

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Wednesday, 15 August 2012**

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

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

## Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

# *Participating member*

## Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*Assembly* — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

*Council* — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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**Deputy President:** Mr M. VINEY

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Mr J. LENDERS

**Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

Mr G. JENNINGS

**Leader of The Nationals:**

The Hon. P. R. HALL

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

Mr D. DRUM

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Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
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Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP



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**Wednesday, 15 August 2012**

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

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have been advised that the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee will be meeting this day following the conclusion of the sitting of the Council.

**PETITIONS**

**Following petitions presented to house:**

**Hooded plovers: protection**

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws the attention of the Legislative Council to the plight of hooded plovers in the Mornington Peninsula National Park.

The petitioners therefore request that the Victorian state government, through Parks Victoria, establishes a strategy for hooded plover nesting protection within the Mornington Peninsula National Park that bans dogs from all ocean beaches where hooded plovers breed for the period of time that hooded plovers are nesting until that time that hooded plover chicks have fledged.

**By Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (808 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**National Centre for Farmer Health: funding**

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the state government's decision to cease funding for the National Centre for Farmer Health. In particular, we note:

1. the likely closure of the National Centre for Farmer Health due to the Baillieu government's decision to cut its \$1 million annual state government contribution;
2. the detrimental impact this funding cut will have to the health, safety and wellbeing of farm men and women, farm workers, their families and communities across Australia;
3. that the Baillieu government's decision to cut funding for the National Centre for Farmer Health will mean that the centre will no longer be able to carry out its important work such as research, service delivery and community for farming communities across regional Victoria.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council urges the Baillieu state government to immediately reinstate funding for the National Centre for Farmer Health and guarantee no further cuts will be made.

**By Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) (166 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**PAPERS**

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Carer Support Programs, August 2012.

Investment Attraction, August 2012.

Ombudsman — Report, 2011–12, Part 1.

**MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

**John Beus**

**Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan)** — I rise to pay tribute to John Beus, OAM, who, sadly, passed away on 2 July 2012.

John was born in Holland on 17 April 1920. He fought in the Dutch resistance against the occupation of Holland by Nazi Germany. His wife, Ann, was a nurse whose family was displaced during the war, but she still managed to assist hundreds of displaced and mentally scarred people. In 1950 John and Ann emigrated to Australia and settled in Springvale.

In addition to being a very dedicated worker for the St Vincent de Paul Society and serving as a magistrate and justice of the peace, John volunteered for 50 years at the Springvale Benevolent Society and was a founding member. Over the course of those 50 years he demonstrated a tireless dedication, assisted those less fortunate than himself and touched the lives of the many thousands of clients who reached out to the society for a helping hand. John had a great enjoyment of the friendships he formed with the society's members. Many members were from different walks of life, but through their shared values and focus on those less fortunate than themselves they developed friendships that endured to the very end.

Earlier this year at a reception I was honoured to present John with the inaugural Wes Eggleston community service award in recognition of his outstanding community service. He was declared a living treasure in 2005 by the City of Greater Dandenong for his community service. John was also

awarded the senior citizen of the year by the City of Greater Dandenong and he also received the City of Springvale award. He was awarded the Paul Harris fellowship by the Rotary Club of Noble Park in 1999 and received an Order of Australia Medal in 2000.

John was a parishioner for 63 years at St Joseph's parish in Springvale. The fact that the parish overflowed with people paying their respects to him is testament to the high regard in which he was held by everyone. I will remember John as a kind, quiet and generous man who gave so much of himself to assist others.

In closing I pass on my deepest sympathies to his children and their families on the passing of their much-loved father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

### Women Showing the Way

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — One of the most rewarding things you can do in public life is to meet the next generation of leaders. For that reason I was delighted to take part in the Women Showing the Way forum in Bendigo last month, meeting about 200 young women from local Bendigo schools. I would like to congratulate an inspiring woman, Cr Lisa Ruffell, the only woman on the City of Greater Bendigo council, for putting the event together for a third year.

My fellow speakers were meteorologist Jane Bunn, Brave Foundation founding director Bernadette Black and WorkSafe technical inspector Anita Macartney. Each of us discovered our vocations through our life experience, most notably in the case of Bernadette Black. She was a young mother at just 16, but what seemed to be a disruption to her life plans turned into an inspiration to help others. Bernadette runs her own foundation aimed at helping teenage mums-to-be navigate the journey ahead. She was also named Australia's Mother of the Year in 2009.

I know that her story and the stories of each of the forum speakers inspired the students to look outside the square and think big when it comes to their futures. It was wonderful to see so many teenagers realising that they have the ability to be leaders in their community. There was even one young woman who was considering a career in politics after the session. I hope she makes it and discovers firsthand that the rewards of public life are worth 10 times the effort you put in.

### Environment: beverage container deposit and recovery scheme

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — Next week state and national environment ministers will meet to decide whether to pursue a national 10-cent refund scheme for bottles, cans and cartons. So next week we will find out whether this government is capable of walking the talk. Victoria has traditionally been the main opponent of a national scheme. If the Baillieu government supports a national scheme, as it says it does, and if it is capable of being persuasive in a negotiation, a national scheme will follow.

Recently I went to visit students in the year 6 class at Keilor Views Primary School, who were studying persuasive writing. Their topic was 'A 10-cent refund scheme'. Ella-Rose wrote that picking up litter could help prevent homelessness. She said, 'Just remember what you throw in the bin is valuable'. Ali compared Victoria's streets with South Australia's much cleaner ones and asked, 'Do you want your road to be full of litter?'. Alitha did the math: 'You could get 50 cans or bottles and get \$5 for them, and then they will be recycled into hundreds of other things instead of being thrown out and wasted'. Benjamin added, 'Everyone would want that extra money'. I want to know: does this government want the extra money?

Writing at a time when Toyota and Qantas were laying off jobs, every year 6 student could see the link between increased recycling and employment in Victoria. I urge the environment minister to represent the people of Victoria, who hate litter, ahead of the bottle companies, who see branded litter as free advertising. I urge him to be as — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Thank you.

### Sheepvention

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — My congratulations to the Hamilton Pastoral and Agricultural Society for hosting a record-breaking 2012 Sheepvention last week. More than 25 000 visitors passed through the gates to enjoy the many attractions on offer, well up on previous years. Sheepvention showcased a wide range of popular events focusing on the sheep and wool industries. Patrons had the opportunity to discuss with exhibitors the latest trends and innovative ideas in farm management, agricultural technology, wool production and other farm-related activities. Sheepvention was also a great opportunity to see world best practice in sheep husbandry and continual improvement where record top prices were achieved for stud rams.

Australia's largest multivendor ram sale was held during Sheepvention and attracted vendors and buyers from across the nation. This year's record-breaking ram sale achieved a top price of \$19 500, more than double last year's \$9000. The 14-month-old faultless Merino ram was bred at Jerilderie's One Oak Merino Stud and was sold to local Glenthompson stud Nareeb-Nareeb, owned and successfully managed by the Biggs family.

Along with the overall average price being well up on total gross sales and total gross sales exceeding \$850 000, these fantastic achievements show a growing confidence in the wool and sheep industry and hopefully indicate better times ahead for the farming and wider regional communities.

Congratulations to Sheepvention committee president, Rob Hartwich, and his hardworking team, including the many local volunteers who contributed to making this a successful event for Hamilton, western Victoria and indeed all of Victoria.

### **George Robert Crawford**

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Today I want to pay tribute to a previous member of this chamber, George Crawford. George was born in Prahran in 1926 and trained as a plumber. He joined the plumbers union in 1944, was elected to the committee of management in 1947 and subsequently filled many positions at the union, which culminated in his being branch secretary and general secretary for over 20 years. He was awarded a life membership of the union in 1989.

In the time that George was very active at the union, many workplace conditions were won for members, including holiday pay, sick pay, portable long service leave, the industry-based superannuation fund Cbus and benefits in workplace health and safety. George was a very active member of the Victorian branch of the Labor Party, being a union delegate at state conferences from 1946 into the 1990s, and he held the positions of state president and vice-president of the ALP. George was elected to the Victorian state Parliament as an MLC for Jika Jika, representing the electorate from March 1985 to October 1992.

A respected leader, devoted unionist and friend to many, George will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

### **Melbourne: livability rating**

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — I stand here proudly today, living in what is the world's most livable city for the second year in a row. We

should all be proud to live in Victoria, this great state. Two years in a row — that is something quite unusual. What has happened in two years? What has been different in this two years? I will tell you one of the things that has happened in this two years: we have had a fantastic planning minister, a planning minister with vision, integrity and knowledge who does not have any sham public consultations. Again we have been well rated. A score of over 80 is regarded as pretty good for a livable city, but we got a 97.5. We scored better than Adelaide, Sydney or Perth.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Adelaide, Sydney or Perth — none of those are in Ms Mikakos's electorate either; she might not be sure about that. Speaking on the topic, Music Victoria's chief executive, Patrick Donovan, is quoted as saying:

Melbourne's one of the top music cities in the world, a claim backed up recently when Music Max [pay television channel] concentrated on six great music cities in the world and one was Melbourne ...

Today and every day, as members of Parliament we should be talking Victoria up. We should be talking about what a great place it is to live, work and bring up a family. We should be doing that every single day. My expectation today and my expectation every day is that those opposite will be talking up Victoria today and saying what a great city Melbourne is to live in. The people of Victoria are blessed with this government.

### **Somali Independence Day**

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — On the evening of 1 July I attended, along with my parliamentary colleague Robin Scott, the member for Preston in the other place, a celebration to mark the 60th Somali Independence Day. Dr Hussein Haraco, president of the Somali Australian Council of Victoria, hosted the event, which included national dancing and singing. I thank the organisers for a great evening and the opportunity to meet Australian Somali members of our Victorian community.

### **Heidelberg Preschool: mini-Olympics**

**Mr ELASMAR** — On Thursday, 2 August, I attended the Heidelberg Preschool mini-Olympic games. I handed out medals to the four-year-olds, who were highly delighted to receive them. The event was sponsored by parents, who raised \$1620 towards furnishing the new room built from grant monies already expended. It was a pleasant and memorable occasion for everyone present.

### City of Darebin: volunteer awards

**Mr ELASMAR** — On Thursday, 3 August, I attended the City of Darebin's mayoral volunteers award night, hosted by mayor Steven Tsitas. Many volunteer organisations were presented with certificates of recognition for their outstanding contribution to their respective communities. Fiona Richardson, the member for Northcote in the other place, was also in attendance on the night. I thank council officers for their efforts in organising a splendid evening.

### Melba Support Services: 40th anniversary

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — On 11 July I had the great honour of joining the member for Evelyn in the other place, Christine Fyffe, on a visit to Melba Support Services in the Yarra Valley. It was a terrific and uplifting experience. We met with Glenn Foard, the chief executive officer, and with other members of Melba Support Services, including Tracey, Ron, Dominic and Cecilia.

I want to explain to the chamber what Melba's mission is, because it is a very professional organisation and one most of us should have a closer look at. Its mission is to assist individuals with a disability to lead everyday lives. It wants to achieve this through a commitment to respecting and safeguarding the human rights of all people, including their right to be safe, well and free from abuse and neglect; individuals being recognised and accepted as valued and contributing members of their community; and listening to and focusing on each individual and the choices they make.

One of the things that will be happening with Melba is the celebration of its 40th anniversary. A 40th anniversary for a disability support service is remarkable. The work it does is of great value to the local community. On my visit I met with people who have real jobs within the community, and I have to say it was just fabulous. One was working with IGA and another with a local kindergarten. Melba has produced a DVD to show how people with a disability can be fully integrated into their community, resulting in benefits to not only the person with a disability but also the wider community. I encourage everybody to have a look at this DVD and join me in celebrating 40 years of Melba.

### International Youth Day

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — Last Sunday was United Nations International Youth Day, which is celebrated each year to recognise the efforts of the world's youth in enhancing global society. It also

aims to promote ways to engage young people in becoming more actively involved in making contributions to their communities. This year the theme is 'Building a better world — partnering with youth'.

Whilst I welcome the Baillieu government's recent youth statement 'Engage, Involve, Create', to date this is simply a set of nice words with no real substance behind them. In fact the government's actions contradict its statement, which calls for increased investment in education and training opportunities for young people. Since coming to office the Baillieu government has taken an axe to the dedicated funding stream for youth mentoring and slashed funding to TAFE, the Victorian certificate of applied learning and other education and training programs. Only last week Premier Baillieu confirmed that his government would proceed with mandatory sentencing for juvenile offenders.

If the Baillieu government wants to be serious about tackling youth crime, then it has to ensure that young people have an education and a job. Enabling Victoria's young people to build a better world requires investing in their futures and a positive engagement with them.

### Olympic Games: Australian athletes

**Ms MIKAKOS** — On another matter, I wish to congratulate our returning Australian Olympians on their hard work and dedication in representing Australia at the London 2012 Olympic Games. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the city of London and the British people for a fabulous Olympic Games.

### Potato growers: contract negotiations

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter I raised with the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh, in an adjournment item during the last sitting period. It relates to concerns raised with me by potato growers from Ballarat about the cost of production and competitiveness in a global market, particularly in respect of the McCain Foods processing plant in Ballarat.

During the winter recess I met again with Ballarat potato growers, both contracted and uncontracted, and they again raised their concerns about the costs of production, particularly energy costs; and no doubt the carbon tax will multiply that hardship. They also raised the costs of water and fertiliser. I also met with representatives of McCain Foods, who raised a number of issues relating to the cost of processing in Australia and the fact that they can get fully processed chips from Belgium cheaper than the cost of producing them in

Australia. This is alarming given that this is an iconic Australian company.

What I was looking for from the minister — and I am very happy to say I have just received advice — was for the minister, through the Department of Primary Industries, to support the need for growers to increase productivity, and I am pleased to see that he has introduced a Ballarat processing potato growers competitive project. This is all about increasing productivity and yield, which is really the only opportunity that potato growers have to be competitive, particularly those in the Ballarat area. I congratulate the minister on starting this project, and I look forward to seeing results for the Ballarat potato growers.

### **Gisborne: indoor sports stadium**

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — As part of delivering its election commitment to the electorate of Macedon, the coalition government has demonstrated its commitment to delivering sporting facilities to this growing community with a \$3.5 million funding allocation for an indoor sports stadium in the 2012–13 state budget. The Gisborne indoor stadium working group and the local community have displayed hard work and dedication to this project. This is an important facility for the community. The previous government would not commit to this project, but this government is working towards its delivery.

I had a very positive meeting last week with representatives of the Gisborne netball and basketball associations; the Macedon Ranges Shire Council and its CEO, Peter Johnston; Gisborne Secondary College principal, John Flanagan, vice-principal Janet DiPilla; and Phillip Trengrove, an architect from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. There was a strong commitment to the Gisborne Secondary College site from all parties present. An understanding was reached regarding council funding contributions, and user group agreements for all parties are to be developed and signed off on.

I am very pleased that this consensus has been reached through discussion and understanding of the requirements of all parties involved. The Baillieu government remains focused on honouring its election commitments, delivering for the communities we serve, and listening and working together with people to ensure positive outcomes.

### **Women: local government**

**Mrs PETROVICH** — Despite making up over 50 per cent of our population and being major consumers of local government services, women represent only 29 per cent of local councillors across Victoria. The Shire of Gannawarra, one of the municipalities in my electorate, has no women councillors, while Greater Bendigo, Loddon and Swan Hill councils each have only one woman councillor. I strongly encourage women in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region to consider running for the 2012 local government elections. I speak on this with some authority: I served as a councillor for the Macedon Ranges Shire Council for several terms —

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

### **Higher education: TAFE funding**

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — Mitchell Shire Council has stepped up to defend the interests of the communities it represents. It is calling on the Baillieu-Ryan government to reverse its unprecedented decision to cut almost \$300 million from Victoria's public TAFE providers. The council has sought a guarantee from the government that no TAFE campuses will be closed. It has expressed concern that the cuts will put up to 1200 jobs at risk and lead to fee rises, course closures and the eventual privatisation of TAFE. Council considers that the cuts to TAFE are particularly ill conceived at a time when there are increasing job losses in other industries and an Australia-wide skills shortage.

In contrast, the member for Seymour in the Assembly, Cindy McLeish, has chosen to defend the government's TAFE cuts, claiming that there will be ample opportunity for all Victorians to undergo training and that the changes the government announced are better targeting government investment. Clearly Ms McLeish does not believe investment in TAFE is well targeted. I call on the member for Seymour to defend the community she has been elected to represent instead of the government's shocking decisions.

### **Sheepvention**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — I want to join my colleagues Mr Ramsay and Mr Koch in congratulating all the volunteers and producers who exhibited at this year's Sheepvention over two days. I also note the hard work of all the volunteers from Hamilton and surrounding areas who manned the gates and the stalls.

### Food and fibre production: western Victoria

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I would also like to congratulate Mr Walsh, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, on his response to an adjournment matter concerning our food and fibre producers, particularly the Growing Food and Fibre initiative that has been announced, which will provide \$61.4 million in the 2012–13 budget, including investment in the new National (Southern) Red Meats Innovation Centre in Hamilton.

### National disability insurance scheme: Barwon trial

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I would also like to join Mr Ramsay in congratulating the Premier and the Minister for Community Services, Ms Wooldridge, on their leadership in resolving negotiations in relation to the trial of the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) in the Barwon region, which is great news for approximately 5000 people with a disability in that region. It is of course a trial, and we join the Premier and other leaders in calling for the commonwealth to walk the walk as well as talk the talk in relation to funding the NDIS. We look forward to the Premier continuing the states' leadership in that regard.

### HM Prison Ararat: expansion project

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I would also like to congratulate the Premier and Mr McIntosh, the Minister for Corrections, on their leadership and tireless energy in resolving the negotiations that brought to a resolution issues around the construction of the Ararat prison expansion at the Hopkins Correctional Centre. This is a public-private partnership that was negotiated under the previous Labor government, and it demonstrates that putting substance over spin and ensuring that the best outcome for all Victorians is a worthy goal for this state.

### East–west link: government support

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — The M1 corridor and the West Gate Bridge and the connections they provide are critical to the Victorian economy, particularly to my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region. The West Gate Bridge currently carries more than 165 000 vehicles per day, and the Eastern Freeway carries more than 140 000 vehicles per day. A number of incidents in recent weeks have brought the M1 corridor to a standstill, reinforcing just how important this corridor is and how critical it is to have an alternative to it.

Labor used to support an alternative to the West Gate Bridge. It commissioned the east–west link needs assessment by Sir Rod Eddington, which reported in March 2008. Former Premier John Brumby is reported to have said:

I think what is undeniable, in Rod Eddington's report, is that the city does need a second east–west crossing ...

... one way or another we've got to address this issue of a second east–west crossing...

What is the Labor Party's position now? It is opposed to the east–west link. In its battle for the seat of Melbourne it abandoned any sense of rational policy decision making in its short-term desperation to retain the seat. On 17 July the *Herald Sun* reported Mr Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition, as saying, 'I do not support a tunnel'.

Regrettably the federal government does not support the east–west tunnel or other east–west connections either, but fortunately the Abbott federal opposition has committed \$1.5 billion to this project if elected to government at the next federal election — —

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Leane should desist from interjecting.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — The Labor Party has abandoned good policy in the interests of short-term political gain. It is most regrettable, but the government is committed to the east–west link.

### Jonathan Huang

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — In February this year, whilst on an official trip to Taipei as guests of the government of the Republic of China, Taiwan, three members of this Parliament, the Honourable Bruce Atkinson, the Honourable Tim Holding, the member for Lyndhurst in the other place, and yours truly, met with Mr Jonathon Huang, world president of the World Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce.

As a businessman who lives in Sydney, Mr Huang was interested to meet three members of this Parliament. He revealed to us his passion for St John Ambulance in Sydney. In the past he has shown his support by donating ambulances, so he put a challenge to the three of us that if we joined him at the World Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce Congress in Sydney in April, he would donate an ambulance to St John Ambulance Victoria. The three of us travelled to the conference in Sydney, accompanied by the chairman of St John

Ambulance Victoria, Mr Cameron Oxley, and a pledge was made that day.

On Sunday, 7 July, during the Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce in Oceania conference held at the Windsor Hotel, a brand new, fully kitted out ambulance was presented to St John Ambulance Victoria. The CEO, Mr Stephen Horton, told us at the handover ceremony that such a gift will do much to inspire the 3000 volunteers of St John Ambulance Victoria. We applaud Mr Jonathan Huang for this amazing gesture and thank him for his generosity and support of this very worthy charity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### Reference

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee is required to inquire into, consider and report no later than the last Thursday in April 2013 on the causes of the Yallourn brown coal mine flooding on 6 June 2012 and the implications for the environment, worker safety and energy supply of such events.

This was a major interruption to a piece of energy infrastructure for which no-one seems to want to take any responsibility. While the government has initiated its own geotechnical inquiry into the direct causes of the collapse, there was a long series of decisions made to configure the mine in this particular way and further inquiry is needed into those very decisions that set up the disaster. I propose to go through some of the time line associated with this.

In 1999 tenders were called to divert the Morwell River around a proposed expansion of the coalmine. That was after an environment effects statement had been completed, but at the time of the calling of those tenders the tenderers were encouraged to submit alternative proposals that would be more cost effective. A particular engineering group came up with an alternative involving re-routing the river back through the old workings on an embankment. The alternative design involved placing 13 million cubic metres of mine overburden across a diversion of some 3.5 kilometres in length and a 1.3-kilometre tunnel underneath — in other words, creating a new piece of land and diverting the river over that land and the tunnel that was to be part of the operations of the mine.

As was claimed by the engineering group and TRUenergy, this led to a saving of \$80 million to the coalminer. The cost of the diversion was \$120 million,

and it was officially opened by then Premier John Brumby in 2005. He cut the ribbon on something that seven years later collapsed, and while I do not mourn the departure of Mr Brumby from this place, it is times like this when I wish he was still here so I could hold him to account for a project he initiated. TRUenergy claimed at the time that there would be significant ecological improvements to the river habitat as a result of moving the river.

In October 2005 TRUenergy won an Engineers Australia Australian engineering excellence award for this el cheapo and, as we now know, risky option. In winning the award it beat out the Craigieburn bypass, the synchrotron, the Eildon dam upgrade, the Melbourne Airport main runway and the Skilled Stadium eastern stadium development. I certainly hope that none of those projects suffer the same fate as Yallourn, but I think the Victorian division of Engineers Australia needs to seriously look at stripping its endorsement and award for this project or taking some responsibility for the disaster that has unfolded.

Of course these disasters are becoming almost commonplace in the Latrobe Valley. On Wednesday, 14 November 2007 TRUenergy announced there had been a major subsidence as the La Trobe River fell into the pit, damaging equipment and halting coal production. Luckily there were no injuries to personnel. More recently we have seen subsidence at the Hazelwood mine which put the Princes Highway out of action for months. By 18 March 2008 Yallourn could announce it had put the La Trobe River back where it belongs in its own riverbed.

Since this collapse we have seen a small drip-feed from the TRUenergy Yallourn operator — three media releases since the collapse and little more. There is certainly not enough information in those press releases for us to understand what happened, why, how the events unfolded and what the fatal flaw was in the design that led to — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — Mrs Petrovich interjects — —

**Mrs Petrovich** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — I am sorry. I did not see Ms Crozier's lips move, but from my left I heard the interjection, 'It rained'.

**Mr Ramsay** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — Well, I am getting old and my peripheral vision is failing. Mr Ramsay would understand.

It is an act of God. We do not need this inquiry; it was an act of God. Certainly by 19 June the government had conducted an inquiry and absolved itself from responsibility. This article in ‘ABC news online’, headed ‘Minister says Yallourn flooding was out of government’s hands’, reports:

The state government denies the flooding of the Yallourn coalmine could have been prevented by more thorough government oversight.

There is some background with which we are now familiar. The Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr O’Brien, is quoted as having said:

Certainly we will be investigating to work out the causes of it and to work out whether the structures that were in place were up to standards, and if not what lessons can be learnt for the future.

He said also:

But certainly when natural events of that magnitude occur, I don’t necessarily know if there’s anything that any particular department can do to prevent that.

The minister may not necessarily know, but I want to know and Victorians need to know, because when you have a power grid based on a small number of big, dumb and centralised coal-fired power stations, you are at risk from any catastrophic loss of any one of those power stations, especially as we now know coal-fired power can be intermittent and weather dependent. There could be another case for a change in the way we provide and distribute power here in Victoria.

The government has already absolved itself from any responsibility due to lack of supervision, and Mr O’Brien’s attention will be given to looking elsewhere, apparently — possibly for some design fault. For that reason alone the government should support my move for an inquiry, because this project went through multiple levels of approval by state and federal governments over the period when the Labor Party was in charge.

Some people say we have too much red tape in this country. Some people want to strip the number of approval processes required to be gone through. Some people — Julia Gillard is one of them — would like to make state governments responsible for approvals under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This development went through all those processes, won an engineering excellence award at the end of them, was launched in

2005 by John Brumby, then the Minister for State and Regional Development, and collapsed less than seven years later, shutting down three-quarters of the power station.

It is not merely a question of what exactly caused the particular collapse at the particular time but also how that design fault was allowed to be built in and how, despite all those ministers for planning and environment and all the material that was considered, not just in an EES (environment effects statement) but in a supplementary EES process, with numerous consultants reports, engineering studies, environmental studies and no doubt river flow analyses — this was supposed to be good for a 1-in-1000-year event, according to TRUenergy — at the end of all that, it went wrong. Members of the government do not sound like they have much of an appetite to know, but the citizenry might.

When it comes to the environmental impacts — this project was supposed to create a net environmental improvement, even though it was moving a river over a pile of recently moved earth — we are now pumping dirty water back into the river, and ultimately it is going into the Ramsar-listed — that is, federally recognised, nationally significant — Gippsland Lakes. There is no publicly available information to hand about the quality of that water — the minister says he is monitoring it — or the impacts of that.

In fact the Environment Defenders Office has written to Tony Burke, the federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, asking whether this would be a controlled action having a significant impact on matters of national significance. Soon enough, when Julia Gillard has her way, those same decisions will be made by state governments, and we will in effect be asking a question of someone who is more or less the proponent of the project. My understanding is that there has been no answer from Mr Burke yet.

There are already a few takeaways. First of all, moving rivers is not such a good idea and not an easy thing to achieve. This is from a government that says it is going to turn the Latrobe Valley into the new Pilbara with a massive expansion of coalmining down there. Latrobe Valley mines are repeat offenders — the Princes Highway incident, the La Trobe River incident and now the Morwell River incident. The Victorian government is not managing it. Minister O’Brien was able to absolve himself within a couple of days from any failure of oversight. I do not know whether he wants to have broader inquiries into whose idea this was in the first place. Pursuing a continuous or even increased

expansion of mining in the Latrobe Valley is a bad idea for reasons that have been argued many times. Here is one more.

I am hopeful the government will support some further inquiries into this. I do not think its limited geotechnical assessment after the fact is necessarily going to answer the broader question. It is a bit like my favourite television show, *Air Crash Investigation*. That is one of the best things that is on TV at the time of night that I normally get home. You get to wind down. What always happens in *Air Crash Investigation* is that a plane crashes. There is always a simple, immediate explanation as to how that happened, but there is also usually a root cause, and by the end of each episode we get to find out what that root cause is.

**Ms Crozier** — Do we really need to hear this?

**Mr BARBER** — Ms Crozier says she does not need to hear this.

**Ms Crozier** — A television program.

**Mr BARBER** — This is a 1500-watt power station.

**Mrs Petrovich** — It is not about your viewing habits.

**Mr BARBER** — I think you will find when you get right down to it that all arguments are based on analogy. In this case it is about the Liberal government's stomach for an open public inquiry into what government members must admit is damaging infrastructure as part our energy supply. The Liberal government has constantly claimed that shutting down Hazelwood would cause the lights to go out. Shutting down Yallourn did not do that, so there is another question for this inquiry.

The Liberal government claimed that a 2.3 cents per kilowatt hour carbon tax would cause the lights to go out. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Energy and Resources embarrassed themselves by claiming that those measures would cause the lights to go out. Yet when they were faced with a very real-life disaster, the first thing they did was run to the media saying, 'Don't worry; there is no danger to power supply'.

When it is a matter of rhetorical political debate, coalition members will claim it is the end of the world, but when stuff gets real they suddenly have to take things a bit more seriously. It is not a student politics debating society anymore; it is about essential infrastructure, and that is why I am taking this matter very seriously. That is why I am initiating a call for an

inquiry into what happened, and that inquiry should go back all the way to 1999 and the initiation of this particular infrastructure project so we can find out what went wrong.

