order.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs PEULICH — Of course 11 years of neglect cannot be reversed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! The level of ambient noise is perhaps a little bit above where it needs to be. I ask members to lower the volume just a little bit.

Mrs PEULICH — Acting President, no amount of noise from the opposition benches will drown out the good news of the coalition government. But you cannot reverse 11 years of mismanagement and neglect in two years. The Labor opposition would now like to place responsibility for all those problems, which it allowed to accumulate on its watch, squarely in our lap. The motions that it brings to the chamber enable us to set the record straight.

I will quickly refer to the improvement of services. We are continuing the good work in terms of responding to the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, addressing Victoria's affordable housing crisis and developing a social housing framework, fixing public transport in underserved areas, improving educational outcomes for vulnerable young people and

implementing proposed reforms that place people at the centre of the service system.

The focus on vulnerable children and young people through the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry conducted by Justice Philip Cummins is very significant. It is not just about child protection issues; all parts of government and the community will need to be involved in fixing the problem. We need to recognise that in many of these areas there is a shared responsibility, and developing a whole-of-government strategy is an appropriate and important part of resourcing that is critical to the outcomes. We have also established an independent Children and Young People's Commission and commissioner, which are important to protect the best interests of children.

The ongoing commitment to protective services officers is being rolled out. Recently it was rolled out at Westall in my electorate, and it is soon to be rolled out in Cranbourne. Even though it has been opposed by the Labor member for Cranbourne in the Assembly, it is certainly something that is welcomed by the community. There have been substantial changes to vocational education and training funding, refocusing priorities to areas of skills shortage and changing that mix. Despite the doomsayers, there has been an increase in enrolments. That may not directly relate to the funding changes, but it does directly relate to TAFEs and providers, encouraging them to focus on their core business and improve the services they offer to the community.

Many of the criticisms we hear from the Labor opposition have little substance, in particular in the area of education, which I was going to outline in chapter and verse but I understand other people wish to make contributions to the debate. I would just like to point out that there has been an overall increase in education funding. You would not hear that from Labor, but there has been an overall increase in education funding and significant improvements have been delivered in early childhood services. In school education there have been a number of consultations, and reform papers have been put out for consultation to make sure that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater but build a more resilient and focused system. Some of the key principles that have been identified by the coalition — such as trust in leadership and autonomy — underpin many of the reforms, but the big focus is on delivering better outcomes to our students.

With those few words I commend the work of the government over the last two years. Obviously I intend to vote against the motion, which is Labor's cheap stunt in trying to abrogate its ownership of the problems it

was involved in making over its 11 years of mismanagement and wasted opportunities. I reiterate that I intend to vote against the motion.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to the debate and speak in support of the motion before the chamber. Perhaps I can kick off and start where Mrs Peulich left off — that is, talking about education. It is true to say that Mrs Peulich did her very best to talk up education, but it is also true that if you spend any time out there speaking to constituents and in your schools listening to what people have to say about this government's contribution, or lack of contribution, to education, you will find that there is a lot of criticism and a lot of disappointment regarding our schools. I see Mr Koch sitting there shaking his head at me.

Mr Koch interjected.

Ms DARVENIZA — But let me tell the house that back in 2006 when Labor was in government it announced a schools plan, and it made a commitment to rebuild, renovate or extend every Victorian school by 2016–17.

Mrs Peulich — A lick of paint!

Ms DARVENIZA — I did not hear anything in Mrs Peulich's contribution that gave that kind of commitment to schools in Victoria. During Labor's last term — I take this up because Mrs Peulich talked about the 11 years of the Labor government, and I was very proud to be part of that government — it invested \$1.9 billion in the first four years of the Victorian schools plan. That was a commitment to rebuild, renovate or extend every school — not just some schools, not just special schools, but every school. It committed to a further \$1.7 billion at the last election. The very clear and clearly stated priority of the Labor government was to ensure that it delivered to the state the facilities and qualified teachers that our children need to ensure that they have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

If it is not good enough to hear about the things we did and the commitments we made when in government, let us look at some of the things this government has done that indicate where its members have held education as a priority since they have been in government. They have cut the School Start bonus, which has been abolished from 2013. That program provided \$300 grants to help parents cover the costs of prep and year 7 students. That has been slashed.

The schools portion of the education maintenance allowance has been cut. That allowance ensured that

needy kids were able to go on excursions. It enabled them to participate in IT programs and use computers. In some schools it even covered the breakfast clubs that are so vital in ensuring that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds get a healthy breakfast before they start their school day.

The student support officer program has been slashed by \$29 million over the next four years. Support for services such as speech therapists and social workers has also been slashed. These are the cuts being made; this is the kind of commitment that the coalition government is making to education. It is scrapping \$3.3 million for additional kindergarten inclusion support services placements, which support children who have high and complex needs. If you have high and complex needs, you will find you are not going to get that support. If you happen to come from a low socioeconomic background where you are not likely to get breakfast, you will find the breakfast club has gone. If your parents need the School Start bonus in order to be able to get you started in prep and year 7, too bad; that has gone.

Add to this the \$12 million a year, or \$48 million over four years, that has been slashed from coordination funding for the Victorian certificate of applied learning program. If members have heard nothing else when they have been out listening to their constituents talk about education, they certainly would have heard that. I will not even get started on the cuts and slashes that have been made to the TAFE system, which is having a devastating effect in rural and regional Victoria and in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region.

What a disappointing two years it has been for this government. What a disappointing two years it has been for the people of Victoria as a result of this government's inactivity. I know members of the government do not like going there, but let us have a look at jobs. If we look around this chamber, we are reminded it is only the Labor opposition that has a jobs plan; we are the only party with a jobs plan. On the other side of the chamber the members of the coalition government have no jobs plan. The most recent jobs figures show that Victoria continues to fall behind the rest of the country under the coalition government and Premier Baillieu's watch. The opposition has been the only party to put together a comprehensive jobs plan. As jobs continue to go west under this coalition government, as people continue to lose jobs and as new jobs are not created, the coalition government continues to have no plan to create and grow jobs.

There were 13 700 jobs lost in November, 10 600 of which were full-time jobs. If members on the other side

of the chamber think that is something they should be proud of as part of their two years in government, then I can assure them that the people of Victoria, and certainly the people in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region, do not agree.

The unemployment rate is 5.5 per cent. That is up from 5.4 per cent. The participation rate — the rate of those people out there looking for jobs — is at 64.9 per cent. That is down from 65.2 per cent in October and 65.7 per cent when Premier Baillieu took office, which was the lowest rate since mid-2009. If members opposite reckon that that is doing a good job, then I think they are pretty much alone. They will not find too many Victorians who are unemployed, who are looking for work or who have given up looking for work because they cannot find jobs saying anything other than the work that the government is doing to create employment is just not good enough.

Unemployment rose to 7.9 per cent, up from 7.8 per cent in August and 6.9 per cent when the coalition government took office under Premier Baillieu. Over the last six months Victoria lost more jobs than any other state or territory. We have lost more jobs than anywhere else. In November Victoria lost more full-time jobs than any other state or territory. I do not think the government should be particularly proud of that.

I will finish my contribution by talking about employment, because it is so important. We know that without a job you have no income. It affects your ability to manage your life, pay your bills and plan for the future. Being unemployed or losing your job causes a great deal of anxiety for those people who are affected by it. The impact unemployment has on people's lives and mental health should not be underestimated.

The government still has not got a jobs plan. Without a jobs plan it is going to cut another 600 jobs from the public sector, bringing the number of public sector job cuts to 4200. It has closed Department of Primary Industries offices, including in northern Victoria. The Treasurer broke his promise to create 55 000 jobs each year over the next four years. In 2012–13 employment is set to grow at 0 per cent. On that note I will conclude my contribution. I say again that I support this motion.

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on this motion. I thank Mr Viney for moving this motion — —

Mr O'Brien — It is Mr Lenders's motion.

Mr ELSBURY — Sorry, it is Mr Lenders's motion. It is just that this motion looks similar to the one

Mr Viney put up a few months back and I thought it must have been the same one. We are subjected to this repetition from the opposition whenever it has relevance deprivation syndrome; it feels it has to once again try to embarrass the government into doing things.

I am all for the opposition keeping the government to account. That is what an opposition does; it holds the government to account for everything that it says it is going to do. But with running the same line over and over again we end up hearing the same speeches constantly being made on both sides of the chamber. In any case it makes a complete mess not only of my paperwork, which has fallen all over the floor, but of the government trying to get the job done in Parliament and in letting the people of Victoria know the alternative to this government. If the opposition wants to present an alternative view, by all means bring it on. Show us what it is. Give us something, because at the moment there is a complete vacuum of ideas over there. Labor members talk about their jobs plan, but it is a nonsensical document that does not deliver anything, whereas the coalition is currently working to deliver jobs in Victoria.

There are trade missions currently happening. There were trade missions to India and China, and there will be a trade mission to the Middle East in the future. They are about creating jobs and attracting business to the state of Victoria. The area of manufacturing is quite close to my heart considering the large number of manufacturing jobs that make up employment in the western suburbs of Melbourne, a part of the world which I love and represent.

It is staggering that members opposite continually stand up in the chamber and say the number of jobs has decreased under this government. In front of me I have the latest quarterly labour force data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics which show that there are 13 100 more Victorians working in the manufacturing sector than at this time last year. In August there were 308 200 Victorians working in the manufacturing sector, which compares to 295 100 Victorians working in the manufacturing sector this time last year. It is interesting that members opposite continue to try to talk down the economy and manufacturing jobs in this state.

We have also been working to create jobs in other areas. We have supported the Werribee employment precinct, a development mooted for many years under the previous Labor government. Previously it was described as a technology precinct. Mr Pallas, the member for Tarneit, in the other place when making his

maiden speech spoke about the importance of the technology precinct in Werribee and then proceeded to do nothing about it. He did not deliver it; he did not provide any plans of what it would look like or what it would contain. He did nothing. Instead in the two years under a coalition government we have not only done the planning and put together the things that are going to happen in the Werribee employment precinct but we have said it is open for business.

St Vincent's Hospital representatives have seen that we have been working actively to develop a site in Werribee. They are interested in establishing a private hospital there. I am sure there will be more businesses who follow suit when they see what a great opportunity the Werribee employment precinct is. It is on the Maltby bypass of the Princes Highway in Werribee, it is around a train line and it has ample access to two major airports — one of them, Avalon Airport, will hopefully be an international airport shortly — and the port of Melbourne.

There is a multibillion-dollar investment to develop the port of Melbourne so it can take more capacity at Webb Dock. Members opposite continue to deride that particular plan. They say, 'But you are going to be putting trucks onto residential streets' when nothing of that sort will happen. There will be an enclosed road network for the port facility to allow for trucks to get off the residential roads they are currently using.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr ELSBURY — Does Mr Barber really want me to talk about the east–west link?

Mr Barber — Yes, please.

Mr ELSBURY — Excellent! I will get onto that shortly but I will do so using my agenda.

Being able to move freight in and out of the port of Melbourne is of vital importance to jobs not just in Western Metropolitan Region but the entire state. To be able to freight our goods into the global marketplace is vital, and it is of great importance that the port facility project goes ahead.

I will speak on the east–west link because Mr Barber is so enthused about the project. It is a way of getting trucks off our residential streets — especially streets in Footscray — and roads, including minor arterial roads throughout Footscray, Yarraville and Williamstown and getting them onto a freeway which will run straight into the port facility. It is a way of being able to move freight more efficiently, which will mean there will be less pollution and fuel use, less stopping and starting of

trucks and the engine wear on trucks will be reduced. It will be a great boon. The project will provide greater efficiency for transport companies in being able to gain access to the port.

We have had to pick up the pieces of many projects, including, need I say, the massive regional rail project in the western suburbs of Melbourne that will not only deliver improved services to our regional cousins but also to people in the outer western suburbs. Two new train stations in Tarneit and Wyndham Vale are being planned. There will be upgrades to stations, including Footscray and Sunshine stations. Some work has been done at Tottenham station. I have named but a few of the works being undertaken under the regional rail project.

Since the coalition came to power, two grade separation projects on Anderson Road in Sunshine have been reincorporated under the program. These two grade separation projects were removed from the project by the former government, which would have meant that traffic in the area would have come to a standstill for 45 minutes of every hour of every single day. There would have been complete gridlock from having the boom gates down for three-quarters of each day because of the regional rail link. It would have been completely unfair. It was something that members on the other side of the chamber were more than happy to inflict on the people of the western suburbs. Once again the west was losing out under a Labor government. It has taken a coalition government to come to power to put it right.

Further away from Anderson Street is the Main Road crossing in St Albans. Labor members are constantly carping in the local media, saying, 'Main Road in St Albans needs grade separation. Do it now!'. This was after 11 years of them doing nothing to remedy that particular situation for the people of St Albans. Now Labor party members want to get it going so badly they choke on their words. There is fervour from members representing the western suburbs, even the ones who have to fly in from Sydney to be able to take up their positions in the Parliament. In any case, we have now established a community consultative group to get the views of the people of St Albans, get the project off the ground and get that job done. I say it again: we have promised that that grade separation will be started in this term of office.

Another project completely ignored by the previous government was the Rosamund Special School. One of my proudest moments was being able to ring the principal of Rosamund Special School and say we were going to fund a rebuild of her school. This was a school

community ignored by Labor for five years, even though a complete rebuild of the school had been promised. In our first budget we were able to bring forward the funds and provide the capital injection needed to get a new school built. That school is under construction as we speak. It is a fantastic thing for the kids who are currently at the Rosamund Special School, because at the moment they are in low-grade facilities. The school buildings are so decrepit they are basically in a wood and glass box — that is all it can be called. However, they will soon be moving into new purpose-built facilities at a new site.

I would also like to highlight to members in the chamber the plight of Wyndham Park Primary School, a school created by the merger of the Glen Orden Primary School and Glen Devon Primary School in Werribee. The school was promised a completely new refit if the two schools merged, but when they merged support for their rebuild was suddenly withdrawn. The school got half of the funding through the Building the Education Revolution program, but the rest of it — the state government component — was ignored. These kids were left with substandard rooms.

In February 2011 when there was a major flood incident in the city of Wyndham and across the western suburbs of Melbourne some concerned parents called me up and asked me to see the state of the school. When you are walking through inch-deep water in a classroom you know things are pretty bad. They are really bad when you are on the second level of the school building and you are walking through inch-deep water. That was a result of the complete neglect by the Labor Party of the Western Metropolitan Region and the Heathdale community in Hoppers Crossing. It was a complete and utter disgrace.

This happened to people who were at their lowest ebb, in an area of low socioeconomic need. They were completely ignored by the party with a bleeding heart, which says, 'We are here for the workers, we are here for the downtrodden'. But no, it took a Liberal-Nationals coalition government to be able to provide the money needed to get the job done. Again that school is undergoing works as we speak, and they will be completed by the start of the next school year.

I move on to Galvin Park Secondary College.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr ELSBURY — Mrs Peulich knows exactly what I am talking about: a school where the roof of the science room collapsed because of a lack of funds provided for maintenance at that school. I hate to tell

members in this chamber but it does not take 12 months for a school to get into the state that Galvin Park was in. Prior to this incident Galvin Park had not used its heating or cooling systems for two years, and the reason they were not used was that they were just plain dangerous. Basically the school was uninhabitable and was in need of a massive amount of repair.

That is why the coalition stepped up and allocated funds for a refit of the school during the last summer holidays. We took action and cleaned that school up. In the last budget we also said we would provide an extra \$14 million for a refit of the school. Galvin Park is going to go from being a basket case to being a place of pride. The students will get the educational opportunities they deserve because they have the educational environment they deserve.

In relation to other projects that needed to be funded, the previous government brought in the growth areas infrastructure contribution (GAIC) as part of a new regime to ensure that infrastructure was delivered to a community when new housing projects were under way. The difficulty with that, though, was that the money just disappeared into consolidated revenue; there was nothing for the area from where the funds were collected.

Instead this government has changed the rules when it comes to GAIC. What will happen is that we will say to a developer that if it wants to give us an in-kind construction of a community facility, then we will take the price of that facility off the GAIC paid. So if a developer wants to build or duplicate a new road or build a sports facility, if a developer wants to provide us with some form of infrastructure that needs to be delivered into a region and it can be negotiated, then the infrastructure will be put in place. Not only will it be put in place but it will be put in place much sooner and at less cost than if we were to collect the money at the end of the project, as the previous government would have, and redeploy that funding.

It was not fair that the GAIC was collected from the people in Caroline Springs so that Doncaster could get a new road, or that the people of Point Cook paid for a sports centre to be built in Ringwood. It did not make sense to me that the community from which the money was being generated could be ripped off so badly. That is why we made these changes: to make it fair.

Also in relation to GAIC, funding has come through recently in the city of Hume and the city of Wyndham growth areas. As part of a larger \$7 million first tranche across Melbourne, the city of Wyndham will see

\$900 000 put towards its events centre to improve bus links into that centre and to improve the car park.

We then have a \$2.4 million investment in infrastructure from GAIC going to the city of Hume, which includes an upgrade of the Mickleham Road–Greenvale Gardens Boulevard–Dellamore Boulevard intersection and the Hume Regional Tennis and Community Centre at Craigieburn. If there were ever a community out there that needed a helping hand, it would have to be Craigieburn — there is such massive growth going on around the municipality. It does not have quite as much as the city of Wyndham or the city of Melton, but for an area with such a small population, it is being inundated with new houses as we speak. It deserves every bit of help that it can get.

I turn now to the delivery of other items, such as our protective services officers (PSO) policy, a policy that was derided by members opposite, a policy which strangely enough sounded very similar to one that they had put forward in a previous election campaign, although it was on a much smaller scale. I believe their idea was to place PSOs on the city loop stations. And how did that go? They did not deliver it. It was a much smaller commitment. From my count, it comprised four stations, if you include Southern Cross, possibly five if you get adventurous and go on to include Flinders Street. They could not even get that done.

Instead we now have 200 protective services officers on our train stations. The people of the western suburbs have been very thankful for that. As PSOs have been deployed to Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, Laverton, Newport, Yarraville and Footscray stations, they have been welcomed by commuters. I can say from firsthand experience and from seeing the PSOs in action that they are getting their job done. They are making our train station platforms safer. They are ensuring that people who have the potential to cause any disruption to people's normal daily lives on a train station platform are removed, and I have seen them do it.

I have also spoken to taxidriviers who congregate around train stations, because strangely enough when one form of transport terminates you need another form of transport to continue your journey. Taxidriviers have told me on a number of occasions that they are so very thankful that the PSOs are now in place because it has removed the antisocial behaviour that they were so frightened of when they used to park in the car parks around train stations in Melbourne's west.