**Mr ELSBURY** (Western Metropolitan) — It has been a little bit perplexing to listen to Mr Barber's contribution, considering that this type of power station is one that ultimately Mr Barber wants to close down. He would have us completely abandon the Latrobe Valley as our major power source and instead rely upon wind and solar. Certainly I have not come across any technologies of that sort that can supply the baseload power that coal is able to supply in such a cheap manner so as to provide the people of Victoria with a reliable power source.

During his contribution Mr Barber eloquently pointed out that this project, the Morwell river diversion, was a legacy of the previous government. I could always join in that juggernaut and throw it in with all the other legacies that coalition members have to deal with. I am not going to be so cruel this morning, but I could certainly go down that track if prompted to do so.

In this case we had a massive amount of rainfall, rainfall that some predicted we would never have again. Mr Flannery may be one of them; he certainly seems to be an icon that Mr Barber would worship. Mr Flannery said we would not have the rainfalls we are currently seeing; in fact he said it would never rain again, so is it any wonder that when a massive amount of rain does fall there are land shifts? When weight increases in the soil structure around an excavation and loads are placed on those soil structures, eventually those structures can no longer cope with the weight.

An investigation looking into this matter is currently being conducted by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) under the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 to determine both the root cause of the failure and whether there has been any breach of the statutory requirements on the part of the mine operator. We are not just going to fly into this thing and start chucking blame around; we are going to undertake a proper investigation into what has occurred.

This is standard practice for an incident of this nature, and hopefully we will learn from what has happened and will be able to avoid further incidents of this nature in the future as well as providing long-term solutions for future projects that utilise the Latrobe Valley or in fact any other mining operation in this state. We may even find that other states can learn from what has happened at the Yallourn site. They can learn about

what has happened to our project, see what may have gone wrong or what could have gone better and then themselves try to ensure that they do not suffer the same consequences as we have faced.

The investigation team is comprised of a Department of Primary Industries lead investigator and an external expert, and the investigation has been set up within the department. The external expert is a gentleman by the name of Keith Seddon, who is a geotechnical expert with experience in civil construction structures. He can establish the facts because he knows what he is looking at, he knows what he is looking for in the failure of the structures that were in place, and he would also know what is reasonable to ask of a structure and what was actually done and whether it was done in a manner that could have caused a different outcome. He has been to the site and been able to look firsthand at the issues behind what happened at the Yallourn operation and actually get to see how the earth moved and what the contributing factors were.

This technical investigation will be made public. We are not going to be hiding anything. It is not going to be hidden in a cupboard or put under a cloak and made to magically disappear into the ether; we are going to make this report public. While there is no deadline at this time for the report to be provided, it is important to know that the work being done in this investigation will be thorough, that it will flesh out all of the issues that contributed to the incident, that all of the facts will be gathered, and all of those facts and the information that has been brought together will then be analysed in a methodical manner by engineers and experts.

Sometimes the urge besets us here in Parliament to perhaps go off on a little bit of a political tangent. Let it never be said, but I get the feeling that when an inquiry is undertaken sometimes there is a desire by some to put a political spin upon what is being investigated. Certainly by getting a panel of experts, by getting a group of people who have got the knowledge base necessary to analyse exactly what is going on, we are going to get the best outcome, we are going to get the best possible report of the information brought back to us so that we know exactly what happened and how to avoid it in the future.

As I said, in terms of experts, we have got the people from DPI coming in. We have also got people from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), and as this is a major mining operation, WorkSafe Victoria needs to be involved to ensure that such incidents do not put workers in jeopardy in the future. Those organisations have the appropriate expertise and have knowledge about how to make investigations such as these work.

They do this sort of stuff on a daily basis. They look into the facts, they look into exactly what the circumstances were that caused an issue to arise and they can make recommendations about how to remedy those issues.

The fact of the matter is that brown coal generates 93 per cent of the state of Victoria's electricity. As I said earlier on, it is simple: the Greens would shut that down. Ninety-three per cent of our energy production would go if the Greens had their way. That is completely unsustainable, and I can tell you now that I will never support such an act of complete suicide when it comes to our industrial capacity or our way of life in this state.

After the initial incident the EPA was satisfied that the circumstances of the breach warranted what is known as an emergency environmental discharge under section 30A of the Environment Protection Act 1970. It decided this approval needed to be given. It has a set of stringent conditions to ensure that discharge is monitored and managed in such a manner as to ensure that it will not do long-term damage to the environment. In this case the EPA requires TRUenergy to use an independently accredited laboratory to sample and test water that has been discharged into the La Trobe River three times a week and report these results back to the EPA. It has to pay for an independent laboratory to go and take samples of water three times a week to ensure that there is limited or no contamination and that there will be no long-term effects of water being put into — —

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — They will be checking the turbidity. I almost have the eyesight of Mr Barber, who could not see the identity of a member from across the chamber. But in any case, the water is tested for its temperature, pH levels, suspended and total dissolved solids, turbidity, colour, salt levels, nutrients and minerals.

The results have so far indicated that the water is more cloudy due to silt being in it; these are the same results that would be received if there were a flood. The dirt gets churned up, and it gets a little bit cloudy. A little bit of mud goes down the river. It is pretty much stock standard stuff. Basically the water discharged from the mine has increased the amount of mud and muck going into the river. The impacts are being monitored. It is expected that there will be a minor impact on the river and no impact at all on the Gippsland Lakes. By the time it gets to the bottom of the river and then to the Gippsland Lakes, the river returns to its normal, natural

state. There has been no problem with the mineral content or heavy metals in the water. I will not say the word 'metallic'; it is something else. It is more like the minerals you would find in a mine. The testing of the water at this time has shown it to be a little muddy, but that is all.

The Morwell River bypass pipes are being brought online. They will enable a proper river flow to be established. Instead of the water going into the mine and then being pumped out of it, a diversion will be made whereby pipes will carry water directly from the Morwell River to the La Trobe River rather than it going into the mine and getting pumped out. That will reduce the possibility of water contamination. I am sure that once we have that in place we can start looking at the broader issues of what needs to be done to ensure that it does not happen again.

Mr Barber talked about the energy security of the Yallourn site. A total of 75 per cent of its capacity has been returned. TRUenergy has established a reliable coal supply for its power station, and it can keep three of its four generators going. It should warm the cockles of Mr Barber's heart to hear that coal is being burnt and is producing electricity for the people of Victoria. Three out of their four generators are currently working.

At the moment low flows in the Morwell River are being managed by directly pumping the water. As I said, later we will have pipes in place to create a proper diversion. DPI expects to receive the design approval in the near future, and, aided by independent technical experts, it has commenced an investigation into the cause of the breach of the Morwell River diversion. It is looking at why this has happened and how it can prevent it from ever happening again.

Even with only three of the four generators working at the Yallourn power station, we have been told there is sufficient capacity to meet a maximum demand that happens in 1 of 10 summers. Should we have another instance of there being a number of days in a summer that are above 40 degrees and everyone switches on their air conditioners at home, the power network will have the ability to accommodate the load that suddenly comes onto the network. We have our power security in place. We have the ability to deal with any of the predicted challenges in relation to energy demands in Victoria.

Mr Barber supplied a brief history of the Morwell River diversion. It was officially opened in 2005, and the designers of the river diversion won awards for it at the time. The plans were peer reviewed by engineering experts at the request of DPI prior to them being

approved. A lot of work was put into the diversion, but unfortunately something along the way went drastically wrong. We want to make sure that that never happens again. SMEC designed the diversion and, as Mr Barber pointed out, won the Victorian engineering excellence award for urban and regional infrastructure.

At the time of the diversion and the embankment failure the Morwell River flows were at high levels and the flooding was further exacerbated by a backup of water coming from the La Trobe River. A substantial amount of water was involved. The Morwell River began to enter the mine on 6 June. Both TRUenergy and the Department of Primary Industries are studying the causes of the Morwell River diversion failure, and the lessons learnt from the incident will be important in determining how to best manage Latrobe Valley mine stability in the future.

It is important to note that the diversion failure was fundamentally different to the other mine instability issues that Mr Barber highlighted in his contribution. In this case the failure occurred in a constructed embankment rather than being associated with batter movement, or the movement of soils over one another. Rather, this is a constructed piece of infrastructure and is something that was put together by people. In the cases of the other issues we are dealing with relating to the movement of soil in the region, that is more to do with the fact that there is a movement of soil that has been there forever. Work has been done to dig out the coal that we need for our energy security, and certainly there have been some issues that have needed to be dealt with, but they are totally different to the matter we are discussing today.

Over the past three years DPI and the Technical Review Board established to advise on mine stability have undertaken fundamental reviews of the three large Latrobe Valley coalmines. From this DPI has progressed to more detailed examination of particular issues within the mines and engagement with mine management to determine actions to address areas of concern. We are not just rolling back on our heels saying, 'Oh, well, that happened'; we are actually getting on with the job of being a government and saying, 'Right, we need to get this sorted out because it is not good enough. What has happened in the past is not good enough; we want a solution to what is causing disruptions not only to river flows but to traffic flows on the Princes Highway'.

Although the Morwell River diversion was identified by the Technical Review Board and DPI experts as an area of concern as to how the structure could handle critical loading, the Technical Review Board

recommended further peer reviews of technical reports — to have a look at what was going on instead of just jumping to conclusions. The failure that occurred on 5 June was not envisaged in any expert advice. The DPI has been working with TRUenergy and other agencies to facilitate essential actions and approvals to ensure that remedial works are designed and implemented appropriately. The department will continue to undertake further technical studies where necessary to improve on current knowledge and support this work.

I think it goes without saying that we will not be supporting this motion, as we feel the investigation currently being undertaken by a professional group of people who know what they are doing and who have the ability to look at and fully appreciate and understand the data will be able to give us a better outcome — one which is not slighted by any sort of political agenda and which will provide us with information that can be used into the future to ensure that such an incident does not occur again.

**Mr VINEY** (Eastern Victoria) — I must say that if the government put Mr Elsbury up to reassure us all that everything was under control, it failed. With all due respect to Mr Elsbury, his technical skill in relation to a complex matter saw him resort to saying that the river might be a ‘bit more murky’ than normal and that this was a project put together by ‘people’. Thank goodness it was put together by people and not monkeys.

This motion is about trying to give the people of Victoria, through its representatives in this place, the opportunity to have a review and investigation into a critical incident that may well have caused significant economic damage to Victoria. We will be supporting this motion, and the basis upon which we will be supporting it might be a bit different to the reasons given by Mr Barber and certainly quite a contrast to the position put forward by the government. Mr Elsbury has essentially said that we should all be reassured by the fact that the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is investigating this matter. Of course the Department of Primary Industries had a role in overseeing the project, so what Mr Elsbury and the government are proposing is that, for whatever reason this incident occurred, the appropriate people to investigate it are the people who oversaw it. By almost any standard of inquiry I think that would be a fairly unacceptable process.

We see no problem in investigating what occurred. I think Mr Barber would like to go down the blame game path in this, but we on the Labor side have nothing to fear from an investigation. Indeed we have consistently

in this place argued for the increased use of parliamentary committees. Whether they be joint parliamentary committees or Legislative Council committees, we have consistently, both in government and now in opposition, supported the principle that parliamentary committees are a good and useful process to get progress on matters of complex issues, and matters of public interest in particular.

The coalmining structures in the Latrobe Valley are absolutely vital to Victoria’s economic position. Perhaps unlike members of the Greens and the government and the Liberal Party, we have a balanced view about how the issue of coalmining in this state should be managed and developed. It was a Labor government that invested in low carbon technologies for the coal industry. It was a Labor government that supported comprehensive policies in relation to sustainable energy. It was a Labor government that supported programs like hot rock technologies and a raft of other things.

The Liberal Party in coming to government has just about killed the sustainable industries, particularly wind. Labor does not support the position of the Greens that everything coal is bad. We do not. We believe that in Victoria a low carbon economy, ironically coal — if we can get the technologies right to reduce carbon emissions — may well be part of the solution. And it will require a significant investment by whoever is in government to get the low carbon technologies functional in a way that they can assist this state. Coal underpins our economic structure in this state, and we need to recognise that we will be for many years in the future reliant upon that energy source to maintain our economic position. That is not to say that we should not be comprehensively and completely investigating strategies and technologies to reduce emissions.

In relation to this issue clearly there has been a significant failure of engineering. I do not believe it is appropriate for this Parliament to rely simply upon the Department of Primary Industries — a department which is under attack from this government, which has been downsized by this government and which industry is now saying it cannot rely on to provide the information and support it needs because of the cuts occurring in it — to in effect investigate itself.

None of us knows where the cause of this engineering failure lies. None of us knows whether it was in the technical work or the construction or whether it lies in the system of establishing the methodologies in the first place. If it lies somewhere there or in the supervision of the project, then DPI may well have been part of the cause of the problem. Unless there is an independent

investigation, given the significance of this industry and this incident to Victoria and to the Victorian economy, I think it is appropriate that the Parliament have an opportunity to review what has occurred.

All the technical experts DPI is using to undertake this investigation would presumably be made available to the parliamentary committee for advice and the parliamentary committee could hear those testimonies. If the government chose not to make those experts available, the parliamentary committee of course has the power to subpoena people. We believe this would be an appropriate process, an appropriate way to reassure the people of Victoria that this matter is being properly investigated so as to protect Victoria's interests into the future by preventing future engineering failures of the sort that resulted in this problem.

It is reasonable to say that the rain incident may have been a contributing factor, but I would have thought that the engineering design should have been such that the mine was capable of withstanding that incident. I heard Mr Elsbury referring to our having four days above 40 degrees, but I am not sure whether that has occurred under this government or not. I am not sure those opposite have actually had that pressure, but I can tell you that in our 11 years of government we had such incidents, because we had 10 years of drought and increased temperatures. We had those problems, and we put in place strategies to cope with them.

I find it extraordinary that the government and the Liberal Party have their heads in the sand around these climate issues. It is quite extraordinary. It is all very well for them to say, 'We didn't need the desalination plant and we didn't need to invest in the northern irrigation project because it has rained since we were elected'. I remind them, however, of something they should bear in mind. I have been reading media reports about the fact that El Niño is returning. Those opposite better hope that between now and the next election they do not need the desalination plant we built, because they might have to eat their words if El Niño hits and we go back into the same weather pattern the Labor government had for 10 of its 11 years in office.

Those opposite might want to keep their heads in the sand, excuse this incident as the result of a high rainfall occurrence and say we do not need the desal plant, we do not need the northern irrigation project and everything is fine, but you cannot plan for the security of this state on that basis. You have to plan for the security of this state by ensuring that we have a comprehensive and reliable source of energy, firstly through Victoria's coal infrastructure and coal

advantage and doing things about reducing emissions in that space and secondly through making sure we have other comprehensive energy options in Victoria — sustainable energy options, including wind, hot rock technology and solar.

We need to make sure those things are in place, and killing those programs — destroying the wind energy system through planning regulation — is not going to do Victoria any good into the future. It is unreliable for this state government to say that the state can depend entirely on coal into the future when the whole world is moving to a low-carbon economy. We have to get with the action. We have to get with the program in relation to this. The whole world is moving in that direction, and the Latrobe Valley is happy to move in that direction. The Latrobe Valley community sees coal as part of the future and as part of the low-carbon economy solution, provided governments invest in the technologies to make sure we can reduce those emissions.

The decision by the government to use its 21 votes in this chamber to not have an investigation into a critical incident which could well have affected the energy security of Victoria — to not open that to parliamentary scrutiny — says a lot about where this government sits. It says a lot about the fact that when those opposite were in opposition they cried all the time about scrutiny — all the time. We had select committee after select committee and the public administration and finance committee all banging on about scrutiny. The opposition — the Labor Party — is prepared to have a further investigation and more scrutiny. This infrastructure was constructed under the Labor government. We have nothing to hide about it. We would like to know what occurred. We would like to know the cause of this problem, and we do not believe it is appropriate for a department to investigate what comes under its own responsibility. You cannot have an independent inquiry reporting for the department that was overseeing the project. It just defies all the logic of scrutiny of government administration.

I suggest the government have a good rethink about this and decide that for once it will support an inquiry by a parliamentary committee that it chairs and has a majority on. The Liberal Party has a majority of members on this committee, and it holds the chair. There is surely nothing to fear from an inquiry into an incident so critical to Victoria's interests. I call on the government to rethink its position.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) —  
Mr Elsbury, on behalf of the government, reassured us that all the proper authorities are running the proper

investigations. He listed the Department of Primary Industries, WorkCover and the Environment Protection Authority and described them as the experts. However, the reason we are here having this debate is that these and other experts signed off on the original design in this location against alternative options and they continued to sign off in the sense that they were the regulators of the project in the subsequent seven years. It ended in disaster, and we still do not know why.

I am perfectly satisfied for those agencies to go ahead and do their investigations, but I want them to know that a parliamentary committee will be not only oversighting their forward-looking investigations but also going back through the chain of evidence to the original approvals, to all the submissions these agencies would have made publicly and internally, to the original approval, to the advice they gave to ministers to approve this development and so forth. Then we may be satisfied as to what exactly went wrong, not just in an engineering and geotechnical sense but in a regulatory sense — that is, in the sense of the responsibilities of government to oversight these sorts of problems and avoid them in the future.

I suppose I could undertake a massive exercise of calling for documents, conducting FOIs and calling some of these agencies before various parliamentary committees, but it would be a lot better if the government, through a committee it controls, were to set up an inquiry that reviewed and interviewed these experts as they go about doing their job. It would be a simple, easy and contained way for the government to provide the reassurances that Mr Elsbury wanted to simply give us here today through his own words. He told us that there is no risk to power supplies in the event of a 1 in 10 summer climate event. He is playing the odds on that one. We have a power supply in Victoria that is 99.998 per cent reliable, and it is only on 0.002 per cent of occasions that power is unavailable. That is a pretty high burden. Some of this is weather dependent.

**Mr Elsbury** — I reckon about 90 per cent of your facts are only made up, but anyway.

**Mr BARBER** — I am sorry, Mr Elsbury; do you think I just made up that number?

**Mr Elsbury** — Where did you get that from? Can you cite?

**Mr BARBER** — Do your homework, friend! Since you represent the government and you purport to reassure the people of Victoria in regard to energy

security, get to know the basic elements of the regulatory environment.

**Mr Elsbury** — I will do my homework.

**Mr BARBER** — We could have a wind-up doll in here repeating words written for it by someone else, but even if everything that Mr Elsbury said turned out to be true — and even he does not know that yet because only time will tell on some of those elements — there is the question of what option will be selected to fix the current infrastructure. Are they going to simply pile all the dirt back up where it came from — this previously moved fill they decided to divert the river over the top of — that is, do a patch-up job and leave things as they are? We know that by doing it that way the proponent saves itself, I think, almost 30 per cent of its original costs. Or is the government going to say, 'No — failed the first time; don't trust it a second time. You are going to need to offer some really extensive engineering options'.

What does the company's insurer say about all of this? I would like to hear from it because if there are significant costs involved in a safer option, I suspect this company is going to have its hand out for compensation. I suspect this incident has already increased the premiums on coal-fired power stations and mines in the Latrobe Valley, and I suspect some of them will be looking at self-insurance. That will of course impact on their financial stability and their appetite for risk. There are reverberations all the way through there that I do not think Mr Elsbury was willing or able to canvass.

It is already costing us a lot. This power station being out of business has boosted the wholesale power price. If Mr Elsbury is wrong and there is not enough power come summer, we will see huge spikes in the power price that will dwarf anything the carbon price could have ever delivered, even in his wildest exaggerations — I mean 2.3 cents per kilowatt hour! Wait till Mr Elsbury sees the price spiking at \$10 per kilowatt hour on those hot days in January and February, and he will understand the financial impact this can have.

Depending on which patch-up or wholly new option DPI ultimately decides to approve, there will be a significant cost to this company as well, and I am concerned that taxpayers dollars will go into this without the accountability that a parliamentary inquiry would quite simply and routinely have delivered. It is disappointing that the government will not support that.

**House divided on motion:***Ayes, 19*

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

*Noes, 21*

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

**Motion negated.****HEALTH: DIESEL EMISSIONS**

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the minister's answers to a question without notice and supplementary question on 19 June 2012 regarding diesel emissions health studies.

When we last met in this chamber, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a subgroup of the World Health Organisation (WHO), had just classified diesel engine exhaust as a carcinogen. It is now known without a doubt that diesel pollution causes cancer, most commonly lung cancer.

Residents of the inner western suburbs live in a cloud of diesel exhaust, as more than 21 000 trucks travel through our streets every single day. Our residential streets look like a truck superhighway, and truck numbers are increasing rapidly — for example, night-time truck traffic on Moore Street in Footscray has increased almost five-fold over 10 years. The *Maribyrnong Weekly* reports:

Australia's largest port is due to double freight traffic from 2.5 million containers a year to more than 5 million by 2025 — about 4 million via Swanson Dock.

The majority of containers from Swanson Dock are carried through our inner west residential streets on trucks. Is it the government's plan that these additional trucks will also travel on our streets? Each truck spews

out diesel exhaust, which is then inhaled by families who are in their homes, walking the streets or at the local park. Schools, kindergartens and child-care centres are in a diesel cloud as a result of being located within metres of truck routes. The residents of the inner west are exposed to more pollution than the average Melbournian; their exposure is thousands of times greater.

Yarraville West Primary School and Yarraville Special Development School are within 150 metres of Williamstown Road and its traffic of 1500 trucks per day, and they are within 200 metres of Francis Street, which has traffic of more than 5500 trucks every day. The kids at those two schools are exposed to the exhaust of a total of 7000 trucks per day within 200 metres of their school. Kingsville Primary School on Somerville Road has at least 1000 trucks per day driving past its school fence. Norfolk Street Child Care Centre is within 100 metres of the exhaust of the 5600 trucks that travel along Francis Street every day. Merriwa Kindergarten has traffic of around 1000 trucks per day that are 100 metres from its playground on Somerville Road. Clare Court Children's Service has more than 2500 trucks driving past it every day, 150 metres from its play rooms. Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School on Geelong Road has 4000 trucks driving past its front door every day, filling the air with diesel exhaust. Students at St Augustine's Primary School are exposed to the exhaust of 2000 trucks that pass their school's fence every day. Yarraville Gardens is bordered by two truck routes. If you were to spend the day in the gardens, you would be exposed to the diesel fumes of around 4000 trucks. It is not exactly a pleasant place for a picnic.

Diesel exhaust now belongs in the same potentially deadly category as asbestos and passive cigarette smoke. Would we put up with 4000 cigarette smokers standing on the fence-line of the Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School? That is the number of trucks blowing diesel exhaust outside the school. The government would not sit back and allow 2000 smokers to puff smoke over St Monica's Parish Primary School. That is the number of trucks that pass by each day. Now we know that diesel exhaust is in the same category as asbestos and passive cigarette smoke, it is time to do something about it.

I raised this issue at the last sitting when WHO had just released its report. The minister said he had seen the report and was going to respond to it in due course. Part 5 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, for which the minister is responsible, allows the minister to either initiate a public inquiry or undertake a health impact assessment.

It is clear that the inner west community has been exposed to high levels of diesel exhaust from trucks, and we now know that diesel exhaust is a carcinogen and causes cancer. The Minister for Health has had time to look at the World Health Organisation report, so there is no excuse for him not being ready to respond today. It is unfortunate that the minister is not in the chamber; I hoped that he would be here so that he would be able to respond. On behalf of the inner west community, I ask that the minister act now to either initiate a public inquiry or undertake a health impact assessment looking at truck diesel exhaust and its impacts on the inner west community and identify solutions to reduce its impact.

With the construction of the regional rail link now under way, I believe this is an opportune time to also investigate the impact of diesel exhaust from the regional rail link project on communities along the line. Without electrification of the regional rail link, communities along the corridor will face increases in diesel pollution from trains. We now know that diesel exhaust from trucks and trains is a carcinogen: it causes cancer. It is time to act to identify the health impacts and how best to mitigate them. To sit back and do nothing would be to jeopardise the health of thousands of people in the west. Will the health minister now act to protect the western suburbs community from cancer-causing diesel fumes?

I repeat that I am very disappointed that the minister is not in the chamber today. He obviously does not have much regard for people in the western suburbs or else he would have been here to respond to this issue.

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to rise to speak to Ms Hartland's motion. I know she has previously made a number of comments on this matter, as we have just heard in her contribution. Can I reassure the chamber and those who have an interest in this issue that the Minister for Health takes this issue seriously and has said so in the past.

As Ms Hartland said, she asked the minister a question on 19 June, during the last sitting week. Thirteen days prior to Ms Hartland asking that question a report was released by the World Health Organisation — so it is a very recent report — on a change to the cancer classification for emissions from diesel engine exhausts. As Ms Hartland outlined in her contribution, diesel emissions were previously classified as a probable human carcinogen, or group 2A carcinogen. The authors of the report held a six-day conference as part of their inquiry during which they investigated a number of issues regarding the classification of

emissions and the probable or potential aspects relating to cancer.

As somebody who has worked in the health industry and seen the effects of cancer, I am only too aware of the suffering that many cancer victims experience during their treatment. Getting back to the classification, the recent study classified emissions from diesel engine exhausts as carcinogenic to humans, or group 1 carcinogen, following newer studies of US worker exposure to diesel emissions and lung cancer risk.

However, the change in the cancer classification for diesel exhaust emissions does not alter how those emissions are dealt with from a health protection perspective. That is a very important point to make. That is because a group 2A carcinogen is assessed conservatively — that is, at the same level of potential health risk as a group 1 carcinogen. So there is still a degree of risk of a potential toxin being carcinogenic.

As part of living in a modern world we are exposed to pollutants and toxins as we go about our daily lives. In her contribution Ms Hartland highlighted some possible effects of this exposure in her region, but we are all exposed to various pollutants and toxins as we go about our daily lives. Population exposure risks associated with diesel engine exhaust emissions are managed through a range of strategies, including improved diesel engine technology, vehicle emissions standards and fuel standards. Technology has come a long way in that respect over recent years and it is continually improving, which is a very good thing. Vehicle maintenance programs also contribute to improving those emissions, as do air quality standards and monitoring programs for those vehicles. As we know, newer, modern cars are far more fuel efficient than older vehicles.

National air quality standards are established for air emissions, including the fine particles and nitrogen dioxide that come from diesel exhaust emissions. National air quality standards are set to protect population health, and those standards are monitored very closely. In this city we are fortunate to have a better air quality than many cities elsewhere in the world. I know that there are many cities in South America and parts of Asia that have very poor air quality. We have a high standard of monitoring here in this country. Victoria's air quality is continuously under review, and that monitoring will take into account the latest evidence in the recent studies about which Ms Hartland spoke.

As I have mentioned, the air quality here in Victoria is far better than in some other cities around the world. Victoria's air quality is continuously monitored by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria through its monitoring stations in Melbourne, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley. Overall I would have to say again that Victoria's air quality is good. As Ms Hartland highlighted, monitoring of diesel engine emissions in major transport corridors is undertaken by EPA Victoria, and it shows that these standards are being met.

With those few words, I would like to take note of Ms Hartland's motion and say that the government will not be opposing the motion.

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Western Metropolitan) — I also want to say a few words in taking note of Ms Hartland's motion. Let me say at the outset that I share her concerns about the proliferation of truck traffic, particularly in the inner west on Francis Street, Somerville Road, Hyde Street, where my electorate office is located, and other roads in the inner west. As Ms Hartland is well aware, the former Brumby government committed to the truck action plan, which would have taken a significant amount of truck traffic out of the inner west. It is a shame that it is not proceeding. The former Brumby government's plan for WestLink would have provided a tunnel that would have allowed most port traffic to avoid those roads in the inner west, so taking a lot of traffic out of residential streets in the inner west.

For those who do not understand the geography of the area, an enormous number of truck drivers have in effect made the decision to go to and from the port without going through the West Gate corridor. That is a concern. It is also one of the reasons a second river crossing from the west is so desperately needed. It is not just about commuter traffic; it is about truck traffic as well. Both the truck action plan and WestLink would have significantly alleviated problems in the inner west, and anyone who travels along Francis Street, as I do on many days of the week, would know that the number of trucks in that area is significant. I do not know if it is growing, but it is significant.

It is probably not enough to say, as many have before, that the area has always been an industrial zone. There is some truth to that — the inner west has always been an industrial zone — but there is also an increasing number of residents in that part of the inner west as well as increasing container trade through the port of Melbourne. For a whole range of reasons, road infrastructure in the inner west that connects to parts of the west further afield is desperately needed.

It also leads one to severely question the no-new-roads mantra of the Greens. It is not simply about putting more freight on rail; it is often about creating new road infrastructure to allow business and industry to move efficiently to the port, to Geelong, to the West Gate corridor, to the Hume corridor, to the Western Ring Road and the like. If you have the role that I once had — and I speak more of my former role as Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Ports than my former role as Minister for Public Transport — and spend as much time engaged with industry as I was on this very matter, when the portal study was being done and there were plans for intermodal hubs at places like Somerton and others, you would know it is not a simple thing to convince industry to put all of its freight on a rail carriage coming out of the port of Melbourne. In fact the infrastructure at the port of Melbourne would need to be significantly upgraded to allow that to occur.

As someone whose office is in Hyde Street and someone who knows that the implementation of the truck action plan would mean a lot more trucks going past my electorate office, I happily put my hand up and said, 'Better there than on Francis Street and better there than on Somerville Road', because Hyde Street and Whitehall Road are primarily used by industry rather than residential and commuter traffic.

The other point I make is that it does not help anybody to hear that they are going to get cancer from trains. In fact it is terribly regrettable to somehow create the impression in the minds of residents, whether they be in the inner west or elsewhere, that they are going to get cancer from the trains. Diesel trains operate throughout Victoria. They operate on all of our country railway tracks and take commuters to Geelong, to Maryborough and to Stawell. I was very proud of the return of the regional diesel trains, the great V/Locity trains, to the town of Maryborough. It was one of the more enjoyable things I was able to do in my 10 months as Minister for Public Transport.

Those communities love their trains. I have never seen happier people than those in Maryborough when the train was returned there or those in Stawell when the community heard that the train from Adelaide was finally going to stop at Stawell again after years and years of it not stopping there. When you talk to people in places like Shepparton and Mildura, you find that they would like nothing more than either more trains or any commuter train at all.

The regional rail link project, which was commenced by the Labor government and is supported by the current opposition and the government, will do enormous good in terms of separating regional rail from

metropolitan rail and providing a better and faster run for commuters from Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo as well as a better metropolitan service for those people coming from Werribee and other parts of the north and west.

I find the rhetoric of raising the spectre that that massive investment in public transport will potentially cause cancer in people completely unnecessary. It reminds me of the rhetoric we heard around the time of the channel deepening project when members of the Blue Wedges group, in many cases supported by the Greens party, were running about telling people that the channel deepening would give them cancer because toxins would be dredged up, the fish would eat them, we would eat the fish and we would all die of cancer. I find that kind of scaremongering unbelievable, particularly from members of a political party that places so much emphasis on its public transport credentials.

I do not consider it good enough to on the one hand tell members of the Victorian community that they are members of the party for public transport and on the other hand turn around and say, 'But just in case you were wondering, the new train might give you cancer'. I do not believe that to be the case.

I must ask: what will the members of our communities in places such as Seymour, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat, all along the Bairnsdale line and right up to Shepparton, who for decades have had diesel trains going through their areas, think when all of a sudden they hear that, unbeknownst to them, they have had a giant cancer-causing monstrosity pulsing its way through their communities?

**Mr Drum** interjected.

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** — No, Mr Drum, I will not vote against taking note of the report, which is all that we are being asked to vote for. In fact the government has already indicated that its members will not vote against it, either. I simply make the point that it is one thing to say that thousands and thousands of trucks going down Francis Street every day is probably not good for the health of the local community. I agree with that and I think that most people would. It is another thing to say that diesel trains that have operated through areas of Victoria for decades would do likewise through the communities in those areas. I consider that to be wrong. It sends the wrong message about our commitment to public transport and it is incredibly disrespectful to those regional communities whose members have had nothing but diesel trains for years

and are unlikely to have anything other than diesel trains for years to come.

**Mr ELSBURY** (Western Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise this morning to speak on this motion. The World Health Organisation (WHO) paper has certainly raised some very interesting topics that need to be looked into. It is interesting that it is Ms Hartland who has raised this particular issue. We do have issues with trucks in the western suburbs of Melbourne, including the issue of Francis Street, which needs to be resolved, and what I believe are about 20 000 truck movements through the city of Maribyrnong every day. But it is a little bit perplexing that Ms Hartland is also against the east–west link tunnel, which would provide a second crossing of the Yarra River and which Mr Pakula raised in his speech. It would allow for trucks to be moved away from the streets that are being plagued by truck movements, and it would allow for trucks to be moved in an efficient manner, therefore causing less pollution with less diesel being burnt.

I am trying to fathom why Ms Hartland is concerned about the WHO report and yet is not supporting a practical measure that would act to remove trucks from our streets. Members of the Labor Party have a bit of a complex issue about telling us their position on the east–west tunnel. If we want to reduce the impact of trucks, be they powered by diesel or any other form of power available, including liquefied natural gas or even biodiesel fuel, we really do need a new tunnel providing access across the river. It would remove trucks from the streets and would provide truck drivers with an efficient way of getting to the port of Melbourne and other ports. It would free up our roads for local traffic and would allow concerns about diesel fuel to be mitigated in some way. With that, I have no problem with taking note of this document.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — There have been some very interesting comments. I repeat that I do not believe the Minister for Health is concerned about this issue, because if he was, he would have been in the chamber to explain what he intends to do about the World Health Organisation report. It is eight weeks since the report came out and it is approximately seven weeks since I asked him a question about it. I would have thought it appropriate for the minister to be here and explain exactly what he intends to do, including whether he intends to make a referral to investigate the matter. I consider that I have outlined a very good case for why there needs to be an investigation into diesel and why the area where I live is particularly impacted by trucks.

I take up Mr Pakula's point on the issue of regional rail. The Greens support regional rail in principle, but it must be noted that the regional rail project has a number of problems. Mr Pakula obviously did not listen to what I said about our concerns. We are concerned about the people who live along Railway Place in Footscray, Railway Place in North Melbourne and Buckley Street — that is, the people who will be living within metres of the regional rail line. We want to know what the effects of diesel will be on those people. One of the really easy things the government could do would be to make the referral and possibly prove me wrong. I would be quite happy with that, but I consider that the referral should be made.

On the issue of the east-west link, which Mr Elsbury brought up, I am not sure that the business case for that has been proved. If he would like to prove that business case, I would be very interested to hear it. I would also like to know how many trucks members believe would go through the proposed tunnel, especially if it is tolled. One of the problems that the inner west has now is that truck drivers will not use the tollways, and that is mainly why they are using Francis Street, Somerville Road and Moore Street. We will not get rid of those trucks quickly unless the government acts. I agree with Mr Pakula that it seems the government is not concerned enough about the truck issues in the inner west in general. It has decided not to go ahead with the truck action plan, which is most regrettable.

I will obviously be asking the Minister for Health again when he intends to make this referral, because unfortunately today we have not received an answer. I can only presume that that means the minister does not consider the reports from the World Health Organisation have enough validity for him to say, 'Diesel is now classified as a carcinogen and it should be investigated, especially in a community whose members are exposed to high levels of diesel every single day'. Considering the number of schools, kindergartens and child-care centres I have listed and the number of trucks that go past them, I would have thought that the Minister for Health would be concerned about the health of those children and that he would have acted very quickly on the report. It is a great disappointment that this government clearly does not have any concern for the health of people in the inner west.

**Motion agreed to.**

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### Reference

**Mr SOMYUREK** (South Eastern Metropolitan) —  
I move:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee is required to inquire into, consider and report no later than 30 April 2013 on the economic development implications of Victorian government procurement policies; in particular, the committee should —

- (1) investigate the procurement policies of the Victorian government, its departments and agencies;
- (2) assess the impact of those policies on the Victorian economy, in particular the impact on —
  - (a) employment within Victoria;
  - (b) locally based industries; and
  - (c) the financial position of the state; and
- (3) compare Victorian government policies with those in other jurisdictions.

Government procurement of goods and services is of critical importance to any modern economy, and the Victorian state economy is no exception. In Victoria the state government spends more than \$10 billion annually on the purchase of goods and services. This substantial purchasing power gives the state government the opportunity to influence markets. Through procurement, governments can promote a broad range of economic benefits to the community such as a greater level of access to major procurement projects by local small and medium enterprises, skills and training opportunities, and innovation and technology transfers.

The motion before the house seeks to investigate whether the Victorian economy is receiving the maximum impact from the Victorian government's procurement policies. More specifically, the motion requests that the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee (EDIC) investigate whether the Victorian government's substantial spending on the purchase of goods and services is being maximised with respect to, firstly, employment within Victoria; secondly, locally based industries; and thirdly, the financial position of the state. I will speak to those points in a little while.

The next part of the motion deals with a comparative analysis of other jurisdictions, but in doing this comparative analysis I would hope that the committee

could give consideration to doing a broader comparative analysis that includes advanced economies comparable to Australia. It will be interesting to see what the committee comes up with in an external comparative analysis.

Although there have been a number of inquiries into the manufacturing sector over the last few years, and government procurement has featured in these inquiries, I believe a thorough and targeted report into Victorian government procurement is essential given the importance of this activity to every economy but in particular to the Victorian economy. For the record, I have the utmost faith in EDIC doing a high-quality job in formulating this report. I make this statement because I was most impressed with the committee's comprehensive report into the manufacturing sector headed *Inquiry into Manufacturing in Victoria*, which was handed down in August 2010. As I have said on previous occasions in this house, that report was about 350 pages long. It was quite comprehensive and it made 68 recommendations. It was a very impressive report.

Mind you, I was subsequently disappointed that the incoming Baillieu government decided to ignore this report and instead launch another inquiry into the Victorian manufacturing sector through a cost-cutting body, which predictably recommended the gutting of the Victorian manufacturing industry — —

**Mr P. Davis** interjected.

**Mr SOMYUREK** — The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission.

**Mr P. Davis** — Who established VCEC?

**Mr SOMYUREK** — Who critiqued VCEC? VCEC was not established to formulate the Baillieu government's manufacturing policy, Mr Davis. It took VCEC 13 months to complete its inquiry process, and I have just mentioned that that inquiry process should have been completed well and truly before that. During those 13 months the Australian dollar reached record highs of \$1.11.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr SOMYUREK** — In July 2011 the Australian dollar was at \$1.11.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr SOMYUREK** — It is above parity now.

**Mr Ondarchie** — Are you claiming that you did it?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! It would be very helpful to the Chair if members on both sides would refrain from having a discussion and we were to stick to the debate on the motion that is at hand.

**Mr P. Davis** — I apologise, Acting President, but I am being sorely provoked by the comments from the speaker.

**Mr Leane** — Is that a point of order?

**Mr P. Davis** — No, it is an observation.

**Mr SOMYUREK** — I would have preferred, and I am sure the Victorian manufacturing sector would have preferred, the Baillieu government to come into office with a manufacturing plan ready to go and to have instead utilised those 13 months to create a wider jobs plan.

Since I am on the subject of manufacturing, I will now discuss why it is important for the jobs of hundreds of thousands of Victorians who are employed in that sector. We on the opposition side believe that retaining and growing Victoria's manufacturing sector is essential to the long-term prosperity of our state, as the manufacturing sector creates wealth, and does not just consume it, and energises and connects other sectors of the economy, thereby creating a substantial multiplier effect that expands out to benefit the wider economy. Furthermore, the Victorian manufacturing sector is the largest employer of Victorian workers on a full-time basis, with 267 000 Victorians employed full time in the Victorian manufacturing sector.

At the outset of my speech I explained how the immense purchasing power of governments can influence markets and promote certain priorities, such as local content, skills, innovation and technology transfers. Through this market power government procurement is a critical driver of the manufacturing sector. If the right procurement decisions are made with respect to skills, innovation and technology, procurement can also be an influential driver of productivity. Unfortunately it seems that this government is yet to work out the importance of government procurement to the maintenance of Victorian jobs and to the survival of the thousands of Victorians who work in the manufacturing sector and the thousands of SMEs (small and medium enterprises) in Victoria.

From the start of its tenure the Bracks government understood the critical importance of government procurement. Under the Bracks and Brumby governments, encouraging local government

procurement was given high priority, as was illustrated by the introduction of the Victorian industry participation policy (VIPP) in 2001. VIPP was introduced by the Bracks government to facilitate the expansion of local manufacturing by providing local SMEs access to government procurement opportunities. The Brumby government subsequently introduced reforms in 2009 which extended VIPP to include projects in which large investments of strategic significance to the whole state are made by the government.

The success of VIPP is validated by the following statistics. Between 2001 and 2010 VIPP was applied to 1405 projects valued at over \$27 billion; it assisted in the generation of 27 200 new jobs; it achieved average local content levels of approximately 85.7 per cent; it achieved a cumulative total of \$618 million worth of import replacement orders for local industry that would have otherwise gone overseas; and it encouraged the local manufacture of new trams for the first time in over 12 years.

Under the Baillieu government the effectiveness of VIPP as a driver of manufacturing is now under threat, as the Baillieu government has indicated that it will drop minimum local content targets in government procurement. This policy risks the loss of thousands of Victorian jobs offshore, in particular in relation to projects of major strategic significance, including transport, health and public infrastructure.

I will now detail how the government is falling short of leveraging its procurement power, and I cite two examples: the value-for-money principle and the government procurement of motor vehicles. I give a note of caution that when I use the term 'government' in this context, I refer to government in a broader sense, encompassing government and all its agencies.

The misinterpretation of current procurement policy has a significant impact on the Victorian manufacturing sector. During the term of the Baillieu government the value-for-money principle has frequently been interpreted as the least-cost alternative, when clearly the value-for-money principle makes it clear that least cost should not be the sole consideration of government procurement decisions. This misinterpretation of current procurement policy has resulted in government departments procuring goods and services — goods such as police uniforms produced in low-cost locations overseas — without giving proper consideration to quality and the broader economic value or benefit to the state from sourcing locally.

Encouraging local manufacturers to access government procurement opportunities assists Victorian manufacturers to compete on a level playing field with heavily subsidised offshore producers. In summary, the existing value-for-money policy is vital for the future of Victorian manufacturers. VIPP needs to be considered more vigorously as part of the evaluation process of value for money. I hope the committee will take a close look at the value-for-money policy and the way it is being implemented at the moment.

Moving on to my second example, the automobile industry has been at the heart of Victoria's manufacturing strength for decades. The automobile industry is of critical importance to the Victorian and ultimately the national economy as it drives jobs, investment, technology transfers, innovation and skills acquisition. The multiplier effect that I talked about a little bit earlier is especially prominent in the manufacture of automobiles in Victoria, with one person employed in the Victorian automobile industry creating a further four jobs down the line.

There are only 13 countries worldwide that have the capacity to undertake the entire process of vehicle manufacturing from concept and design right through to making sales on the salesroom floor, and Australia is certainly one of those 13. This capability means that our skills in design and engineering are world class, and the continuation of vehicle manufacturing is of critical importance to ensuring that Australia's engineering capabilities are maintained. The automobile industry continues to undergo a massive transformation as it becomes increasingly a technically driven industry, with automobile manufacturing driving engineering innovation in engineering, computer systems, information technology, material processing, design initiatives and clean-cut car technology.

Notwithstanding the importance of the automobile industry to Victoria, demand for Australian-made vehicles has been in steady decline over the last decade or so, as imported vehicles have increased their market share at the expense of Australian-made vehicles. For the Australian automobile industry to survive in the longer term, demand for Australian-made vehicles must increase. As a significant purchaser of vehicles, governments have a direct impact on the quantity of locally built vehicles sold in the Australian market.

During 2011 governments throughout Australia purchased 60 000 new vehicles, but fewer than one-third of them were built in Australia. In Victoria, the heart of the Australian automobile industry, where the three major car manufacturers are based, the proportion of Australian-built cars was around 63 per

cent. It was higher than the average, but I contend that that it is nowhere near enough. When you consider the importance of the automobile industry to the Victorian economy, you can see 63 per cent is nowhere near high enough.

Both the state and the national purchasing figures are far too low given that local manufacturers offer a comprehensive range of vehicle options. With the exception of a very few specialised vehicles local car manufacturers are able to meet the needs of nearly all government car purchases. The Victorian government and its agencies have a responsibility to purchase vehicles made in Victoria given the broader economic benefits to the state.

In conclusion, I reiterate that government procurement is of critical importance to every modern economy. In the Victorian context the procurement of goods and services by the Victorian government and its agencies amounts to over \$10 billion annually. This substantial purchasing power gives the state government the opportunity to influence and to promote a broad range of economic benefits to the community, such as a greater level of access to major government projects by local small and medium enterprises, skills and training opportunities, innovation and technology transfers, measures that will ultimately improve our state's productivity and drive our manufacturing sector in the years ahead.

**Mr P. DAVIS** (Eastern Victoria) — I regret that due to the time and the imminent approach of question time my contribution will be abridged.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** — Abridged or interrupted?

**Mr P. DAVIS** — Perhaps I will take the lead from Mr Pakula — it will be interrupted. I might not be able to do justice to the contribution made by my eminent and learned colleague Mr Somyurek in 3 minutes, so I might extend beyond the interruption of question time.

I note that the motion before the house is somewhat broader than the proposition Mr Somyurek actually advanced. I do not want to be perceived to be making pejorative remarks about the contribution Mr Somyurek made, because I think some of the points he made were apposite.

We would all agree that from a parochial Victorian perspective it would be desirable for Victorian taxpayers contributions to the welfare of the state to be able to be directed specifically to the local enterprises which are active in this state. However, at the same time we have an obligation — that is, the Parliament and the executive — to acquit the revenues of the state

with great effect. Indeed Mr Pakula and I, and also our colleague in this place Mr O'Brien, participate in a process where we examine the estimates on an ongoing basis to ensure that the government does acquit expenditure appropriately. That is a pressure, or tension, if you like, which needs to be taken into account.

In that context, for Mr Somyurek's edification, the Treasurer has given a reference to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee to deal with a major aspect of procurement which relates to the procurement of infrastructure — major projects, in effect, which are a very significant component of the Victorian economy in terms of driving demand for the contribution of goods and services. That inquiry is under way, and if Mr Somyurek is patient, he will see the result of that inquiry. I invite him to attend the public hearings that will be held next week here at Parliament House, where he may be informed effectively about some of the issues around procurement in the major projects area.

I regret that my substantive contribution will have to await question time. I will return to the theme momentarily.

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Apprentices: mutual consent arrangements

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. I draw the minister's attention to the government's *Building Trade Pathways* policy document, which outlines a review of the mutual consent arrangements for the termination of apprenticeships. In the past any suspension or termination of an apprenticeship had to be with the permission of the Victorian Skills Commission. Apprenticeships Group Australia recently suspended 75 apprentices in Gippsland without pay. Given that his government has abolished the Victorian Skills Commission, did the minister give the permission for the contracts of these apprentices to be suspended without pay — effectively sacking them?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — The issue raised by Mr Lenders is a serious one in that because of the workforce conditions in the Latrobe region — or in fact the greater Gippsland region, because Apprenticeships Group Australia extends its operations more broadly across the region — unfortunately AGA had to temporarily stand down some apprentices.

The government of Victoria responded immediately with assistance by providing an incentive scheme for employers to place 50 of those apprentices who were stood down by AGA, and that process is still being worked through at the moment. Through the market-facilitation people we have in that region we are actively seeking to have those displaced apprentices located with employers so that their apprenticeships can continue. We are working diligently with them on that.

In answer to Mr Lenders's specific question about the Victorian Skills Commission and the permission to break those arrangements, as I said, at this stage my understanding is those apprentices have been temporarily stood down; they have not been dismissed as such.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer. To cut to the chase of what I am trying to get to in relation to the *Building Trade Pathways* policy document and its reference, which the example highlights, is it the government's intention to significantly change or abolish the current mutual consent arrangements for the ending of an apprenticeship?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — In answering that question I think it is important to again put on the record our government's commitment to apprenticeship training in Victoria. We have increased every apprenticeship training subsidy being applied in this state, so we are committed to fostering an apprenticeship employment arrangement.

As to the exact nature of that particular question, which will be a policy issue arising out of the completion of that discussion paper, that is a matter the cabinet will consider in due course, but I can assure the house that we are committed in every way, and we have demonstrated that, to encouraging apprenticeship training in this state.

**Industrial relations: federal legislation**

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Mr Dalla-Riva, and I ask: can the minister advise the house of the impact the commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009 review will have on workplaces in Victoria?

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I thank the member for her question and her ongoing interest in the

impact on workplaces of Labor's industrial relations laws.

In the Victorian government's submission to the commonwealth review panel we said we believed there could have been sensible amendments made to the Fair Work Act 2009 to lift productivity and competitiveness of workplaces while still guaranteeing a safety net of fair, relevant and enforceable minimum terms and conditions. However, it saddens me to say that the outcome of this review will be a great disappointment to anyone who understands the importance of our industries being competitive, especially in the tough global trading conditions we are seeing.

We have seen today on the front page of the *Australian* and also in the *Australian Financial Review* a survey of our global chief executives warning that federal Labor's industrial relations framework and the carbon tax are combining to have a lethal effect on business confidence. For us the critical and crucial policy test for workplace laws is whether they are contributing to a stronger, more dynamic, more productive economy which is able to attract investments and therefore generate the necessary jobs.

Despite the common-sense advice from business and the states, the commonwealth is still refusing to acknowledge the need to bring a more balanced approach to the industrial relations framework. After waiting for more than one month for the commonwealth to release this report of the panel, we were presented with a document that failed to address some of the basic flaws in Labor's industrial relations model.

We must say that there have been incremental improvements in two areas. One was a recommendation to adopt the issue in the *Barclay v. Bendigo TAFE* adverse action case. We were the only state that combined to join that case, which is being heard now in the High Court. In other words, the report supported overturning the notion that being a union official provides blanket immunity against an employer's right to enforce responsible workplace behaviour. It also questioned the damage that is inherent in the strike first, bargain later principles that have been established under the J. J. Richards and Sons case, and we hope that the Prime Minister takes heed of those two areas.

But let us not pretend that we will see a shift in the fundamentals. On the whole the review has been a wasted opportunity. Only yesterday we saw the Federal Court of Australia rule that the Fair Work Act allows unions to dictate conditions to contractors. As the

Australian Industry Group has pointed out, with some justification, the only people who seem no longer to have workplace rights under Labor's law are the employers. We saw it last week with the irresponsible action unions took at a car parts manufacturer which took the Victorian automotive manufacturers to the brink of meltdown, and as I warned, this would have had a damaging effect on Ford and Holden.

But let us be very clear. The federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Mr Shorten, could have terminated that dispute with a mere stroke of the pen, but he chose not to. What we saw was that the company was pressured into a conciliation session at Fair Work Australia and forced to settle on terms as set by the unions. The fundamental question that we have to ask here is does Mr Shorten serve the interests of the unions or does he have a higher responsibility to the Australian people? Equally, do the unions want a local car industry or do they not? In our submission to the review, the Victorian government has urged the commonwealth to consider changes to the Fair Work Act to better assist employers.

### **Ford Australia: government funding**

**Mr SOMYUREK** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Mr Dalla-Riva. I refer to the decision by Ford Australia on 17 July to axe 440 Victorian jobs and to the Premier's comment at the time that he was confident that Ford would meet all the milestones attached to the joint \$53 million federal-state contribution announced earlier this year, including some \$19 million from Victoria. Can the minister advise the house what these milestones were?

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I thank the member for his question, and of course Ford is a very important employer not only in Victoria but specifically in Geelong and the northern parts of metropolitan Melbourne. However, as we have always said, the automotive industry is facing enormous structural change. We have indicated in our negotiations with Ford, as we have done with Holden and with other companies, that we will be providing an outcome for Ford to remain here until at least 2016 and beyond, because in our view it has a long-term sustainable future here, but that does not take away from the fact that it is under enormous pressure, as I have indicated here time and again.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — Mr Pakula, as the former industry minister, would well know that the negotiations that we have with the automotive industry — or with any industry — as part of the agreement are not something that we would publicly disclose. We have indicated that we gave a substantial amount of funds to Ford as part of that negotiation and also to ensure that there is long-term investment in Ford of \$103 million.

What we are about is ensuring that we have a plan for the automotive sector and we have a plan for the manufacturing sector. We are delivering on that at a time when there is enormous pressure being placed on the manufacturing sector.

I can tell members opposite that while we move one step forward, we find that Labor and the unions take us two steps back. Every time we put forward a plan to ensure that we have a long-term sustainable manufacturing base here, we find there is an industrial relations framework, a carbon tax and a union that fail to recognise the importance of the automotive sector. When unions are threatening to shut down an entire automotive manufacturing sector, as I indicated in my answer to a previous question, you have to ask the real question — —

**Mr Somyurek** — On a point of order, President, on a matter of relevance. The question was specific and related to milestones. The minister has not sought to answer the question at all.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister's remarks have generally been apposite to the question and the issues it raises. The minister has another 1 minute and 44 seconds to respond. The minister indicates he has finished.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr SOMYUREK** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Given that 440 jobs were axed and the Premier said the milestones would be met, can members of the house assume that maintaining jobs was not one of those milestones and, if it was not, why not?

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I thank the member for his question, but he should ask the Prime Minister that question. In January the Prime Minister went to Broadmeadows and said there would be an additional 300 jobs. She was totally wrong. I knew, as she should have known, there was no such additional commitment. To go out and make such outlandish statements demonstrates how desperate the federal government was. What we have said is that we are

committed to supporting the Ford automotive manufacturing company. We have invested \$103 million to ensure that it is here until at least 2016. We believe this will be a long-term investment which will support Ford not only in Geelong but also in Broadmeadows.

**Mildura Base Hospital: community advisory board**

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis. Can the minister inform members of the house on developments that strengthen community input into Mildura Base Hospital?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I am pleased to respond to the member's question, and I note her strong advocacy for Mildura Base Hospital and the advocacy of Mr Drum, Ms Lovell and Peter Crisp, the member for Mildura in the Assembly, who is a firm advocate of health services in Mildura and in the region.

I am very pleased to announce that the government has appointed a new and strengthened community advisory board. Mr Vernon Knight will take over as chair of the board; Gayle Danson, Marcus Guthrie, Sister Marion McDonald, Gary Nalder and Ada Peterson join him on the board, which has the job of holding the hospital to account and ensuring that the interests of the community are represented. The board has capacities under the contract and has the ability to work with the department and the community to ensure that the very best services are delivered.

**Mr Jennings** — So it is an independent board.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — It is a board that has been appointed by me, and its job is to do the work on behalf of the community after an advertising process and an appointment process. An analysis of the performance of the Mildura hospital shows that it performs at least as well, and in many categories better, than equivalent health services in regional areas.

It is interesting to look at Mildura hospital and see the large area it services, both over the New South Wales and South Australian borders and a significant sweep of smaller towns to the south of Mildura. It is a very important hospital that we are committed to.

**Mr Jennings** — That's the catchment it serves.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — It is, but let me be clear about that catchment, Mr Jennings. Under Mr Jennings's government many of the smaller

hospitals ceased performing some procedures, including services associated with births. Many of those procedures — —

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — They do undertake obstetric services. Those services are now delivered in Mildura. Under the stewardship of the Labor government there was a closure of a series — —

**Mr Jennings** — Name one.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I could go through the list. If the member will indulge me, I will bring him the full list. I will give him the comprehensive list.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Yes, that will be good; it will help you. The government is committed to greater transparency and support for the community in Mildura. The government has proceeded to publish data from 2011 on the performance of the hospital. That data was deliberately kept secret by the previous government. I have to say Mildura hospital is performing quite well on many measures and at least as well as regional hospitals. I say to Mr Jennings that at least we are not hiding the data like he did for 11 years.

The contract that governs the arrangements at Mildura is available for the community and others to see. In the forthcoming arrangements that are struck we will be working hard to ensure that we get the very best deal for services in Mildura. At heart we will be focused on delivering our election commitments for additional capacity in the emergency department. An allocation of budget money has already been made — \$5 million. There is some additional commonwealth money which we have welcomed.

**Ms Broad** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Certainly the scoping is very well advanced. Members may need to wait a little while to see that, but we will be delivering that as soon as we possibly we can.

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

**Tatts Group: legal action**

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Assistant Treasurer, who also represents the Treasurer in this chamber. As the minister is aware, Tatts Group Ltd today ends its lucrative role as one of the operators of the EGM

(electronic gaming machine) network at the same time that it is exiting Victoria and launching a \$600 million lawsuit against the state. Can the minister assure the house that the Victorian government will vigorously defend the action as well as the one launched by Tabcorp?

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Pakula for his question. I must say I am surprised that he would seek to raise in this forum this matter of potential litigation against the state. As I said to the house through the course of the consideration of the budget back in June, and as I said to the media earlier this week, the Victorian government will act in the state's interest.