We have also been able to provide new school infrastructure, with a new Tarneit P-9 school at a cost of \$10 million and the new Alamanda P-9 school in Point Cook at a cost of \$10 million. Also in education we have had almost an epiphany of sorts, so that the International Baccalaureate is offered at Werribee Secondary College. It is a goal that that particular school was attempting to achieve under the previous government and for which it could get no support. We believe in there being choice in education. We believe our children in Victoria deserve only the very best, and that is why we support the Werribee Secondary College offering the International Baccalaureate as part of its course structure.

Going back slightly to the Werribee employment precinct, another major factor in that particular project is the \$40 million Sneydes Road overpass, an overpass which is desperately needed so that the people of Point Cook can gain access to the Princes Highway. The access to the Princes Highway from Point Cook is abysmal, to say the least. The previous government built the Palmers Road extension into Point Cook, but it did not bother to connect it to any other road. It connected it onto the freeway, which is all good, but it did not actually connect it to the community on the other side of the freeway or the rail line. It was known as the bridge to nowhere, because that is exactly where it ended up. If you did not want to go on the freeway, you had no choice but to go on the freeway. The government has worked with the developer so that the connection to the other side of the freeway and the rail line will shortly be available. Not only that, but we have added extra funds to duplicate the Palmers Road extension and the bridge over the top of the freeway to ensure adequate traffic flows.

As part of that particular project, there was a redrawing of the plans for the Williams Landing train station. You would have hoped the previous government would have learnt its lesson when it redeveloped Footscray and Laverton train stations. However, this was not the case. At Laverton we have stairs that can only be described as billygoat stairs: they are so steep that you just about need to be a billygoat to get up them. If you do not want to go by stairs, you need to use a lift. The problem is that lifts break down. If passengers on a train do not know the lifts are not working, it is a bit of a wait — 20 minutes — until the next train comes through so that they can catch a train down the line and then get on another train and come back. We are talking about spending 40 minutes just to get off a train station platform. And then you have no guarantee that the other lift is not broken.

The problem at Laverton station is that the lifts are used for disabled access and for people who have a mobility issue, or even a mother with a pram. With the Williams Landing station we redrew the plans and established ramps. Ramps are a little bit more robust than your average lift, and when they break down you know about it pretty quickly; and it is very unlikely that they will fail because there are no moving parts. The ramps will provide people with mobility issues or disabilities 24-hour access to the train network.

We have also improved security and safety in Footscray with the new closed-circuit television camera network. The police in the area have been calling for such a network for many years so that they can control antisocial and illegal behaviour in the centre of Footscray. It is a fantastic tool. I have seen firsthand what this particular installation is able to achieve, and to say it is something of a marvel is an understatement. The technology used is unbelievable. It is a fantastic tool for members of our police force to use to show offenders evidence of an illegal act occurring so that they know the jig is up and they have been caught.

The network can also assist in finding a vehicle that may have been stolen. If you are able to tell the police the time when you left the vehicle and the time you returned to the site where the vehicle should have been, the police can use the computer systems to work out what time that particular vehicle left; they can wind the footage forward a bit and have a look at who it was that flogged your car.

Another commitment that we made was to provide the Westgate bicycle ferry — the Westgate Punt, as it is well known — as a Monday to Friday, five-day-a-week commuter service. It is used as a tourist and recreational tool on the weekend. The punt is a fantastic way to get to the other side of the river, to get over to Port Melbourne, and be able to pedal like mad. It is a great thing — I wish I did it.

We have also been providing the people of Braybrook with desperately needed infrastructure and \$2.7 million has been allocated to the Braybrook community hub. It will provide a new library facility and new health, child-care and kindergarten facilities. There are further plans for pavilions to be added to the sportsgrounds in the area. It is a great project which I completely support.

Training facilities for emergency services are also vital, and I am very glad that the western suburbs of Melbourne are able to assist. There is \$3 million for Victoria Police for the establishment of its Essendon Fields operational tactics and safety training facility,

which will assist in tactical training and the training of our protective services officers. There is also the new Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Country Fire Authority training facility at Craigieburn. It is a massive investment for the region and we are more than happy to assist in training our emergency services for many years to come.

Who can forget the intensive care unit at Sunshine Hospital, which was promised back in 1999? Mr Lenders can go on about a train line that was apparently promised on the date of his birth, and that is okay, but if we go back to the previous government, we were told, 'We cannot do that, it is off-limits, it is too far back'. In this instance a promise was made in 1999 to build an intensive care unit at the Sunshine Hospital. What eventuated? It was built but never funded for use. People might ask, 'What was it used for?'. If you were recording *Stingers*, it was used as a TV studio. It is an absolute disgrace that a medical facility that was supposed to be for the intensive care of the most sick people in the western suburbs was being used as a recording studio for a TV program. I almost cannot speak because I am furious about the fact that this area was neglected so badly and that it was treated to having a recording studio rather than an intensive care unit at one of the most vital hospitals in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The community was treated with absolute contempt.

I could go on, and in fact I would be more than happy to, because I have ample examples of how the coalition is working hard for the people of the western suburbs. The Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre has received another \$2.6 million for a desperately needed pool upgrade. I could talk about the regeneration of the Laverton College P-12 and the provision of a school for autistic kids in Laverton. It is something that has been desperately needed but which was completely ignored by Labor for many years.

I could go on; this debate will continue back and forth, and I am sure that in a few months we will have yet another motion saying, 'You have not done enough, you have not finished this project, you have not done this and you have not done that'. If I had a record like the one of those opposite, I would not be flinging mud. I would not be flinging mud after \$3 billion was lost in the pokies licences issue and \$2 million a day is being spent on a desalination plant. We could build a school every week if we did not have that. In any case, we are dealing with the issues and the financial realities and we are delivering on our election promises. With that I can happily say that I will not be supporting this motion.

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

Debate adjourned until later this day.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed from 28 November motion of Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan):

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 11 December 2012, examples of bathymetric data, showing both cross-sectional and concomitant 3D representations, for the plateau and the entrance or Rip Bank area used to depict seabed topography from four distinct periods, namely —

- (1) measurements that were used for the 2004 environment effects statement — before any dredging occurred (pre August 2005);
- (2) post the trial dredging period (September 2005);
- (3) post the completion of the channel-deepening project (after 25 November 2009); and
- (4) within the past six months;

and any data pertaining to ongoing erosion, if any, as predicted in the scour assessment report, July 2007, Sinclair Knight Merz, which was tabled on the last day of the 2007 supplementary environment effects statement inquiry into channel deepening of Port Phillip Bay.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That '11 December 2012' be omitted with the view of inserting in its place '5 February 2013'.

The amendment is necessary because the debate continued on from last week, and I simply want to set a new date for the return of the documents, that date being the first sitting week in February 2013.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank members for their support of my motion during the previous sitting week. I will pick up on one point made by Mr O'Donohue when he said that the government may not be able to provide the information because channel deepening was undertaken during the term of the previous government. However, the Port of Melbourne Corporation holds all the information and should release it. I suggest the information it holds on the tides in Port Phillip Bay and the depth of any particular part of the bay is not the property of the Port of Melbourne Corporation, it is the property of the people of Victoria and should be released by the corporation so it can be used by the people of Victoria, marine research scientists or anyone who has an interest in that information. It should not be closeted away by the Port of Melbourne Corporation.

I thank members for their support of the motion, and I also support the amendment moved by Mr Barber that was necessitated by the house running out of time last week.

Amendment agreed to; amended motion agreed to.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE: CHAIR

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me no great pleasure to move:

That this house notes that —

- (1) the claim of the member for Caulfield, Mr David Southwick, MP, in a media statement released on Friday, 16 November 2012, was that he was only informed on that day that he did not complete all the points required for his postgraduate diploma in marketing from Monash University;
- (2) on Mr Southwick's personal website, www.davidsouthwick.org, the entry of 16 October 2010 contains the claim that he graduated from Monash University with a graduate diploma in marketing;
- (3) on 19 October 2010 the same website had been altered, removing the claim to graduation and replacing it with a statement about having studied business and marketing at Monash Caulfield;
- (4) the member for Caulfield's embellished claims continued to appear on the Liberal Party website and in the parliamentary handbook;
- (5) the alteration to the member for Caulfield's personal website between 16 October 2010 and 19 October 2010 suggests that the member has known for at least two years, and not for less than two weeks, that his claim to have graduated in marketing from Monash University is false;

and calls on the member for Caulfield to immediately stand down as chair of the Education and Training Committee of the Parliament.

Mr Barber — It could be called some sort of 'gate'.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I think we call it 'Adjunct Professorgate'. I remember when I was much younger, before I was a member of Parliament, in the lead-up to the 2001 federal election when the *Tampa* issue blew up, a lot of people on my side of politics accused or at least believed that the then Prime Minister, Mr Howard, was behaving in a racist manner in regard to that affair. I never agreed with that. I always took the view that what was actually going on was just naked political opportunism.

What was so disconcerting about it was that the Prime Minister of the day decided to break apart the post-war political settlement, the post-war consensus — the

concordant, if you like — in regard to refugees to scare up a few votes. That was the view I took — that is, that it was much more about opportunism than anything else. I remember thinking it was terribly unfortunate that something that had been dealt with in a bipartisan way for more than 50 years was suddenly being dealt with otherwise.

I remember at the time thinking it would be something that as a community we would live to regret — that for a long time we would end up endlessly debating that matter — and so it has proved to be. It is more than a decade on, and the matter has scarcely been out of the public domain since that time. I had not seen a decision made with as much capacity to cause discord and mischief until last year, when the member for Caulfield in the Assembly decided to mastermind an attempt to similarly break down bipartisanship that had grown up in this state over the post-war period, at least since 1948 and the creation of the state of Israel. It is a bipartisanship that has existed for decades and decades.

I have to say that if notices of motion over this sitting week and last sitting week are anything to go by, he is still at it. I thought it showed a disturbing preparedness to do anything to scare up a few votes. I think the scars that were inflicted on this chamber and the other chamber by that behaviour will be felt in here for some time. In that context Adjunct Professorgate is nowhere near as surprising as it should normally be, because I think we got an insight into the nature of the conduct in which the member for Caulfield is prepared to engage in order to pursue his political objectives.

Of course there are the well-established facts of this matter that were revealed in the *Herald Sun* a few weeks ago. The facts are quite clearly that in numerous types of documents, whether it be the member's personal website, the Liberal Party website, the parliamentary handbook or other statements, until he was rumbled the member for Caulfield described himself as an adjunct professor, which he never was. He described himself as a graduate in marketing from Monash University, which he is not. Of and by itself I think that is disturbing enough, and it is certainly a big enough breach of faith for the electors of Caulfield to warrant the member no longer being the chair of the Education and Training Committee of this Parliament.

I have to say quite frankly that the fact the Premier did not immediately seek the member's resignation from that role after it was not just alleged but admitted that the member had made false claims about his qualifications is an indictment of the Premier every bit as much as it is of the member for Caulfield. It really

has demonstrated that for this government there are no standards.

There is no behaviour odious enough to warrant resignation, other than unfortunately that of the member for Benambra in the Assembly, whose resignation was required simply to protect the Deputy Premier. The member for Benambra is the only one who has had to go in two years, and it was only because his resignation was an absolute necessity if the Deputy Premier's position was to be preserved. However, the member for Frankston in the Assembly, continues unhindered. The member for Caulfield continues to be the chair of the Education and Training Committee, and of course the Deputy Premier rolls on unencumbered by any of the established facts relating to the conduct of his office. The facts are disturbing enough and warrant the member's resignation from that august position as chair of a parliamentary committee which is designed to inquire into and report on all matters regarding education and training in the state of Victoria. I think all members would agree that it is a fairly important role.

As disturbing as the initial offence is the increasing tendency of members of this government to fudge and mislead when they are caught out. We spent a great deal of time in this and the other chamber talking about the logically inconsistent positions being adopted by the member for Benambra and the Deputy Premier over the Jones-Weston affair, the incontrovertible fact that they could not have both been telling the truth and the almost impossible contortions that those members undertook in order to try to create the impression that whilst their stories were completely contradictory, they were, in fact, both truthful. We saw that absurd display.

Then we saw the situation a few weeks ago with the member for Frankston. He was the subject of an unfavourable Ombudsman's report, but did not have the common sense to keep his head down or the self-preservation instinct to simply make himself a small target. He decided to go into the other place and start simulating a sex act at the Leader of the Opposition. When caught doing it, what was his response? Was it to fess up or apologise? His response was to deny it, and the denial continued until the video emerged. Even after the video emerged we had this ridiculous spectacle of not just the member for Frankston but also the Premier and others trying to wish it away, trying to — —

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, Acting President, I have listened to Mr Pakula both in my office and now in the chamber for 9 minutes and have resisted the temptation to intervene before this point, but the reality is that the motion moved by Mr Pakula is

very specific in its allegations about the member for Caulfield. I suggest that Mr Pakula has spent the majority of his contribution talking about the alleged behaviour of other members. I would ask that you bring him back to the motion at hand.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — On the point of order, Acting President, as Mr O'Donohue knows, I am the lead speaker on this motion, which allows me some latitude, and I am creating context. As Mr O'Donohue would note, the motion is about dishonest behaviour, and I am creating some context in terms of the conduct of various members of the government in order to support my point.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! I thank Mr Pakula for his assistance on the point of order. I was going to say there really is no point of order; the lead speaker is allowed some latitude and I think he was drawing an analogy, but I would suggest that he bring himself back to the substance of his own motion forthwith.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Thank you, Acting President, and I will do just that because I do not think this motion requires a particularly lengthy discussion. I was making the point that the conduct of both the Deputy Premier and the member for Frankston, when coupled with the conduct of member for Caulfield, indicates that there is an emerging trend amongst members of this government, once caught out, to respond not by fessing up, admitting and apologising but instead by continuing to mislead and deceive.

In regard to the member for Caulfield, I draw the house's attention to the media statement he put out, listing Mr McKee as a contact, on the day after the story appeared in the *Herald Sun*. Without going through the statement in detail I draw the house's attention to the last two paragraphs which go particularly to the matter of the claim about having obtained a postgraduate diploma in marketing at Monash University. I quote from the member's media statement:

Sixteen years ago, not long after finishing my bachelor of business degree and while running my own small business, I undertook study towards a postgraduate diploma in marketing at Monash University. I did so in order to improve my skills in this area and grow my business.

It was my understanding at the time that I had completed all necessary units towards that further qualification. Today I was informed that I did not complete all the points required for that diploma. I will now remove all reference to it from my website and any official publications issued by my office. I apologise for this error.

The clear import of the member's statement is that until that day — that being the day after the story broke — the member believed he had graduated in marketing from Monash University and that it was only on that day that he discovered that that was not the case. That is curious in itself, because most people attend a graduation ceremony when they graduate from a course.

Mr Barber — I didn't. I got mine in the mail.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Let me take up Mr Barber's interjection. He says he got his in the mail. The point is that even if you did not attend the graduation ceremony, you would receive your diploma through some other means. You would receive it in the mail or at a later date. One way or another I think you would know if you had graduated or not. Of and by itself it is pretty difficult for anybody to believe that Mr Southwick really only discovered the day after the story broke that he had not graduated as he had claimed. But there is more.

On 16 October 2010 on David Southwick's personal website, davidsouthwick.org, the following entry under the heading 'Making a difference' said:

David completed his high school certificate at Mount Scopus College and went on to study for a bachelor of business at Victoria University. In 1991 he was awarded an honorary fellowship in recognition of his service on the university council, and in 1996 he graduated from Monash University with a graduate diploma in marketing.

There you have the claim on 16 October 2010 by Mr Southwick that he graduated from Monash University with a graduate diploma in marketing. It is interesting to look at what that very same website said just three days later. What did that website say on 19 October 2010? Words had been added to the heading so that it read 'Growing up in Caulfield and making a difference', and the site then went on to say:

David was the first in his family to attend university. He started at Victoria University and later at Monash Caulfield where he studied business and marketing.

The claim to have graduated from business and marketing had been removed three days after it appeared on 16 October. What happened between 16 October and 19 October to cause the then prospective member to change his website? I do not know. It might be that he became aware that somebody was onto him. What those changes make clear is that sometime between 16 October and 19 October 2010, and not merely a few weeks ago, the member for Caulfield became aware that he had not in fact graduated from marketing at Monash University as he

claimed. Let us be clear about this: between 16 October and 19 October 2010 David Southwick's personal website was changed and the claim was removed. For him to say that he only discovered this fact recently is demonstrably false, and it is further evidence of why it is an undeniable fact that this member ought to resign from his position as chair of the Education and Training Committee.

Members might say, 'He discovered it, and he changed it', except for the fact that at some time after 19 October 2010 — in fact in November 2010 — Mr Southwick was elected as the member for Caulfield. After that, as all members know, he was asked to provide an entry for the member's handbook, the same type of entry we are all asked to provide for that handbook. This was after 19 October 2010, because the election was not until 25 November. Mr Southwick's entry says that he has a graduate diploma in marketing, 1996, from Monash University. The claim that was there was removed and then returned. Not only does it appear in the member for Caulfield's entry in the member's handbook but it also continued to appear on the Liberal Party website until the night upon which Mr Southwick and the Liberal Party became aware that journalists from the *Herald Sun* were making inquiries about this matter.

I now understand why Mr Southwick is quoted in a Victoria University publication as saying, in terms of his advice to graduates, the following:

Find out about the company you are looking at working for, and demonstrate the contribution you believe you would be able to make. Tailor your CV to the organisation and the job.

He has done that. He has tailored his CV backwards and forwards and backwards again. This is a person who has represented himself to his local community in a way that is not correct and not honest. He is a person who continues to hold the position of chair of the Education and Training Committee of this Parliament despite the fact that he falsified his qualifications, not about any old thing but about his education and his training. He falsified qualifications about his education and his training and was then deemed appropriate by the Premier to serve as the chair of the Education and Training Committee of the Parliament. It is a situation we simply cannot abide.

However, more disturbing than all that is that when confronted with the fact that he misled not just the Parliament but also the people of Caulfield, he chose to mislead again. He chose to put out a statement which claimed that he had only just become aware of the fact that he had not graduated in marketing from Monash University — a claim that is disputed by common sense

and a claim that anyone would consider to be a highly unusual mistake to be made for any member of the community but a particularly unusual mistake for a member of Parliament to make. Most constituents would expect a little bit more prescience from their member of Parliament than him not knowing whether he has graduated from a course. Most constituents would expect a little bit more prescience from their member of Parliament than his claim, which importantly is disputed by written facts.