We are in a situation where the potential for litigation has been raised as a consequence of decisions taken by the previous government, and we have seen the announcement by Tatts yesterday that it would seek to exit most of its involvement here in Victoria. Tomorrow its EGM licences expire as a consequence of decisions taken by the previous government. Decisions were taken in the period of the previous government, and this government will act to protect Victoria's position.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Western Metropolitan) — The minister may be aware that in response to an FOI application from me, his department, the Department of Treasury and Finance, indicated that there are some 1780 pages identified as being briefing notes and other documents on this issue that have been prepared since his government came to office. Can the minister at least assure the house that in deciding whether to defend the action those 1780 pages demonstrate that the government is receiving its own advice rather than continuing to hide behind the fiction that the only view that matters is the one formed by the previous government?

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Assistant Treasurer) — I can say in relation to FOI documents that they will be dealt with as all FOI documents are — that is, in accordance with the FOI act. As I stated in my substantive response, the Victorian government will deal with this matter in the interests of Victorian taxpayers.

**Disability services: training subsidies**

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Peter Hall. With the national disability

insurance scheme trial being launched in Geelong and the Barwon region and an expected rollout across Victoria over the next decade, what action has the Victorian government taken to ensure that we have sufficient trained workers to support the workforce needs of the disability sector?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — This is very good news for Victoria. Sterling work has been undertaken by the Premier along with my ministerial colleague the Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge, and her parliamentary secretary. They have done some sterling work to secure a trial for the national disability insurance scheme in the Barwon region.

It is really good news not only for people who are in need of disability services in that region but also for those across Victoria, because it will set disability service standards that will benefit all people with disabilities. It will be even greater news for Geelong, too, if the federal government decides to locate the disability transition authority, the transition agency, in Geelong. The Victorian government is very keen to secure that and has made \$25 million available to assist with that. I think it behoves us all to take some responsibility to advocate for the location of that facility in the great city of Geelong.

The question asked of me by Mr Koch related to meeting the training needs of people working with those with disabilities. The way the Victorian government will support that training is by setting subsidies to support the training of people who are eligible.

Again, in a very open and transparent way, on the department website we have published all the subsidy levels available for each of the around 2000 training courses in Victoria. If you look at the areas of health care and social assistance, you will see that some very healthy subsidy levels have been set for the vast majority of those courses. Disability was one of the priority areas when those subsidies were set. In particular you can look at some of the areas that will be particularly relevant to training people to deliver services to those with disabilities — for example, certificate IV in disability. Previously the training subsidy rate varied between \$6.16 to \$6.93 per student contact hour; under the new subsidy arrangements that figure is now \$8 per student contact hour — a significant increase.

Similarly, for certificate IV in aged care \$8.47 to \$9.53 was the previous rate; that is now \$10 per student contact hour. For certificate IV in home and community

care \$6.16 to \$6.93 was the previous rate; it is now \$8.50 per student contact hour. It is the same figure for certificate IV in mental health. Certificate III in disability has also seen an increase in subsidy. Perhaps the only one you could argue is that the rate for the diploma and advanced diploma of disability was previously \$5.20 per student contact hour; alongside all other diploma and advanced diploma courses it is now \$5 per student contact hour — but it is very much the same.

All those examples illustrate the fact that we have increased support for training people to deliver disability services in Victoria. It was then somewhat bemusing to find that in this house this morning Ms Mikakos gave notice of a motion in which she criticises budget cuts, including cuts to ‘many courses that train disability professionals’, and:

so will leave Victoria seriously short of the skill workforce that will be needed to deliver the national disability insurance scheme.

I suggest that the exact opposite is the case. The figures I have quoted here this morning demonstrate that we have actually increased funding subsidies in those areas of disability. Obviously the notice of motion given in this house this morning is factually incorrect and should be withdrawn.

### Planning: Phillip Island rezoning

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. On 31 March 2011 the minister received a letter written on behalf of the landowner of the Cadogan land at Ventnor in which he was asked to rezone the land for development. In May that year the department advised him and recommended that he refer the matter to the responsible authority, the local council. Yet on 3 June his office sent an email to the department overriding the department’s views and recommendations and stating that he supported rezoning the land as requested by the landowner. Is overriding the views of his department in response to a request for rezoning by a landowner the minister’s usual practice?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — It is interesting to see the occasional shadow Minister for Planning roll out this chestnut about a year and a half after the letter was actually written. The premise on which Mr Tee has quoted an email from my office to the department is factually incorrect, or at least he has certainly taken licence with what I believe was the wording of the email. Therefore I believe the question he has asked me is incorrect.

### Supplementary question

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I have the email here. It says:

The minister is supportive of a rezoning of this land in accordance with the request from Mr Cadogan’s planning consultant.

What the minister’s actions mean is that there is a real concern that developers can simply ignore the local community, ignore the local council and indeed ignore the views of his department and deal with him directly. What assurance can the minister give that his office is not simply a vehicle for developers to override community, council and departmental concerns?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — Mr Tee’s primary question said my office sent an email to override. In no way did what he just read do that. It specifies a point of view, but how does it say, ‘I want you to override the department’? It does not.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Hang on, Captain Snooze, you’ve had your questions. Now I am dealing with Mr Tee’s question.

Let us get one thing clear. The supposed fact about which the member just asked a question was not one. Secondly, the member talked about dealing with the minister’s office directly. Hang on a tick! What did the office of Justin Madden, the former Minister for Planning, do when he redrew the urban growth boundary? We just went through a four-stage process, yet Madden’s office redrew the boundary for 60 000 hectares. These guys get up here to try to have a go at me by manufacturing what was in an email, when they redrew 60 000 hectares in the minister’s office with the stroke of a pen.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — You’re a bunch of hypocrites.

### Planning: Fishermans Bend

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy. Can the minister inform the house what action the Baillieu government has taken to facilitate urban renewal opportunities in Melbourne?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — I would like to thank Ms Crozier for her question about urban renewal, to which of course this government is absolutely committed.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Without assistance!

I would again like to inform this chamber of some more action this government has taken to facilitate the largest urban renewal project in the Southern Hemisphere — that is, the rezoning at Fishermans Bend, of which this government is immensely proud. There is 240 hectares of urban renewal opportunity in the Fishermans Bend urban renewal precinct. That will see a huge amount of investment. It is Australia's first inner city growth corridor. The area has been rezoned by the Baillieu government to create an inner city growth corridor — as I said, the first in Australia. This represents a vision for our city of creating a new precinct, a new suburb, a new lifestyle, a new heart of Melbourne that will beat into the future to create up to \$1.5 billion worth of investment over the next 10 years.

What we have seen in this rezoning is, as I said, 240 hectares of urban renewal to expand Melbourne's capital city zone, to expand our central city area to include Southbank, which is around 110 hectares; the Docklands precinct, which is around 140 hectares; the Hoddle grid, which is around 160 hectares; and, as I said, Fishermans Bend, which is around 240 hectares. Through the rezoning at Fishermans Bend we will see around 25 000 jobs created and nearly 50 000 people calling this area home in the future.

Importantly, Mrs Coote, Ms Crozier and I are working very hard to ensure that the government gets a new school in this precinct to which we have committed and which we will deliver. We are also working very hard in relation to traffic and transport to ensure the transport solutions are right for this new urban renewal precinct that has now been rezoned.

It is important to note the vision in this idea. The Labor Party said, when we first mooted urban renewal, that this was a thought bubble. It is the biggest thought bubble in the Southern Hemisphere if that is the case. Labor Party members said there would be no movement in Fishermans Bend for 5 or 10 years. The rezoning has occurred. Of course, this contrasts with the tired and boring attitude of the Labor Party and Daniel Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, and the boring negativity espoused by Daniel Andrews.

**Mr Jennings** — Daniel who?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — You would have a better conversation with a raccoon than with Daniel Andrews. He has no idea about urban renewal, that is for sure.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — As we on this side of the house know, you are either in or out with Daniel Andrews. It all depends on whether you are an old frontbencher from the previous government or you are out of it.

The reality is 240 hectares, an urban renewal opportunity — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I am worried about Mr Guy's health. I am certainly worried about his larynx. Can we have less yelling and less interjecting? In fact I would prefer that Mr Guy completed the answer without assistance from any members of the chamber.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Thank you, President, for your concern. I can assure you that I might be short in stature, but my voice and my larynx are strong in performance, so you do not have to worry about them.

I just say in conclusion that the urban renewal precinct we have just rezoned is one of the most important in Australia's history. As Labor's deputy leader in this chamber has just said about Daniel Andrews, 'Daniel who?', we also say, 'Daniel who?', because his visionless approach is one that is contrasted by action on the part of this government.

### **Medical physicists: shortage**

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — My question today is for the Minister for Health. As the minister would know, medical physicists play a critical role in delivering effective and safe cancer treatment. Victoria's medical physicists are the worst paid in Australia. The starting wage in Victoria is \$30 000 less than in New South Wales, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. With a workforce of 54, there is currently a shortage of 20 medical physicists in Victoria. This week Traralgon lost its only qualified physicist to New South Wales and another resigned yesterday. This shortage means extensive waiting times for life-saving cancer treatment. No physicist means no radiation oncology treatment.

The government has offered a 2.5 per cent wage increase which falls offensively short of fixing this problem. Will the minister continue to risk patients' lives, particularly country patients, or step up, stop the long waits for radiation treatment and increase the medical physicists' wages to match those of New South Wales?

**Questions interrupted.**

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Just before I call the minister, I acknowledge in the public gallery the former President and my immediate predecessor in this place, Bob Smith. Welcome.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Medical physicists: shortage**

**Questions resumed.**

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I thank Ms Hartland for her question, and I want to make a couple of points that are pertinent to it. The first is that, as Ms Hartland would be aware, medical physicists, as part of the particular union involved, are currently engaged in EBA (enterprise bargaining agreement) negotiations with Victorian hospitals and health services. The Victorian Hospitals Industrial Association is the agent that is doing that work. Negotiations are occurring, and the EBA process, as Ms Hartland will understand, as with other EBA processes, is one that I am not going to enter into the details of.

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Let me make some points with respect to the importance of medical physicists — and I understand the importance of the group very well. They undertake a very narrow but important role in the delivery of cancer services across the state. The government is — as indeed was the previous government, to its credit — rolling out cancer services in country Victoria to make them more accessible to Victorians. This is a principle we strongly support. I accept that that means a greater workforce of medical physicists, and I accept that that means we have to remain competitive with other states.

I met with Rosemary Kelly prior to the election and had a number of discussions with her.

**Mr Jennings** — But not since.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I am being quite serious here, Mr Jennings.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I have indeed had discussions with her since.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** — You know we can verify this.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Of course, and I very much welcome your doing so. The point I would make is that there is a challenge with longer term workforce provision here, and I do not in any way resile from that. I want to make the point that Victoria's waiting lists in this area compare very favourably with those of other states and that all emergency patients are treated within 24 hours where radiotherapy is required.

In terms of the specifics of the EBA negotiations, I will leave those to the bargaining agents and the HSU, but as a more broad point, I accept that there is going to be a requirement for additional medical physicists in the workforce, given the increased activity in terms of radiotherapy.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — If the minister acknowledges that there is a need for additional medical physicists, how does he intend to recruit them? It is quite clear that patients are already at risk and are not receiving desperately needed treatment. The exact conditions that we have in Victoria existed in South Australia in 2004 and led to 869 patients being undertreated between 2004 and 2006. An independent review revealed that the health department was warned for years — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! As I have said on a previous occasion, a question needs to be framed as a question. It is appropriate for a member to provide some context for the question, but there is a very big difference between doing that and making a statement. I think this supplementary question is really moving towards a statement, rather than providing the context. The member should continue, but I ask her to bear that in mind.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I was almost to the question. An independent review revealed that the health department was warned for years that understaffing could cause a major radiation accident, and it did. In this case the government has been given the same warnings. The minister is acknowledging that there is a need. When is he going to step up to the plate and actually do something about this, because we are talking about a lack of oncology services, especially in country areas?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I have tried to be reasonable and fair on this issue and indicate that we do believe there is a longer term workforce shortage. Ms Hartland is absolutely right. The previous government was warned about this repeatedly, and I

think it is broadly understood across the sector that there is a challenge longer term with the workforce.

Ms Hartland correctly pointed out that the Department of Health undertook some work last year, and we are very aware of the longer term challenges there. The government is supporting medical physicists and their training by providing \$1.05 million for 13 medical physicist registrar positions and for three 0.5 effective full-time medical physicist clinical educators to work across all public radiotherapy services.

The government is taking significant steps. It has also allocated money for the physical facilities in a number of locations around the state. It will be working with health services and with the education sector to try to ensure that there is a sufficient workforce. On the matter of the EBA, that will be negotiated in the normal way.

**Information and communications technology: procurement process**

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Technology, Mr Rich-Phillips. Can the minister update the house on how the government's overhaul of the e-services panel will benefit Victoria?

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr O'Donohue for his question and for his interest in an issue that is of importance to the technology sector in Victoria as well as for the provision of services to government in Victoria.

Last year, following a range of industry complaints about Labor's e-services panel, I commissioned an evaluation of that mechanism to identify ways in which it could be improved. It is worth bearing in mind that the mechanism the Labor government had in place required e-services companies to go through an extensive and expensive tender process to be appointed to an e-services panel, typically for a period of four years. As part of that process they were required to nominate the hourly labour rates they would charge the government if they were engaged on projects.

It is interesting to reflect on some comments made by Mr Somyurek in his contribution to the debate on a motion before question time. He complained about value-for-money assessments being taken as lowest cost. I can say to Mr Somyurek that that is exactly what his government's e-services panel did — it took labour rates submitted by various bidders and simply evaluated them on a cost basis. No regard was given to the quality of work that could be provided or to value for money.

Importantly, a company that was unsuccessful in getting on the e-services panel was locked out of providing services to government for up to four years.

The review of the panel undertaken by the working group found that the previous government's mechanism lacked visibility and transparency, and it recommended a complete overhaul of the mechanisms. Earlier this year I was pleased to announce that the government will replace the e-services panel with a new e-services register.

At the national iAwards last week I was pleased to release the draft implementation plan for putting in place the new e-services register. Importantly the implementation plan for the register will allow companies to enter and exit the register on a rolling basis. It is worth bearing in mind that the e-services market is an incredibly dynamic market with a lot of small companies being established every year. The mechanism that had previously existed, which locked companies out for four years because of a contract, simply meant that the state was being denied the type of opportunities and competition it needed in terms of buying services. It was denied the type of innovation that new small companies in the technology field generate. It also meant that those new companies were denied the opportunity to bid for government work.

The e-services register will overcome the challenges of the previous model. It will allow new and innovative companies to enter the register as they are created, and it will allow the state to access the innovation of those companies at the same time.

The implementation plan is out for industry consultation over the next fortnight, and the government looks forward to receiving strong feedback from industry as it implements that new register model from 1 July next year. We look forward to working with the ICT industry in this state to ensure that it has opportunities to work with government and importantly that the government and taxpayers have opportunities to benefit from the innovation and competition in that marketplace.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Answers**

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 124, 126, 133, 140, 353, 364, 369, 400, 411, 436, 675, 688, 710, 728, 729, 735, 761, 794, 1017, 3578, 3579, 3581, 3582, 3584–790, 3798, 3803, 3808–4014, 4262, 4583–614, 8138, 8155,

8178, 8197, 8205, 8242, 8243, 8250, 8253, 8257, 8261, 8264, 8265, 8268, 8269, 8308–12, 8314, 8316, 8318, 8319, 8355, 8357, 8359, 8361, 8362, 8383, 8386, 8388–90, 8392–8, 8400, 8402–4, 8460–8, 8471, 8488–96, 8506 and 8507.

## RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

### Right of reply: procedures

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I would like to make a statement in respect of a matter that occurred in the last sitting week. It concerns the right of reply procedures that we have in the house.

The most important parliamentary privilege we have is generally regarded as the freedom of speech of members of Parliament. The practical effect of this privilege is that members can speak in this house without fear of recrimination. However, just as important is the incumbency upon members not to abuse that privilege. Members are absolutely privileged from prosecution in respect of anything they might say in the Parliament. Provided that their statements are in accord with the rules and practices of this house, members are able to express themselves as they see fit. However, on occasion this right has caused distress to individuals who are adversely referred to in the house.

There is obviously a clear conflict on the one hand of this Parliament's right to, and its need of, the fearless, open and direct expression of opinions by its members, and on the other, Victorian citizens' right to their good reputation and fair interpretation by members of their views and actions. In order to address this issue, this house, like many other houses of Parliament, has followed the Australian Senate's lead and introduced a right-of-reply procedure for persons or organisations who claim that they have been adversely affected by statements made in the house. This is detailed in chapter 21 of our standing orders.

Two of the distinguishing features of the right-of-reply procedures in this house compared to nearly all of the other parliaments are, firstly, that the President alone is responsible for determining whether a right of reply should be presented to the house. Secondly, our practice is that a fairly strict approach is taken in relation to the content of a right of reply. As a matter of fact, every one of the 13 replies tabled in the Council have had material omitted or altered in some way from their original submission. To date, six applications for a right of reply have not been approved.

Members will recall that on 21 June 2012 I presented a right of reply from a certain councillor of the City of

Kingston to statements made in this house by a member of the Legislative Council. Following that presentation the member who was the subject of the right of reply attempted to make a 90-second members statement on the contents of that right of reply. I subsequently ruled that the member could not use that procedure to respond to the right of reply as it was akin to making a personal explanation.

I advised the house that members should not be permitted to make a personal explanation on the same day as the presentation of the right of reply. That was consistent with a previous ruling in this house, but there had been another occasion that was raised by the Leader of the Government on which there was an inconsistent position in the proceedings, where on one occasion in this house a member was able to follow a right of reply with commentary by way of a personal explanation.

I said that the personal explanation should not occur on the same day, and I made that decision on the basis that to allow an immediate response by the member concerned could trigger a mechanism for continuing debate between the member and the citizen concerned and could well diminish the right conferred by the house to an aggrieved citizen. Also, I believed that the house should first be afforded the opportunity of acquainting itself with the contents of the right of reply prior to any immediate comment by members or possible consideration of the right of reply.

I therefore wish to reiterate to the house that I will continue to deny members the opportunity to make 90-second statements or personal explanations on the same day that I table a right of reply. However, members can of course give notice of a motion to take the right of reply into consideration on the next day of meeting, or use the statements on reports and papers procedure, pursuant to standing order 9.10, or indeed they could follow what occurred on that occasion in June when matters pertinent to the right of reply were subsequently raised in the adjournment debate.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### Reference

#### Debate resumed.

**Mr P. DAVIS** (Eastern Victoria) — Before we were interrupted by question time I was trying to set the framework around my response to Mr Somyurek's motion. In that context I will restate the observation I made then, which is that my learned friend

Mr Somyurek — with whom I have a not quite intimate relationship; I had the privilege of serving with him on a parliamentary committee during the 56th Parliament — made a useful contribution.

I do not intend to make any pejorative comments about Mr Somyurek's contribution, but I need to point out that it is by omission rather than commission that I take issue with some of his comments. Mr Somyurek's inference was negative in respect of the present government's position on the issue of purchasing and procurement policies. That is a little unfair because, as Mr Somyurek failed to acknowledge, there is largely a bipartisan view that ensures that government purchasing and procurement policies essentially reflect best value for taxpayers dollars. There may be slight differences in interpretation around that, but essentially that is the thrust of all governments.

For a long period there have been various policies in place to achieve that outcome. Mr Somyurek alluded to a simple example of that, which was motor car fleet management issues. If Mr Somyurek had assiduously read the transcript, or sat at the Assistant Treasurer's estimates hearing, he would have noted the Assistant Treasurer's comment that currently the Victorian government vehicle fleet, which is managed by the government services division, consists of 9100 vehicles. My understanding of what I would describe as the non-operational vehicles — that is, the four-wheel drive type vehicles which necessarily are imported — is that something like an overwhelming 98 per cent of all the sedan-type vehicles are in fact purchased from Australian manufacturers.

Mr Somyurek singularly uses the example of the motor car industry when the reality is that it has been a bipartisan position. Nothing has substantially changed since the change of government. It is a very substantial buy for Victorian taxpayers to purchase those vehicles. This is not just to have that inventory; that inventory is changing all the time, so there is a driver in terms of the manufacturing sector and vehicle purchases. I just wanted to note that point.

The lead speaker for the opposition also talked about the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission inquiry, and in referring to VCEC used the phrase, 'that cost-cutting organisation or body'. Again I could not, by way of invitation, encourage Mr Somyurek to respond to me and acknowledge that VCEC is actually a process body which deals with issues of productivity for Victorian governments and which has bipartisan support, or at least it did have.

The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission was created by John Brumby, who was Treasurer at the time. It also came under the stewardship of Mr Lenders when he was Treasurer, supported by Mr Brumby as Premier. I am to a degree perplexed by Mr Somyurek's pejorative comments about VCEC because this government has, like the previous government, accepted that there is a need to take its advice on productivity and efficiency issues. I am sure Mr Lenders would support me in saying VCEC is a good organisation to which to give references and from which to receive advice. I just wanted to touch on that. I will go to particular matters in a moment, but I am just trying to round up some brief comments on Mr Somyurek's contribution.

Mr Somyurek, aside from attempting to make a point about the government's motor car purchasing policy, also wanted to make some adverse comment about the VCEC inquiry. The VCEC report entitled *Victorian Manufacturing: Meeting the Challenges — Inquiry into a More Competitive Victorian Manufacturing Industry* is a useful document, as is the government's response. In the foreword to the government response, the Treasurer, Mr Wells, and Mr Richard Dalla-Riva, the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade — —

**Mr Lenders** — Lots of time but it still does not do much.

**Mr P. DAVIS** — Mr Lenders has a certain way about him. I have to say there is no doubt that losing office has diminished the Leader of the Opposition. The foreword states:

The VCEC outlines a forward looking strategy for the government and identifies 44 recommendations to guide and implement the strategy through initiatives, regulation and procurement policy. The VCEC proposes that the ultimate objective is the improvement of the wellbeing of Victorians by having more high-performing manufacturing enterprises operating in a dynamic and internationally competitive Victoria. This is best pursued through a focus on enterprises and well-functioning markets and ensuring that any interventions achieve net benefits for Victoria.

The government is supportive of the general direction of the VCEC report. The government response identifies a number of areas for immediate action and a set of broader competitiveness priorities for ongoing consideration.

That is particularly relevant because of the context of the motion before the house, which is to establish an inquiry to do something which is already largely in train. I alluded to the fact that we already have in train a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the delivery of major infrastructure, which is a major Victorian government priority, and it is clear that there

is a bipartisan view about the need to have a good look at the way that projects are being delivered.

It is true that the VCEC report recommended a strategy focus on particular action areas, including ‘framing government procurement to achieve value for money and opportunities for competitive local manufacturers’. That recommendation, amongst many others, was adopted and supported by the government, and it has been put in train. There are a number of points that need to be made around this space, but I am conscious that time is on the wing. I might come back to this after lunch.

**Sitting suspended 1.01 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.**

**Mr P. DAVIS** — Rather than continue, perhaps I will press the refresh button and start from the top, but I probably cannot start without Mr Somyurek, who moved the motion. I note that he is absent from the chamber. It is a considerable disappointment that I cannot address him because the whole point of making a speech in response is to respond to the mover of the motion. I feel a little slighted, I suppose.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Mr P. DAVIS** — No, but I was trying to engage with him. In the two attempts I have made to start this speech I have genuinely tried to engage with Mr Somyurek. His absence speaks volumes about his disinterest in the subject. Therefore I will make it a speech to myself, perhaps. No, I will not do that, as Mr Hall is listening, Ms Pennicuik is listening and Mr Finn is listening. That is outstanding, so away I go.

Mr Somyurek’s motion seeks to refer an inquiry to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee on issues relating to Victorian government procurement policies. I do not discount that Mr Somyurek’s motion is well intended. I thought that his contribution was misdirected in the substance of his presentation because the paragraphs of the motion state that the committee should:

- (1) investigate the procurement policies of the Victorian government, its departments and agencies;
- (2) assess the impact of those policies on the Victorian economy ...
  - (a) employment within Victoria;
  - (b) locally based industries; and
  - (c) the financial position of the state; and
- (3) compare Victorian government policies with those in other jurisdictions.

What I am a little confounded by is that Mr Somyurek’s remarks were essentially confined to the manufacturing sector. What confuses me about that is that the subject is a good deal broader. Mr Somyurek made little or no mention in his commentary of matters which are to hand — for example, the Victorian Ombudsman’s report of November 2011 in relation to ICT-enabled projects, which was done in consultation with the Victorian Auditor-General. It was a very interesting report because it touched on this broader issue of procurement in a substantive way. Bearing in mind that this was essentially a retrospective analysis of projects that were in train under the previous government, I note that the Ombudsman and Auditor-General made the point that the public sector had not learnt any lessons from experience.

In relation to the 10 projects that were examined, they failed to meet expectations, most failed to meet delivery time frames and all ran over budget. The original budgets for these projects totalled \$1.3 billion. The latest estimated cost, at November last year, was \$2.74 billion — that is, an additional \$1.44 billion cost to government, which is a very substantial sum.

When we are looking at addressing procurement policy this is clearly material information relevant to this motion. We have that input, if you like. I will not take the time of the house to examine this particular report in detail because it has been done in here before and members are familiar with the report, but in context it is a very important report.

Similarly, it is useful to note that the government responded in December 2011 to the final report of the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission entitled *Victorian Manufacturing: Meeting the Challenges — Inquiry into a More Competitive Victorian Manufacturing Industry*. Again, some of the matters addressed related to the manufacturing sector particularly but also of course to the procurement policies of the state. Rather than elaborate on the detail of that report, I will simply mention for Mr Somyurek’s benefit that a good understanding of that report would inform him as to the direction of Victorian government policy.

I was a little perplexed, to be honest, that Mr Somyurek, who takes seriously his responsibility for the manufacturing industry on behalf of the opposition, seemed in a sense to be disconnected from the argument he was seeking to advance. Again I am trying to avoid being pejorative and I am just taking issue with the case that he presented. It is a matter of fact that the Victorian Government Purchasing Board, which has prime responsibility for establishing the

parameters around procurement, does account to the Parliament. Its annual report for 2010–11, which is the most recent annual report tabled in this house, is illuminating to some degree about the broader context of the direction of procurement policy.

Of course this report was tabled before the narrow report from VCEC about manufacturing, so some of the direction set out in this annual report will be further informed by the recommendations from VCEC, which is important because naturally public policy is incremental. The whole nature of public policy is that it is incremental. We do not often see what I describe as seismic shifts in public policy. We see an established basis, we build on it and we change direction, often at the margin. I think it is useful to just allude to the annual report of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board and refer in summary to the chairman's report. The introductory comments are:

In 2010–11, the Victorian Government Purchasing Board ... moved closer to the development of a new procurement framework for government, drafting 12 new streamlined supply policies to direct end-to-end procurement practices. The policies aim to give departments the flexibility to establish a procurement environment relevant to their activities with greater emphasis on organisational procurement governance and planning. Complexity is to be introduced as a key driver of procurement process and it is intended that procurement processes governed by value thresholds will no longer exist. The policies also emphasise building procurement capability and professionalism to ensure sufficient expertise exists for departments to implement the new framework successfully.

Further in that chairman's introduction a subheading reads 'Taking a broader view of value for money'. This is an issue that was raised by Mr Somyurek in his contribution when he talked about how value for money can be interpreted. The chairman states, and this is germane, that:

Value for money in procurement is not only about the best price. It can involve a balanced judgement of a range of financial and non-financial factors, for example, the mix of quality; cost and resources; fitness for purpose; timeliness; risk; and total cost of ownership.

Within departments and agencies, various initiatives aim to deliver direct and indirect benefits to the Victorian community and economy. This includes aligning government procurement of goods and services with opportunities to deliver economic and other broader government objectives on behalf of the Victorian community.

That is a useful summation of what we mean by value for money, because this often gets lost in individual interpretation.

In her concluding remarks, the chairman said:

On behalf of the VGPB, I would like to express my appreciation to the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, MLC, Assistant Treasurer, for his support of the VGPB's procurement reform agenda and delivery of its strategic priorities.

That is a useful note on which to conclude my reference to that report because it relates to this issue of incremental change and attempts to improve the delivery of procurement practices, to which I have alluded. I summarise the government's priorities in respect of procurement policy, which include probity and transparency, value for money — which I have just alluded to — equity for local businesses and competitive markets.

In relation to the comments in its annual report, the VGPB is proposing the introduction of a new procurement platform that will modernise and improve the policy framework that governs the supply of goods and services to departments. The VGPB is seeking to develop a new procurement framework and, in doing that, has to consult across jurisdictions, in particular with the Australian Procurement and Construction Council. The VGPB is considered a leader in government procurement reform. It is also undertaking a period of industry consultation to further support the direction of this reform, with particular focus on enabling small business and local industry to participate. The consultation in this area is being led by none other than my colleague the member for Morwell, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business, Russell Northe. I cannot think of a more energetic and interested member to lead that process.

The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission's report, to which I have alluded, made a number of recommendations in relation to procurement policy. The government response was to support, or to support in principle, all the recommendations the VCEC made. I think that is important to note. With regard to the delivery of ICT projects, which are a substantial burden for all governments, the Ombudsman's report found that of a sample of 10 projects there was a 110 per cent budget blow-out, totalling more than \$1 billion, with failures across governance and procurement.

I am a little frustrated that I cannot engage — through the Chair, of course — with the member who moved the motion and try to tease out some of these issues more effectively.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Mr P. DAVIS** — I will not be tempted to respond to the interjections in the chamber because they are

obviously disorderly, but more to the point they do not serve to help me to come to the conclusion of my speech, which I am seeking to do for the third time.

My point in summary is that this is a very broad motion to which the member has spoken incredibly narrowly, and he has missed the point entirely. There is a reform process occurring in the area of procurement that is being driven by a number of factors. The government has been informed by its own policy on being elected, which clearly sets out its aspiration to improve access for Victorian businesses to opportunities to participate in engagement with government on commercial terms. It has also been informed by the inquiry into the manufacturing sector by VCEC, by the Victorian Government Purchasing Board's own initiative to improve the platform for accountability, governance and competitiveness in the procurement field, and, as I alluded to in my first attempt to make this speech before I was interrupted, by the substantial inquiry that is being undertaken by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, very much on a cooperative and bipartisan basis, looking at the acquisition and procurement of major infrastructure.

We have seen repeat failures in delivery of that infrastructure, whether it is in the service delivery area, ICT, things like HealthSMART and myki, which have been problematic. We have seen this in terms of the delivery of the hardware, the recent failure of the challenge of the public-private partnership (PPP) on the Ararat prison. We need a better framework to manage these projects in the future, no matter how complex. I do not intend to go into the detail of that, because the committee is midway through its inquiry and is taking evidence, as I said earlier, in public hearings next week. We will get to the end of that inquiry, and I am hopeful there will be a bipartisan view about recommendations to this place.

I believe the motion before the house to establish a further inquiry process is in a sense premature, given that all these things are works in progress end on end. For that substantial reason I am not prepared to support the motion. I say that with a heavy heart, because it is an area in which I have a particular interest. Any effort to advance productivity and efficiency, reduce the burden on taxpayers and improve the outcomes in procurement is worthy, but what this motion asks for is premature and duplicates a lot of other activity which is on foot.

There is no upside to the reference at this time. In future it may be appropriate to review the changes which will presently be put into effect. The outcomes of the PAEC inquiry into infrastructure will also inform the

Parliament, and at some future time it might be appropriate to further consider this, but given that there is a policy shift, or if you like a protocol shift, within government across a whole lot of areas that I have alluded to, now is not the time for this motion. Therefore I oppose it.

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — I will speak for around 10 minutes on Mr Somyurek's motion 343 regarding a referral to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. I note that Mr Somyurek is not in the chamber. If you are the mover of a motion, it is strange not to be present when other members are responding to your motion. I say again that I will be speaking for around 10 minutes, in case Mr Somyurek is in some other part of the building and wants to rush back in time to respond to what we have said.

The Greens are prepared to support the motion, notwithstanding the comments and remarks made by Mr Davis. In his closing remarks he said he had a heavy heart in not being able to support the motion, but he did say it could be a motion for the future. I believe it is a motion that could be put in train now and complement other inquiries that are going on in the Parliament, including the current inquiry of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee into local economic development initiatives in Victoria. The EDIC is due to report at the end of June next year, whereas Mr Somyurek's motion would require reporting at the close of April next year, so the two inquiries could run in parallel. They would be looking at slightly different but related matters.

Amongst other things, the EDIC's inquiry into local economic development initiatives will examine the range of existing local economic development programs being carried out in Victorian municipalities; examine the appropriate role of local government in generating economic development, including the role of both local government and state government in procurement; examine whether the role of local government in rural and regional areas has different economic tasks to that of metropolitan-based municipalities; identify the barriers to local economic development, including compliance costs for business and planning delays, operating in local municipalities and developing solutions to address these barriers; and examine ways in which municipal councils and the Victorian government can support local economic development and investigate best practice. That is what the committee is doing at the moment, and part of that is related to procurement policies.

I note that both Mr Somyurek and Mr Davis mentioned that there is bipartisan commitment to there being value for taxpayers money with regard to procurement policies of the state government. Of course it is understood that because the state has a sizable budget to spend on procurement, government procurement affects employment and industry within the state of Victoria. Mr Davis mentioned that value for money should not just be about least cost but also about quality and broader economic objectives, and the Greens agree with that.

Mr Davis also mentioned that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), of which he is the chair, is currently holding an inquiry on a reference received from the Assembly in May last year and that hearings will be held in Parliament House next week. The terms of reference for that inquiry ask the committee to examine the competencies and skills that public sector managers require for the effective evaluation, decision making and oversight of significant infrastructure projects and protection of the public interest; the extent to which government policies specify these and support the Department of Treasury and Finance's application of these across the public sector; what strategies are in place for the development of such competencies and skills; and whether particular significant infrastructure projects have been developed and implemented in a manner which aligns with the public interest and maximises transparency and accountability for the life cycle of the project. I will come back to the latter — it is covered in paragraph (d) of the terms of reference.

The committee has also been asked to look at relevant infrastructure delivery strategies and practices and the merits of centralisation versus decentralisation of available skilled experts in the Victorian public sector during the life cycle stages of public-private partnership (PPP) projects, including any benefits that may be derived from greater flexibility. This is an important inquiry, because a lot of public funds are invested in infrastructure projects. We could go into the merits of those projects, such as the desalination project and myki. Both those projects have huge question marks over them. I return to the inquiry's terms of reference, and to paragraph (d):

whether particular significant infrastructure projects have been developed and implemented in a manner which aligns with the public interest and maximises transparency and accountability for the life cycle of the project ...

There is no accountability and transparency. Myki documents have not been released, the desalination documents have not all been released and the financial arrangements of many other major projects remain obscure to the public.

I was going to mention the issue of Ararat prison, which Mr Davis mentioned. That would be a case in point of a subject this inquiry of PAEC should be looking very closely at in terms of how that situation arose. How did that PPP fall in a hole after being spruiked by government? Certainly the former government was spruiking the benefits of PPPs across the state. Members of that government said the risks would be taken by the private sector and the benefits would be gathered by the public sector, but in this example — and in many other examples — that is just not the case. In this case the private sector has fallen in a heap, and who is left to pick it up? If the project is going to be finished at all, it will be the public sector which picks it up. I hope that members of PAEC get their teeth stuck into that particular issue.

Mr Davis said he did not want to anticipate any findings of the committee, but the last iteration of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee completed a review of the Audit Act 1994. The report of that review recommended that the Auditor-General have access to public funds and public assets that are held by private companies, whether they are in PPPs or in contracts being carried out for government involving large sums of public money, as happens in other countries. In countries such as New Zealand, such as the UK, such as Canada and even in the state of Western Australia, that is the case. In terms of his response to that report I think I can say the current Minister for Finance, Mr Robert Clark, in principle supports the recommendations of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, but so far we have not seen a bill to amend the Audit Act to that effect. This of course goes to the issue of procurement as well.

I agree with Mr Davis that a lot of issues were covered and canvassed in the VCEC (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission) report into manufacturing he raised. Interestingly enough, one of the key findings of that report was that the total value of manufacturing output has been stable over 10 years even though manufacturing's share of the economy has fallen somewhat. Perhaps the doom and gloom of the situation is overstated. However, work certainly needs to be done to ensure that manufacturing remains a key part of the Victorian economy. I think those are the key messages coming out of that report. It does say, though:

In pursuing this objective, the Victorian government needs to support the operation of markets, intervene only where there is an identified problem, and transparently evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

And its actions should be consistent with the principles of good policy.

Of course one of those interventions is government procurement. All of these things are related but not necessarily being covered in the way Mr Somyurek's motion anticipates. I somewhat agree with Mr Davis that the motion could have been a little bit broader, but I still think it is worth supporting. I think that if this motion were to succeed — and we will be supporting it — the committee could look at these terms of reference and ask for them to be broadened. In looking at the terms of reference the committee could take into account the activities going on in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and it could take into account the findings of the VCEC inquiry into manufacturing in doing its work.

There have been some other reports that I think could be taken into account by the committee if it receives this reference. For example, there was a report by the Auditor-General some years ago, I think in 2007, regarding procurement practices in selected agencies, in which the auditor looked at 15 particular contracts and found that in relation to 6 of them there was good practice but that:

For 9 of the 15 contracts, complete documentation could not be provided to show that important purchasing practices had been conducted. It was unclear whether those practices had been conducted, or whether the agencies were unable to provide documentation because records had not been kept. This was particularly the case for evaluations of tenders.

That is a report that could be looked at by such a committee. I would draw the committee's attention to the report tabled by the Auditor-General in October last year into procurement practices in the health sector, where the auditor found that:

The department has not provided HPV —

Health Purchasing Victoria —

with sufficient support for the discharge of its full legislative responsibilities.

The report did find that Health Purchasing Victoria has quite a big budget and does procure a lot of things on behalf of the health sector, but it found that there are problems in those procurement practices. That is something the committee could be looking at.

There is also a June 2010 report entitled *Managing the Requirements for Disclosing Public Sector Contracts*, for which the auditor looked at 11 departments and about 1900 private sector contracts valued at around \$34 billion. The report found that six departments did not disclose the texts, as was required by the disclosure policies, of 43 of 144 contracts valued at over \$10 million. The total value of these contracts is around \$3 billion, which is 10 per cent of the value of all

contracts. That report made a number of recommendations. I am not sure, and possibly no-one else is, to what extent they have been adhered to by the departments. That is another report the committee could look at in terms of government procurement. Also, in the May 2010 performance reporting by departments of the Victorian government the Auditor-General found that they needed to be strengthened and that in particular the Department of Treasury and Finance needed to play a role.

I think there is room now for the committee to investigate the procurement policies of the Victorian government's partners and agencies. Issues that have already been pointed out by the auditor in several reports could be followed up by the committee and drawn together, in addition to its looking at the VCEC report.

The other point that is worthwhile in Mr Somyurek's motion is the third point relating to comparing Victorian government policies with those in other jurisdictions. I think it would be valuable for the people of Victoria to see how it is done in the other states and territories and also in other comparable countries. That would be valuable information, which I do not think is before the Victorian public at the moment.

There is good work that the committee could do that would be parallel to its other inquiry. It would build upon the work that has already been done, as I have mentioned, by the Auditor-General and VCEC. With those few remarks — —

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I apologise. I did not realise that. With those few remarks, the Greens will support the motion.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thought I was going to speak after Mrs Peulich made her contribution. We always look forward to her making a contribution.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Mr LEANE** — We do. I will speak on Mr Somyurek's motion about setting up a parliamentary committee to investigate the Victorian government's procurement processes. I suppose I understand Mr Somyurek's frustration. This is an obvious vehicle that can be used. There are a number of obvious vehicles that government can use to stimulate and generate employment in this state. Another obvious vehicle is in relation to government services and improving government services through employing

good public servants. However, obviously that is not a vehicle that has been utilised by this government, considering that 4200 public servant jobs have been eliminated of late.

When this government came to power one of its commitments was that it would not take the razor to the public service. It actually has. Another commitment it made was to be an open and transparent government with no spin. The worst spin this government has created, and the worst spin I have heard over the years, is saying that the public service job cuts that are being made will not affect front-line public servants. I am not sure what 'front-line public servants' are. I am not sure that when people take a job they are labelled as a 'backline player' or a 'centreline player' and can therefore expect to be the first one to be taken off the ground. Saying that front-line services will not be affected is spin. It is the worst type of spin for a government that came to power saying it would be open and transparent.

Another obvious way the government can stimulate employment is in relation to the field of major infrastructure projects. This government has talked a lot about major infrastructure projects. They are an obvious way to stimulate employment. Members on this side of the chamber and a lot of people in the Victorian community have resigned themselves to the fact that this government is never going to build anything in relation to major projects. Government members talk the talk but do not walk the walk.

The government creates spin. Two days before the 2010 election Mr Baillieu went to Doncaster and said that it was a great day for Doncaster and that an elected Baillieu government would build a heavy rail line to Doncaster. We know that is not going to happen. He said a lot of things, including that his government was going to do these things and that it would be terrific. We know it is not going to happen.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Mr LEANE** — The jousting across the chamber — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Leane! I will be calling Mrs Peulich next, so if she wishes to comment on Mr Leane's contribution she will have ample opportunity to do so then.

**Mr LEANE** — I hope the government builds a rail line, but I know it will not. In recent times government members have spruiked building an east-west tunnel. They joust across the chamber, saying, 'What is your position in opposition about an east-west tunnel?'. That

question would be irrelevant if the government built it now. If the government were building the tunnel and spruiking it, it would not matter what we thought because the tunnel would be being built. It would not matter what we thought about anything, but we will wait and see in regard to that issue. If major projects went ahead, procurement would be an important part of them. All Mr Somyurek is asking from members of this chamber is something that was asked from members during the last term of government.

I am sure the Deputy President would know better than me about issues in relation to the role he played during the last term of government. I have to say that when a member of this chamber moved a motion to send a reference to a joint parliamentary committee — this was done about half a dozen times — I cannot remember one instance of members of the previous government actually voting against one of those particular types of motions.

In this term of government over half a dozen of these motions to send a reference to a joint parliamentary committee to look into an important issue for the Victorian community must have been moved in this chamber. Maybe there have been a lot more. Perhaps one motion was passed, but the others have been voted down by this government. This new government was going to be open and transparent. Everything about this government was supposed to be open and be able to be looked at.

**Ms Pulford** — The Baillieutopia!

**Mr LEANE** — The Baillieutopia! It has just not made it; it is just not there. 'Seek and you will receive' was the message of the last election, but now the message is 'hide and seek'. There is a lot more hiding than receiving. That seems to be what this new, open and transparent government is doing. It said it would be happy if someone wanted to look into something, yet this government has been voting down motions to send references to joint parliamentary committees that are controlled by a majority of government members. We have been lucky: this government has voted with the rest of the members of this chamber to pass one motion in relation to this!

I remember Philip Davis during the term of the last government focusing on the rights and needs — which were above the executive — of this chamber to scrutinise legislation. We would hear thundering contributions from Mr Philip Davis about the right of this chamber and the importance of this chamber, the Parliament and where the Parliament sits. We did not hear that sort of contribution from Mr Philip Davis

during this debate and we have not heard that sort of contribution from any government member since the change of government. No government members have got up and spruiked the importance and the need of Parliament to be able to scrutinise the executive.

What government members have done is impede the Parliament in every way they can. They have used rule 21-19 and impeded the Parliament from looking into any issue of concern — any issue they think might make them look less than fantastic. I have to say that when these motions were passed during the last parliamentary term and these references were sent to joint parliamentary committees, the findings and recommendations were all productive and all suited to the purpose the committees are set up for — which is to recommend better ways to benefit the people we represent in this chamber.

I strongly support this reference going to the committee. It is not the biggest deal in the world; it is a reference to a committee. It is a shame the government has taken the position it has. I am convinced on form that this will continue and that any reference by the Parliament to any joint parliamentary committee — not just the issue in Mr Somyurek's motion but any in the future — will not succeed because this promise of being a new, open and transparent government is just a lie. It is just as big a lie as the heavy rail line being built to Doncaster. It is just the same. I support the motion. We know it is going to go down and that rule 21-19 will apply. I suppose the government will have to defend itself somewhere down the track. One day it will have to answer to something, and we will see how it goes.

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — It is always my luck to strike you, Deputy President, during my contributions. I acknowledge Mr Leane's desire for my interaction during the debate. Hopefully some of what I say may be relevant to what he said. Basically the Labor Party makes one very flawed mistake — that is, it equates words with action.

**Ms Pennicuik** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — And the Greens, regrettably — words with action. Mr Leane, Ms Pennicuik and other members of the opposition want another inquiry. Ms Pennicuik spent a considerable time itemising and identifying the various inquiries that have been undertaken on this very important issue. I will borrow the four she specifically cited just to make sure that Ms Pennicuik's research skills do not go unnoticed. The reports are entitled *Performance Reporting by Departments, Managing the Requirements for*

*Disclosing Private Sector Contracts, Procurement Practices in the Health Sector* and even *Investment Attraction*, which was tabled today. I note some significant reports have been excluded.

If the opposition has not wised up, one of the major reasons it lost government was waste and mismanagement and that it equates words, including public relations and spin, with action. It failed to act on a whole range of issues over its period of government and has wasted a lot of money since that time. We have had debates here on some iconic examples of waste and mismanagement: its HealthSMART, its myki, its ultranet, its desal project, its smart meters — the list of major projects mismanaged by the former Labor government is endless and is consuming and gobbling up a lot of precious Victorian resources and dollars.

In fact there was another Auditor-General's report, which I think was on transport projects. It reported that the value for money of transport projects in the public sector was 30 per cent less than that of those in the private sector. Clearly the layer of fat in procurement and in contracting out was very substantial, and the waste was substantial.

Regrettably the Labor Party not only believes words equal action but it is also absolutely adept at wasting money, mostly because its members have never had to manage a lot of their own. They do not run businesses; they do not draw on that culture. Most of them have been drawn from the political offices of their factional bosses, their heads and their mentors, whether it is from electorate offices, from being advisers or from the union movement as paid organisers. When everyone else is protesting and losing money by supporting stop work action — misguidedly — their union bosses are still getting paid, and they are getting paid big bickies.

Sometimes what they get is not officially reported, as we saw, for example, with the Craig Thomson debacle, where obviously there was a substantial misuse of union members money. I am not that naive to believe for 1 minute that this was a one-off. I believe this is endemic in the union movement and that there are some practices that inflate the cost of projects to taxpayers, to the public purse, that need to be cleaned out. This is precisely one of the reasons the Premier has taken up the issue of construction costs through the Council of Australian Governments.

We have had a lot of inquiries. It is now time for action. In relation to this motion, that action is being taken by the minister responsible for procurement, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips. I completely concur with the chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates

Committee, Philip Davis, who said that it may be appropriate for PAEC — and it will be appropriate for it, as a key committee of scrutiny — to oversee the implementation of a new framework and new guidelines. That is really the basis of why a coalition government was elected. It is entirely appropriate that PAEC and other instruments of scrutiny give oversight to such changes to see whether or not they are delivering better outcomes.

The fact that the Labor Party combined with the Greens is calling for this inquiry at this time shows that they have not learnt anything. There have been a stack of inquiries and there is a consultative process on track, and I will go through that in a moment, in which the government consults the various stakeholders in order to make sure it delivers better outcomes, better value for money and better community outcomes and that they are implemented fairly and transparently. That shows that Labor's notion of process management is deeply flawed. That is the reason, regrettably, for Labor always mucking up the management of money and the administration of government, and it is usually the reason it loses office.

Another point Mr Leane made is that this coalition government's desire is to press ahead with a well-established fact — that there were inadequate and flawed procurement practices, which have been exposed, combined with mismanagement of significant infrastructure projects, including IT projects — and that somehow its members have thumbed their noses at it and have been blockers in this Parliament. Another inquiry parallel with or on top of the extensive work that has been done — and we all know that most of the departments are focused on fixing up these problems, as is the government — shows that opposition members are the blockers. To engage in yet another inquiry means to go back to step 1. It will create more uncertainty and more delays in rolling out important reform in procurement. Mr Leane calls it the 21-19 rule. Guess what? Victorians voted for the 21-19 rule, and in 2010 Victorians voted for common sense.

We might have a majority by only a slender margin, but common sense fortunately still prevails in this and the other chamber. It would be absolutely nonsensical — lacking in common sense — to now engage in yet another inquiry into procurement, another study, when the facts are well established, and some of the relevant reasons have been well documented by various Auditor-General reports; when the departments are focused on it; when the minister is focused on it; and when there is a process in place. And, yes, I completely agree with Mr Philip Davis that implementation of a new framework should always be scrutinised. I have no

doubt whatsoever that the Auditor-General will do that in turn.

Ms Pennicuik said she did not know whether the Auditor-General was going to do that or not, but if Ms Pennicuik were on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, as she or a member of her party should be — the Greens have chosen not to be members of key scrutiny committees of this chamber — she would know, and she would then lend her strength and wisdom to that process. The Greens have opted not to be a part of that process, so they cannot have it both ways.

**Ms Pennicuik** — It would be good if it wasn't chaired by a government member.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Ms Pennicuik, the fact of who chairs the committee should not necessarily be pertinent to getting an outcome if the processes are respected and if the bipartisan or tripartisan nature of those committees is respected. Ms Pennicuik will recall the process we went through when we looked at the container deposit legislation. It was a comprehensive, fair process. Members should contrast that with the process the Greens were party to, along with the Labor Party, on a reference committee in recent times on — what was the name of the inquiry, Mrs Kronberg?

**Mr Scheffer** — Oh, you know!

**Mrs PEULICH** — I am trying to block it out! Let me tell members: Ms Pennicuik, for whom I have often had and still have a lot of regard — I like Ms Pennicuik — was not shy about flexing muscle and using the majority numbers to crunch things through, as demonstrated in 50 divisions on 34 motions. In this chamber Ms Pennicuik calls for improved and strengthened democracy, but when she gets a taste of power it is a very different game. She crunches it like the best of them. She loves it! We have also seen that in the federal Parliament where the Greens have the balance of power, so let us not be green about the Greens. They are red at heart. They feign a belief in a greater, better, more inclusive democracy, but give them the taste of power and they crunch it. They grind you into the ground and common sense plays no role. Now I ask Mr Leane: have I sufficiently quickened the pulse?

Fortunately for Victorians the 21 to 19 rule — the rule of Victorians' common sense — means that the waste and mismanagement identified by the Auditor-General in successive reports on key infrastructure projects and in relation to key expenditures can stop; we can rein it in. It is important to rein it in to make sure that the

Victorian community gets better value for money, that businesses are better supported and that more projects are delivered for Victorians. Why would we need another inquiry when there have been so many?

I am referring to some notes, and I wish I had my glasses on so I could read them. Does anyone have 1-plus glasses?

**Ms Pennicuik** — Here you are.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Are they 1s? Thank you. You can see that I've recently lost — —

**Ms Pennicuik** — They're very powerful.

**Mr Scheffer** — That's cooperation.

**Mrs PEULICH** — In the main chamber Ms Pennicuik is entirely cooperative, but given a taste of power she would probably rip these out of my hands. They are absolutely illuminating, Ms Pennicuik — without the green tinge!

The minister, the government, the Premier and the entire coalition are strong supporters of improving government procurement practices and creating opportunities for Victorian businesses to participate in government purchasing. The priorities that have been identified by the government in respect of procurement policy include probity and transparency — and another report and losing our way in the maze is not going to do the trick. Another priority is value for money — this is so that we can stop that waste and mismanagement. That is what Victorians voted for; that is the 21 to 19 rule.

Another priority is equity for local business. Often former Premier Jeff Kennett is vilified by the left and the Labor Party, but the biggest thing he did to support the Victorian economy and Victorian business was his policy on contracting out. You speak to anyone in Victoria and you will see they recognise that as a very significant boon to economic activity in Victoria. Along with equity for local business, another priority is competitive markets.

The Victorian Government Purchasing Board is proposing the introduction of the new procurement platform to modernise and improve the policy framework that governs the supply of goods and services to departments, responding to the problems that have been identified by successive Auditor-General's reports amongst others. To make sure we have a best practice model, in developing the new framework the VGPB has consulted across various jurisdictions, in particular with the Australian

Procurement and Construction Council, which is considered to be a leader in government procurement reform. To further support the direction of this reform, the VGPB is undertaking a period of industry consultation with particular focus on enabling small business and local industry to participate.

The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission's *Victorian Manufacturing: Meeting the Challenges — Inquiry into a More Competitive Victorian Manufacturing Industry* report also made a number of recommendations in relation to procurement policy. The government response was to support or at least support in principle all of those recommendations. Mr Somyurek was right; it was a good report, and the government has taken the best of it and is moving ahead with it. It is not going back to first base. We are not chasing our tails; we are moving forward.

There is no doubt: Labor failed in the field of procurement. We know that, as I said before, from a range of reports. One that stands out in my mind is the 2011 Ombudsman's report into ICT-enabled projects, which looked at 10 projects and showed a 110 per cent budget blow-out totalling more than \$1 billion. That is \$1 billion in lost revenue that could have been applied to produce other benefits, whether they be related to roads, services or other much-needed community initiatives. That report also identified multiple governance and procurement failures.

We do not need to revisit the facts. We know the facts; we need to implement change. Labor's proposed inquiry, therefore, is not only pointless, it will contribute to even further confusion and greater uncertainty. It has failed to understand that the next step is not action, not more words and not more inquiries, but implementation. There is an appropriate role for scrutiny of that implementation further down the track in line with the role of any Parliament, including this chamber.

This government is focused on improving access for local businesses to government procurement opportunities. Ms Pennicuik picked up on the fact that that is part of the terms of reference that the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee has recently received for its inquiry. I am a member of that committee. It is going to be a very comprehensive inquiry into something that is very important — that is, what role local government plays in economic initiatives. One significant aspect of the inquiry is to determine what role local government plays or does not play in supporting local economic development. There are some good examples of where local government

plays a very good role, and there are lots of very ordinary and unimpressive examples.

I do not believe there is a need to revisit well-established facts or to take it back to where we might have been if Labor were still in office. We need to progress this issue, and we need to progress the inquiry we have been asked to conduct. The committee has five members. It is a comprehensive and important inquiry, and I believe the workload of the committee is such that not only is there no need for the inquiry proposed by Labor but it would detract from the important work that the government needs to undertake.

This motion highlights why Labor lost its way. Labor members do not have an understanding of government and parliamentary processes. To suggest that we should somehow disregard the well-established facts in various Auditor-General's reports and other reports that have been tabled in this chamber, go back to first base, revisit the whole question and create greater uncertainty shows that Labor has a lot more to do in its development of policy.

With those few words I look forward to the implementation of a more rigorous and effective procurement framework, and I commend the minister, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, who has been undertaking that work. I would also like to commend all ministers who know they can stem the waste by getting it right and making sure their departments get it right as well. I have great pleasure in recommending to this chamber that we should not support this motion, much as I commend Mr Somyurek's efforts to focus debate on some of these very important issues.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! I advise Mrs Peulich and all members that reflections on the Chair at the beginning of a contribution to debate will not be tolerated. I am prepared to accept any criticisms or comments when I am sitting over there, but not here. I will not accept such comments, whether it is me sitting in this place or any other Acting President.

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak briefly in support of Mr Somyurek's motion. Mr Somyurek and others have gone fairly thoroughly through the importance of doing the scrutiny here and the jobs nature of the motion, but I want to speak briefly in rebuttal of what in a sense is increasingly the tone of this government. I say in all sincerity that that tone is not dissimilar from the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico or, dare I say it, the old Communist Party in the Soviet Union. I will explain why I say that. It is because there is an unbelievable arrogance emerging whereby if the government says it

scrutinises itself, that is okay. This is the tone of where this debate is coming to.

You can get up and say, 'Wow — Mr Philip Davis, that impartial champion of independence of the Parliament who votes with the government every time, 21 to 19, is dealing with an inquiry — heaven forbid!'. The executive government has steered an inquiry to a committee it controls — but how dare anybody even suggest a review? How dare they suggest the house of review in the Parliament actually refer an inquiry to a joint investigatory committee on which the government has the numbers? How dare they! Everything is okay because this government, this repository of every bit of wisdom in the solar system, has reflected on its own internal procedures and devices and therefore knows what is happening, and it will consistently vote against any scrutiny whatsoever. It is little wonder. These are the same people who muzzled Ches Baragwanath when he was Auditor-General because they did not like the scrutiny, and they are the same people who every single time in this place vote to stop any scrutiny.

Mrs Peulich, who has left the chamber, was saying that we on this side should understand the great significance of the Australian Procurement and Construction Council and the great wisdom that council has because it is considering this matter. I attended about six meetings of that council, including two chaired by that champion of the Howard administration, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Peter Slipper, who chaired that council on two occasions, and let me assure the house that I would prefer a joint investigatory committee of the Victorian Parliament to report on some of these matters than to rely on these federal bodies.

In conclusion, because I do not want to take away Mr Somyurek's thunder in replying, I will make an observation about the selective nature of the coalition in wanting to rely on federal bodies to report to it. When it comes to anything to do with the Murray-Darling Basin we see this attitude of: 'You cannot trust the federal Labor water minister, Tony Burke. Everything federal is terrible'. When we deal with anything to do with cattle in the high country it is: 'You cannot rely on the feds. Everything they do is biased'. However, when it comes to any other form of review that we wish to do in this place, like on coal seam gas or any other issue, when we seek to refer such issues to joint investigatory committees, why would we waste Victoria's time and the precious time of the coalition majorities? It is because you can rely on the feds to provide impartial advice on coal seam gas and presumably on procurement.