Between 16 October 2010 and 19 October 2010 Mr Southwick changed his personal website to remove that claim. If he knew about it in 2010, how can he claim that he first found out about it only a few weeks ago. It is a nonsense claim. It is a claim that no person with common sense would believe, and it is a claim that simply compounds the original offence by the member for Caulfield of falsifying his qualifications. It is a claim that must drive the dagger through his ambition to remain as chair of the Education and Training Committee. The Premier should remove him forthwith. If the Premier will not, this house should move that that should occur by supporting my motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am very pleased to speak on behalf of Mr Southwick and to advise Mr Pakula and the opposition that the government opposes this take-note motion moved by Mr Pakula. The change of government has seen the continuity of one thing — that is, the Labor dirt unit. The Labor dirt unit is alive and well, and clearly Mr Pakula and his colleagues, rather than spending time developing policy and prosecuting issues for their constituents and the people of Victoria, are running through archives of websites playing semantic word games to try to find a difference between a website on this date and that date to try to prove some grand conspiracy and lies.

It is disappointing that the Labor Party is not focusing on the issues that matter to Victorians and the issues that matter to their constituents. It is quite ironic to listen to Mr Pakula's allegations about various coalition members of Parliament when we all know about the Labor Party and its Australian Workers Union scandal, the allegations against the Prime Minister, the allegations against the now independent member of federal Parliament, Craig Thomson, and a range of other allegations. Mr Pakula comes in here and is happy to spray allegations all around the chamber — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I proved it.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Mr Pakula interjects by saying — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! Mr Pakula has had his chance. I note that through most of his contribution no-one was interjecting.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note that Mr Pakula spent a large amount of his time spraying dirt not only about Mr Southwick but also about various other members of the coalition in what was a wide-ranging contribution from him.

Mr Pakula alleges he has the smoking gun. He has the hard evidence — he has got him. It is his gotcha moment, which, as the spokesperson on opposition scrutiny of government, I know he lives for. That is what he gets out of bed for — the gotcha moment. He thinks he has got it with his frozen frames of Mr Southwick's website on 16 October 2010 and then later of a different website on 19 October 2010. 'I've gotcha', Mr Pakula says; 'After being elected as the member for Caulfield, Mr Southwick repeats a lie'. Let me put to Mr Pakula through you, Acting President, and to members of the opposition who are supporting him in this motion, that perhaps Mr Southwick made an honest mistake. Perhaps Mr Southwick is telling the truth in his statement which Mr Pakula quoted from. Perhaps when Mr Southwick said on Friday, 16 November, that:

Sixteen years ago, not long after finishing my bachelor of business degree, and while running my own small business, I undertook study towards a postgraduate diploma in marketing at Monash University. I did so in order to improve my skills in this area and grow my business.

It was my understanding at the time that I had completed all necessary units towards that further qualification. Today, I was informed that I did not complete all the points required for that diploma. I will now remove all reference to it from my website and any official publications issued by my office.

He issues an unreserved apology — 'I apologise for this error'. I do not think there is any grand conspiracy here. There is no gotcha moment, as Mr Pakula is alleging. Indeed there is no correlation between this and the other allegations Mr Pakula is trying to wrap up into this debate today. What Mr Southwick said on Friday, 16 November, is completely understandable and completely plausible. I put it to the house that it makes more sense than Mr Pakula's attempts to put together some grand conspiracy. The facts are that Mr Southwick genuinely believed that 16 years ago he completed all the necessary units towards this qualification. He studied for a graduate diploma at Monash University. When Mr Southwick obtained the transcript from Monash University and became aware that he did not have the necessary units for that

qualification he released the statement on Friday, 16 November.

As I said, Mr Pakula's argument rests on the two screen shots he captured from Mr Southwick's website on 16 October and 19 October 2010, and the suggestion that a slight change in language somehow proves guilt. Let me provide some context. This was a couple of weeks before the 2010 state election. There were multiple entries going onto members' websites every day updating press releases, responding to statements made by opponents and putting out information about current issues. This was right before the election. To suggest that changes to a website a matter of days before the election is confirmation or proof of guilt is an absurdity. I imagine that Mr Pakula's website was different on 16 November 2010 from the way it was on 19 November that year.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I didn't have one.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I respond to Mr Pakula's interjection by saying that I imagine the details of the websites of most of our colleagues in the Assembly would have changed between 16 November and 19 November 2010. The different phrases Mr Pakula cites are often interchangeable.

My fundamental propositions to Mr Pakula are that he has mounted too weak a case to prove anything and that the media statement Mr Southwick released makes sense and is logical, and I believe it. The fact that Mr Southwick's later entry in the *Victorian Parliamentary Handbook* reflected the original entry on his website on 16 October further proves that Mr Southwick believed he had attained the qualification from Monash University. Rather than saying Mr Southwick went back to tell another falsehood, I put the alternative to Mr Pakula: that by reiterating what he did in the parliamentary handbook, Mr Southwick demonstrated that he believed that what he was asserting on his website on 16 October was actually true.

As I said, full marks to Mr Pakula. He has the title of opposition spokesperson on scrutiny of government. It is his job to scrutinise the government, and good on him for trying to draw a long bow between a range of actions which have no correlation with each other as evidence of some sort of guilt or malfeasance. As I said, Mr Pakula has mounted a barely plausible case against Mr Southwick.

Let me go to the issue of Mr Southwick's chairmanship of the Education and Training Committee.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — What about his adjunct professorship?

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am happy to take up the interjection from Mr Pakula, who raised the issue of the adjunct professorship. From listening to Mr Pakula I do not believe it was raised in his contribution. I do not profess to have — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I thank Mr Pakula for raising this issue of Mr Southwick's adjunct professorship. I have in my possession an email sent by a David Abramson from Monash University. I will quote the email from Mr Abramson and then the response from RMIT University. I will not say who the email from Mr Abramson was addressed to, but he said in the email of 14 October 2010:

You don't know me, but I had a quick question for you. In a few weeks my wife will debate David Southwick ... He is standing for the seat of Caulfield as the Liberal candidate, and my wife is standing as the ALP candidate. It should be an interesting debate.

I was gathering some information to give the convenor of the debate, and in searching David's various web pages ... I note that he is an adjunct professor in your school at RMIT. I just wanted to check this information was correct, so I checked your school web pages, and couldn't find any reference to him.

I wonder if your pages are up to date? Or perhaps it isn't your department?

Would you mind letting me know so I can pass it on to the debate convenor ... We want to make sure he is addressed correctly (and as you can see, I hold an academic position myself ...

A senior person at RMIT responded to Mr Abramson at 4.10 p.m. on 18 October:

Just to clarify the matter you raised, David has been referred to by different titles for the various types of work he has done at RMIT over the years. These may have included at various times adjunct fellow, adjunct professor and adjunct lecturer.

In relation to the work David did with the graduate school, particularly regarding the executive education and other activities he undertook for the school internationally, my understanding is that he was given the title adjunct professor.

As I said, this email is from someone who I understand is a senior person at RMIT. We have an email from the husband of an ALP candidate who is standing against Mr Southwick seeking to interrogate the veracity of his title and RMIT has confirmed that title in an email back to the husband of the candidate on 18 October 2010. I think that suitably responds to Mr Pakula's issues about the title.

Ultimately, we can play word games, make allegations and make all sorts of cases for political leverage, as Mr Pakula has done. As I said, that is the task he has been given by the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Mr Andrews, so fair enough.

Taking a step back, I am very proud to be a member with Mr Southwick. He is an outstanding member of Parliament; he represents his community in an outstanding fashion. One of the interesting things about the changes in this house and in the other place is the fantastic talent the coalition recruited for the 2010 election campaign. The coalition has recruited some fantastic members. Members of the opposition are fighting each other for spots on their front bench, with Mr Somyurek saying that the old guard former Brumby government ministers should make way for the up-and-coming talent. I assume by 'old guard Brumby government ministers' Mr Somyurek means Mr Pakula and by 'up-and-coming talent' he means himself. They are fighting among themselves because nothing has changed. With the exception of Mr Tarlamis, these are the same old, tired members who gave us the legacy of the desalination plan, the myki card and all the other issues that this government is getting on with fixing.

In contrast the coalition has recruited some talented members, Mr Southwick amongst them. Leaving aside the semantics — Mr Pakula wants to play with words in trying to mount his case — the email from RMIT goes on to say what a fantastic job Mr Southwick did in his teaching roles. That reflects the talent that came into this place and the other place at the 2010 election. We have a diversity of skills and a diversity of talents, compared to the same old faces in the opposition, the people who gave us the failures of the previous government.

My colleague Ms Crozier is an outstanding talent. Mr Ramsay, in the Chair, is an outstanding talent. Mr Ondarchie brings fantastic experience from his business background. Mr O'Brien is a former barrister and brings an exquisite knowledge of the law and a great understanding of legal and parliamentary process. Mr Elsbury brings his fantastic talent to this place.

Mrs Coote — Knowledge of his local area.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Indeed, he has a wonderful knowledge of his local area, Mrs Coote. The coalition is lucky to have two members who represent the western suburbs and who live in the western suburbs. There is a tip for the opposition: have your members from the western suburbs live in the western suburbs.

I could go on and talk about some of the wonderful talent that has been recruited for the government in the Legislative Assembly — and there are some fantastic new members there — but I think the examples I have provided demonstrate the point. One can take a step back from the word games Mr Pakula is attempting to play and the smearing of individuals that he is happy to carry out under the protection of parliamentary privilege. The Leader of the Opposition in this place, Mr Lenders, used to refer to it as 'cowards castle' when in government, but now that his role has changed he does not say that quite so often.

The fact is that this is the last sitting week for the year. It is the last opportunity for the tired Labor opposition to put forward its solutions to the problems Victoria is facing and its policies for the future. What do we have in the last sitting week before we recess until February? We have documents motions from the Greens, the continuation of debate on a motion from the last sitting week with no substance or constructive approach to the issues of the day, and we have a motion from Mr Pakula attempting to smear the member for Caulfield, an outstanding member of Parliament who is doing a fantastic job for his community. The government absolutely opposes Mr Pakula's motion. We stand behind Mr Southwick 100 per cent.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — The facts that we have before us seem to be somewhat disputed. Mr Pakula says, and the member in question, the member for Caulfield in the Assembly, has admitted, that he did not have the degrees that he claimed to have. That appears to be confirmed. In response to the question of the member claiming the title 'adjunct professor', the government has put forward some evidence that the member had the right to claim that title. Mr Pakula may reply to that.

This appears to be a question of a member's honesty, or openness, if you like. None of this is ultimately going to affect the great matters of the state, such as health, public transport, addressing climate change, education and so forth. However, honesty and integrity is incredibly important in maintaining the system that we all rely on. I am trying to establish what the benchmark and the standard is here, because it is a standard that will need to continue when any other matter comes up at any other time. The Greens certainly hope any standard that we set with this motion in respect of this particular member is one that we can all uphold consistently. Questions of honesty and claims that members make are important. Mr Southwick, the member for Caulfield in the other place, has already made a public correction. The question then is what to do about it.

Is the matter a parliamentary matter? Let us face it: we are all accused out there in the political arena of anything from incompetence to corruption and all the many different possibilities in between when we stand by our particular positions as party members and as MPs. Is this a matter relating to the processes of the Parliament? Not every accusation about a member leads to a debate inside the Parliament about that accusation.

In this case the connection seems to be that the *Victorian Parliamentary Handbook*, which is a document of the Parliament, albeit one authored by many people, contains the same incorrect information. That appears to be a fact. If one purports certain things about oneself in the parliamentary handbook, I guess that is a matter for the Parliament to concern itself with. Along with that is the related question of the member in question's chairmanship of a parliamentary committee.

For my part, if I were accused of a falsehood or some other sort of behaviour that was unacceptable in light of the written or unwritten standard and it related to matters of my conduct as a parliamentarian, I think I would like to make a personal explanation in the Parliament. A press release is one thing — we can all say lots of things in the public domain at lots of times — but if there is a question of your conduct, particularly in the role that you perform in the Parliament, then an explanation of the facts and so forth should be made in the Parliament. I would like to see Mr Southwick make the same claims that he has made in his press release through a personal explanation; that would be appropriate.

I know that Mr Pakula jealously likes to guard his own reputation for integrity — as do I, as do other members. Any member who puts a high premium on their own reputation and integrity is, paradoxically, not afraid to receive a challenge to it either, or to address that challenge. Mr Southwick has admitted that in making the claims that he did, he did the wrong thing, at least in relation to the degrees that he was not qualified to claim. As I said, it would be better to address these matters formally through a personal explanation, which is certainly well provided for in the standing orders. The question, then, is: what is the appropriate punishment, if you like, or the appropriate sanction to go with that?

A man of high integrity — a man or woman of integrity, I should say — would probably have already worked out their own punishment for themselves. If they are so jealous of their own reputation and want to be a part of setting high standards in this place, they probably would have also formed a view of what the

appropriate sanctions should be. I guess that is something for Mr Southwick to consider. He could form the view himself that as a result of having falsely — whether it be mistakenly or deliberately — made a claim about qualifications that he did not actually have, he should, for example, step down as chair of that committee.

Mr Pakula tried to suggest that the Premier should sack Mr Southwick from his position, although that is not what the motion calls for. Of course the Premier does not have the power to do any such thing. Chairs of committees are elected by the members of those committees. Mr Pakula might have been suggesting that the Premier should bring pressure to bear on his government members of that committee to move against Mr Southwick, but the reason Mr Pakula did not put that in the motion is that he knows that as a matter of law it is the committee itself that would have to appoint or remove a chair.

Personally, I do not know at this point. If Mr Southwick had made a personal explanation to the Parliament about the matters in the parliamentary handbook and put all those facts into this domain, then we all would have formed a view about the appropriate sanction or what should arise out of that. But he has not done that, and therefore to some degree he is still avoiding, I think, a proper accounting in the Parliament of parliamentary matters.

As we know, the committee that he chairs relates to education, and it would be an extraordinarily poor example if a committee chair who regularly inquires into and makes recommendations and findings related to matters of education thought it was okay to go around making up degrees. Mr Southwick has not said that; he has in fact apologised to the public at large for doing that. So there is that previous step to determining an appropriate sanction — that is, to actually face up to the facts in the chamber, and that has not happened yet. In this matter he is a cautionary tale to the rest of us. I am sure he now fully understands that if this was inadvertent, you certainly should not let mistakes like that happen, and he has a clear view of what the public and the rest of us would think of that.

The problem, of course, and Mr Pakula was right to raise it, is that what has been alleged in the matter of the member for Frankston by the Ombudsman and what is now the subject of an inquiry by the Privileges Committee — although I am not sure what matter of privilege was actually breached; it was more a matter of administration of entitlements — is a much more serious matter and yet there is no apparent sanction or admission by the member for Frankston. So if the

Premier allows that kind of matter to go by and does not immediately require of Mr Shaw that he repay the amounts on the fuel card, then the Premier is not in a position to hold any other standard against any of his other government members. It leaves various members of this place — and for that matter, the public — unsure themselves as to what the right standards are. We all want them to be absolutely high. We all hold our own reputations in high regard and would want to defend them and maintain them, so we need to be sure that others around us are all engaged in that same exercise and that we are all together working on one common purpose, which is to maintain the public's respect for this place and its processes, because this is, after all, where their democracy gets delivered.

On that basis we would support the opposition's motion, but I think with some nuances. We have suggested where we think the deficiencies of Mr Southwick's response are and further steps that could be taken by him and other members in this place to maintain the highest possible standard.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I rise in support of Mr Pakula's motion and want to touch on a few of the key issues. The first thing is that Mr Pakula has thoroughly outlined the case here — the paperwork trail, if you like — not, as Mr O'Donohue alleged, from Mr Pakula's assertions but from his facts: the facts that he had uncovered from, principally, Mr Southwick's own words on his own website or on the Liberal Party website, his own words that he would have put together, like all of us, in the parliamentary handbook and his own words and what he said in his media release when this matter became public. I might say that I think it was made public by the *Herald Sun*, not the alleged dirt unit of the Labor Party.

Mr Barber — The dirt unit works in mysterious ways, doesn't it?

Mr VINEY — Mr Barber was perfectly happy to be part of select committees and processes that ultimately proved to have very little substance in the last Parliament, and I am sure that most of that stuff was not uncovered by the media; most of that stuff was as a result of research done by various members of Parliament and their staff. I suspect the truth is, that the entire Parliament has a dirt unit operating because everyone is doing research on everyone else; that is actually part of the accountability process.

Let us have a look at the facts here. It is part of the accountability process to check whether what a politician says is true, and in this instance what a politician said — namely, Mr David Southwick, the

member for Caulfield in the other place — has been proven to be untrue. The words that Mr Southwick used on various websites and in various statements have been proven to be untrue.

It was revealing that Mr O'Donohue managed to let the cat out of the bag in his contribution by revealing that the reason Mr Southwick changed his website between 16 October 2010 and 19 October 2010, as was so eloquently exposed by Mr Pakula in his contribution, was because RMIT University, in response to an inquiry from someone else, stated that he did not hold the position he claimed to hold during the election campaign period.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On 18 October, incredibly.

Mr VINEY — Yes, on 18 October. And on the very next day after that exchange took place, as revealed by Mr O'Donohue in his contribution, Mr Southwick changed his website. Mr Pakula, speaking first, said, 'We don't quite know why he changed it between the 16th and the 19th'. Now we do because Mr O'Donohue has explained it. I thank Mr O'Donohue. Now we know with absolute certainty that Mr Southwick's explanation in his media release of a couple of months ago — which I do not have in front of me for some reason, nor the date — when this all became public — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — November.

Mr VINEY — In November. Mr Southwick's explanation was that he inadvertently made this mistake and he was not aware of it until the day it became public. That is what he says in his media statement. We now know that that was a lie. We now know because Mr O'Donohue explained in his contribution that Mr Southwick knew on 18 October 2010 that he had misrepresented his position and had been found out by RMIT.

It has now been exposed that not only were Mr Southwick's representations of his experience and qualifications incorrect right back in the lead-up to the election but his explanation after he was elected and it all became public was also untrue. His explanation for all of this was a lie. It is always the cover-up that gets you, is it not? In politics is it not always the cover-up that gets the politician? There is the perfect example of the attempted cover-up — —

Mrs Coote — Craig Thomson's cover-up is pretty impressive.

Mr VINEY — I thank Mrs Coote very much. If Mrs Coote wants to go down the path of all the

examples of politicians behaving badly in this place, I am happy to start. Let us just stick to the example of this politician behaving badly. We know this politician, behaving badly, constructed a lie about his qualifications and experience in the lead-up to the election campaign. We know that when that first lie was exposed his explanation in his media release of a couple of months ago was also a lie. We have a lie in the cover-up for the original lie. Based on Mr O'Donohue's contribution alone — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Four weeks ago.

Mr VINEY — Sorry, four weeks ago; I thank Mr Pakula very much. Time has passed more quickly than I thought. Mr Southwick has been exposed — by his own side, I might say; by Mr O'Donohue's helpful contribution — as having clearly lied in his explanation of four weeks ago.