On the one hand the coalition says, ‘Don’t go to Tony Burke’s department for advice on the Murray-Darling Basin or high country cattle’, and on the other it says, ‘Go to Tony Burke for advice on coal seam gas’. This house should show some courage. I do not hold it against Mr Ramsay, Mr Ondarchie or Ms Crozier, or any members who were not part of the last Parliament. At least they are not being inconsistent. However, I would say to the other members of the coalition that they should remember how they voted in the last Parliament and remember what they said about the sanctity of the house of review, about the importance of scrutiny and how governments should not fear scrutiny. For those members opposite who were in the last Parliament, the change is amazing. I am not going to hold to account the members I named, because they were not in this house while their colleagues did exactly the opposite to what they are doing now. If members opposite are not fearful of scrutiny, they should let it happen.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party of Mexico eventually lost government because no-one was prepared to scrutinise it. The communist party of the Soviet Union collapsed because no-one was prepared to scrutinise it. If the great leader says, ‘Jump’, and you all ask, ‘How high?’, eventually the great leader will get it wrong and you will all fall in a heap.

I urge members opposite to have a little courage, to trust their three coalition colleagues who dominate this committee and give it the reference. If the all-enlightened and esteemed Mr Rich-Phillips, Mr Slipper’s successor, or whoever else the coalition is looking to provide better advice, can work it out, presumably the three coalition members of that committee can work it out too. There is nothing to fear. It is a little bit of scrutiny from a committee that is chaired by a government member. Why is it that the coalition cannot let go and let the house scrutinise something, or more importantly let the three coalition members of the committee, who outnumber the committee’s two Labor members, just have a little look at it? It might actually make the government look a little better. I urge the house to support the motion.

**Mr SOMYUREK** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I take this opportunity to set the record straight, particularly in relation to a few matters that were raised by members of the opposition.

Firstly, Mr Philip Davis challenged the figures that I quoted in regard to the Victorian government’s purchase of motor vehicles. During my speech I stated that 63 per cent of the vehicles purchased by the Victorian government were built in Australia. If

Mr Philip Davis were to go back to *Hansard*, he would see that on a number of occasions I stressed that I was using a broad definition of Victorian government or state government — that is, it included departments, statutory bodies and agencies. Mr Davis, in attempting to set the record straight, quoted figures that used a very narrow definition of state government. He used the figure that Mr Rich-Phillips has been using for a while now. Mr Rich-Phillips issued a press release a few weeks ago, straight after Ford laid off 440 workers. I think we are comparing apples and pears. It is a matter of definition.

The source of my figures is the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) and the VFACTS registration reports. Industry will tell you that the VFACTS reports are almost considered to be the official source for Australian vehicle sales data. In the VFACTS reports the sales data attributed to state governments includes vehicles purchased by state government departments, statutory bodies and agencies.

Mr Davis also objected to me criticising the Baillieu government for holding a Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission inquiry into the manufacturing sector. According to Mr Davis, I broke some sort of unilateral, bipartisan and tacit agreement on the sanctity of VCEC — namely, that we in opposition should be supporting VCEC no matter what it does. The fact of the matter is that VCEC is not the appropriate body through which the Baillieu government should be creating its manufacturing policy. The Liberal Party, having been in opposition, should have come into government armed with a manufacturing policy. I say to Mr Davis that there has never been bipartisan support or agreement that VCEC should be the policy development arm of the Liberal Party.

Mrs Peulich made the comment that this report will potentially waste taxpayers money and duplicate other reports that have looked into procurement, including manufacturing reports. I am critical of there being too many manufacturing reports. Manufacturing reports have looked at procurement, but what I see is a more comprehensive, targeted inquiry into procurement.

Talking about waste — how hypocritical! Three months before this government assumed office, the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee (EDIC) handed down a 350-page report in which the committee made 68 recommendations. There were very senior people on that committee. They travelled the world, and they came up with 68 very good recommendations. However, about four months after the report was handed down, the Baillieu government totally disregarded that report and engaged in producing

yet another manufacturing report. I have read the resulting VCEC report and it duplicates the EDIC report. You cannot get worse waste than that. In four or five months, you have two manufacturing reports. That is the embodiment of waste.

I do not understand the incredulity of members about my proposal to ask the people's representatives — parliamentarians — to review or investigate an important issue like procurement. After all, the policy development and scrutiny mechanisms of this Parliament are a committee system. Why the incredulity? I cannot understand it.

In conclusion, the procurement of goods and services is a very big issue, not only in Victoria but in all advanced economies across the world. It would be a worthwhile inquiry to have. With that, I commend the motion to the house.

#### House divided on motion:

##### *Ayes, 19*

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

##### *Noes, 21*

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

#### Motion negatived.

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

#### Statements on reports and papers

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — By leave, I move:

That statements on reports and papers be taken at 5.00 p.m. this day.

#### Motion agreed to.

### HOUSING: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — I thank Mr Jennings for his gesture. I also thank Mr Scheffer, who very nearly had to start off on my behalf as I was called away to a meeting; however, this has worked out well. It is my pleasure to commence debate on this motion. To begin, I move:

That this house condemns the Baillieu-Ryan government's poor performance in relation to the provision of public housing for the most vulnerable people in our community and notes that the government —

- (1) has provided no new funding to build new housing since coming to office in 2010;
- (2) refuses to rule out privatisation of public housing;
- (3) threatens to increase rents;
- (4) plans to introduce fixed-term tenure; and
- (5) has cut funding to the social housing advocacy and support program, placing Victorians that are homeless or at risk of homelessness in an even more precarious position;

and notes that the public consultation period on the government's *Pathways to a Fair and Sustainable Social Housing System* ended on 31 July 2012, and calls on the government to provide certainty to public housing tenants by clearly stating its intentions in relation to asset sales, tenure and rental increases.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! I cannot hear the member moving her motion. If the Minister for Health and Mr Ramsay could have their conversation either elsewhere or more quietly, it would be appreciated.

**Ms PULFORD** — This motion condemns the Baillieu-Ryan government's poor performance in relation to the provision of public housing in Victoria. Public housing is the source of accommodation and shelter for the most vulnerable people in our community, so this is an incredibly important responsibility of government.

The motion has five points that I wish the house to observe. These are that the government has provided no new funding to build new housing since coming to office in 2010; refuses to rule out privatisation of public housing; threatens to increase rents; plans to introduce fixed-term tenure; and has cut funding to the social housing advocacy and support program, which removes an important support for people who require assistance

to enter into public housing or to maintain a tenancy that is at risk of coming undone.

The motion also notes that the government has recently undertaken consultation in relation to its discussion paper, *Pathways to a Fair and Sustainable Social Housing System*, and so I invite government speakers in this debate to provide some clarity as to the government's intentions for those people who would be affected by the proposed changes.

We have now had two budgets since the change of government, and not one dollar has been directed towards new dwellings. The population of Victoria continues to increase, and with it the demand for public housing. The target for upgrades to existing dwellings is the lowest it has been in decades. This is demonstrably not a priority for the Baillieu-Ryan government, and it should be. There are some 6500 additional housing units that have been built in Victoria in the last four years or so, and, as members will recall, many of these were funded by the commonwealth government's stimulus package. There were certainly large amounts of money targeted towards public housing in the federal government's response to the global financial crisis, but the Baillieu government has not taken any steps to improve access to public housing for people in Victoria.

The government has been consulting with the public in relation to its discussion paper entitled *Pathways to a Fair and Sustainable Social Housing System*, and there are three main elements causing concern amongst public housing residents in Victoria. The first, as I indicated, is a proposal to introduce fixed-term tenure. Because public housing in Victoria over the last decade has become highly targeted, there is a high proportion of people living in public housing who are social security beneficiaries — some 90 per cent or so. It is not a matter of any contention that we are talking about many of the poorest and most vulnerable people in our community.

The second area the government wants to have a look at, as flagged in the discussion paper, is a change to the rent threshold. For decades the standard rent threshold in Victoria has been fixed at 25 per cent of income, but it would appear that the government has plans to change that. Anglicare Australia recently released a report entitled *Rental Affordability Snapshot*, covering almost 15 500 properties. A number of locations across Australia were surveyed to assess the availability and affordability of rental properties in the private rental market for people on low incomes.

Anglicare found that of the 15 429 properties listed for rent on realestate.com.au on Friday, 13 April — not a particularly auspicious date — only 2 per cent were affordable to single-parent working families on minimum incomes. No properties were affordable for singles on a minimum wage or those on income support, including the Newstart allowance, the parenting payment, the youth allowance or the aged pension. Anglicare's *Rental Affordability Snapshot* defines 'affordable rent' as that which takes up less than 30 per cent of the household income. This is a survey that Anglicare has been doing for a number of years, and Melbourne, the Latrobe Valley and Ballarat were considered in this year's snapshot taken as recently as April.

We know that for many people there is nowhere else to go when access to public housing is denied, and for the government to introduce fixed-term tenure is an incredibly concerning prospect for those people. I invite government speakers in this debate to provide some suggestions as to how fixed tenure would work when the current occupants of public housing are overwhelmingly on fixed social security incomes and have very limited options in the private rental market, as the Anglicare report clearly indicates.

The third area that the government has flagged in its discussion paper is that of stock transfers. I would ask that the government rule out wholesale sell-offs of public housing to the private sector. This is the question that people living in public housing would like answered, and the opposition seeks an answer to this question from the government today. There are around 68 000 public housing dwellings in Victoria, many of which have multiple residents living in them. Around a third of these dwellings are in regional Victoria. Some of those residents have experienced, and are experiencing, great disadvantage, and the government needs to provide some answers to their questions.

I was going to say it is the latest breaking news of cruel punitive funding cuts by the Baillieu-Ryan government, but that changes on a daily basis. One that has recently come to my attention is the proposed cut in funding for SHASP (social housing advocacy and support program). I met with PACT Community Support, a local organisation in my electorate. It is one of nine providers of advocacy support to public housing tenants in Victoria that are funded under SHASP, which provides support to around 6000 Victorian households a year. Their clients are people who are experiencing homelessness or are at immediate risk of homelessness.

Last year PACT Community Support, the provider that assists people in the Grampians-Wimmera region in my

electorate, provided assistance to 800 clients — that is, 800 households. I am told they include many people who are fleeing domestic violence at home and that it is not uncommon for a single parent and some dependent children to be counted as one of those 800 clients. We are talking about thousands of people in PACT's area of provision of SHASP services. Across the state there are vastly larger numbers of people across 6000 households.

The Baillieu-Ryan government's proposed cuts to funding for SHASP advocacy services are of the order of 30 per cent. The government has said that it aims to reduce homelessness, that it wants to keep children safe and that it wants to make the public housing system as effective as it can be. The government has said also that there will be no cuts to front-line services. If the people who work as advocates for those trying to establish new public housing tenancies or who are at risk of losing existing public housing tenancies are not providing front-line services, then I need a new dictionary. They look pretty much like front-line service providers to me. I have spoken to people who are undertaking this work at PACT. They do hands-on case management work for people who — for reasons of injury, illness, disability, precarious employment, unemployment, mental illness or drug or alcohol addiction — are overrepresented in the community of people in Victoria who are experiencing homelessness. I would have thought that these people could do with a hand rather than a funding cut from government.

The proposed cuts will have an immediate impact. By way of example, as one of the organisations that provide SHASP services across Victoria, as I said, last year PACT provided assistance to some 800 households. The numbers are similar each year, and I am told that it provides assistance to 800 to 1000 households year in and year out. If the government proceeds with the proposed funding cuts, it will mean that in future many hundreds of those people will not be able to be assisted. As I said, currently across the state 6000 households are being assisted with complexities involved in their tenancies. The proposed cuts will mean that around 2000 of those households will miss out in 2013–14.

The proposed cuts to this funding are an incredibly nasty act of this government that has said there will be no cuts to front-line services. It has said also that it wants to support vulnerable people in our community, yet some of the people who are at greatest risk of homelessness will pick up the phone to speak to someone at the advocacy service and that service will not be able to take the call. With 30 per cent of its funding gone, the advocacy service will not have the

capacity to provide the same level of service that it has provided. It is a disgrace. The government needs to review this urgently, before it is too late and we see the consequence of additional people experiencing homelessness in communities right across Victoria. The government needs to plug this gap and find the funds that are needed to allow these services to continue this important work.

Not only is the government failing to invest in new public housing dwellings but it is undertaking a review that is frankly terrifying. It introduces concepts of tenure and rent increases to people who are least able to meet those challenges. We know the private rental market is incredibly tight for people on fixed incomes. Finally, the advocates assist people in places such as the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and in departmental offices by filling in the forms required by the department to get that foot in the door to housing for people who cannot live where they have been living. They are in a whole range of circumstances, many of them tragic. Some of them have just had awfully bad luck and are in need for reasons completely beyond their control. These are exactly the people for whom the government needs to be providing support.

In the debate today the government needs to take the opportunity to provide certainty to people on the three questions that have been flagged in the review. I invite future speakers in the debate to do that. The government needs to step up in the next budget and provide funds for additional dwellings, improve the rate of upgrades to public housing stock and restore funding to advocacy services. In the scheme of things it is a modest amount of money that provides far greater benefits than any saving the cuts could make to the budget bottom line. Keeping people in housing is critical so that kids can go to school and the grown-ups can continue to deal with the demands of their daily circumstances.

The government has failed. I am disappointed that the Minister for Housing is not here to join in this debate. I would welcome her participation in the debate at some point this afternoon. I urge the government to lift its game in this area, and I urge the house to support the motion.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise today to speak against Ms Pulford's motion 377, which is about public housing. I thank her for the opportunity to talk about public housing in the state of Victoria. What I am surprised about is the sudden epiphany of Labor Party members on community and social housing. Where were they for 11 years of mismanagement? I have to ask: when they were in

government, why did they not care? Why did they not do their jobs? As for Ms Pulford, I like her, and I know she cares. But I know, and I suspect that she knows, that the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments let down Victoria in the area of public housing. I suspect she knows that.

Let us talk about Ms Pulford's motion. Let us talk about Labor's track record in public housing. I refer specifically to the Victorian Auditor-General's report of April 2012, *Access to Public Housing*. Here it is, a solid document. I suggest my friends opposite read it because it is a bit of a revelation. It may well be the cause of this epiphany today. It is a scathing report, and it highlights Labor's history of poor financial and asset management over 11 years. The Auditor-General was critical of its lack of effective and efficient strategic planning and its poor financial management, not a term that is uncommon in relation to 11 years of the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments — 11 years of poor financial management and poor asset management.

People know that the best way to get good value out of your assets is to ensure that they are utilised and optimised — something new to the Australian Labor Party. The key recommendations of the Auditor-General's *Access to Public Housing* report of April 2012 included the need to develop options for a better operating model and better asset management along with the need to develop long-term plans for public housing. It was a scathing report, but there were a lot of truths in there about Labor's mismanagement of public housing. It was an indictment yet an indicator of its capacity to manage finances and assets. It was some revelation for the people of Victoria — but we knew, and the people of Victoria knew in November 2010 as well.

There has been a history of inaction. Labor was warned by the Auditor-General in 2004 and again in 2007 about the maintenance liability. Again in 2012 the Auditor-General was very clear in his indictment of the Australian Labor Party and the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments when he said:

... the division lacks basic information, such as accurate property condition data, to inform decisions. These failings expose a serious deficit in asset management skills within DHS, which must be addressed.

He also said:

It is unclear why the division has not introduced longer term strategies to address this acute situation given that it has developed over at least a decade.

On financial management and the structural deficit the Auditor-General said:

In its 2007 report, the board —

that is, the housing review board —

noted that the division's underlying financial position has been deteriorating since 1998–99.

Who took government in 1999? It has been deteriorating ever since, and today we get this epiphany, this sudden revelation, this sudden desire to care, now that the ALP members are in opposition. Where were they in government? Where were they in the Labor strongholds of the Northern Metropolitan Region — Heidelberg, Epping, Preston, Northcote, Brunswick, Collingwood and Richmond? Were they caring for people in social housing back then? Silence — that is what we had.

Most damning, the Auditor-General found that despite these reviews — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I will take up Ms Mikakos's interjection — she who is apparently of the Northern Metropolitan Region. She is now trying to defend her government's inaction over 11 years. She will get her chance today, and she had better tell the truth because Victorians know how the Labor government let them down over 11 years. Today is Ms Mikakos's chance to put her hand on her heart and say, 'We are sorry, Victorians; we let you down so many times'. Here is her chance today. Today we will find out if opposition members are genuine or not and whether they tell Victorians the truth.

If Ms Mikakos is criticising the Auditor-General's report, she should come out and do it in her presentation today. In that report the Auditor-General said:

Despite these reviews, neither the board, the division, nor the government —

the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments —

developed or acted upon any long-term strategies to address the deteriorating financial position.

That quote comes from page 11 if Ms Mikakos wants to look at it. There it is right there. Asset management under Labor put the housing portfolio at risk. The Auditor-General found that the lack of asset management has placed at risk approximately 10 000 properties which have significant maintenance required.

I have been blessed to be appointed chair of the Carlton community liaison committee (CLC) in relation to the public housing estate in Carlton. The former government chair was none other than Ms Mikakos, who somehow by chance found herself in the Northern Metropolitan Region — by accident no doubt. Maybe the Navman was not working that day or maybe she lost her *Melway*, but she found herself in the Northern Metropolitan Region and was the former government chair of the Carlton CLC. After a couple of meetings to get to know the people, they said this to me: 'Nobody has cared about us for the last 10 years'. They also said to both the minister and me: 'Finally someone is here to listen to us'. Ms Mikakos asked me early in my parliamentary life to hang my head in shame. Today it is her turn in her contribution to stand up and apologise to the people of Carlton, because I have got to know them quite well. You know what — they know me, they do not know Ms Mikakos.

The bottom line here is that Labor's mismanagement has put the housing portfolio at risk. The tragedy is that each dollar of taxpayers money — taxpayers who require return on their investment — that was squandered by Labor's poor management could have been used to make a difference to the housing stock. The Bracks and Brumby governments did not do it. They blew it. There is a tangible cost of the mismanagement to Victoria's public housing tenants, as identified by the Auditor-General. Ms Mikakos can feel free to criticise if she wants, but the Auditor-General said it in his report.

On coming to government the current Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, acted quickly to address the deficiencies in the management of the housing division. Firstly, at her initiative an independent, third-party review of the finances of the housing and community building division of the Department of Human Services was commissioned, including a detailed review of program expenditure.

Secondly, the minister directed that a comprehensive property condition audit of the housing portfolio be undertaken. Get it going! The Auditor-General's report confirmed the need for this to be done, and Labor did not do it for so many years. Here we are, and today the Labor Party has had an epiphany! I do not know what they are drinking down at West Melbourne, but suddenly they have woken up to the fact that there are people who need our support.

Thirdly, one of the minister's priorities was to better manage the vacant stock to ensure that houses did not sit idle and were used in the most efficient way to support those who need housing. This includes such

things as reducing the days vacant before re-tenanting and conducting maintenance more quickly as the tenants move on. Did those opposite do their job? They failed to do it, and now this minister is doing it.

The Minister for Housing also called for an audit of vacant stock that resulted in approximately 1000 properties being returned to tenancy, and she has commenced the development of a new housing framework to ensure that scarce public housing resources are allocated to the people in most need of assistance and to set a pathway to increase the stock of social housing to ensure that public housing in Victoria is financially sustainable. Ms Mikakos might want to write that down. I agree that it is a term foreign to her and the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments; she might want to write it down.

An evaluation of the Nation Building program has commenced. These projects were 1000 behind target when the coalition came to government due to the mismanagement of the former government. The program will deliver more public housing than was originally contracted with the commonwealth, and Victoria is now leading the way. The coalition is getting on with the job of fixing the mess left behind by Labor.

Let me address public housing funding and privatisation. The Baillieu coalition government has announced investment to the value of \$400 million in its first 20 months in government — 20 months, versus 11 years. I repeat: we have announced \$400 million in our first 20 months. By the end of 2012–13 the coalition will have delivered over 5000 homes. Labor disposed of 8000 properties in its 11 years. Labor transferred approximately \$155 million worth of public housing to housing associations in 2008 without consultation. There was not even a sham public consultation; it was done without consultation. Maybe they could have got the former Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, involved. We understand he is good at consultations.

In 2008, \$155 million worth of public housing was transferred to housing associations without talking to anybody — surprise, surprise! Labor then promised to transfer 2600 more, valued at \$475 million, at the end of the 2010 election. Far from Labor's notion that the coalition government has not invested a single dollar in social housing, as I said, this government has invested \$400 million in its first 20 months in government.

I turn to the Norlane regeneration project. Last week the coalition government secured a pilot of the national disability insurance scheme for Barwon. Despite political resistance from Canberra, we have done it.

There is a better deal on the table for the people of Barwon. The Norlane initiative invests \$80 million in 320 public and affordable private homes to uplift an area neglected by Labor.

It is interesting to be a member of Parliament representing the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, which I share with my colleague and friend the Honourable Matthew Guy. The clear message out there all the time is, 'Labor neglected us, because its members thought we were the Labor heartland. They ignored the north of Melbourne'. Labor ignored them. A consistent message I am getting in the Northern Metropolitan Region is, 'They ignored us, because we are the Labor heartland; they did not care about us'. In the Assembly seat of Broadmeadows, to which the present member travels from Brighton by train every day to visit his electorate, the government has invested \$160 million in the Westmeadows initiative, because the coalition is getting on with the delivery of this major development in one of the most disadvantaged areas in the country. It is in the Northern Metropolitan Region, and some of those opposite should go and visit the area.

**Mr Finn** — Part of Westmeadows is in Western Metropolitan Region.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Some of it is, Mr Finn. I agree with you that some members in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, together with their coalition colleagues in the Northern Metropolitan Region, are doing some good work out there. I agree.

The Westmeadows initiative will deliver 144 public homes, including 34 independent living units.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Let me take up the interjection of Ms Mikakos. All she says is, 'That's rubbish!', but 'that's rubbish' is a term best applied to the 11 years of the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments. This project will deliver 144 public homes, including 34 independent living units and 220 affordable private homes, as well as a 120-bed aged-care facility for our older Victorians, which will be delivered by Bapcare.

Heidelberg is regarded as part of the Labor heartland ignored for so long. In Heidelberg \$160 million has been announced for the first stage of the Heidelberg redevelopment, including the replacement of 600 properties badly neglected by Labor. This redevelopment will see the first major renewal of public housing in that area since the time of the Olympic Games in 1956.

The other day the minister and I visited Barb, a public housing tenant, in Heidelberg Heights, and she was delighted when we visited. She has gone from an old 1950s cold, dark, grey home into a beautiful, bright, warm, new place, and she is delighted. She said she was delighted that this coalition government cares about the people of Heidelberg. She has lived there for a long time. She was born in Preston, as I was, and she has lived in that area for a long time, and here we are, a coalition government, developing solid responses for the people of Heidelberg, an area that would have been regarded as a Labor heartland.

It is interesting that in the other place today Mr Carbines, the member for Ivanhoe, had something to say about that place. He should have a good hard look at himself before he starts talking about things in West Heidelberg. He has a severe case of sour grapes, because he knows that his own party neglected that community, and it has taken the coalition government to recognise and invest in the needs of families living in Heidelberg West, Heidelberg Heights and Bellfield.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — We could ask about Craig Langdon, that great supporter of the ALP. We could ask what he has to say about how well he was treated as the Government Whip by the people of the ALP, but there is no loyalty in the ALP and there is certainly no loyalty to the people of the northern and western suburbs. There is no loyalty to people who need public housing. The long-awaited Olympia project is a fantastic outcome for the local community that will see people living in modern, energy-efficient homes with no net loss of public housing. It has been praised by the local council. The mayor was in the room and said, 'This is fantastic for local government'. The former member for Ivanhoe, Cr Craig Langdon —

**Mr Finn** — I thought he was the mayor.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — He is not the mayor; Tom Melican is the mayor. The former member for Ivanhoe, Cr Craig Langdon, spoke to the minister and me in front of the media and in front of Barb, the public housing tenant. He congratulated the coalition government on the work it is doing in housing in the Heidelberg area. Cue the sounds of crickets opposite, because they did nothing! Mr Carbines's reaction shows that he would rather his constituents continue to languish in decaying homes neglected by Labor for so long, and isn't that a shame! Mr Carbines said the new chair of the Olympia Community Liaison Committee, a lady called Michelle Penson, would not know where Heidelberg was. What an interesting comment about a

fine upstanding citizen! Michelle Penson was the last mayor of the former City of Heidelberg, and she is a fine citizen. In a political sense Mr Carbines is such a new boy. He lacks integrity, and the people of West Heidelberg know that he is letting down his community, and it is a shame.

In housing the big difference between the coalition government and the former Labor government is that the components of our developments are self-funding as part of a prudent asset management plan. We will not wait for the commonwealth to provide a stimulus before we act.

In terms of selling off public housing, the Labor legacy is damning. I refer to former ministers, including Bronwyn Pike, the former member for Melbourne in the Assembly, Ms Broad, a member of this place, and Mr Wynne, who is perhaps inappropriately named in terms of disposals. In terms of disposals he should have been called Mr Lost, not Mr Wynne. He oversaw the disposal of approximately 8000 homes between 1999 and 2010. In his four years as minister the member for Richmond, Richard Wynne, disposed of 4494 properties — nearly 4500 public housing properties. He turfed them out the door, yet those members sit here today — the two who are here — claiming they are completely disgusted about public housing in Victoria. I ask you, Acting President: should the motion today not be that they stand in front of a mirror and have a good hard look at themselves?

The level of disposals by the previous Labor government effectively wiped out the commonwealth stimulus investment in public housing. The program to build 4600 homes was wiped out by Mr Wynne's disposal program, by the member for Richmond chucking out public housing, and those opposite sit here in this state of fake epiphany today, claiming they care about people in public housing. Richard Wynne announced before the last election Labor's plans to invest in 4000 dwellings over four years. As my children say sometimes, Mr Finn, 'Yeah, right!'. Sure it was going to.

This was just one in a long list of sudden revelations before the 2010 election about things Labor was going to do. After 11 years of failure Labor members suddenly decided when it was election time that there were things they were going to do, and we know this was not right because no extra funding was attached to this announcement. There was no extra funding, so we can assume it was going to be delivered through base funding. I wonder. In stark contrast, after 11 years of Labor mismanagement, by the end of this financial year this Baillieu coalition government, having come to

government 20 months ago, will have delivered over 5000 new properties in its first two and a half years. I encourage those opposite to have a good, hard look at themselves before they rise to speak to Ms Pulford's motion.

In terms of privatisation, Labor keeps stirring up fear in the community, claiming that the coalition is going to sell off public housing to private developers. Nothing could be further from the truth. The real story, which Labor conveniently fails to mention, is that in 2008 the Labor government transferred ownership of \$155 million worth of public housing to the housing associations. Over 1100 public housing homes were transferred to the community housing sector. That happened without any consultation. How dare those opposite stand here today and accuse this government of a lack of action when after 20 months we have got on with the game and got on with fixing what they failed to do in 11 years?

I remind you, Acting President, that prior to the 2010 state election the then Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne, was boasting about his plan to transfer 2600 more properties worth another \$475 million, and that process was criticised by the Auditor-General, who commented that the properties to be transferred were already managed by housing associations, meaning that leveraging opportunities for housing associations to borrow against those assets would not have been effective. Maybe those opposite are taking some financial guidance from this presentation today. They can write it down if they want, but these were more missed opportunities. The data is damning.

Here is an opportunity to talk about rent and tenure in public housing. This government, this Baillieu coalition government, under the stewardship of the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Wendy Lovell, is developing a new framework for social housing. No policy decisions have been made yet. The minister made it clear that public housing tenants on aged pensions and those with severe or profound disabilities or mental health issues will continue to enjoy long-term tenure, as they do now.

The minister and I attended the public housing forum in Collingwood, and the minister was there the whole time and met the Collingwood public housing residents. How many members of the Australian parliamentary Labor Party were there? The minister and I were there the whole time and met with all the residents. There was a lot of emotion in the room, and the people there got a chance to talk to the minister, and she and I got a chance to hear them. How many members of the opposition were there? None! None were there.

**An honourable member** — Did you invite them?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — It was well advertised. There were plenty of public housing tenants there, but nobody from the Labor Party turned up in Collingwood, in Northern Metropolitan Region.

**Ms Mikakos** — How do you know?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — In your own electorate, Ms Mikakos. You weren't there.

**Ms Mikakos** — How do you know there was no-one there from the Labor Party?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — You weren't there. You were not there. Labor's hypocrisy on tenure in public housing knows no bounds. In 2002 it was Labor policy to review the tenure every five years. Labor increased rents twice, in 2004 and in 2007, and on not one single occasion did it consult. Not once did it consult with public tenants about that. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame. It is enough for the Labor Party to tie up parliamentary time with these false allegations and these false motions when they will not have a look at their performance. Not only did they mismanage public housing in Victoria but they are now recklessly engaging in scaremongering about rent and tenure. They are doing that for their own political gain, but the by-product is that there are people out there who are frightened of the result. They did that. Public housing tenants are frightened and nervous as a result of Labor's political game-playing.

**Mr Leane** — When are you going to do your law and order reform?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Enough is enough, Mr Leane. While you sit here in opposition, deny any responsibility and take no account of your mismanagement over 11 years you are frightening people in public housing in Victoria, and that is unacceptable. How dare you! Your mismanagement of public housing has failed those Victorians who are most in need. As in other portfolios, in housing we are faced with the challenges of fixing the mess left by Labor.

**Mr Finn** — Again.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — As Mr Finn rightly points out, again, as is the case for many other portfolios, fixing the mess that was left in the state by Labor. You can point to the government and say the government has to fix the mess, but the mess is not for the government, the mess is for the people of Victoria, and that is the responsibility of those opposite, and they failed.

The housing framework is being developed in response to the recommendations outlined by the parliamentary inquiry into the adequacy and future direction of public housing in 2010. Those frameworks are being developed right now. There is a critical need for a housing framework, given the recent Auditor-General's report. Here it is. I am not sure if those on the other side of the house have read it. They should read it, because it is a report card of their performance.

If I could paraphrase the Auditor-General, pages 1 through to 29, I would almost say shame, shame, shame. How dare they put people in this predicament in public housing! How dare they sit here today scaremongering recklessly and making them nervous! It is not fair. The Auditor-General says the government's capacity to continue to provide public housing in the future has been put at risk due to Labor's mismanagement — that is the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments.

There is a need to put housing on a sustainable footing so we can continue to provide public housing to Victorians in need. Encouraging economic and community participation is one of the hallmarks of this government's approach to social housing. That is evidenced by our innovative policies to build five work and learning centres, one of which is in Carlton in Northern Metropolitan Region, and three youth foyers, one of which is in Broadmeadows in Northern Metropolitan Region.

Recently, a number of peak bodies, including the Victorian Council of Social Service, issued a joint statement in which they commended the Victorian government's commitment to developing a social housing framework. They commended the Baillieu coalition government on committing to developing a social housing framework. There are many complex issues which must be addressed. Our focus is on innovative policy responses to ensure that we can grow social housing in Victoria and ensure that public housing is available to the people who most need it, so that the people who are most in need can get access to public housing.

A very thorough community consultation phase has recently been concluded. I was there; the minister was there. The government will carefully and scientifically consider the submissions and the feedback which it received.

Ms Pulford talked about the social housing advocacy and support program — SHASP, as she called it. This Baillieu coalition government is committed to the delivery of SHASP services that focus on case

management and supporting people to maintain their tenancies, so while the opposition runs around recklessly scaremongering and frightening people, we are committed to SHASP.

The department has been working with providers to minimise the impact on direct case management support and is working on a revised case management model for SHASP. This government wants SHASP providers to be able to focus on support for homeless Victorians and advocacy for social housing clients. Currently, SHASP providers are providing some services that are not advocacy or support services, such as the management of community meeting rooms and facilities on housing estates. Agencies have advised our minister, the Honourable Wendy Lovell, that this costs them around \$800 000 to \$900 000 per annum out of their funding agreements.

The management of community facilities will be taken back in-house by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to allow SHASP providers to do what they are commissioned to do. This will relieve those agencies of those burdens and allow them to concentrate on advocacy support services. This \$800 000 or \$900 000 will be invested back into support services.

It is important to note that the government's focus in terms of homelessness programs is on outcomes, not throughput, so its focus is on achieving outcomes for Victorians, not process. We need to ensure that we minimise the administrative costs of delivering these programs, so we can concentrate on front-line services. Ms Pulford touched on it. SHASP providers have also revealed that some agencies have been subcontracting services and activities out to other organisations, which incurs an additional administrative cost, thereby reducing the capacity for direct assistance to clients, so they are subcontracting out to other providers, adding margin to margin and it is reducing the capacity for us to provide that direct assistance to the people who need it most.

The Minister for Housing, the Honourable Wendy Lovell, has directed the department to continue to work closely with the sector, and officers from the department are meeting with the sector regularly. Those discussions will continue.

We are getting to the point of it. After 11 years the former Labor government failed. It failed to develop and deliver an effective homelessness plan. The homelessness policy under Labor was about churning people through without focusing on real outcomes. It built its stats by churning them through and not providing them with outcomes. That is inexcusable. But

it is inexcusable that the people who were elected by the people of Victoria to do their job did not do it. Why did they not do their job? Why did they fail the people of Victoria?

The review of this sector is long overdue. In 2012–13 the Baillieu coalition will spend over \$200 million on homelessness services. If you want to find out about the homeless, you should go and meet with them. I have done it. I have been out there. I have been chatting to lots of them, and it is tough. It is tough that people do not necessarily know unless they get out there and talk to them. There are some genuine, salt-of-the-earth people out there, really caring and nice people with good ideas, and this government has spent \$200 million in this budget on homelessness services. In 2011 we committed \$76.7 million to the Victorian homeless action plan 2011–2015.

The Baillieu coalition government's focus is on prevention and real outcomes. There is \$30.1 million for three 40-bed youth foyers. One of them is in Broadmeadows in Northern Metropolitan Region. They will focus on providing accommodation to assist young people to engage in work and in learning opportunities and to help them make a better life for themselves. Is not part of our reason for being to help that next generation? There is \$25 million over two years for innovation action plans that focus on developing partnerships and innovative programs to break that cycle of homelessness, to do something about breaking this nexus and to revive opportunities for Victorians. That is our reason for being. Our reason for being is not to satisfy our federal government mates with things like carbon tax, on which the opposition has been completely silent.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Ms Mikakos will get a chance to make a submission today. I would really like to hear her say that she supports the people of Northern Metropolitan Region, that she supports jobs and working families and that she denounces the carbon tax. Here is her chance. But I am tipping that she will not do that. I am tipping she will not speak against the carbon tax because she cares more about political endeavour than about the people of Victoria, and that is unacceptable.

Let me talk about the housing framework. Since I have been in this house Ms Mikakos has spent her time talking about what we have done or making claims about what we have not done. Why does she not spend some time talking about why her former government, the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders government, failed

Victorians? Now is her chance to put her hand on her heart and initiate her own apology to the people of Victoria. We have the time.

**Ms Crozier** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — We could be finishing at 5 o'clock? I am prepared to finish my contribution at 2 minutes before 5 o'clock to let Ms Mikakos do that. That is no problem at all.

This government is committed to genuine consultation in relation to the housing framework. Every effort has been made to provide public housing tenants and interested members of the community with opportunities and support to participate in the public consultation process.

The minister and I were in Northern Metropolitan Region meeting with public housing tenants and providers. How many members of the opposition were there? Zero — they were not there. They were sitting in their parliamentary offices, working on their next flawed media releases. They were not there talking to the people.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — It is time to get out of your office and get amongst the people. The director of housing wrote to all public housing tenants telling them what the consultation process was all about. The letter was published in nine languages other than English and was available on the DHS website and through DHS housing offices. So far about 2000 copies of these discussion papers have been sent out to interested people. Over 1000 submissions have been received in response to these discussion papers. Over 90 per cent of those responses have come from public housing tenants, Mr Leane. We are talking to them; we are consulting with them.

We were at the meeting. There was a lot of emotion, fear and anger in the room where the meeting was held primarily because of the work the Labor Party did to make people scared and worried. The minister stood and listened to it all. She went around the room and talked to all the people. I was there too. Nobody from the ALP was there. Where was Ms Mikakos? She should have been working there with the people.

**Ms Mikakos** — I didn't get invited. How about you invite me to something for a change? You should ring me up and invite me to something for a change!

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Ms Mikakos asked to be invited. Not only does she want to be invited to meet

the people of Northern Metropolitan Region but she wants to be introduced to them, because they do not know who she is.

The summary of the discussion papers and feedback form has been available on the DHS website and translated into 11 languages. Maybe we need to translate those documents into very simple English so that my friends opposite in the chamber can read them.

What is really disappointing is while we are talking to people and consulting with them, there is no action by those members opposite. It is symptomatic of their 11 years in government; they were 11 years of inaction. They sit in this chamber, they are incredulous and they claim they care about people in public housing. Where were they for 11 years? For 11 years they were in denial.

Copies of the summary discussion paper and feedback forms and prepaid envelopes are available from the housing framework information line which we established to assist people who have queries about the discussion papers. Hard copies of the feedback forms have been made available to people who do not have access to the internet. They are also being made available at public consultation forums like the one the minister and I attended. Ms Mikakos was not there. Eleven consultation sessions for public housing tenants and interested community members were held in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria in June and July 2012.

To be fair, I will say that maybe those members opposite were a little busy fighting off their friends in the Greens in the lower house electorate of Melbourne. Maybe that is why they were a little busy — they spent more time worrying about their own party than caring about the people of Victoria. They were not there. Ms Mikakos will get the opportunity to stand in this chamber and tell us how many public, well-advertised DHS consultation forums she attended. I know what the answer is, Mr Guy. It is zero.

Information about these sessions was advertised in local newspapers — Ms Mikakos should try to read one — and distributed to tenant groups and communities. The dates and venues for the sessions were advertised on the DHS website. Interpreters were provided to help tenants; interpreters were in the meeting room to pick up what was going on. Three round table discussions were held with key stakeholders in the area of housing, and eight consultation sessions for local services providers have been held. We have been talking to people. The former government acted without consultation.

This government is committed to reforming the system we have inherited that is simply in crisis. What the former government did was unforgivable. The first thing Labor members should do when they stand to speak in the chamber today is to say sorry for their disregard of public housing tenants. We understand it.

**Mr Leane** — That is about the seventh time you've said that.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I have said it seven times, but when are you going to say it? We do all of this understanding that the importance of any decision we make about the system, whilst it is in crisis, will have an impact on individual tenants, but no decisions have been made yet. We need to review what we have received from those people — over 90 per cent of them are public housing tenants. We will consider the feedback and form some views about how to fix this mess left to us by the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders government.

The former government never consulted or talked with tenants before raising rents twice — in 2004 and then in 2007. Labor left the housing system in crisis. The coalition is seeking to make the system better by once again making it sustainable.

**Mr Ramsay** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — That was the preamble. Let us look at some of these projects. Just this week I attended, along with the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Health, the start of the construction of a \$180 million wellbeing precinct in Carlton. I know that Ms Crozier also joined the Minister for Housing to talk about an innovative social housing project for Port Melbourne. And the Olympic spirit has returned to Heidelberg, with the minister's announcement of a 10-year project to advocate and provide for public housing tenants in Heidelberg.

We have also driven the waiting list down. Under Labor the waiting list for public housing soared to 41 212 applications. The Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments were prepared to just leave families languishing on the waiting list while doing very little to assist them with housing. We have introduced active management of waiting list applications. Housing officers are now working with applicants to ensure that those most in need of public housing are attended to sooner. We have assisted more families with housing and have reduced the waiting list by more than 10 per cent. In June 2012 the waiting list stood at just over 36 000. We have already brought the number down, I

would say to Mr Leane, in 20 months in government. In 20 months in government we have already done it.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — And those opposite could not do it for 11 years! Woe betide Victoria if it ever gives you a go again, because you are going to make a mess of it again.

A \$4.8 million social housing development continues in Norlane, 77 000 vulnerable Victorians have been helped with long-term housing and a \$160 million development will create new homes — and jobs — in Westmeadows. Again we are relying on the great work of the Auditor-General in providing the report entitled *Access to Public Housing*. It is a damning report on the mismanagement of housing by the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders Labor governments. The members of those governments failed Victorians and they failed public housing tenants. They were out there scaremongering, and the open dialogue by the minister has made them frightened. They should be ashamed of themselves. The first thing opposition members can do in their contributions today is stand up and say, 'We made a mess of it, and we're sorry'. Thank goodness the Baillieu coalition government is here to fix public housing.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I will make only a brief contribution to this debate. I think I am in something of a unique situation. I grew up on a housing commission estate in Morwell. Most of my aunts lived in the Heidelberg village, and at least one of them still lives in Office of Housing accommodation in Melton. I also worked at the Office of Housing high-rise blocks in Williamstown for five years. I go and visit residents there quite regularly, so I get a sense from them of what their concerns are about their daily living, the cost of living, their rent and so on.

While I am happy to acknowledge that the Auditor-General's report did expose huge failures in the previous government's handling of the Office of Housing accommodation, I remind those opposite that they are now in government and it is now their responsibility to step up to the mark and actually do something. It is an indictment of the previous government that there are 36 000 people on the waiting list. Thirty-six thousand people need housing, and unless that is addressed quickly and thoroughly I am concerned that that list will just grow.

Mr Ondarchie talked about consultation. I went to at least one of those consultation meetings. I also went around to estates and spoke to various people I know

who live in Office of Housing accommodation. When it first began, the consultation was in English, but it was bureaucratic gobbledegook. The only access people actually had to the papers was via the internet, so if you did not have a computer, you were not able to be involved in that consultation process. I am glad to see that the government has seen sense and changed that process, but I would have thought that right from the very beginning the government would have understood that, considering the number of languages spoken on most estates, it needed to conduct the consultation in multiple languages, and it needed to use plain English that was simple and straightforward, not bureaucratic gobbledegook.

I have real concerns about the way the government is dealing with the public consultation process in relation to the discussion paper entitled *Pathways to a Fair and Sustainable Social Housing System*. Does it mean a sell-off? Does it mean rental increases? What exactly will the government's end game be on this? I am also concerned because in the previous Parliament I saw vicious campaigns run against people who live in Office of Housing accommodation that denigrated them. When there were new projects to be built smear campaigns would be run along the lines of, 'You don't want these kinds of people living in your neighbourhood'. As someone who lived in a housing commission house, I do not consider that I have two heads, and I do not consider that my family does either. I think there is a real problem with this government's perception of who lives in Office of Housing accommodation.

Mr Ondarchie talked a great deal about the SHASP (social housing advocacy and support program). He said that everything was fine and dandy, that it was all going very well and that the government had looked closely at it and was supporting a homelessness program. I am concerned about this because I have a document dated 6 August, obtained from the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) website, saying that the SHASP campaign had been launched by Victorian housing groups because they were concerned about the cuts. I will read from the document. It has been written by Heather Holst, the acting CEO of HomeGround Services, which is a member of the Save SHASP Campaign group. If the government is supportive of this program, why is it that these organisations — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier)** — Order! I ask members if there could be a little less chat so we can hear Ms Hartland's contribution.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I am not sure the government actually wants to hear it, so I presume that is why there is so much talking.

**Mr Elsbury** interjected.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I sat in silence during the contributions of other members. It is Mr Elsbury's side of the house that is making the noise, as usual.

**Mr Elsbury** — You are trying to make a point that is factually wrong.

**Ms HARTLAND** — What part is factually wrong?

**Mr Elsbury** — That opposition members were making the noise.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier)** — Order! Mr Elsbury!

**Ms HARTLAND** — This is factually correct, and you might like to hear it. I refer to a guest blog on the VCOSS website by Heather Holst, acting CEO of HomeGround Services, a very reputable organisation and a member of the Save SHASP Campaign group. It states:

Recently announced cuts to one of Victoria's most successful homelessness prevention initiatives — the social housing advocacy and support program (SHASP) — will put thousands of Victorians, including children, at risk of becoming homeless.

To urge the state government to restore funding, the Save SHASP Campaign has been formed by the 11 Victorian service providers of the program — Advocacy and Rights Centre, Bethany Community Support, HomeGround Services, PACT Community Support, Quantum Support Services, Rural Housing Network, Salvation Army Social Housing Service, UnitingCare Harrison, WAYSS Ltd, Wesley Mission and Wombat Housing and Support Services. Individuals and organisations are invited to join and add their voices to the campaign.

The cuts have come at a time when SHASP services are already at peak capacity. The campaign partners believe that it is neither sensible nor economically responsible to create the conditions for more tenancy breakdowns and homelessness flowing from our public housing system. The result in personal trauma and taxpayer cost far outweighs the money saved in the short term.

Our agencies have written to the Victorian housing minister, Wendy Lovell, Premier Ted Baillieu, the Secretary of the Department of Housing and other policy stakeholders to seek an urgent review in consultation with service providers and commit to SHASP as an integral part of Victoria's housing and homelessness system.

SHASP provides direct support services and referrals to public and community housing tenants who are at risk of losing their homes. The program was trialled as an innovation project under the Kennett government in the 1990s and then

continued and expanded under the subsequent two state governments. SHASP is provided in every part of the state and is delivered through partnerships and collaboration between 11 different support providers. The Minister for Housing has made this cut as the main component of the savings required in her portfolio, anticipating that it would not affect front-line case management services. Unfortunately, there is no way that such a large cut can avoid falling on case management.

The 30 per cent cuts this year —

and this is from a government that is supposed to support this service, yet has cut it by 30 per cent —

and the further 10 per cent cuts next year will reduce the availability of desperately needed support services to around 2600 households — representing nearly half of the 6000 households who were helped in the last 12 months. Without the smart and innovative response provided by SHASP, many of these households will inevitably lose their housing and become homeless.

SHASP plays a critical role in making our public housing system more efficient and financially sustainable, with a reduction in the statewide eviction rate by more than half in the six years it has been operating. There seems to be a view by government that other services also work in this same area and can pick up this demand, but our experience is that, although some tenants are supported by specialist programs such as mental health, family and disability services, no other program provides the broad spectrum of support aimed at retaining housing that SHASP delivers.

These front-line service cuts will create additional demand for homelessness, health, family violence and child protection services and expose men, women and children to trauma through housing crisis and homelessness.

There is a clear and direct connection between homelessness and frequent use of high cost government services. There are also lifelong consequences for people exposed to violence and trauma. Vulnerable groups like families, youth, women, older residents and children are exposed to even greater harm when they become homeless.

I repeat that this is on the VCOSS website, and it is dated 6 August. Mr Ondarchie just stood here for almost three-quarters of an hour, lecturing us on the greatness of this government, yet it is quite clear the government is cutting a most important service. I am not saying this; VCOSS is saying it.

Let me repeat some of the organisations in this campaign team: the Advocacy and Rights Centre, Bethany Community Support, HomeGround Services, PACT Community Support, Quantum Support Services, the Rural Housing Network, the Salvation Army Social Housing Service, UnitingCare Harrison, WAYSS Ltd, Wesley Mission and Wombat Housing and Support Services. This is not the Greens saying this; this is organisations on the ground, delivering front-line services, saying, 'This government has abandoned people who are at risk of homelessness'.

That is what I would like one of the government speakers to talk about, because it was certainly not addressed in Mr Ondarchie's contribution.

I do not believe the previous government did enough on the issues of homelessness or housing, and I am yet to see this government stepping up to the mark and actually doing something about the 36 000 people who are on the current waiting list and who desperately need housing. In relation to this current consultation I think tenants have a right to be fearful that this is going to be an excuse to sell off more Office of Housing properties and land and that they will be forced into the private rental market, which is incredibly tight at the moment and which most people cannot afford. I would like this government to be realistic about the fact that it is dealing with people's lives. Families that become homeless end up splitting up. Then the cost of the care, especially for children, is much higher than the cost of providing a service that would have enabled the family to live together. This government needs to step up, and it needs to stop blaming the previous government. Members opposite are the government now; they are the ones providing the services.

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Eastern Victoria) — In recent weeks the papers have carried a number of stories expressing concern over the decision of the Minister for Housing, Wendy Lovell, to progressively cut around \$3 million from the social housing advocacy and support program. As Ms Pulford and Ms Hartland have explained, the social housing advocacy and support program provides a range of services for social housing tenants to assist them with advice on financial problems, on issues they may have with their neighbours, on getting repairs done to their homes, in lodging complaints they may have with the Department of Human Services and in organising appeals they may wish to make against decisions that have been made in relation to their housing. The DHS website, as we have heard, lists some twelve community organisations that act as service points to deliver the program.

The social housing advocacy and support program has been in operation for around six years and was of course an initiative of the previous Labor government. It was part of the group of programs that came under the rubric A Fairer Victoria, which designated Labor's overarching program that coordinated and improved services for Victorians who needed special assistance.

The Baillieu government's announcement that it would cut the funding to the social housing advocacy and support program has naturally been met with dismay by the community sector. The 12 community organisations that deliver the service around Victoria have been very

vocal, and local papers have run with some strong criticism of the government and the minister herself for what seems an inexplicable decision. The Salvation Army, Wesley Mission, HomeGround Services, UnitingCare Harrison, the Tenants Union of Victoria and many others, which Ms Hartland listed in full, have called on the government to urgently rethink these funding cuts.

The organisations are seeking a commitment from the government and from the Minister for Housing that the services will be fully restored and maintained as an integral part of homelessness and housing services in Victoria. Those organisations say that the program has been extremely positive in enabling social housing tenants to overcome problems and to maintain their tenancies, which means that they have more secure housing. It also means that costs to the welfare sector and to the state are reduced. They say that the program's achievements have been well documented by DHS and that in the six years the program has been operating the eviction rate in social housing has more than halved.

Last month the *Age* reported that leading welfare agencies had launched what it called a 'scathing attack on the Baillieu government' and that Wesley Mission Victoria, HomeGround Services and the Rural Housing Network 'slammed the decision to slash millions of dollars from the social housing advocacy and support program as short-sighted and illogical'. And of course that is the question: what has motivated the government and the minister to take this unnecessary, extreme and counterproductive step?

Victorians have been watching the government now for long enough to know that there are no answers to these questions because this government has shown itself time and again not to be motivated by public interest or long-term economic benefit. This lack of logic or thought for consequences cannot be better expressed than through the remarks of the minister herself as reported in the same *Age* article — namely, that cuts of around \$3 million by next financial year would not affect the level of direct support the program provides. It defies belief that the minister thinks a program that relies so heavily on face-to-face service delivery will not be affected when around half of its budget is cut.

The *Age* article reports Heather Holst from HomeGround Services as saying that the number of households helped each year would fall by around a third from 6000 to 4000. Under this minister's budget cuts, around 2000 at-risk households each year will be unable to find the help they need to keep them in secure

housing, and yet the minister says that the level of direct services will not be affected.

The latest information I have seen shows that over 80 000 Victorians receive some form of assistance relating to their housing from the Victorian government on a range of matters, including homelessness, transitional housing support, family violence, property inspection and maintenance services and referrals to support providers. It is not as though this is the only service that the Baillieu government is hopping into. The same people affected by the cuts to the social housing advocacy and support program are also affected by increased hospital waiting times, cuts to home-care services, cuts to special schools and cuts to household utility bill concessions, all courtesy of the Baillieu government.

Behind the worrying cuts to the social housing advocacy and support program, the government and the minister are manoeuvring to undermine public sector housing delivery support in this state. They are, as usual, doing this in the guise of making access to social housing fairer, more cost effective and less wasteful of public resources. For evidence we need look no further than the *Pathways to a Fair and Sustainable Social Housing System* public consultation paper that the minister released in April this year.

To be fair, the paper asks some good questions and identifies some challenging issues, but it is also profoundly concerning to anyone who cares about the future of social housing and housing equity across the state. The paper says, for example, that the current tenure and eligibility policies create few incentives for tenants to build their independence and transition out of public housing. It goes on to say that the lack of incentive for present tenants to move on has meant that these tenants are living in social housing for too long. That means new tenants who need the services cannot access social housing, and they miss out. The assumption behind this is that social housing is not seen as one of a range of viable ongoing housing options but simply as a transition to private housing.

The whole point of establishing housing associations that the previous Labor government introduced and funding the construction of new community housing developments was to provide a form of social housing that was an ongoing and viable housing option. The objective of housing associations under the act is to grow social housing by leveraging government funding and the value of their existing properties to expand the quantity and quality of affordable housing for low-income Victorians. Community housing was never intended as a residual and transitional housing option.

Housing inequality has always been a serious problem in Australia and in Victoria, and successive governments, state and federal, have privileged private home ownership — effectively the privatisation of housing — to the detriment of universal models of social housing that promote social equality. One consequence of this is that it is very difficult for people who experience socioeconomic disadvantage to find secure housing, and the reforms Labor made through the establishment of housing associations were to work towards turning this around.

Another problem with the push to home ownership is the massively rising levels of private debt that individual purchasers now sustain and the level of funds that are drawn away from more productive uses into the buying and selling of real estate. Therefore Victorian Labor, in partnership with the federal Labor government, provided a major funding boost for social housing that did a great deal of good for people looking for affordable and secure housing. We made a new start on rethinking the role and viability of social housing. That was an exciting initiative, and under the leadership of the then Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne, the Brumby government invested \$500 million to build 4500 new public and community housing dwellings.

The former Labor government was also delivering on major renovations to over 3000 units of existing public housing stock, and on a program of 19 neighbourhood renewal projects in areas with high densities of public housing. That is the measure that the present Baillieu government needs to match. If, by the end of its term, the government can deliver an achievement of that level, it will be in business. We do not need the paltry kinds of excuses Mr Ondarchie made in his contribution.

Labor grew social housing stock by developing substantial grants to housing associations so they could build new accommodation. Labor integrated service provision so that social housing tenants could have a better housing experience, and part of this was the social housing advocacy and support program.

None of those very significant and important initiatives made public housing perfect. They absolutely did not — far from it — and Mr Ondarchie has milked this fact to great effect, or what he thinks is to great effect, for himself and his team. However, these initiatives represented a major gearshift in housing policy in this state, and many of us were hopeful there would be bipartisan support and we would see long-term benefits delivered. Labor recognised that the mainstream housing market could not provide appropriate housing for those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, or

those who needed long-term support services, and it recognised that state intervention and ongoing funding is necessary.

Back in April, ahead of the May budget, Victorians heard that the government was looking at opening a round of privatisations as part of what was described as a shake-up of the public sector in a bid to make savings, and as usual the government invited us to wait and see. It refused to rule anything in or out, including the sale of state-owned assets. Richard Wynne expressed the community's fears that the Baillieu government was on its way to raising rents, selling social housing stock and cutting funding, and he noted the total failure of the Baillieu government to invest real money in social housing.

These are legitimate concerns and the community will be watching to see how the minister and this government tackle the challenges they have identified in their own discussion papers. In my view, the government has to ensure that the state continues to play a direct role in both policy development and in the administration of social housing.

**Mr ELSBURY** (Western Metropolitan) — I share some of the disappointment of my colleagues in hearing from Mr Scheffer that he does not value private home ownership. That was the message I got from his contribution, that somehow the aspiration to own your own home is not something you would actually want to achieve. I would prefer people to be able to access a home of their own, rather than having to rely on government housing forever. In fact, it would allow more people to access government housing, but I ever so slightly digress.

Ms Hartland, during her contribution, said that it was an indictment of this government that 36 000 people were currently on the public housing waiting list. If a list of 36 000 people represents an indictment of this government, what was it when there were 41 000 people on the waiting list? What was it when there were 41 000 people waiting to gain access to public housing? That is what it was like under Labor. There was a 41 000-person waiting list for those hoping to gain access to public housing.

In its first 20 months in government, the coalition has reduced that number by 10 per cent. We have got it down to 36 000, as of June 2012. There we have it. We have got a reduction, because we are more efficiently using our resources. We are getting people into vacant homes, homes that were sitting completely idle, and we have used the resources that we have.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I will take up Ms Mikakos's interjection about Brunswick Street. That building is not ready yet, Ms Mikakos! You do not put people into a building that is not ready. Members opposite might do things by half measures, but we do not. We wait until we have an occupancy certificate before we move people in. It is a practical completion and handover that needs to happen before we can allow people to move in. Would you have them move into concrete boxes?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier)** — Order! Mr Elsbury, through the Chair.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I apologise, Acting President. I got a little bit hot under the collar at that particular moment, but I was provoked into it. Ms Mikakos's interjection was about the Brunswick Street building, and basically it is not ready. It is not ready to be moved into. In any case, in its first 20 months in government, the coalition has made \$400 million worth of investments in public housing across the state — that includes \$80 million in Norlane, \$160 million in Westmeadows and \$160 million for the first stage of Heidelberg. There are other projects that I will not be mentioning that are of a minor nature. These investments have been welcomed by people in public housing accommodation.