Our argument is this: if Mr Southwick was prepared to conduct education fraud by misrepresenting both his qualifications and experience, he is not entitled to hold the position of chair of the Education and Training Committee of this Parliament.

This is a case of the government not holding its members in the other place to account. Because of the closeness of numbers, it is not prepared to have them resign from the party or from the positions they hold. During their contributions other members raised issues about the Labor Party and the positions its members hold. I was in this place when a member for Silvan Province, Carolyn Hirsh, made an awful error of judgement and was pinned for being over the 0.05 limit when driving. She was asked by the Premier of the day, Steve Bracks, to step down as chair of the Road Safety Committee. I think we would all agree that it was no longer tenable for her to hold that position given what had occurred and her error of judgement. Carolyn is a friend, and I like her very much, but she made a mistake and paid the price expected of her. She did the right thing and resigned.

Here we have a case of the member for Caulfield having made, even if you were generous, an error of judgement. I would contend that he actually committed a fraud by presenting himself in the way he did, but even if you were to be generous and say he made an error of judgement in misrepresenting his CV in the way he did, I would contend that if we were going to apply the same standard to Mr Southwick that all members of this place believed was properly applied to Mrs Hirsh at the time of her error of judgement, he has no choice but to resign. If he were an honourable man, he would have resigned his position as chair of the

Education and Training Committee, because you cannot hold that position having committed education fraud. It is untenable for the Parliament to have the chair of the Education and Training Committee commit such an act.

We say the honourable thing for Mr Southwick to do is resign his position as chair, just as Carolyn Hirsh resigned from the Road Safety Committee. If Mr Southwick fails to do that, then the Premier should ask him to resign. If Mr Southwick fails to do so on his own initiative, the Premier should ask him to resign and exercise discipline in his own party. If Mr Southwick still refuses to resign, then the Premier could require coalition members on that committee to vote with the Labor Party, because we would certainly vote for a change. We agree that the new chair should be another member of the government; that is not in question. But Mr Southwick should resign his position, and if he does not, he should be voted out; that is what should occur. This motion calls on Mr Southwick to step down as chair of the Education and Training Committee. That would be the correct and honourable thing to do.

Why do I say Mr Southwick has committed an education fraud? All of us in life, whether in public office or not, need to stand by our actions and the CVs we present. I am sure that everyone accepts that when people write their curriculum vitae they put their best foot forward. They will highlight those things in their career that are appropriate and that will help their application for the particular position they are applying for.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr VINEY — They will highlight the relevant bit; I understand that. As a former employer of many years experience, I can say when I read someone's CV I was always aware that they were properly presenting their best side. That is what I wanted them to do, but you weigh that up when reading the CV. Mr Southwick is someone who did not just represent his best side; he misrepresented himself completely. It was claimed on the Liberal Party website:

David is currently an adjunct professor in the graduate school of business at RMIT University ...

If members go to the RMIT University website, they can find a very detailed methodology of what is involved in appointing someone to the position of adjunct professor and adjunct lecturer and when making an honorary appointment; it is about seven pages long. It is a rigorous and comprehensive process. I will not read all seven pages, but I can say that the awarding of an adjunct professor appointment is

normally done by a dean of a faculty nominating the appointee; that is then endorsed by a professor and pro-vice-chancellor and approved by the vice-chancellor before the decision being determined by the university council. That happens before anyone can claim to be an adjunct professor. I can tell members that at RMIT University this involves the completion of nomination forms, making an application and getting endorsements. How you could inadvertently think that you have been through that process is beyond anyone's wildest imagination. Members can read the seven pages of the process for appointment to an adjunct professor position. Mr Southwick did not go through one single step.

If someone is a lecturer or a member of staff at RMIT University — I was able to find this on the RMIT website in well under 5 minutes — you would pretty easily be able to access information about how one could be appointed as an adjunct professor or associate professor at the university you are teaching at. We are not disputing that he taught at RMIT; we are saying that his claiming to be an adjunct professor is fraudulent. He must have known it to be fraudulent if he was working for the university. In about 2 minutes I could print out information about the process for these appointments, and I am not a member of staff. Any member of staff at RMIT would be able to quickly and easily access the information. Mr Southwick has committed an educational fraud, and he ought to stand down as the chair of the Education and Training Committee.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I have a great deal of pleasure to speak on the motion today, because it gives members an opportunity to talk about a very honourable man. In my contribution I intend to talk about the work that David Southwick, the member for Caulfield in the Assembly, has done since coming into this place and before that time.

Mr Barber during his contribution talked about honesty, openness and integrity. Today I want to talk about an honourable man. Mr Viney was full of huff and puff, as he usually is on a Wednesday of a parliamentary sitting week. He went on and on and tried to make a case — I will give him the benefit of saying he made an attempt. That is his job on a Wednesday. He tries to acquit himself, but today he was blowing in the wind.

Mr Pakula made an argument. He must have been terribly excited when he thought he had something in this. He was absolutely keen and invigorated, but again he ran out of puff. He has been out of the chamber for most of this debate. It was all very well for him to move the motion in the chamber, bring up the dirt and then

disappear. But now I have to say he is back in the chamber. How very pleasing to see that!

I would like to start at the beginning; I have quite a lot to say about this issue. Mr Viney spoke about Mr Southwick's ability to hold the position of chair of the Education and Training Committee. The chair of any parliamentary committee, as members know, is elected by the committee. The committees in this Parliament are bipartisan and largely work very cooperatively. The Greens have not bothered to join any of the committees.

It is very important to know what members of this chamber have said about the chair of the Education and Training Committee, Mr Southwick. On 14 November in this place Ms Tierney said:

I also draw the house's attention to the statements the chair has made in his report, and I thank him for the generous comments he directed towards me ...

These comments would hardly come from someone who thought the chair was some sort of fraud or someone who was not doing his job. That is quite a good endorsement.

Mr Elasmr said:

I would like to acknowledge my fellow committee members: the committee chair, David Southwick ...

On 20 June Ms Tierney said:

I thank the committee members — the chair, the member for Caulfield in the other place, David Southwick ...

If the members had had problems with David Southwick as the chair, there were opportunities to have brought them up, but all of the statements are endorsements.

I again recommend to this chamber the excellent reports the Education and Training Committee has made available in this Parliament under the chairmanship of the very person who is the subject of this motion today — that is, David Southwick. They include the reports entitled *Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students* and the *Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria*. Both are tomes of very relevant material from a committee with an excellent chair who, as I said, has been endorsed by the Labor members in this place who are on that committee.

I would like to get this on the record: in a media statement released on Friday, 16 November, the member for Caulfield, Mr David Southwick, MP, stated he was only informed on that day that he did not

complete all the points required for his postgraduate diploma in marketing from Monash University. Mr Southwick's statement is correct and accurate. The facts are that Mr Southwick genuinely believed that while running a small business 16 years ago he completed all necessary units towards that further qualification. Until Friday, 16 November 2012, the website of Mr Southwick, as the member for Caulfield, made references to studying at Monash University. Mr Southwick's statement says he 'studied for a graduate diploma in marketing at Monash University'. This is correct. On that day, 16 November, he received a copy of his transcript and saw he was two units short of completing the further degree. He then removed reference to it from his website and had it removed from the Parliament and Liberal Party websites.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, it is completely unacceptable to say 'Princess Andrea'. I think this was said in a misogynistic way that was determined to reflect poorly on the member.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! It is up to the member in question to seek a withdrawal if that is what she wants.

Mrs COOTE — I would like an explanation from the other side that it was not meant in a facetious way but was a term of endearment.

Mr Leane — Absolutely!

Mrs COOTE — No, a bit louder.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Mrs Coote is either seeking a withdrawal or she is not.

Mrs COOTE — No, I will not seek a withdrawal, but I thank the minister for his very noble support.

I would like to tell this house about the timing of this motion, because Mr Southwick has been a great advocate for Israel. If members have a closer look at what was happening earlier this year with the Max Brenner situation and the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the role of the Labor Party, they will see how much the Labor Party was seen to be wanting in all of this.

I would like to talk about the ACTU. An article in the *Australian* of 15 October 2010 headed 'Unions want ACTU to endorse protest plan against Israeli settlements' talks about the Australian Workers Union (AWU) national secretary, Paul Howes. The

sticky fingers of Paul Howes are in so many things, but they were in this one as well. The ACTU wants to endorse the movement to boycott Israeli goods. I have some sympathy for the member for Albert Park, who was in an absolute conundrum over this situation because — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On a point of order, Acting President, it appears to me that Mrs Coote has just asserted that Mr Howes from the AWU supports a boycott. I can assure Mrs Coote that that is totally incorrect. I want to ensure that Mrs Coote is not inadvertently misleading the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mrs COOTE — That gives me the wonderful opportunity to read the entire article, which I shall do. The article from the *Australian* of 15 October 2010 is by Patricia Karvelas. She wrote:

Australian unions are signing up to an international campaign to boycott Israeli goods.

But a fight is brewing over a proposal for the Australian Council of Trade Unions to endorse the movement.

The broadbased divestment and boycott campaign is targeting companies that profit from the Israeli settlements.

The Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Queensland branch of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the Finance Sector Union have all passed a resolution supporting the international campaign of 'boycott, divestment and sanctions' (BDS) against Israel.

Does Mr Pakula want me to go on? This is one union after another. All these unions — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order!

Mrs COOTE — I am painting a picture to look at the union attitude towards sanctions against Israel, and we are talking about Mr Southwick and his endorsement and support of Israel — forever.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs COOTE — I say to Mr Leane that members should reflect on comments made by Michael Danby, the federal member for the Melbourne Ports electorate, about Senator Bob Carr and about what happened recently in regard to the Prime Minister, who is from the party of those opposite, and with her attitude

towards the Palestinians and the United Nations. She was wrong; she was absolutely rolled.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On a point of order, Acting President, on the question of relevance, I ask you to bring the member back to the point of the motion.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, Acting President, a number of aspersions have been cast on the character of Mr Southwick, and Mrs Coote is working assiduously to put forward a strong case on his very good character. She is doing that by drawing out a number of threads, including some about people who have indicated support for Mr Southwick, including members of committees. Let me be quite clear: just because this member is sensitive about certain matters — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! The minister has made his point. I do not uphold the point of order.

I ask Mrs Coote to come back to the motion.

Mrs COOTE — If members opposite do not want to follow Mr Danby, of whom I am sure they are all great supporters, I inform them that this morning he was very damning about Senator Bob Carr and the Prime Minister's attitude towards the Palestinian situation in the United Nations. I would like to quote from an article in the *Australian Jewish News* of 10 December by Senator Scott Ryan. He has a great deal to do with David Southwick, the member for Caulfield, because Senator Ryan has a lot to do with the Melbourne Ports area. He has been to Clarendon Street in South Melbourne because of the boycott against Max Brenner and the shop. He has been there with Mr Southwick supporting him, supporting Israel and negating the boycott. This is what Senator Ryan had to say:

The message broadcast loud and clear from the Labor Party last week was that domestic and international pressure will guide its position on Israel.

In deciding that Australia would abstain on a United Nations vote to grant special observer status to the Palestinians, the ALP showed its position is based on pressure — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Acting President, my point of order is very simple. You have asked the member to return to the motion, and I suggest to you that she has not done so.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, it is clear that Mrs Coote is quoting from extracts that will show important matters on which Mr Southwick has been active. When he is being attacked in terms of his

character, it is important to make sure there is a balance in this, and the balance weighs very much in favour of his advocacy for Israel and his determination to protect the Jewish community, both here and overseas.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! I thank the minister. I do not uphold the point of order. I am prepared to give Mrs Coote a little more leeway, but I have asked her to return to the substantive motion.

Mrs COOTE — I think members will have got the gist of what Senator Scott Ryan has had to say, with which I concur, as indeed does Mr Southwick.

I would like to talk about the member for Caulfield. I know he is indeed a very honourable man. I will begin by talking about the things on the ground. His electorate is within the electorate that Mr David Davis, Ms Crozier and I represent. The other representatives of Southern Metropolitan Region, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Lenders, are also here today. I think even they would have to attest that Mr Southwick is well respected and well liked and has a huge reputation in the Caulfield community for the work he does for his local area.

I have done a significant amount of doorknocking with Mr Southwick, and it always continues to surprise me that many people know about him because of the work he has done and the long-term involvement he has had with the community. However, I would like to go on to talk about some of the things that Mr Southwick has done since he has been in Parliament. They are quite considerable. Aside from being the chair of the Education and Training Committee, with the endorsement of the Labor members on that committee, as I said before, he has done many things.

One of the things you can look at to learn about a member of this place is their inaugural speech, the very first speech they make in the Parliament. It sets out their values and what they hope to achieve. Inaugural speeches are very good indicators of what a member is like. In his inaugural speech David Southwick is reported as saying:

One of the many things we are proud of in Caulfield is our diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds, including our strong Jewish, Russian, Indian and Chinese communities. To walk down any of the streets ... and see this diverse group happily contributing to their local community is truly reflective of our great city.

He said he takes pride in the Caulfield community and in the people from many different backgrounds joining together to contribute, one and all, to enrich their community. He has worked assiduously within the

municipality of Glen Eira and the Caulfield electorate to do precisely that. Although Jewish by background, David has embraced not only the people who have a Jewish heritage but all people in Caulfield. There are many different ethnic groups and various groups that have issues within Caulfield.

It is interesting to note and remind this chamber that the highest number of Holocaust survivors per capita in the world, with the exception of Israel, live in Caulfield. I know David Southwick is very understanding of the pressures on these Holocaust survivors. There are not many of them left now. However, the life challenges for Holocaust survivors and their families have been profound. It has been quite disturbing to see some of the Holocaust survivors age, but the work that Jewish Care does with them is extraordinary. Jewish Care Victoria, Bill Appleby and a number of other people have an enormous respect for David Southwick. He is key to their organisations and understands and supports them in every way.

Some Holocaust survivors are now suffering dementia and cannot remember what happened yesterday. But the tragedy is that they remember what happened throughout the Holocaust. It takes a great deal of sensitivity to understand this, and I know David Southwick certainly understands how complex and difficult that is for them.

It is very interesting to read the *Australian Jewish News*, which has a very high profile in Caulfield. It has highlighted a number of areas to do with David Southwick. I would like to read from an article published on 6 August regarding Victorian members of Parliament who recently visited Israel:

Fostering vibrant relationships between the Jewish community and members of the Victorian Parliament is of prime concern to David Southwick, the member for Caulfield, who recently led a delegation of Liberal MPs on an Israel study tour.

This article highlights David's values of reaching out and bringing people of different backgrounds together. It was important to him to take a delegation of members from this Parliament to help them understand some of the very challenging issues in Israel and what is happening as a consequence.

To go back to the comments I was making before about the union boycotts, I point out that Mr Southwick was engaging with members of Parliament to make quite certain that they understood what the challenges are for this small, democratic, highly successful country in the middle of that chaos in the Middle East.

The Jewish Holocaust Centre is located in the centre of Caulfield. An article in the *Australian Jewish News* reports that David invited the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, to the Jewish Holocaust Centre. The article referred to David's involvement in the centre's:

... continuing campaign to educate policy-makers on the history of the Jewish people and on Israel's fraught political situation ...

The Jewish Holocaust Centre educates up to 21 000 Victorian students each year. David has noted that many of these students are not from Jewish schools. He is reported as having said this:

... allows the centre to provide a window for these students to gain an insight into the atrocities experienced by the Jews at the hands of the Nazis ...

I know from comments he has made in this chamber that Mr Pakula is also a great supporter of the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

David Southwick is very concerned and outspoken about terrorist attacks on Israel, including missile attacks. He has frequently spoken out about this issue in the Legislative Assembly. Just yesterday he discussed the recent attacks on the nation of Israel. He said something along the lines that Israel had experienced days of bombing and attacks at the hands of a terrorist regime which seeks to wipe it off the face of the earth, while others do not recognise that Israel is a legitimate state. This is what David has been passionate about. As I have indicated, he has taken deputations to Israel, he has talked about it in the Jewish news and he has discussed it with his community. He is a great supporter of Israel and the issues Israel is dealing with, including its right to be an independent state and to be the democracy it is.

David Southwick is in fact a very strong opponent of anti-Semitism. That is what I said before when I spoke about the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign. He noted in February:

Anti-Semitism and anti-Israel rhetoric are not new concepts. The hatred directed against Jews by Hitler's regime defined racism and evil in the 20th century. I am concerned by recent developments in Melbourne which suggest a lack of understanding of what happened historically the last time Jewish businesses were targeted by angry protesters.

Many of us in this place will remember the bipartisan celebration of Israel's independence in June this year, when a noisy rabble tried and failed to prevent Victorian parliamentarians from crossing the road to the Windsor Hotel. It was intimidating, it was frightening, and indeed all members of the various parties in this place stood together, shoulder to shoulder, and walked

across the road. It was a very cohesive moment and one that many of us in this place can feel exceptionally proud of because it showed that we stood for democracy and how important democracy is here.

David Southwick is an enormous supporter of democracy, and he went on to say the next day that he condemned:

... the shameful tactics of racism and hate we witnessed just outside Parliament last night. The leaders of Melbourne's Jewish community came together with leaders and members from both sides of Parliament, acting in a spirit of bipartisanship, and with Israel's friends at the Windsor Hotel to celebrate 64 years of Israel's independence — 64 years of existence of the only free, liberal democracy in the Middle East.

David Southwick has also raised the issue of anti-Semitism at Victorian universities. I know the Minister for Higher Education and Skills has worked constructively on that issue. Last year David Southwick also spoke about joining the students from different universities to celebrate Israel's Independence Day. He is reported as having said:

These events were peaceful and fun, involving dancing, singing and a joyful celebration of Israel.

I have talked a lot about what David's Jewishness means and his activities with the Jewish community. Another one I would like to mention is Mitzvah Day. David is the sort of person who always tries to give back more to the community than he takes. His lengthy involvement with numerous charitable organisations is a testament to that. One of the shining examples of his charitable community work is his involvement in Mitzvah Day. The Mitzvah Day motto is 'Doing good deeds to meet community need'. In an open letter from the Mitzvah Day Australia founder, Judy Feiglin, following the 2011 Mitzvah Day, David's involvement was praised. Ms Feiglin said:

David Southwick, MP, attended and assisted at a number of projects and was so impressed that he has announced publicly at the after party that he intends bringing it up in Parliament and suggest initiating a national day of social action spearheaded by Mitzvah Day.

And David, referring to his Mitzvah Day activities, said:

I joined a group of enthusiastic young people from the Australasian Union of Jewish Students who cleaned up the area around Caulfield railway station. They did a great job. I then joined a large group in South Melbourne —

which shows his concern for the wider community —

where we served food to residents of public housing. My Mitzvah Day concluded back at Caulfield Park, where I had a great time meeting with members of Melbourne's strong

Sudanese community in an event organised by Jewish Aid Australia.

When we are talking about such an honourable man, who the Labor Party has tried to denigrate here today, it would be remiss of me if I did not go on and talk about the other significant work he has done for a very long time within the broader community. One of those areas is the Ardoch Youth Foundation. David was president of the Ardoch Youth Foundation. I had the great honour to work constructively with David in the work that he did. One of the things the foundation did was to provide breakfasts for people in and around South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Windsor and other areas. It looked at how it could support disadvantaged children by giving them wholesome and nourishing breakfasts, encouraging them with uniforms and making certain that they could go to school and have a positive experience and therefore go out into the wider community and be participants in the long term with a strong education framework behind them. The work David did at Ardoch Youth Foundation — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On a point of order, Acting President, Mrs Coote's contribution has now been going for over 25 minutes. I understand your previous desire to give her a bit of latitude, but the motion is quite specific. The motion is about particular claims about educational qualifications. It is not about the member for Caulfield's various qualities and good deeds. I ask you at some point to bring the member back to debating the motion.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, Acting President, it is very clear that this is a motion that attacks Mr Southwick's integrity on a number of levels and that Mrs Coote is defending those and making it very clear that he has a very high reputation in the community, in certain parts of the community in particular.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! I ask the minister not to debate the point of order. I do not uphold the point of order. Contextually Mrs Coote was in the environment of supporting Mr Southwick in relation to his activities, and I ask her to continue.

Mrs COOTE — We have had a lot of last straws here today. It would seem that you can bring up a motion against someone, you can throw the dirt, you can throw the mud and you can go to the very heart of their integrity and honesty — I am directing my remarks through you, Acting President, to Mr Pakula — and the reality is that you now have to sit there and listen to what a fabulous member this man is,

a man with integrity and honesty. If you do not like that, you should not have brought it up in the first place.

I will continue to talk about the excellent work the member for Caulfield has done within the community. Another organisation he has been associated with is Try Youth and Community Services. Once again that was prior to Mr Southwick coming into Parliament. He did an extraordinary amount of work with, once again, disadvantaged youth. He mentored youths and helped them to get established, and education was the key to what he gave those children. There are many examples throughout Caulfield and more broadly, particularly in Southern Metropolitan Region, of people who have been — —

Mr Viney — On a point of order, Acting President, we have now reached 28 minutes into Mrs Coote's contribution and her entire contribution has been about putting it into context. I suggest that at some point the member is required to come back to the motion. Having built her case for 28 minutes, the context is now well built. We would like the member to deal with the motion before the chair. To continue down this path is really flying in the face of the standing orders that require members to be relevant to the motion.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Acting President, I have been listening to this debate this afternoon and I have heard a series of speakers who had absolutely no hesitation in taking the axe to Mr Southwick — taking the axe to his name, his reputation and his integrity. It is only fair and reasonable that members who are defending Mr Southwick be given the same degree of latitude as those members who were attacking him. I know that you are a man of decency and balance, and I put it to you, Acting President, that it is only fair and reasonable that members on this side of the house should be given the same latitude as was given to members on the other side.

Hon. D. M. Davis — Further to the point of order, Acting President, Mr Viney asserted that there had been no direct content in terms of the matters that are directly listed in certain of the points here. In fact Mrs Coote has gone through a great deal of detail on those matters at various points in her contribution.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Further to the point of order, Acting President, I want to deal with the matter raised by Mr Finn in his point of order. Mr Finn indicated that members of the government should have the same latitude as members of the opposition. I agree with him, but the fact is that members of the opposition have almost exclusively confined their comments to the items in the motion. In fact Mrs Coote has not had the

same level of latitude, but 20 times more latitude than members of the opposition had in terms of straying from the motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Mr Pakula has made his point.

Mr O'Donohue — Further to the point of order, Acting President, at the 9-minute mark of Mr Pakula's contribution I took a point of order about relevance in relation to his debate. His discussion about members in the Assembly had absolutely nothing to do with the motion or with Mr Southwick. The ruling at that time was that Mr Pakula could set the parameters of the debate. In response to Mr Viney's point of order I put it to you, Acting President, that indeed Mr Pakula did set the parameters of the debate. The parameters were very wide and encompassed a range of other members.

Mr Viney — On the point of order, Acting President, I would make a couple of comments. It is true that Mr Pakula drew the inference in relation to the decisions of the Premier, particularly in regard to the member for Frankston, but it was in context, it was very brief and the substance of Mr Pakula's contribution related to the words of the motion. I was the other speaker on behalf of the opposition, and I can assure you, Acting President, that my contribution went explicitly to the substance of the motion and I gave quite a considerable contribution in relation to the facts of the matter. It is absolutely incorrect to assert that members of the opposition made any more than a fleeting reference to matters outside of the specific words of the motion. I would ask that you afford the same obligation to members of the government in their defence. We are happy for them to build some basis to the case on the question of integrity, but having done so, to then move to the facts.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! With respect to Mr O'Donohue's comments, typically lead speakers get some latitude. I caution Mr Finn on his reflections on the Chair, albeit that they were flattering. I ask Mrs Coote to return to her contribution as she builds her case and comes closer to the motion.

Mrs COOTE — I pick up on Mr Viney's point of order. Mr Viney admitted in his contribution that he had talked about integrity and what he said the facts were. I have talked about integrity through this entire contribution. We are talking about Mr Southwick's excellent integrity, honesty, involvement with his local community and the work he has done with youth for a significant time, that is the calibre of the man we are talking about.

The reality is that Mr Fluff and Bubble over there did not have much to say about integrity, but I have had a lot to say about integrity today. It is a pity because if he had wanted to say a bit more, Mr Fluff and Bubble could have done it, but he did not; so it is up to me to go through the motion and to talk about the integrity of a very fine member of Parliament and a very fine person, Mr David Southwick, the member for Caulfield in the other place.

I have a few more things to say. I could easily go on for another 33 minutes if members would really like me to. I could talk about every person we doorknocked.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mrs COOTE — It is conceivable we could have ended up doorknocking in Black Rock.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Back to the motion.

Mrs COOTE — The other two organisations I have not spoken about that Mr Southwick has been involved with are Virtual Enterprise Australia and Big Brothers Big Sisters. It is obvious that after talking about the Ardoch Youth Foundation, Try Youth and Community Services, Virtual Enterprise Australia and Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia —

Mr Viney — On a point of order, Acting President, we have just had a lengthy point of order discussion where you ruled that Mrs Coote ought to come back at some point to the words in the motion. I would put it to you that she is flouting your ruling by now continuing down the path that has been her entire 36-minute contribution so far. I suggest to you, Acting President, that she is now flouting your ruling and that she should be required to come back to the words of the motion, which is what you asked of her after our last round of points of order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! I am going to ask Mrs Coote to continue and come back to the motion, but I have to say that she is being encouraged by the interjections from around the chamber. If members would like her to continue on the motion, let us allow her to do that.

Mrs COOTE — I think all the examples I have given show that as he has said himself, David Southwick has a real passion for youth and kids. They are our future and provide the opportunity to get things right. His involvement in the education committee is another obvious example of his desire to improve things for Victorian school students.

I would like to finish my contribution today by reading extensively from the media statement of the member himself, because I believe it goes to the very heart of what this motion purports to do. As a consequence of the actions about which we are speaking, this is a media statement from David Southwick, the state member for Caulfield in the lower house. He says:

As part of my role at RMIT I taught on the RMIT MBA (executive) program, through the graduate school of business, including teaching in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group program, based in Hong Kong.

The graduate school of business used the local title 'adjunct professor' in course materials.

As is well known, such programs invite businesspeople to assist with teaching assignments, and at various times I have been an adjunct lecturer, adjunct fellow and entrepreneur in residence reflecting the particular tasks allocated in the teaching of that course.

This exactly lines up with and parallels what Mr Edward O'Donohue said in his excellent contribution about the letter from the husband of the candidate running against David Southwick in the Caulfield election. Mr O'Donohue read at length from that correspondence. This press release from David Southwick backs all of that up. It states:

Prior to entering Parliament, my primary career has been in business. I have, however, always been passionate about entrepreneurship, which is why I have participated in a number of business programs.

Sixteen years ago, not long after finishing my bachelor of business degree and while running my own small business, I undertook study towards a postgraduate diploma in marketing at Monash University. I did so in order to improve my skills in this area and grow my business.

It was my understanding at the time that I had completed all necessary units towards that further qualification. Today I was informed that I did not complete all the points required for that diploma. I will now remove all reference to it from my website and any official publications issued by my office. I apologise for this error.

This was the statement of a very honourable man with integrity. We will watch his career with a great deal of interest. It will go from strength to strength.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Minister for Planning to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 5 February 2013, a copy of all public submissions received by the Department of Planning and Community Development in relation to the reformed zones for Victoria planning zones review.

This motion seeks a copy of all public submissions that have been sent to the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) in relation to the reformed zones for Victoria review, which has been instigated by the Minister for Planning. He is an energetic minister. He has got any number of reviews under way; this set of zones and their review is just one of them. But all of them rightfully have involved a high degree of public involvement and consultation.

In relation to this particular review I was contacted by a constituent who had made a submission and who had also sought from DPCD a bit of information about when his and all the other submissions were to be published. He could not get any information out of the department on that.

I know, as does my constituent, many people who have made these submissions, so I came into this place in question time a couple of sitting weeks ago and asked the minister for an estimate as to when those submissions were likely to be published. I was expecting a routine answer. At worst I thought it would be that there was to be a delay. But the minister gave me quite a surprising answer which members might like to check. He suggested that it would be inappropriate to release the submissions at this time because they were undergoing something called peer review. That is not a term I have ever heard before in relation to submissions to public processes. Generally when the minister or a body invites public submissions those submissions review the proposal. It is not for the submissions themselves to be reviewed for their competency; it is simply a matter of the relevant panel or committee of inquiry looking at the submissions and weighing those alternatives against the minister's proposal.

I read the terms of reference of the ministerial advisory committee that has been appointed for the reformed zones review. Before point 11 of these terms of reference there is a large heading in capital letters that says 'Method'. Point 11 says:

Copies and an analysis of all submissions received will be provided to the committee by the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Point 12 says:

The committee will not seek further submissions but may otherwise inform itself in any way it sees fit, including conducting consultation as necessary with relevant stakeholders to clarify issues ...

and so on and so forth until we get to another subheading, also in bold and capital letters, 'Submissions are public documents'. Below that point 16 states:

The committee must create a library of any documents received and provide this to the department at the conclusion of its activities. This library will be retained until a decision has been made on the committee's report or five years has passed from the time of its appointment.

Point 17 states:

Any documents provided to the committee —

and we know from the earlier paragraph that that includes the submissions —

must be available for public inspection until the submission of its report, unless the committee specifically directs that the material is to remain confidential.

I am not aware that it has been.

If a committee has been appointed and its job is to review the submissions and the submissions are to be provided to the committee and must be available for public inspection, my question is: why are they not already? Since I asked my first question of the minister the DPCD has updated its website to say that over 2000 submissions have been received. The committee certainly has its work cut out for it. But it is fundamentally unfair to ask people to engage in a public consultation process where the content of their submission is known to the panel or the advisory committee and there is a public debate going on about the proposal but individual submitters do not get to see the content of everybody else's submission. It is a many-to-one conversation. The community, the department and the minister get to sit in the middle and they see what every one of these 2000 people are saying, but the 2000 people do not get to see what the other 2000 people have said. There can only be one reason for it, given the pretty clear interpretation that these documents are meant to already be public, and that is that the government wants to avoid for a bit longer some public criticism.

There has been an overwhelming response. We now know there have been 2000 responses just to this one review, and many of them are no doubt critical of the proposal. It is kind of a new chump's mistake to walk into that one. If you have a review about something that

is going to be controversial, and I am sure the minister admits that the changes proposed are significant, then you are going to get feedback. Since the minister has signed off these terms of reference himself — his signature is right there, dated 8 November 2012 — he would have known what he was setting himself up for. People who have participated in this review so far are now starting to wonder.

I am hoping that we do have support for this motion here today. It now sets a deadline for the tabling of these submissions here of 5 February 2013, which is in itself quite a long way away; it is just a matter of when our Parliament is sitting.

I would have hoped that even before then the submissions to this inquiry would have been made public. That would be the case for a planning scheme amendment, for example. In fact submissions to a planning scheme amendment are integral to the whole process by which the panel goes off and does its job. This is possibly the only chance we will get at submitting to it, because when reformed zones come through they will be by ministerial amendment and I do not believe there will be a further panel appointed then to review the minister's amendment with a second round of submissions being made. This is our only chance not only to see the submissions and to participate in the debate but also to observe how this amendment is to be crafted, because the next time we hear about it, it will probably be from notification in the *Government Gazette*. I hope that between now and then the minister is able to talk to his department and his committee and see that the submissions are published in any case on the DPCD website.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The planning zones review is profoundly important in terms of defining the built form and the natural form of the environment in Melbourne. It is a process that has been awkward at best, a process that has allowed very limited opportunity — I think it was a two-month opportunity — for community consultation. The period of consultation occurred at the same time as local council elections, which severely hampered the capacity of local councils to effectively participate in the process. Notwithstanding the limited consultation allowed and notwithstanding the complication around local council elections, more than 2000 submissions were received. I think that speaks volumes about the concerns of Victorians about what is being proposed in these zones and the manner in which they will change forever the look and feel of our suburbs and our natural environment.

Labor believes it is important that there be as much opportunity as possible for community engagement and debate. It is incredibly important that the community has an opportunity to really understand the ramifications of what is being proposed in these zones. If we look at, for example, the proposals around the green wedges — the proposals to allow more development, the proposals to allow the carve-up of land within the green wedges, the proposals that will see greater risks of there being fires on our green wedges, some 100 000 hectares of which burnt during the Black Saturday fires — it is clear that the consequences of what is being proposed by these zone changes are profound, are enormous, and will be felt for literally generations to come. In those circumstances it is inappropriate to have the sort of truncated, rushed consultation that has occurred, so we welcome this motion as an opportunity to put out the ideas and the views of those 2000 submissions in contributing to this debate.

If we look at the impact on the commercial zones, just as another example, it is clear the impact that these zone changes will have on our main streets, activity centres and retail strips will be profound, and yet the proposed zones have been introduced without any context or any social or economic modelling. No work was done in the lead-up to the review so that the community could be informed about the profound impacts these changes will have. It is clear from some of the submissions, which I have had the opportunity of having a look at, that they contain some quite dire warnings about the impact the zone changes will have for strip shops. We know that the changes to the zones for the commercial areas such as strip shops are a concern to many local councils. Knox City Council, for example, in its submission to the government found that these changes are likely to have long-term detrimental consequences for existing commercial precincts. What that means is jobs. It also means that the hubs of local communities — their strip shops and main streets — are at risk because of the changes in commercial areas.

We know that one of the submissions included legal advice from Maddocks lawyers which said that the changes will profoundly alter the make-up and function of retail precincts. Maddocks went on to say that the changes have the potential to severely undermine the role of existing activity centres. The submission from Urbis property consultants says that as a result of these changes some centres will change over time and others may fail. Shopping centres have also put in submissions which say that under these changes existing investments are at risk.

We know, whether it is the green wedges, the suburbs or the retail strips, that there is a lot at stake. Yet the process has involved limited consultation and provided no opportunity for the community to get a sense of the underlying reasons behind or the long-term consequences of the changes. In our view it is appropriate that we do whatever we can to support a public debate to make sure that people are informed. For that reason we support the release of the submissions. We support this motion because it will enable people to understand the profound concerns, some of which I have gone through, of councils and the industry about the impact that these changes are going to have on the look and feel of our communities, neighbourhood character and environment and also the effect on local businesses.

Small businesses really do not have the capacity or the resources to engage in the debate because they are just so busy maintaining their businesses. They would be enormously assisted by the sorts of submissions made by the councils and by Urbis that set out the terrible impact that these changes will have on their livelihoods and on the livelihoods of their staff. As we know, small businesses are one of the biggest employers in this country. An attack on those businesses, which is what the commercial zone changes will be, is an attack on Victorian jobs and Victorian families. Members of the Labor Party are not surprised that the submissions have not been made more public because they are damning in their predictions of the consequences of the proposals put forward by this government. We will support Mr Barber's motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise in response to the motion moved by Mr Barber, which states:

That this house requires the Minister for Planning to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 5 February 2013, a copy of all public submissions received by the Department of Planning and Community Development in relation to the reformed zones for Victoria planning zones review.

Noting that Tuesday, 5 February 2013, falls within the next sitting week, I make the point that providing a reasonable period of time for the return under an order for the production of documents gives public servants the requisite time to search for the documents that are sought by the house. Motions seeking the production of documents have often had a return date falling within the next sitting week — which may be in 13 days time — which places the public servants who do the searching under significant pressure. I think that is unreasonable. I make the point that notwithstanding the fact that this is the next possible return date, it will give

a more appropriate length of time for the search for these documents.

That foreshadows the government's position in relation to this motion. Consistent with the approach the government has taken with motions seeking the production of documents in the past, the government will not be opposing Mr Barber's request, with the usual caveats about cabinet confidentiality and other — —

Mr Barber — Has the cabinet read the 2000 submissions?

Mr O'DONOHUE — Mr Barber made an assertion about cabinet reviewing these submissions. I am not part of that process. I cannot speak on behalf of the Minister for Planning or the cabinet, because I am neither the Minister for Planning nor a member of cabinet, but what I will say is that the government will not be opposing Mr Barber's motion in relation to this matter, with the usual caveats.

Mr Barber referred to the questions that he asked the minister in question time on 14 November and 15 November. Without foreshadowing the government's response to this motion, Minister Guy has responded to Mr Barber in a clear fashion. Again to Mr Barber's credit, he articulated this in his contribution, but it is worth noting that in response to Mr Barber's supplementary question on 14 November, Mr Guy said:

I have just said that when the process of a peer review of those submissions by the committee actually begins I will take the advice of the ministerial advisory committee as to what then becomes the process beyond that. If Mr Barber thinks I am somehow going to usurp an independent process of four eminent people who are well qualified to review a public submission process, that might be the approach of the Greens, but it is not the approach of the government.

Minister Guy has given some clear indication of where he sees this process going.

In question time on the next day, 15 November, Mr Guy said in response to a similar question from Mr Barber:

I do not want to get into academic debate with the Australian Greens about the terminology of peer review. Suffice to say, what we want the peer review group to do and to find is well explained in the terms of reference.

The government has asked for the submissions, however many there may be, to be peer reviewed in line with the terms of reference and for those involved to come back to us with a recommendation.

Minister Guy's response to the two questions on 14 November and 15 November — the supplementary question and substantive question respectively — provide some insight into his thinking on this matter.

I cannot conclude my contribution having only responded to Mr Barber by articulating the government's position, because Mr Tee, in his unique fashion, has made a range of assertions and allegations about the planning process. While I do not want to reflect on individual members, Mr Tee has a unique ability to foreshadow the end of the world and at the same time send people to sleep. It would be unkind to labour that point too much, but he does have a unique capacity.

Mr Tee basically criticised everything the government is doing in relation to planning. Minister Guy is more than capable of explaining planning matters himself. Indeed the minister did it today during question time. Mr Tee put a question to Minister Guy about planning interventions, but the minister gave Mr Tee a lesson in interventions 101 by explaining what an excellent intervention is. I give Mr Tee credit for actually standing up and making a contribution to debate after the lesson he was taught by the minister in question time today.

Mr Tee likes to make all sorts of unsubstantiated and vague assertions about jobs and the like. He spoke about the retail sector. I have not followed this process that closely, but I clearly recall reading an article that quoted Tom Daunt, the head of Aldi in Australia — I think it was in the *Age* or the *Australian Financial Review* — as saying that the changes the Victorian government is implementing will deliver jobs and drive investment. Companies such as Aldi will make a clear investment decision to invest in a place like Victoria because of the changes the Victorian government is foreshadowing and implementing.

In Mr Barber's contribution he used an adjective that seems to be associated with Mr Guy more than any other — that is, energetic. That is an appropriate adjective. Mr Guy is a man of action. He is reformist; he is visionary. He is doing all the things the previous government did not do. He is setting out a clear agenda in planning with the metropolitan planning study and a range of other reforms, one of which is the subject of the debate today.

I commend Mr Guy on his energy, as Mr Barber aptly described him as having. Many other commentators, including opponents and colleagues, have referred to Mr Guy as an energetic and diligent minister who is demonstrating a long-term vision for Victoria, and for

that I commend him. It stands in stark contrast to Mr Tee's mouthing of words with no passion or conviction, and it is no wonder that nobody is listening.

The government does not oppose Mr Barber's motion. As I said, Mr Barber asked questions without notice about this process on 14 and 15 November, with supplementary questions on both days. Minister Guy has given his personal view on this process through the responses he provided to Mr Barber.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to also rise and speak on Mr Barber's motion. In doing so, I reiterate what Mr O'Donohue has said about the Minister for Planning. He is a minister who is on top of his portfolio and a man of vision. He has the confidence of those who are involved in the planning portfolio, which is evident in the enormous amount of reform that has been undertaken in this state since we came to government in 2010. That is in stark contrast to the previous planning minister, Mr Madden, now the member for Essendon in the other place. In terms of Mr Guy's openness about his planning portfolio area, he said he would reform planning zones, and that is exactly what he has done.

I note that a media release in July from the minister outlines that the reform package features three new residential zones: a residential growth zone, a general residential zone and a neighbourhood residential zone. This will return planning certainty to residents and councils, and it will give certainty to people who have been affected by those particular zoning reforms. In addition there are other zoning reforms that will impact the commercial and industrial areas of the state, which is very important to not only metropolitan areas but also to rural and regional Victoria, which also needs certainty. There was no certainty under the previous government. The minister's planning zone reforms will increase productivity, which will in turn increase jobs, and that will be good news for Victoria.

I note that under the former government, prior to the announcement of the Melbourne 2030 green wedges boundary in 2002, smart growth committees were formed to look at — —

Mr Barber — You've got a long memory.

Ms CROZIER — I have done some research, Mr Barber. I want to take members to this point because it is important to know exactly what the previous government did. Smart growth committees were formed around the urban growth boundaries, and a number of submissions were made in relation to that particular process. I note that the previous government

never released the submissions to the public. The reports of the smart growth committees were never released either. It is a bit rich for Mr Tee to come out and argue these points, as he continually does. As Mr O'Donohue said, Mr Tee gets completely confused, and that was evident in question time today.

Minister Guy should be commended for the reforms he has undertaken. In my electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region he has undertaken some significant reforms. I refer to Fishermans Bend, which is the biggest urban renewal reform in this country's history. It will be of enormous benefit to not only those local areas but also the entire state. It is an exciting project that we can all look forward to.

Mr O'Donohue also referred to the questions without notice that Mr Barber put to Mr Guy in November. In reply to one of Mr Barber's questions about the zoning reforms Mr Guy stated:

Very simply, because they are being peer reviewed by members of the planning profession: Liz Johnstone from the Planning Institute of Australia; Chris Canavan, who is a planning lawyer, and a Queen's Counsel, I might add; Geoff Underwood, who headed the government's ministerial advisory committee; and Joan Stanley from Planning Backlash. Those four people will peer review the submissions that have been made.

Mr Guy has independent people with an enormous amount of experience and credibility in this area reviewing the submissions. He is undertaking that process, and he will be looking at those findings and releasing the submissions after he has reviewed the findings.

The government will not oppose Mr Barber's motion to make those documents public, but it needs to be reiterated to the house that the planning minister has undertaken significant reforms. This government has listened to the community, it has consulted at various levels and it continues to do so. The government has looked at what will give councils, residents and businesses greater input into the planning process. The minister should be commended for all the reforms he has undertaken that will not only improve the livability of the city but also increase productivity, creating more jobs for Victoria. That can only be a good thing, as we all know. I reiterate that the government will not be opposing Mr Barber's motion.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank all members for their support of my motion and for their time in considering it.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT: PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan):

That this house notes that the Baillieu-Ryan coalition promised the people of Victoria in 2010 to 'fix the problems' and 'build the future' but has failed to successfully plan, build or deliver on its promise during the past two years, in particular —

- (1) cost of living pressures on families have increased with higher taxes and charges levied by the Baillieu government, which is now the highest taxing and spending government in the history of the state;
- (2) health services have been cut and promises that were made have not been delivered on;
- (3) education services and school construction have been cut and promises that were made have not been delivered on; and
- (4) after two years in office, the Baillieu government has no jobs plan;

and that this house calls on the Baillieu-Ryan government to plan for the future, build both infrastructure and human capital and deliver on its election commitments.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to support the motion moved by Mr Lenders. I understand that quite a few members made contributions to the debate on this motion on a previous occasion as well as earlier today. I believe the debate will continue after today. My contribution will focus on paragraph (4), which has to do with employment, job losses and this government's vision for jobs or lack thereof.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reflect that approximately 40 000 jobs have been lost in this state since the Baillieu coalition government took office. The November ABS statistics that came through not so long ago demonstrate that over the last six months Victoria lost more jobs than any other state or territory, and that in November Victoria lost more full-time jobs than any other state or territory. If that is not bad enough, the August statistics were particularly damaging for the electorate I represent. In August there were 12 400 jobs lost across the state, but of those, 10 100 jobs were lost in the Barwon-south western region. That is a phenomenal number of jobs that have gone.

Before this government came to power its election campaign was focused on fixing the problems. But I submit to the house that the only thing it has done is fix Victorian families to a post — a post that has no jobs and has reduced opportunities when it comes to education and skills — and at the same time as the cost of living is out of control. Those opposite need to hang their heads in shame, because they have been caught

out sleeping over the last two-year period, which essentially has been a honeymoon period. Even more concerning is that they still do not have any plans, they do not have any vision and they do not have any future for this state.

It is now just over two years since the election of this government, and all I can say is that it is one thing to win government, it is another thing to do something with it. By doing nothing — except, of course, the slash-and-burn approach they have adopted — government members tend to just direct the blame elsewhere. That demonstrates that this government is incapable of doing the right thing.

The purpose of my contribution today is to inform the house of what really is going on in my electorate when it comes to job losses. My contribution today is not about talking down this state; it is this government that is taking down this state. In fact, this government has stood down this state. It has stood it down to the point of atrophy.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms TIERNEY — In my electorate of Western Victoria Region we have experienced the biggest full-scale job losses that can be remembered in living history. The story I am about to tell will not be palatable to those opposite, and they have already indicated that by their interjections. But like with most things, you need to confront the problem if there is to be a strategy and an attempt to search out solutions. Some members opposite may think that these are wild claims, but let the facts speak for themselves. The list I am about to go through is not an exhaustive list, but unfortunately it is an indicative list, and there are many small businesses that are not reflected in this list of job losses because they do not necessarily make major headlines in the newspapers; they go under the radar.

Let me start with the alphabet. I understand Mr Leane went through the alphabet earlier, but I will go through the alphabet to refer to towns in my electorate where there have been significant job losses. I will start with Ararat. At Bartco 20 jobs have been lost. At Avalon Airport 113 maintenance workers were told that their jobs were gone on 22 May. On 9 November 260 maintenance workers were told that they were no longer required.

In Ballarat the University of Ballarat TAFE estimates that 70 to 100 people will be leaving that institution. At IBM in Ballarat there were 120 job losses, although the government said there would be 150 jobs created. The

fact is that there was a net gain of 30, not 150, which was the spin in the newspapers and electronic media.

In Ballarat at Combined Metal Industries around 60 full-time employees and 40 contract employees have lost their jobs. In Ballarat again, at SP Treads 26 employees have had their jobs go, and at Mars 38 people have lost their jobs. Also in Ballarat, at UGL Rail there were 13 job losses, at SEM Fire and Rescue, 21 job losses, and at ICE Engineering, 6 job losses.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms TIERNEY — That is six people and six families, Mr Dalla-Riva. I go to Colac — again, a demonstration of how the government does not care at all about workers and their families. At the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, based in Colac, three people have lost their jobs because of budget cuts that this government has inflicted. At Cororooke at the Fonterra dairy factory 130 jobs will go. At Dick Smith in Geelong 25 jobs have gone, and at Chubb security 20 jobs have gone. At Alcoa there have been significant redundancies with respect to their restructuring process.

Mr Koch interjected.

Ms TIERNEY — The number has not been finalised, as Mr Koch well knows. At the Gordon TAFE 55 have already gone, and we expect another 72 will be on their way. There have been 240 job losses at the Ford Broadmeadows and Geelong factories.

At the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority 7 jobs have gone, and it was state funding that triggered that. At Koroit at the Murray Goulburn factory 20 jobs have gone, and at the North Geelong Dick Smith store, 25 people. Mr Koch would know that in Portland both of the car dealerships that you see as you drive into that great city have been shut down. He would also know that 90 jobs at Keppel Prince have gone — and it is expecting another 10, making it 100 — and that approximately 45 contractors have also had their employment cease.

At the Queenscliff Marine Discovery Centre 15 highly skilled researchers and other staff have also had their jobs taken away. At Dahlsens in Sebastopol 24 people have also been told — just before Christmas — that they are not going to have a job.

In Stawell there has been the closure of the goldmine: 47 people have already gone, there is another group that will be going before Christmas and another significant group that will be going in June or July next year. That takes 150 jobs out of that fairly small community and

that will have a devastating impact on that local economy.

When a public forum was called, not one government member chose to attend. The mayor and the CEO from local government chose to attend; they understood the importance of it. The manager of the mine and the head of human resources were also there. Do you know what they say? They say they cannot get Stawell on the radar of this government. They cannot get anyone on the phone; although they did say that Mr Rich-Phillips and Mr Ramsay were there the day before to make an announcement, which had been announced three times before, about funding of the regional airport to enable the so-called fly-in, fly-out proposition. The fact is that while the fly-in, fly-out proposition is a good one, it will only cater for a reasonably small number of people employed at the mine. There are a huge number of people employed at the mine who will not be able to, for a whole range of reasons — whether they be personal, skill-related or the types of jobs they do — afford that opportunity.

There has been no tailored response from this government in respect of Stawell. I put to the government that that has not happened in any of the cases I have experienced in terms of job losses in western Victoria — not once. When government members see an issue or a problem, they turn their backs on it and head the other way.

We have also seen 20 jobs lost at Quiksilver — —

Mr O'Brien — On a point of order, President, Ms Tierney is misleading the house. I have met with representatives from the mine; I have spoken to the mine — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is not a point of order; it is a debating point.

Ms TIERNEY — Then there are the jobs in state departments and instrumentalities across the state that will also go. In the Department of Sustainability and Environment 400 jobs will go; in the Department of Human Services the figure is 500; in the Department of Police and Emergency Services 350 jobs will go; in the Department of Justice, 480; and in the Department of Primary Industries, 200 — and that will also mean the closure of the Casterton, Camperdown and Ararat offices. We also have 140 jobs going in the Department of Planning and Community Development, 400 jobs in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 200 jobs in the Department of Health, 175 jobs in the Department of Transport, 450 jobs at

VicRoads and 8 at the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

South West TAFE has had 43 jobs targeted, with 70 or more to go. At Sam's Warehouse in Warrnambool 22 jobs will be going.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In accordance with standing orders we now go to statements on reports and papers.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Auditor-General: *Prison Capacity Planning*

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I would like to speak this evening on the November 2012 Victorian Auditor-General's report *Prison Capacity Planning* and in so doing note some very disturbing crime statistics from part of my electorate. In Horsham the latest crime statistics reveal some remarkable numbers. Crime against the person is up 93.6 per cent from 12 months ago, drug offences are up 18.7 per cent and other crime is up 22.8 per cent. On a slightly more positive note, crime against property is down 13.8 per cent, but overall crime is up 9.6 per cent in this part of Victoria. It is interesting to note that the government's 'tough on crime' rhetoric is not translating to results on the ground in communities across Victoria.

The government, as part of its so-called sustainable government initiative, is reducing the workforce at Victoria Police, so much so that sworn officers are now taken away from the front line, where they should be, and performing administrative functions that have traditionally been undertaken by members of the public service employed as non-sworn officers in Victoria Police. It is very concerning that the government is choosing to take the axe to the budget; it has disturbing implications for community safety across the state, which is reflected in the alarming figures outlined in the latest data from Horsham.

What do we do about this reported crime? It brings us to this question of prison capacity planning. The Victorian Auditor-General's Office looked at this issue. Corrections Victoria forecasts that by 2016 the male and female prison systems will not have sufficient capacity to meet increases in prisoner numbers. The report indicates that the male prisoner population is growing beyond the capacity of existing infrastructure and makes some recommendations and observations about long-term planning. It indicates that there is a four to five-year lead time in the construction of

correctional facilities. This will come as no surprise to members.

Victoria's prisoner population has grown by 38 per cent in the last decade. We talk about the challenges of the growing population in Victoria; 38 per cent in a decade is very rapid growth. At the end of June 2012 the male prisoner population was a little over 4500 and the female prisoner population was 336. These significant increases pose some real challenges for the government, which talks a good game on law and order. The report indicates that the government has some serious work to do in providing facilities to meet the demands of our prison population.

The report recommends that Corrections Victoria determine whether its targeted offending behaviour programs have sufficient places to meet demand; update and improve the primary model in areas such as the use of demographic data and the way stakeholder-provided information is quantified; conduct regular external reviews of the model of the primary forecasting model; use the secondary model in a limited capacity only; and develop a new forecasting model based on contemporary practice and publish its forecasts.

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office has made some concerning observations regarding long-term planning in this report. This is a wake-up call for the government to take some action. It needs to get with the infrastructure program and back up its tough talk on law and order with a bit of action on prison facilities.

Office of the Child Safety Commissioner: report 2011–12

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the 2011–12 annual report of the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner. As I read this report I felt considerably conflicted, because whilst there are many good things being done by the child safety commissioner, you have to wonder what sort of a world we live in when all these things are necessary; you have to wonder why we need a child safety commissioner. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a loving and caring family, and I would like to think that I have a loving and caring family at home as well. It makes those of us who are in that situation wonder what is going on out there in what appears to be another world. It is a world apart from the one in which I exist.

It is very distressing reading, I have to say, knowing what is behind many of the initiatives in this report. I know from working with Les Twentyman — who I have known for a couple of decades now, if not a little

bit longer — that some dreadful things are happening in society. I believe we will be judged as a society by how we treat the elderly, the vulnerable and in particular our children. As a father who loves his children more than anything else on this earth, I can say that when we see children under attack in the way they are in this day and age there is something severely wrong with our society.

I commend Bernie Geary, the child safety commissioner, who is totally passionate and committed to getting the best possible result for the area in which he is involved. I commend him as a fine and outstanding servant of the people of Victoria. He is somebody who really wants to make a difference. I wish that more people in similar positions to his had the same enthusiasm, commitment and dedication for what they are doing.

He says in the report:

'Victorian children, seen and heard', has been the vision of the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner since its inception in 2005.

That is a pretty good mission statement. You do not dismiss children. Kids matter, and their futures matter. If they have a great future, then we will have a great future and we will have a great society. We are all getting old. Let us face it — those children who we may not be treating now as well as we should are going to have a say in a few years as to how we are treated. If we do not do the right thing by them, can we really expect them to turn around and look after us? I do not think so.

Apart from anything else, we have a vested interest, I suggest, in ensuring that children are looked after. Another point Mr Geary makes in his opening comments is:

Child protection, youth justice and out-of-home care systems cannot bear the whole weight of community fragility all on their own. They need backup from the rest of the community.

That is so very true. We, as individuals and as a community, have a responsibility to ensure that we look after children; we have a responsibility to stand up if we see children being mistreated; and we have a responsibility to report such mistreatment if we believe it is happening. It is not good enough for us to say, 'It is none of our business. They are other people's children and they will look after them'. Children are not shackles. They are human beings with the same rights as you, Acting President, and me. But when they are unfortunately unable, in many instances, to stand up for those rights then we have a responsibility to stand up for them. I could talk on this subject for quite some time, but my time to make a contribution is finishing. I

commend Bernie Geary once again. I suggest to members of this house that they have a good read of this report; it is a particularly good one.

Auditor-General: *Consumer Participation in the Health System*

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report *Consumer Participation in the Health System* of October 2012.

I am deeply proud of the fact that reforms in consumer participation in the health system have been borne primarily from Labor governments. For instance, Tom Roper, a Labor Minister of Health, responded to representations from the chair of the Health Commission and the deputy chair of the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria, way back then, established the Office of the Health Services Commissioner and the Health Services Review Council.

It was also under a Labor government that hospitals such as the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital produced charters of patient rights. In that hospital, the person who successfully moved in that direction was an appointee of the then Minister for Health, Caroline Hogg. They were a community or consumer representative. I make that distinction because when Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett took office he sacked these community or consumer representatives and replaced them — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr EIDEH — He replaced them with corporate businesspersons, just as the Baillieu government is now seeking to do in various areas. That issue was raised in debate on the Education Legislation Amendment (Governance) Bill 2012.

But as the report notes, the key legislation is the Health Services Act 1988. I quote from section 1.2.2 of the Auditor-General's report which notes that the act includes specific requirements relating to consumer participation in health. They are that:

healthcare agencies are accountable to the public

users of health services are provided with sufficient information, in appropriate forms and languages, to make informed decisions

users of health services are able to choose the type of care most appropriate to their needs

the board of a public health service appoints a community advisory committee (CAC).

The report further notes the 'Doing it with us not for us' policy. Its aims are:

... for consumers ... to participate with their health services and the Department of Human Services (now the Department of Health) in improving health policy and planning, care and treatment, and the wellbeing of all Victorians.

It provides strategic directions for consumer participation and a guide for participative actions. These are also all initiatives of Labor in government. I could go on and on because we — —

Mr Finn — No, don't do that.

Mr EIDEH — We on this side of the house, Mr Finn, believe very strongly in the direct participation of the broader community in decision-making processes and in listening to community members and in encouraging them to be proactive and to enjoy some of ownership of what we achieve.

I cannot say the same of the Baillieu-Ryan government or the current Minister for Health, David Davis. We need to see far greater participation of consumers than we have seen in the past three years, including — to show some bias — more from ethnic communities, given the immense impact of multicultural Victoria on the economic growth and prosperity of our state and the large number of people who are first, second or third-generation Victorians. That also means that we must produce more information in languages other than English so that all Victorians better understand and better utilise our precious health system.

Communication is critical, especially as many people have stated that a key cause of malpractice suits against doctors and hospitals in the past was in fact poor communication. None of us wishes to see malpractice grow, just as none of us wishes to see iatrogenesis grow.

In various areas of the report the Auditor-General praises what we have. However, he also noted in section 3.5.2 that:

... there is scope for increasing the level of strategic input.

We can do more; we must do more.

Shortly after this quote, the Auditor-General has included a statement that consumers must be more involved in planning for new hospital developments.

I wish to remind the government that the people of the fastest growing region in the nation — Wyndham and Melton — urgently need a new and dedicated local

hospital. I enjoyed reading this report and talking with people involved in this area of health consumer participation. I am also proud of the many positives which I related to the governments of the day, primarily Australian Labor Party governments, but I accept that we can do more and this is something to be considered seriously for the future.

Office of the Child Safety Commissioner: report 2011–12

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I have great pleasure in speaking today on the child safety commissioner's 2011–12 annual report. As my colleague Bernie Finn said, Bernie Geary, the child safety commissioner, has done an excellent job. It is interesting to note that this is his seventh annual report. In his introduction he said:

This year has been a crucial year for vulnerable children, with the government clearly indicating a commitment to improving services through its response to the findings and recommendations of the protecting Victoria's vulnerable children's inquiry. The directions paper 2012, *Victoria's Vulnerable Children — Our Shared Responsibility*, provides guidance on a cohesive and considered approach to service enhancement for all of those working within and across government and community sector agencies.

I know Bernie Geary works very closely with the Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge. The work of Philip Cummins on vulnerable children has become a benchmark for our government and is also a benchmark for vulnerable children in this state. A number of the inquiry's recommendations have already begun to be implemented, and, as I have said in this chamber before, Minister Wooldridge has put a considerable amount of funding into this program to make quite certain there are some major changes. There have already been changes to the working conditions of child protection workers, who do a fantastic job. Minister Wooldridge has been working closely with them and understands very carefully the pressures they have been under and the challenges they face. She has done a lot of work to improve those conditions.

There are a number of parts to this extremely interesting annual report. One of the things to come out of the recommendations is that the Attorney-General, Robert Clark, Minister Mary Wooldridge and the Premier, Ted Baillieu, have instigated the inquiry into child sexual abuse, the chair of which is Georgie Crozier. I am fortunate enough to be a government member on this inquiry, together with David O'Brien and Nick Wakeling, the member for Ferntree Gully in the other place. We are doing some extraordinary work on this inquiry. I believe the entire community wants us to get this system right, because we do not want to have

any systemic sexual abuse of children in our organisations ever again.

Witnesses appearing at the public hearings have been very forthcoming. I want to put on the record my admiration for the courage that so many of the victims have shown in coming to our inquiry to share their stories. For many of them it has taken over 20 years to be given the opportunity of coming forward and telling of the horrors they experienced as children. I thank the people who have wanted to come to our inquiry and give us their personal accounts. I admire their extraordinary courage.

This report raises issues which are quite pertinent today. One is cybersafety, and Bernie Geary and his team have recognised this enormous area and its future growth. As a community we have still not grappled with this. Just as child sexual abuse was not grappled with for a considerable time amongst communities across the world, neither has cybersafety been investigated properly. We are falling behind.

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Mrs COOTE — Mrs Petrovich reminds me that the Law Reform Committee is looking into this very issue, and I wait with great interest to see what its report has to say. It is a very fast-moving area, and we must make certain that our children can operate the new technology safely and carefully. I know the Acting President, Mr Ondarchie, has been instrumental in establishing a foundation looking into cyberbullying, and he is to be commended for the excellent work he has done in that area.

Another area of interest to me in this report is that of children of prisoners. At the moment there are nine children in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. Children can remain in the prison with their mothers until they are four years old. This is particularly important because of the need for early bonding. It is important that good programs are put into place so that bonding can be established before the children have to leave the prison. It is extraordinarily challenging work, and the staff involved have done excellent work. The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development has just walked into the chamber, and I know her department has an award-winning program for women and children at Tarrengower Prison. This report addresses a lot of those issues.

Auditor-General: *Student Completion Rates*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a contribution on the report tabled in November

by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office entitled *Student Completion Rates*. Before I chose this report I was asking myself which report to speak on in the last statements on reports and papers for 2012. I grabbed this report to read as I have always been very interested in education and training, particularly as I am a member of the parliamentary Education and Training Committee. I have always subscribed to the view that if the state government can give our kids a good education, then most good things will follow for them: a good job, a nice home, a family and a proper, respectable place within the community.

Unfortunately for our kids and the economic future of Victoria, the Auditor-General's conclusions in his report are very sad. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has failed to significantly improve student completion rates. Under the auspices of the state government's Growing Victoria Together policy, the 90 per cent targets that were initially set in 2005 have not been successfully met.

While these targets were ambitious, it was the government's ambition to do it for the children's sake. Sadly, only about 80 per cent of students have completed year 12 or attained a Victorian certificate of education or a Victorian certificate of applied learning. Coincidentally, kids who dropped out were, not surprisingly, from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and regional kids who still wanted to get any job in the big smoke as soon as they legally could.

The Auditor-General talks about implementing strategies for student retention, and I agree with him. If our young people take advantage of the opportunity to utilise their entitlement to good education up to 19 years of age, they will realise the benefits, particularly of having a better chance of getting the jobs they want, not just the jobs they have to do — or worse, no job at all.

The report has several recommendations, all of which are sensible and logical. Without a reasonable standard of education our young people will be left behind and our economic outlook very grim. We must do more to encourage the retention of students so that they complete vital education and training. It is their future we are planning and ultimately our responsibility to the younger generation.

Auditor-General: *Student Completion Rates*

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am always pleased to speak to Victorian Auditor-General's reports in general, but particularly today on his report

on student completion rates, which was released in November. It is like the planets are in alignment in that I make my statement on this report immediately following my erstwhile parliamentary colleague Mr Elasmarr speaking on the same report.

As Mr Elasmarr was speaking, my heart went out to him because as he started to get into this report I think he realised he was on the wrong tram. This report is an indictment of the performance of the Labor government over a 10-year period, the way it provided oversight and accountability for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), how much slippage occurred and to what extent targets have not been met. I must say — and it is not at all parenthetically — the Baillieu coalition government is actually providing momentum for a turnaround in this important area.

We are talking about student completion rates. We are talking about the fact that often many factors — including social and economic background, the family situation of students, their personal qualities such as resilience and self-confidence — affect the ability of students to complete a secondary education or get an alignment with a vocation-based qualification. It is important that people who often start off in a position of disadvantage with lots of personal problems get a fair go. It is important to ensure that the means for these students to complete their education are optimised, that these systems are refined and that the data is researched and compiled. It is essential that people are not flying blind, which was a signature of the Labor government, whose left hand never knew what the right hand was doing. It never correlated information and often blatantly disregarded important research that would have provided it with guidelines, guiding principles and a way forward so that children would not have missed out.

Importantly, the negative impacts can be offset. The burden that a young person trying to complete their education and set themselves up for economic independence for life can be offset when you use appropriate strategies in schools. The Victorian Auditor-General stated:

This audit reviewed whether the support provided to students to complete their schooling to year 12 or equivalent is effective and whether strategies, programs and initiatives developed and implemented by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ... have increased the number of young people completing year 12 or equivalent.

The Auditor-General concluded that over a 10-year period the DEECD has failed to significantly improve student completion rates. What a tragedy; what an

indictment. The Victorian Auditor-General stated that important commissioned research was ignored, and stakeholders, including schools, were not consulted about the likely impact of funding changes to the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) and vocational education and training in schools programs. Furthermore, the Auditor-General said:

The issues highlighted in this audit relating to DEECD's advice on VCAL raise broader concerns about its ability to gather and use sufficient evidence to assess the potential impact of policy changes —

that is, to be able to adapt to changed conditions, basic rules of survival —

and provide comprehensive, informed advice to decision-makers to improve student completion rates.

Let us have a look at some of the figures. In 2005 the Growing Victoria Together framework set a target of 90 per cent of 20 to 24-year-olds having completed year 12 or equivalent by 2010. In 2010 only 88 per cent of students had completed year 12 or equivalent. The proportion of 19-year-olds completing year 12 or equivalent in Victoria actually plateaued at 80 per cent in 2008, and it has not improved. The completion rate for non-metropolitan students has deteriorated since 2006. The legacy of Labor is increasing this gap.

In low socioeconomic areas there is a worrying decline in the completion rates for the duration of the Victorian Labor government, reaching a nadir — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Sadly, Mrs Kronberg's time has expired.

Northeast Health Wangaratta: report 2011–12

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise and say a few words on the Northeast Health Wangaratta report for 2011–12. I wish to make some remarks about the report, but at the outset I acknowledge the contribution of the president of the board of management, Christine Cunningham, and the CEO, Margaret Bennett. Northeast Health is the principal health service and referral hospital for the central Hume region and services a catchment of approximately 100 000 people. It is the largest employer in the rural city of Wangaratta, providing work for over 1200 staff.

This year has been a year of celebration for Northeast Health as it celebrates its 140th anniversary. It was established in 1872, and it is a wonderful achievement to have been operating for such a long time. The hospital opened on 5 January 1872 and was able to accommodate a total of 10 patients. This was quickly

expanded to 20 to meet demand. In 2012 the total number of beds has expanded to 222. The number of inpatients who presented and were treated at the hospital who in 1872 was 148, compared with 16 534 patients who have been treated at the hospital in 2012. A very significant increase has occurred over those 140 years.

Northeast Health provides a wide range of clinical services, including a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, 12-trolley emergency department, and inpatient services, including surgery, paediatrics, obstetrics, dialysis, oncology, mental health and residential aged care. The hospital covers the full range of services for the 100 000 people for which it provides care in its catchment. It also has a community service that includes dental services, community nursing and outpatient therapy. Northeast Health is like many regional hospitals in my electorate in that it struggles to use every dollar that gets allocated to deliver first-rate health services. Northeast Health continues to provide quality health-care services to its community.

Some of the significant highlights during the year include the establishment of magnetic resonance imaging services in partnership with Regional Imaging Ltd and a well-supported community fundraising campaign; recruitment of six new specialists; refurbishment of a six-bed ward in the Thomas Hogan Rehabilitation Centre; replacement of a generator; strengthening tertiary partnerships to establish education capacity and workforce development; 20 844 episodes of patient treatment through the emergency department, which is an increase of 2.7 per cent; 601 babies were born, which is an increase of 88; 5530 surgical operations performed; and the introduction of universal language signage across the organisation has commenced.

The Northeast Health service offers extensive services and is truly responsive to meeting community needs. I congratulate it on not only its anniversary but also a very successful year.

Education and Training Committee: agricultural education and training in Victoria

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a statement on the inquiry into agricultural education and training. In doing so I congratulate the committee on its report encompassing 45 recommendations, 106 submissions and 216 witnesses compiled into 236 pages. It was an extensive amount of work and given it was a committee with members who had little agricultural background, it is interesting that its key findings were consistent with what the industry has

been grappling with over the last decade. I also take the opportunity to thank the chair, the member for Caulfield in the Assembly, David Southwick, and congratulate him and the committee on the report. On that basis I indicate that I was pretty disappointed — in fact I was disgusted — that Mr Pakula would see fit to move a motion reflecting on the reputation of Mr Southwick, and it just shows the desperation Labor will sink to in attempting to find some relevance in this chamber, particularly in relation to opposition business.

The report identified the same issues that plagued the industry when I played a leadership role some years ago; issues that I am very passionate about. The reduced numbers of people interested in seeking an agricultural education, whether through degree courses at university, which were commonly agricultural science, to the less formal diplomas of farm management through Glenormiston College, Longerenong College and Marcus Oldham College, were disappointing. I believe the University of Melbourne taking over the agricultural colleges and redirecting the curriculum played a part in the demise of some of these colleges. Marcus Oldham is the exception where, as a private provider, it has been able to deliver a curriculum that industry was seeking and subsequently it has full enrolment and is acknowledged as a world leader in agricultural education. It is very well networked.

The poor image of an agricultural career or as a professional agribusinessman has been dogged by the public image of a stereotypical farmer being old, illiterate, slow speaking, overweight, wearing gumboots, bib-and-brace and straw hat with corks, and a piece of straw clenched between his teeth. That image is still being portrayed today on our television, as advertisers try to flog anything from milk to barbed wire. Farmers are their own worst enemies at times, as they continually talk down the industry and scare off any siblings contemplating a career in agriculture. That is not the reality. The reality is that most agribusiness professionals — farmers — use laptops and the most modern technology available particularly when using machinery.

The state school curriculum is no better, with teachers dropping the most basic education on where our food and fibre comes from and the importance of a healthy diet of fresh balanced foods that are naturally produced, which has disengaged students on the important role our food and fibre producers play in a fit and healthy nation and the worthiness of a career in agribusiness which can be very rewarding and which uses the world's best and latest technology. I was pleased to see the Young Agribusiness Professionals' comments were

used in the report because it was a group I initiated while at the Victorian Farmers Federation to provide the vehicle to promote agriculture as a career of choice, rather than as a last resort, and to improve the image of farming. The group was also a mechanism to provide young leaders to the industry, and I am very proud of the way this group has grown in its charter in fulfilling its original goals.

Deb Bain, who is quoted in the report, has worked tirelessly to engage metropolitan and country people through National Farm Day, which places urban families with country families to create a better understanding of country life. The Baillieu government has also helped young farmers through stamp duty concessions to help them enter the industry, which has traditionally been a high cost capital entry, as well as providing funding to the Victorian Young Farmers. But, as the report identifies, the underlying problem is how the industry is promoted within our schools and how education and training is delivered to the industry through post-secondary education.

The recommendations for increasing promotion, awareness programs in schools, internet hubs and increasing the agricultural profile of food and fibre in the Australian curriculum is very positive. The *Weekly Times* in its last edition has highlighted that the agricultural education system has underperformed, and it is pleasing to see, also reported in the *Weekly Times* in an article entitled 'Reforms for ag education', that the government is undertaking a number of feasibility models to arrest the decline of tertiary students pursuing an agricultural education. An agreement to fund the appointment of a rural industries careers adviser charged with raising the profile of farm subjects across schools to revitalise the workforce is a positive approach that attacks the core of the problem. It is ironic that we have an ageing farmer demographic with industry seeking agricultural managers and business professionals with certain skills — Marcus Oldham has tailored courses to fill that market — and industries are facing a severe workforce shortage.

Office of Police Integrity: *Crossing the Line*

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a statement on the Office of Police Integrity report entitled *Crossing the Line*, which is a report on the investigation into the conduct of a member of Victoria Police undertaking secondary employment as a ministerial adviser and his relationship with the Deputy Premier.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — I appreciate the interjections because recently — —

Mr P. Davis interjected.

Mr LEANE — There has been a bit more, Mr Davis. There have been reports of the member for Benambra in the Assembly, Mr Tilley, in the paper over the last few days.

Mrs Peulich — He is a good man; he is a very good man.

Mr LEANE — I am going to get to that; he is a good man.

It has been in the paper that the Office of Police Integrity has reopened the investigation into the Deputy Premier. Mr Tilley said they were going to use the taped conversation between him and Mr Ryan which Mr Tilley said would vindicate him. He said he would demand his job back as the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services — I suppose it is emergency management now. I have to say, and I have put this on record before, that I agree with Mr Tilley. He should never have been demoted; he was just following the party line at the time — that is, that Mr Overland was bad and Mr Jones was good. That was the theme. Mr Tilley and Mr Weston were following the party line at the time, but then when it was suddenly exposed it was Mr Tilley who was told to jump on the grenade and be the fall guy.

If you are going to get a fall guy, you need to be careful. You might get a fall guy who has a backbone, believes in himself and has integrity. I served on a committee with Mr Tilley and had a lot of debates with him. We were angry with each other, but I can tell you he has got a backbone, so it will be interesting if, when the Office of Police Integrity investigates this tape, the tape vindicates Mr Tilley. Where will that leave the Deputy Premier when Mr Tilley says, 'I informed the Deputy Premier of conversations I had with Mr Jones, and I informed the Deputy Premier about conversations between Mr Weston, myself and Mr Jones'?

Mrs Coote — On a point of order, Acting President, this is about reports. Could the member explain which page he is referring to in this report?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President, I would have thought Mrs Coote was raising a matter of relevance. Nonetheless, the point of order I wish to raise is the fact that it is against standing orders

to reflect on a member of Parliament except by means of a notice of motion. Mr Leane is attempting to reflect and impugn the character of the Deputy Premier, and the standing orders indicate that the only means to do that is by way of a motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! I uphold the point of order that the member would need to do this by way of substantive motion, so I ask the member to come back to the report.

Mr LEANE — I am happy to come back to the report, and I am a bit surprised that government members would be calling points of order when I am defending their colleague Mr Tilley and saying that he is a genuinely honest man with a backbone. If government members are going to pick a fall guy, then they should not pick a guy who has a backbone; they should pick a jellyfish. They picked the wrong person.

I find it a bit strange that government members say it is outrageous for members of the opposition to come in here and say someone who lied about their educational qualifications and became chair of the education committee should not maintain their position. Yet it is a member of the opposition who comes into the chamber and says, 'I agree with the Liberal government MP that he should be promoted, deserves to be promoted and should get his job back under that portfolio'. Mr Tilley did nothing wrong so far as government MPs are concerned; he did the job they wanted him to do, along with Mr Weston, to somehow try to manoeuvre Mr Jones into Mr Overland's position, whatever the case may be. He did what he was expected to do, and then when it all blew up — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — It all blows up on page 55, and suddenly it is a case of, 'Sorry Bill, you're going to have to jump on the grenade because Mr Ryan is too much of a delicate genius to admit he has done something wrong'. I am here to say to the government that it should give Bill his job back and do the right thing.

Auditor-General: Local Government — Results of the 2011–12 Audits

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I was going to make my statement on the Auditor-General's report on student completion rates; however, in view of the fact that two members have spoken on that report, I thought I would change tack.

Mr P. Davis — Speak on the Ombudsman.

Mrs PEULICH — No. I could have, but I thought I would speak on the Auditor-General's report on *Local Government — Results of the 2011–12 Audits* tabled November 2012. In doing so, first of all I would like to say how useful and how much of an improvement in quality I have found the Auditor-General's reports that have been tabled, and in particular the briefings that have been conducted for members of Parliament by the now retiring Auditor-General, Mr Des Pearson. I take the opportunity of wishing him well in his retirement and place on record the gratitude of those members of Parliament who have religiously attended his briefings and partaken in some of the hospitality at those briefings, which typically includes a sandwich lunch and usually occupies the entire lunch hour. I have found them very beneficial, and whilst he will be very ably represented by the acting Auditor-General, Des Pearson has done a sterling job.

Each year the Auditor-General prepares findings on the results of the audits of the financial statements of 79 councils and 12 regional library corporations. In October 2012 the Auditor-General completed a report which provided the results of the audits of 103 entities with 30 June 2012 balance updates across councils, regional libraries and companies, trusts and joint ventures within the local government sector. This report includes the assessment of the financial sustainability of councils and quality of financial reporting. Councils are assessed against six financial sustainability indicators: underlying result, liquidity, self-financing, capital replacement, indebtedness and renewal gap. An assessment of the financial sustainability of regional library corporations has not been concluded in the 2011–12 report. Instead a commentary on the overall performance of the regional library corporations has been incorporated.

Clear audit opinions were issued on 103 of the entities. I note the Auditor-General's comments:

Notwithstanding some areas for improvement, Parliament can have confidence in the adequacy of financial and performance reporting and the internal controls of the entities audited.

Seventy-three councils were given the favourable category of low risk — an improvement from 71 in the previous year. Of the remaining 6 councils 5 were rated medium risk — an improvement from the 6 councils of the previous year. One was rated as high risk, and I understand further work is being undertaken in that regard. I think it does show some improvement.

The Auditor-General makes some pertinent remarks not just on the finances but on what the finances represent. He makes the following comments on budget development management:

... 92 per cent of councils did not acquit actual performance against the budget —

for the council term —

or the strategic objectives set ...

...

Seventy-seven per cent of councils did not demonstrate links between their operational and capital budgets ...

Also:

... 71 per cent ... did not prepare a business case when determining whether to outsource waste management services.

Clearly it was not just to show that the dollars and cents added up; it was to link — and to be seen to be doing so — the objectives of the funding intentions and the projects as well as the outcomes. These are themes that the Auditor-General has made comment on previously. Anyone who is a follower of local government and takes note of some of the strategic documents would, in my opinion, say this is definitely the area where significant reform is needed. I am aware that the minister is very keen and has done a lot of work on developing performance indicators for the sector, and I think this is long overdue.

In the meantime the Auditor-General recommends that councils should:

... critically review the performance information in their annual reports so that it is relevant, balanced, appropriate and clearly aligned with their objectives;

...

... prepare and align financial and strategic budgets beyond the elected council's four-year term to inform delivery of longer term outcomes and consideration of timely asset replacement;

...

... review the link and impact between their operational and capital works needs when preparing the budget so that sufficient provisions are made for maintenance and renewal of assets;

...

... develop and maintain outsourcing policies and procedures that:

mandate the preparation of robust business cases and require rigorous assessments of procurement options, including outsourcing or insourcing any service;

...

... identify and register risks inherent in outsourcing and develop mitigation strategies and monitor progress in managing those risks.

I certainly commend those reforms to the house.

Auditor-General: Annual Plan 2012–13

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I wish to make some remarks on the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's *Annual Plan 2012–13*.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr P. DAVIS — I will start at page 1 and go right through. In actual fact I want to reflect on the fact that the Auditor-General tabled his annual plan in June of this year for the next financial year — that is, the financial year we are currently in — and I note that at midnight on Friday, 14 December, halfway through that annual plan and halfway through the year, the Auditor-General will retire. I had the privilege of making some remarks at a farewell function for the Auditor-General on Monday afternoon. I want to do the same in the context of the Parliament as is appropriate, given that this will in effect be the last opportunity to reflect on the tenure of Des Pearson as the 25th Auditor-General of Victoria. He is a man who has given significant service to Australia in terms of his public service. He has been a public servant for 42 years and has spent 21 years as an auditor-general, 6 of which have been in the Victorian jurisdiction.

Mr Pearson has been a fine servant of the community, and I am sure that the previous government, including the former Treasurer, along with the current government would share the view, as does the Parliament, that the high office of Auditor-General, if performed well, is a significant assurance of the delivery of services in an effective and efficient manner. The oversight, scrutiny and transparency that the Auditor-General provides in association with the oversight by the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee across government departments and agencies ensures that the public can be satisfied that the resources available to the government and executive are effectively and well deployed.

Des Pearson came to the role in Victoria with a history of the services I will refer to. He started his public service career in 1970 as a graduate cadet auditor with the commonwealth Auditor-General's office, progressed through a career in audit and then moved on to more general administrative and financial roles in the public sector before becoming an auditor-general 21 years ago. It is useful to note that he has been well respected by his peers, and not just in his role as Auditor-General. He was actively involved in CPA Australia, the Institute of Public Administration and the

Australian Institute of Management, having served all three bodies as the West Australian president and at a national board level. He was CPA Australia's national president in 2001, elected a national fellow of the Institute of Public Administration in 2002, made a life member of CPA Australia in 2003 and made a life member of the Australian Institute of Management, Western Australia, in 2007.

He was a convener of the Australasian Council of Auditors-General from 1997 to 1999, a member of the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board from 1997 to 2000 and a member of the Australian Accounting Standards Board from 2005 to 2008. Mr Pearson is a life member and fellow of CPA Australia, a life member and fellow of the Australian Institute of Management, Western Australia, a national and Victorian fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia, a fellow of the International Society of Engineering Asset Management and a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia.

Mr Pearson contributed an incredible length of service to the community and an outstanding commitment to ensuring that Victoria has been well served by successive governments in terms of the stewardship of the resources of the community — and they are community resources, not the Parliament's or the executive's. I congratulate Des Pearson on his public service and contribution to the financial welfare of the state of Victoria.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Sandringham College: Beaumaris campus

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, and I raise it on behalf of the Beaumaris campus of Sandringham College. Before this year's state budget was announced I asked the minister to honour the Baillieu government's commitment to provide \$6 million to Sandringham College for building works, but the Baillieu government's promise was not kept. The Brumby government commenced master planning for Sandringham College.

Since that time the Beaumaris campus community, part of the three-campus Sandringham College, has determined that it wishes to establish a stand-alone college. On 9 February around 700 people attended a

public meeting at the Beaumaris campus to show their support for public secondary education on the site. In excess of 70 public meetings at various sites have since been held, showing the overwhelming support for a stand-alone school at the Beaumaris site and for the continuation of a two-campus Sandringham College using the sites of Bluff Road and Holloway Road. The school council of Sandringham College voted unanimously on 21 August to disaggregate. Yet despite the clear support of the school and the community, the state government has yet to give its support to the establishment of the new school.

The school community needs the support of its local MPs and the Baillieu government to move forward. Yet as of today, with the buildings and grounds in dire need of investment, local Liberal MPs are mute and the promise of funding has not been met. Hundreds of families currently using public education in the excellent primary schools in the area are affected, and parents and students are angry and frustrated by this government's inaction. The lack of surety for the school on this site in the immediate future has left many doubting the intentions of the Baillieu government with regard to secondary schooling in and around Beaumaris. The action I seek from the minister is for him to immediately honour the Baillieu government's \$6 million promise and get behind the students and parents at Beaumaris.

Water: management

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water, the Honourable Peter Walsh, and it relates to the Wonthaggi desalination plant. The Wonthaggi desalination plant was a commitment made under the previous Bracks and Brumby governments that will cost Victorian taxpayers an estimated \$24 billion over the next 28 years. The desalination plant will be able to comfortably produce 150 gigalitres of water per year but the water will not be distributed across the whole state. Instead it will be used solely for consumption by the people of Melbourne.

Forgive me, but there is something wrong with this picture. Yet again the taxpayers will be forced to bear the brunt of the irresponsible management of the Bracks and Brumby governments overseen by the former Treasurer, John Lenders. And again money is being taken away from regional Victoria to fund this reckless infrastructure.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mrs PETROVICH — Mr Lenders is very sensitive about this. He blew the budget. People protesting the construction of the Wonthaggi desalination plant and the north–south pipeline were treated like criminals by the previous Bracks and Brumby governments. Members of my own community arrested for protesting on their own land. The sort of democracy that existed under the Bracks and Brumby governments not only deprived members of the community of their right to protest but also centralised the Victorian water supply to support the people of Melbourne.

I am proud to say that the Victorian coalition government has always represented the best interests of all Victorians in both our rural and urban communities. I am proud to say that we have always fought for better water management in Victoria by increasing the number of dams and improving dam infrastructure. I am proud to say the Victorian Liberal-National coalition government did not support the Wonthaggi desalination plant in its present form — a desalination plant of this sort of cost and magnitude. I am proud of the Victorian coalition government's use and management of water across the state, working as it is on sustainable irrigation practices such as the Sustainable Irrigation program and the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project, which will invest \$2 billion into the replacement and management of older channels to prevent irrigation water from being lost through evaporation and leakage.

The coalition government is about practical solutions to water management. We are about working with communities and developing practical approaches with other states. The action I seek is for the Minister for Water to continue to oversee water in Victoria in his practical management style and continue to support regional communities through the development of irrigation channels and dams. I commend him on his management of the Wonthaggi desalination project, which is a failure of the Bracks and Brumby governments.

Shire of East Gippsland: Bastion Point boat ramp

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — On Monday, 10 December, I addressed a rally at Parliament House organised by the Save Bastion Point campaign to send a message to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to not support the option 3b proposal for the construction of the boat ramp at Bastion Point as applied for by the East Gippsland Shire Council. The Save Bastion Point campaign has gathered almost 2000 signatures on its petition to ask the minister not to grant coastal consent to the council

for the boat ramp. Bastion Point in Mallacoota is recognised by the National Trust for its outstanding landscape and environmental values and sits within the spectacular marine and coastal environment of the Croajingolong National Park, which is recognised by UNESCO as a world biosphere reserve.

The East Gippsland Shire Council proposes to build a causeway right on the beach and a large breakwater through the surf break. This development would significantly damage the natural and indigenous values of this special place. An independent panel inquiry in 2008 found that the new ocean access facility at Bastion Point of the type suggested and exhibited by the shire, including options 3b and LS1, do not have coastal policy support. The Gippsland Coastal Board also submitted to the inquiry that while it supported the provision of ocean access at Mallacoota, none of the exhibited options are supported by the Victorian coastal strategy when considered against those core principles. The Gippsland Coastal Board considered that a minimal upgrade of the existing ramp should have been explored.

I raised the issue with the previous government in June 2010, twice with the then Minister for Planning, and in September 2010 with the then Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, urging them not to give Coastal Management Act 1995 consent to option 3b because it did not comply with the values of or key criteria for the importance of the coastal environment and it lacked broadbased community support. There were also the issues of the inequitable use of public open space, the landscape values of Bastion Point and the irresponsible use of public funds with the large 3b option. Safety remains a huge issue with that option.

A recent review by the Department of Transport found that 88 per cent of submitters would prefer to see a smaller development than option 3b, and the significant majority, 72.9 per cent, would prefer to see a boat ramp with a small or no breakwater. My request to the minister is that he reject the application by the East Gippsland Shire Council to develop option 3b and that he support the majority of the community and both reviews and not grant coastal consent as applied for by the East Gippsland shire for option 3b and instead support the alternative h2 option with no or a very minimal breakwater.

Winton Wetlands: master plan

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith. The Winton Wetlands

committee of management recently launched its master plan, which outlines the vision for the development of tourism, recreation, community, education, and research facilities that would bring many benefits to my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. This master plan contains implementation plans for a potential \$57 million, two-stage development project in the wetlands. As members would know, the Winton Wetlands project is of national scientific, cultural and environmental significance, and once completed it will be the largest wetland restoration project in the Southern Hemisphere. The project will return native wildlife and vegetation to the area, and provide habitat for a range of bird species such as the wedge-tailed eagle, the peregrine falcon and the black kite as well as threatened bird species such as the brolga.

The project has already achieved much, including conducting biomass mapping to guide grazing, weed and fire management; negotiating grazing licenses for more than 1200 hectares; establishing reserve and boating regulations; and also initial environmental studies. Given the clear significance of the project, I am puzzled as to why the minister has not bothered to visit the Winton Wetlands site since his appointment two years ago. Unlike the Labor Party, it seems self-evident that the minister does not value this significant regional Victorian project. Indeed he cannot seem to find the time to get into his car and drive a couple hours north of Melbourne. I encourage the minister to pack a picnic basket, rug and GPS and spend a relaxing Sunday afternoon visiting one of Victoria's best assets. The specific action I seek of the minister is for him to advise me if he ever intends to visit the Winton Wetlands, and if so, when?

This is a fantastic project. The decision to decommission what was originally Lake Mokoan and return it to natural wetlands was announced in 2004 under the previous Labor government. It was the first time a major Victorian reservoir, Victoria's fifth largest, had been decommissioned. The reservoir is being returned to its natural wetland condition. I encourage all Victorians, including my parliamentary colleagues, to take the time to have a look at the Winton wetlands, which are being returned to their natural state.

Wellington planning scheme: amendment

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, concerning amendment C33 to the Wellington planning scheme. The minister will be aware that I raised this matter with him in October 2011, and I understand that the matter has still not been resolved. The minister will know that amendment C33

incorporates new flood data into the planning scheme and that a planning panel was established because some Port Albert residents had raised concerns. The panel reported that the concerns were addressed, but nonetheless the minister subsequently asked the Shire of Wellington and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to reconsider the entire planning scheme as it affects Port Albert.

In my previous adjournment matter I asked the minister to clarify exactly what it was he wanted the shire to review as the process had been completed and as far as the shire could understand there was nothing further to consider. I discussed the details regarding the C33 amendment in an adjournment matter in October last year; I will not go over them again. The minister replied to me in February 2012, explaining that he had asked the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to undertake an independent peer review of the CSIRO report on climate change in eastern Victoria on which the planning panel had relied in doing its work. I understand that since the minister requested that the catchment management authority undertake the peer review in late 2011, nothing has happened and the shire and the residents of Port Albert are none the wiser. I also understand that the shire raised the matter directly with the minister in a meeting and that the minister was surprised at the inaction and undertook to get back to the shire, but no-one in Wellington has heard anything from the minister since that meeting.

The flood overlay has been prepared, the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is required to see it implemented, the data on which the overlay relied was peer assessed and confirmed in May this year and all relevant documentation has been lodged with the minister. I ask the minister to immediately approve planning scheme amendment C33 and advise Wellington shire of the status of the C33 amendment.

I note that in June 2010 the Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan, who is also the member for South Gippsland, tabled a petition in the Legislative Assembly signed by 685 Port Albert residents who registered their opposition to Port Albert being included in the C33 amendment. The signatories said they believed historical evidence and recent studies confirm that the Port Albert region is not at risk of flooding or inundation; however, that is inconsistent with the findings of the shire, the CSIRO and the planning panel. Therefore I ask the minister to indicate whether the views of these petitioners are a factor in his being unable to finalise the approval of the C33 amendment to the Wellington planning scheme?

Places Victoria: performance

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The issue I raise today is for the Minister for Planning and it concerns Places Victoria. As members know, Places Victoria is in a fair degree of difficulty — in fact it is a bit of a shambles. The CEO recently resigned one year into a four-year contract. The chairman of Places Victoria, Peter Clarke, has stood down under the shadow of Federal Court proceedings, although he is still earning a salary. We know that one in four staff have been sacked and that \$18 million has been wiped off the value of the assets of the organisation. This chaos means that businesses and others trying to engage with Places Victoria are suffering.

The opposition has been contacted by Pastor Phil Cayzer from TurningPoint Family Church. At the start of the year the church contacted Places Victoria to purchase a property in Lynbrook to expand its community outreach services. The church was allocated a person to deal with, but after two months this person told the church they were no longer in charge of the property and the church was referred to a second Places Victoria employee. A couple of months later that second employee told the church that his position had been terminated after 25 years. The church was then told to go back to the first employee. The church left messages for and sent emails to that person, but received no response. Eventually the church was told that the employee was also no longer working at Places Victoria and that the files had all been passed on to a third Places Victoria employee. When the church used the phone number it was provided it found the number was not connected, and the phone number on the Places Victoria website — the 13 number — was also disconnected. In this case it is a church, but it could be any organisation or business that is trying to fulfil a business arrangement or is halfway through contract negotiations. It is a complete mess.

My request of the minister is that he intervene and ensure that there is some proper oversight of Places Victoria. Taxpayer money is flowing out through the cracks caused by this shemuzzle — this complete lack of direction and focus. This is chaos; it is out of control. It is now time for the minister, who has given himself extensive powers under the Places Victoria legislation, to intervene to make sure there is some proper oversight, because otherwise taxpayers will continue to feel the consequences of the lack of direction in this organisation.

Responses

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I have a written response to an adjournment debate matter raised by Mr Finn on 14 November 2012.

A number of adjournment matters were raised for the attention of the relevant ministers: by Mr Lenders for the Minister for Education, by Mrs Petrovich for the Minister for Water, by Ms Pennicuik and Ms Darveniza on separate issues for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and by Mr Scheffer and Mr Tee on separate issues for the Minister for Planning. I will refer all those matters to the relevant ministers for a response.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — In accordance with standing orders in regard to adjournment matters that are outstanding, I seek an explanation in relation to the following matters: to the Minister for Education on 21 June in relation to the Warrnambool Alternative VCAL Education School, which has the acronym WAVE; to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change on 30 August in relation to the Winchelsea Gun Club relocation; to the Minister for Health on 10 October in relation to diabetes funding; to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations on 23 October in relation to employment in regional and rural Victoria; and to the Minister for Planning on 24 October in relation to the Glenelg planning scheme amendment.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I have written those down, and I will ensure that my office follows up on the matters relating to the education, environment and climate change, health and planning portfolios. In terms of the matter which I have responsibility for, I know I have seen it, and I think I have signed it or it is about to be signed. I am sure Ms Tierney will get it by tomorrow.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.46 p.m.