This situation did not happen overnight. As I said, there has been a 10 per cent reduction in the 20 months since we took office. Under Labor 41 000 people were looking for a home, and now there are 36 000 people. Labor was warned twice about this by the Auditor-General — once in 2004 and again in 2007. It was warned about issues with the maintenance of the housing stock. The Auditor-General's report of March 2012 entitled *Access to Public Housing* states:

It is unclear why the division has not introduced longer term strategies to address this acute situation given that it has developed —

over the last decade.

Since at least 2006 —

I do not think the coalition was in office then. We made it in at the end of 2010. The report states:

Since at least 2006, other departments, including the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, have also been aware of the deteriorating state of public housing, yet this has not spurred action.

What a disgrace! There was no action, even though the Treasury and the Premier's department knew what was

going on in the public housing system. The report goes on to say:

There are no clear long-term objectives for public housing. Long-term objectives are important to guide management of an asset base with a long life span that requires substantial lead times for redevelopment or renewal. Now that public housing is nearing a crisis, it will be all the more challenging to address.

And that is exactly what we are finding. We are finding that there is a massive challenge to address the many shortfalls in our public housing stock, not only in the quality of the stock but in the quantity available to us. The report continues:

The current operating approach is not working, and cost and demand pressures are unlikely to abate, so change is necessary. New directions must explore innovative options for providing public housing and should consider the future role of the division, so that access to public housing can be better managed and sustainable into the future.

Under its 'Findings' section the report has the following subheadings: 'An unsustainable operating model', 'Planning for the future', 'Poor asset management' and 'Poorly informed decision making'. Basically, here we have the report card of Labor's very poor attempts at trying to manage public housing. Labor members can be as bleeding heart as they want, but they failed. They failed the people who are most in need and who needed their help to provide public housing.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I am missing something here. An investment of \$400 million into the sector is somehow a bad thing? I am struggling with this.

The Auditor-General's report goes on to say:

In its April 2006 report, the board found that the division's financial position was unsustainable over the forward estimates period, given current policy and revenue settings. The board determined no immediate risk to financial operations as the public housing program was able to be funded using short-term measures. In its 2007 report, the board noted that the division's underlying financial position has been deteriorating since 1998–99.

There has been a deterioration since 1998–99. In the period between then and now there has been a deterioration. What happened during that period? Who was running the show? Sometimes it is better not to ask the question. But certainly there was a great big whack of 11 years of Labor attempting to manage public housing stock. It is unbelievable.

I will just go back a little to say that the housing program was able to be funded using short-term measures. The report says that these short-term

measures included deferring capital construction and acquisition, disposal of stock — and certainly Labor was good at that — and deferring renewal maintenance and physical improvement expenditure. Each of these measures basically moved the problem into the future. Nothing was actually done in the there and then; instead it was moved into the future.

Between 1999 and 2010, 8000 properties were disposed of by the Labor government. When Ms Broad and Mr Wynne, the member for Richmond in the other place, were the ministers responsible for those particular portfolios, 8000 properties were disposed of. Mr Wynne was the champion of disposal, wiping out almost 4500 of those properties. Ms Pulford, who put forward this motion but who is not in the chamber, suggested that the federal stimulus on public housing was as a result of the global financial crisis. Why would the federal government focus on this particular area if everything was hunky-dory? Perhaps it was the case that federal Labor members were just trying to cover their backsides because their Labor colleagues in the states could not manage this thing? They could not organise it — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr)** — Order! Pursuant to an order of the house made this day I interrupt business to move to statements on reports and papers.

**Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council.**

## STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

### Environment and Planning References Committee: environmental design and public health in Victoria

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Eastern Victoria) — I would just like to comment on the report entitled *Inquiry into Environmental Design and Public Health in Victoria*. By way of preamble I would like to reflect for a moment on the committee that we have established, because it has been the subject of discussion in this house on previous occasions. The Environment and Planning References Committee was established during the life of the previous Parliament, and the present reference is therefore the first.

The Victorian Parliament's committee system plays a critical role in ensuring that the public has the opportunity of providing direct input into the underlying policy issues and legislative program of the Parliament. While joint investigatory committees generally operate in a bipartisan way, their chairs are nearly always members of the governing party and their

membership comprises a majority of government members, as they should do. This means that when a matter needs to be decided, the vote of the government party usually carries the decision, and I think every member of a joint investigatory committee accepts this.

The discipline the system imposes is that members have to work to ensure that the evidence for their case is presented and included in the final report and in the recommendations to government. This is not always easy, but personally I think this is where the interesting work lies. The job is to persuade the committee of your view on the basis of the evidence. Sometimes you succeed; sometimes you do not.

The interesting thing about the Legislative Council committees is that they are structured so that non-government members have a majority on the references committees and government members have a majority on the legislative committees. Many of the recommendations in the final report of the Environment and Planning References Committee, *Inquiry into Environmental Design and Public Health in Victoria*, were made on the basis of a vote that was carried, in accordance with the rules, on the casting vote of the chair. But in each case the prevailing view was argued for and based upon a judgement of the available evidence. This is a good report that does not deserve the kind of overreaction that we have witnessed in some of the contributions made earlier this year.

In his capacity as Labor's shadow Minister for Planning, Mr Tee wrote to organisations that provided evidence to the inquiry. I wish to expand on a response that was received from the chief executive officer of the City of Whittlesea, Mr David Turnbull. In general terms Mr Turnbull is satisfied that the recommendations:

... reflect the significant public health evidence base provided through a broad range of expert stakeholders and academics and acknowledge the need for health impacts to be reflected in the state planning policy framework ...

He goes on to say:

The recommendations are generally consistent with and build on the broad intent of the City of Whittlesea submission.

Mr Turnbull acknowledges the concern expressed in the minority report in relation to:

... the general imposition of increased central regulation, impositions on key stakeholders and a lack of validation of proposals and costings.

But he adds that while there is some truth in this, the committee's brief:

... did not allow for a comprehensive assessment of all issues raised — —

**Mr Ondarchie** — On a point of order, Acting President, I am seeking clarification on Mr Scheffer's contribution. He is reading from a letter which has emanated as a result of the committee's report and which I suspect has been sent back to the committee. That letter has not been tabled before the committee, so I am not sure how he is able to talk to that letter in the house today when the committee has not seen it.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — On the point of order, Acting President, I said quite clearly in my contribution that Mr Tee, in his capacity as shadow Minister for Planning, wrote to a number of stakeholders, and this letter was received by Mr Tee in that capacity.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr)** — Order! I think that is enough clarification.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — All this is confirmation of the soundness of the committee's inquiry. But the most interesting aspect of Mr Turnbull's letter relates to his disappointment that the inquiry process does not allow for those who provided evidence to respond to the recommendations. Mr Turnbull believes successive state governments have failed to facilitate stakeholder input to inform the way the government should respond to committee recommendations. He believes a government, through relevant departments, should facilitate discussion and negotiation over the merit, modification and negotiated implementation of recommendations made by parliamentary committees — and that is my summary, not Mr Turnbull's words.

Mr Turnbull concludes by expressing his disappointment that this final report is 'likely to have little impact on the way the state government manages the complex issues of urban design and public health' and that this 'undermines the process of calling for submissions for future inquiries when final reports may well be cast aside'. I am confident that the report and its recommendations will be considered seriously by the government in conjunction with departmental officers.

I commend the report to the house, and I hope that the government honours the work of the many organisations, such as the City of Whittlesea, which provided evidence for the inquiry, that it objectively examines the links between the evidence provided and the recommendations made and that it is able to pass over the intemperate remarks made in the minority report.

## Department of Planning and Community Development: report 2010–11

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I was going to talk about the Department of Planning and Community Development's annual report for 2010–11, but now that there have been some comments on the Environment and Planning References Committee's environmental design and public health in Victoria, perhaps I will speak about that report. I am just doing a quick re-evaluation. I will not, because the rebuttal by Mr Scheffer is an act of damage control to cover up the disgraceful conduct of the non-government committee members in the way they rammed through what should have been a broadly bipartisan committee.

With some compromise on some of the key recommendations, the report could have produced a blueprint for a decade, just like other blueprints that have been delivered by other all-party committees that I have been involved in during my nearly 17 years of parliamentary service. These have had significant impact on the development of services in particular areas. One that comes to mind is the *Inquiry into Planning for Positive Ageing* report tabled by the Family and Community Development Committee, on which I had the privilege of serving with the Honourable Caroline Hogg. The recommendations in that report had a landmark effect on the delivery of services for older persons and planning for positive ageing, with many of those issues being canvassed in subsequent reports as well.

The report I would like to comment on tonight is the Department of Planning and Community Development's annual report for 2010–11. With respect to that annual report I want to take the opportunity to touch on sport and recreation development. The department provides a snapshot of the fantastic work being undertaken by the Victorian coalition government, particularly the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Honourable Hugh Delahunty.

The department outlines the funding support given to over 94 sport and recreation organisations which undertook projects, provided services or developed strategic advice targeting increased participation through volunteer and community involvement. The coalition government also provided grants for community, sport and recreation facilities throughout Victoria, including projects in South Eastern Metropolitan Region such as the redevelopment of Lum Reserve Tennis Club in Wheelers Hill and a contribution of some \$21 million towards the redevelopment of the Noble Park Aquatic Centre, just to name two examples.

Whilst we have seen investment in sport and recreation by the Victorian coalition government, there have been recent media reports on the Olympic gold medal performance of the Australian team which have highlighted the budget cuts to the Australian Olympic Committee and the Australian Sports Commission by the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments. The national sport and active recreation policy framework, produced in June 2011, outlines that a key objective of sport and recreation is to ensure that Australia continues to excel in international sporting competitions, with success being measured by an increased number of medals at the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games and the Commonwealth Games and by the maintenance of Australia's relative high position in the overall medal tally at these events.

I do not share the view that an increased number of medals, whilst being a very important indicator, should be the paramount indicator of success, and I certainly do not wish to take away from the successes of the United Kingdom in staging the 2012 Olympic Games. I congratulate the United Kingdom on the outstanding medal tally which is typically associated with being a host country. It will hopefully be an inspiration to young people and sustain the United Kingdom for many decades to come.

I would also like to congratulate all of the athletes across all sporting codes who represented Australia in the United Kingdom. Our medallists and qualifiers have all made us proud. I am the mother of an athlete who aspired to go to the Olympics — an aspiration which may be reignited — and who represented Australia at the world youth and junior championships, attaining a placement of, I think, 10th in the world as a 16-year-old. If I were the mother of a son or a daughter who successfully qualified for the Olympic Games as a clean athlete who did not use performance-enhancing drugs and who did not achieve anything else, I would be the proudest mother of all. Any athletes, able-bodied or not, who manage to qualify for the Olympic Games, do us proud irrespective of whether they win Olympic gold, silver or bronze.

We must not forget those who helped the athletes to get to the Olympics, being the coaches, volunteers, family members, friends, supporters, the nation and of course the taxpayers, including those in Victoria. For those Olympic athletes the years of effort and endless hours invested in them have been rewarded. However, standouts like Trinidad and Tobago 19-year-old Keshorn Walcott, who defeated all expected finalists to win his country's first ever Olympic gold medal in a field event, truly encompass the Olympic ethos, the spirit of the games and the capability of young,

enthusiastic, talented athletes. Olympic success depends on many factors, some of which are within the athletes' control but many of which are not. Having the resources and facilities that foster the Olympic dream is paramount to ultimate success and sporting glory, and I look forward to making future contributions on those issues.

### **Environment and Planning References Committee: environmental design and public health in Victoria**

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — I also rise to make some comments on the Environment and Planning References Committee's report on its inquiry into environmental design and public health in Victoria, which was tabled in this chamber on 24 May. As is the norm, on that day members of the committee were afforded the opportunity to make comments on the report, as are all members of the chamber in sessions such as this on a Wednesday afternoon.

Since 24 May we have witnessed government members of the committee continuing to take up that opportunity to speak, several times each, on this report. Unfortunately, essentially in all of those contributions they have made accusations about the workings of the committee. There have been personal attacks, and there has been a general attempt to undermine the credibility of the report.

All the standing orders that apply were complied with in the work of the committee. Again today in this chamber we have had two separate instances of the continuation of that behaviour.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Ms TIERNEY** — All that I can say is that it demonstrates to everyone why the work of the committee has been problematic and difficult.

As I said on 24 May, my purpose is to deal with the issues that were before the committee and the issues I have covered in terms of the content of the report. My purpose today is also to go through some of the issues and consider how the stakeholders have received the report.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Ms TIERNEY** — Mrs Peulich has had ample opportunity in the committee hearings and in this chamber to speak.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Ms TIERNEY** — Enough. We need to hear what the stakeholders have to say.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Ms TIERNEY** — Important stakeholders have received this report warmly, unlike Mrs Peulich. They are organisations such as the Planning Institute of Australia, Doctors for the Environment Australia, the Heart Foundation, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Victorian Council of Social Service and COTA Australia, an organisation that advocates on behalf of older Australians. They have congratulated committee members on providing a landmark report and demonstrating the strong link between urban design and public health. They have asked for the implementation of the report's key recommendations — that is, they have asked the government to go ahead with those recommendations.

Those organisations have written detailed letters to the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Health, encouraging them to adopt the views of the committee. They have asked that recommendations 3, 12, 14, 20 and 22 be adopted. They say that those important, practical recommendations are cost effective and they would have a very positive effect on Victoria if they were adopted.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr)** — Order! Enough, Mrs Peulich!

**Ms TIERNEY** — I do not think Ms Kathy Bell, the CEO of the Heart Foundation, Dr Eugenie Kayak, the Victorian representative of Doctors for the Environment Australia, Mr Steve Dunn, the president of the Victorian division of the Planning Institute of Australia, Dr Bruce Bolam, the president of the Victorian branch of the Public Health Association of Australia, Ms Carolyn Atkins, the acting CEO of the Victorian Council of Social Service, and Mr David Craig, the acting CEO of COTA Victoria, would appreciate what has occurred in this chamber in the past few minutes. I know that these people and their organisations are credible and are great advocates on the issues that were presented to committee members.

We have also had the Obesity Policy Coalition write to us saying that it is supportive of the report. That coalition includes Cancer Council Victoria, the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University and VicHealth. All these people support this report, and all we ask is for the government to get on board.

### **Victorian Law Reform Commission: guardianship report**

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — I have great pleasure in speaking on the Victorian Law Reform Commission's final report on guardianship. As members can see, it is a hefty tome. I have spoken on this report before but it is important to understand the ethos of the review. I would like to quote from the preface by Professor Neil Rees, the chairperson of the commission. His preface is dated 31 January 2012 and in it he states:

Victoria has been an Australian and world leader in the field of guardianship law. Legislation passed by the Victorian Parliament in 1986 has been the model for similar laws in other states and territories, as well as other countries.

Further on he states:

This report represents an opportunity to improve the lives of many people, some of whom are the most vulnerable members of the community. I encourage everyone with an interest in guardianship laws to read and consider the many recommendations for reform.

The report has some excellent recommendations in it. After the report was released the Attorney-General, Robert Clark, said on 18 April:

The report rightly recognises that decision-making capacity is not an all-or-nothing concept. People with impaired decision-making capacity may be fully capable of making some types of decision themselves, while needing various levels of help with other decisions and activities.

He went on to say:

The coalition government intends to draw on the report's recommendations, together with the recommendations of the parliamentary Law Reform Committee's 2010 report on powers of attorney, giving priority to reforms that will make it easier for individuals and their families to provide for their current and future needs, while strengthening and enhancing the last-resort and protective roles of VCAT and the office of public advocate.

One of the aspects highlighted in the report is the uncertainty about responsibility for medical treatment, including what the areas are. In chapter 13 of this comprehensive report the Victorian Law Reform Commission considers the various acts that will be affected by the guardianship issue. They are the Medical Treatment Act 1988, the Disability Act 2006, the Mental Health Act 1986 and the Guardianship and Administration Act 1986. These acts are relevant to guardianship issues.

As I have said, there are many technicalities, and people are unaware of what is needed. The commission makes recommendations for reform of the law

concerning the authorisation of medical treatment for people with impaired decision-making capacity. The current law is very complex, largely because it is sometimes necessary to consider a number of overlapping statutes, as I have outlined, as well as the common law in order to determine the legal rules that apply when a person is unable to make their own decisions about medical treatment.

I think that the community at large still has some problems with a medical power of attorney. It is good to have it clarified, particularly for people who are in a vulnerable situation. It is very important that the carers, the service providers and the individuals themselves are well aware of who is responsible for making what can ultimately be life-or-death decisions for very vulnerable Victorians.

As I said, Victoria has been the leader in the field of guardianship, medical treatment and responsibility for the most vulnerable in our state. This is another area in which we are taking the lead nationally. It is important to concentrate particularly on chapter 13 of the report to see some of the issues that are dealt with.

Five minutes is such a short time in which to deal with something like this, which is really important. In the very short time I have left, I point out that chapter 13 deals with matters such as the current law, substitute decision-makers, the powers of guardians, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's powers, the powers of the person responsible, the types of treatment covered and consenting to a medical procedure. It goes into detail on the Medical Treatment Act and addresses the issues of withholding consent and refusing treatment and carrying out medical treatment without consent. It addresses other jurisdictions, including the distinction between minor and major treatment for the purposes of consent. It addresses tribunal reviews, community responses, automatic appointments, minor medical procedures and the definition of medical treatment.

Members can see how comprehensive this report is. It is a very good guide for anybody who is taking on this very responsible position. I suggest that people have a close look at this report.

**Environment and Planning References  
Committee: environmental design and public  
health in Victoria**

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I too wish to make some comments on the Environment and Planning References Committee report on environmental design. I do so following the

contributions of Ms Tierney and Mr Scheffer, who have outlined some of the positive comments that have been made by stakeholders and those who made submissions, in stark contrast to some of the public comments that have been made by the Minister for Health and others on the other side of the chamber. I think they have delivered a slap in the face to those who have put in the time and effort to address a really important issue.

These are not just my concerns. I note that the mayor of the City of Boroondara has written to the Premier and expressed concern in light of recent media reports. He said:

In light of recent media reports, I am concerned that some of the good work contained in the submissions may be lost.

The mayor attached a copy of the council's submission:

... highlighting a number of recommendations that we believe are important considerations in improving community health and wellbeing through good design.

The City of Boroondara recognises that there are significant opportunities to promote health and wellbeing through environmental planning and design, and ask that you give due consideration to the recommendations contained in our submission.

What has happened is that the council has gone over the head of the Minister for Planning, noting his offensive comments — offensive to those who put in submissions — and noting the offensive comments that those in this chamber have made in relation to what is an incredibly important issue and what are some very sensible recommendations. But again those are not just my thoughts. We have heard from Ms Tierney and Mr Scheffer. I have also received a letter from the City of Melbourne which states:

The City of Melbourne believes it is time to make the investment to integrate health into our planning mechanisms ... It is therefore imperative that the commitment to the parliamentary inquiry and the recommendations made in the final report are maintained, particularly those recommendations that can provide the driver and catalyst for action at the local level so we can create communities that provide the best possible outcomes for its people.

Again we see from the City of Melbourne that these are incredibly important issues that go to the health and wellbeing of the community. We see from the City of Melbourne, one of the biggest stakeholders, its belief that these recommendations could go a long way towards delivering better and healthier communities. We see from those who made submissions, like the City of Boroondara, that their constructive engagement stands in stark contrast to those opposite, who have done nothing but belittle those who have made

submissions, who have done nothing but attempt to humiliate those who contributed positively to this inquiry by disparaging their recommendations, by displaying disparaging, bullying and harassing behaviour, all of which serves to do no justice to the members opposite, no justice to this chamber or to the committee process.

I also want to reflect on the views of Australian Medical Association (AMA) Victoria, which in a letter reflecting on the committee report and recommendations said:

As to the recommendations of the committee, AMA Victoria supports initiatives which address the public health consequences arising from environmental design ...

AMA Victoria supports legislation which expressly includes the protection and promotion of public health and ensuring environmental sustainability as important considerations in the planning processes for built environments (such as in recommendation 12).

Here we have another submitter reflecting positively, and trying to add positively, to make a contribution to this debate so that we as a community and as a Parliament can move on. Yet those opposite seem to be stuck, unable to get outside of their petty prejudices and hostilities and their outrageous, intemperate bullying antics, which do not — —

**Mrs Petrovich** — On a point of order, Acting President, on a number of occasions during this debate Mr Tee has reflected on the behaviour of members of the committee. I think he is reflecting on a member or members and should withdraw.

**Mr TEE** — On the point of order, Acting President, I am at a loss as to who the member is referring to.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr)** — Order! I do not believe Mr Tee referred to another member. Mr Tee's time has now expired.

### **Department of Primary Industries: code of practice for the welfare of horses**

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the draft *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses*, which falls within the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. Having been a horse owner nearly all of my life, I am very pleased to see this report coming through the Parliament. It deals with all facets of equine management, welfare and veterinary science. This code replaces the code approved by the Governor in Council on 15 December 1987 and is a much more up-to-date

and appropriate, modern approach to equestrian management.

As I have said, it talks about hooves, teeth, training, veterinary care, feeding regimes, responsible horse ownership, saddlery and, even at the end point of many of our beloved friends' lives, euthanasia. I have seen both sides of the equation. The majority of horse owners love, respect and treat their animals with every care. Often the joke in equine society is that the husband will be sleeping under a \$20 doona while the horse will have a \$300 rug. The care and money that is spent on these animals is often disproportionate to income, and I think people who do look after their animals in this way are to be commended. However, unfortunately I have also seen the other side of that where through ignorance or abject neglect animals have died or suffered in the most inhumane and terrible ways. This code of practice recommends the basic needs of horses, irrespective of the husbandry system, including:

readily accessible food and water to maintain health and vigour;

freedom of movement to stand, stretch, turn around, walk forward, lie down and roll;

regular exercise;

social contact with other horses or people —

as horses are herd animals and they do love contact —

accommodation that neither harms nor causes undue strain or discomfort;

protection from disease, and regular inspections to assess the need for attention to feet, teeth and parasite control;

rapid identification and treatment of injury and disease.

Many of the points in this code of practice talk about the behavioural needs of horses and such matters as design of facilities, stocking density and about the responsibilities of horse owners so that they can have an understanding of the nature of the animal. A person responsible for the supervision of horses must also have the capacity to recognise signs of ill health. It is good to know that at the back of the report there is a clear and simple diagram which describes for people who own horses what is an appropriate condition for a horse to be in. This will enable people to recognise signs that perhaps their horse is not being fed enough. It is terrible that many people do not understand that having a skinny horse is perhaps a sign that the animal is not getting enough to eat. Some people just put another rug on the horse.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mrs PETROVICH** — Yes. Most of those would be very well looked after, Mr Finn.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mrs PETROVICH** — I would say this report would argue that. The report also addresses the issues of identification of the animal, which is something that I think has been discussed in Victoria for many years, such as microchipping and the way horses are branded, and the responsible breeding of horses. We have a variety of breeds and breed associations in Victoria and a range of domestic uses for horses. Many people get great recreational enjoyment from horseriding in a variety of disciplines, but it is good to ensure that we breed fit-for-purpose horses and do not breed horses that are no good for anybody.

I commend this report. It is a very user-friendly document and should make a difference to those who are thinking of becoming responsible horse owners. This is a good starting point for people to look at to ensure they have a guideline. It is also good for people to join a pony club or the Horse Riding Club Association of Victoria if they are looking for that advice.

### **Victoria University: report 2011**

**Mr EIDEH** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on Victoria University's annual report for 2011, and I might add that I am truly delighted to speak on a report of such a prestigious university that has developed through the growth of Melbourne's west. The university's vision is to empower a diverse community of students to grow their capabilities and transform their lives. Now in its 96th year of operation, Victoria University has truly done that, and its many students are testament to that vision. I congratulate the university's chancellor, George Pappas, and vice-chancellor, Professor Peter Dawkins, on their direction and making plans for a better university and TAFE for the students who are based in the western suburbs.

It will come as no surprise to members to learn that Western Metropolitan Region is one of the most socioeconomically diverse and marginalised areas in the state, yet Victoria University's enrolments continue to increase as more and more people of all ages receive much-needed education to transform not only their lives but also those of their families and future generations. Education is one of the most important things a person can receive, yet not too long ago — now a fading memory — post-secondary education was only available to the elite few. Education has opened the

door to so many, and Victoria University, along with many other TAFE and tertiary providers, has transformed a generation into thinkers and doers.

Victoria University's mission statement says that the university is about:

... empowering students from diverse countries and cultures, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, to be successful lifelong learners, grow their skills and capabilities for the changing world of work, and be confident, creative, ethical and respectful, local and global citizens ...

That statement is indicative of what we on this side of the house stand for and of something to which we believe everyone is entitled.

Victoria University's roots were put down in 1916 when the Footscray Technical School was established. It was established to equip the west's growing industrial workforce, and within 50 years it grew into the Footscray Institute of Technology. The foundations of this education provider have been built on trade training and equipping people due to a skills shortage, a situation similar to the one this state is facing now. However, there is one major difference. At that time there was not a Liberal-Nationals government significantly cutting funding to TAFE providers, one of them being Victoria University.

Victoria University alone has suffered a \$29 million slash in TAFE funding. Mr Baillieu is not only cutting the total TAFE funding by \$290 million but he is also cutting short the ambitions of so many Victorians. We must also remember that we cannot just take this issue at face value and assume that the effects stop at the humble students who seek an education. This government's decision has significant ripple effects not only on the students and the staff who will lose their jobs and their families who will face a loss of income but also on the skills shortage, which will be higher than ever in this state. Institutions such as Victoria University no longer have the tools to teach the important trades that will keep Victoria moving and the economy developing.

I do not wish to dampen the great work and the future direction of this education provider with a reflection on the current state of vocational training funding in the state under the coalition government. Victoria University aims to help students grow, and I hope this institution will enable many prospective students from Melbourne's west to continue to do just that. I commend the report to the house.

### **Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust: report 2011–12**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to say a few words on the Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust annual report for 2011–12. I have to say up-front to the house this afternoon that I love the MCG. I just absolutely adore the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Over the last 35 years I have been there many times, and I have never failed to be in awe of this place that is an icon of Melbourne and, I think it has to be said, of Australia. To many people in places overseas — perhaps in India, Pakistan, the West Indies and even the UK — Australia is known because of the MCG and what happens there. It is always a joy to be at the MCG, but it has to be said that sometimes it is not always a joy to leave. Those of us who are Richmond supporters will sing that in unison after recent weeks.

It is interesting to note that 2011 was a highly significant year for the MCG Trust, being the 150th anniversary of the appointment of the initial MCG trustees in 1861. As I read this report I thought of what this report would have read like back in 1861. I would bet it would have been very different to what it is now. Just looking at the ground itself, we see that it is not just a ground, it is an edifice. It is a magnificent construction that is the highlight of Melbourne for anybody. The current MCG is very different to the MCG I first visited in the mid-1970s. In fact it is completely different. I recall that back in those days we used to park ourselves on the second deck of the old southern stand, where the wind and the rain used to get us if it was coming from the wrong direction. The Richmond cheer squad would sit behind the goals, out of the rain sometimes because it was under the roof. We would sit up there and have a few blue or green cans. You cannot do that anymore at the MCG, and that is probably a pity. I am sure Mr Leane would agree with me that that is something that perhaps has gone missing from our lives.

To see the MCG as it is today compared with what it was is to see a transformation of quite extraordinary proportions. I recall the old smokers stand. Could you believe that we would call it the smokers stand? Could you believe that today, in 2012, we would have a members stand of a major sporting stadium called the smokers stand? These days you would be taken out the back, put up against a tree and shot for calling something anything to do with smoking.

I have to say I actually miss that old stand. It had character. I did not go there very often. It was a very rare visit for me, because I am basically a southern stand man — I went there every time. But it was always

great to see the old smokers stand, and I do miss it. It is a great pity that it was not allowed to survive the redevelopment, but progress is progress, and sometimes there is not much we can do about it. Of course we now see the statues and the stands that have been rebuilt: the new Ponsford stand, the new Olympic stand, the new southern stand — the Great Southern Stand, which of course was the first part of the development. I understand the possibility of redeveloping that again is being looked at, but even the insides of the new southern stand are being renovated almost on a daily basis.

One of the great highlights for me is the many statues that are popping up around the MCG — statues of champions, of cricketing greats, of sporting greats, of football greats. I cannot let the opportunity pass to suggest to the trustees and the committee of the MCG that they might like to erect a statue in honour of the player who has kicked more goals than anybody else on the MCG, and that of course is a great champion of the Australian Football League, Matthew Richardson. It would be more than appropriate if a statue of Richo were erected to commemorate his great feats on the MCG. As I say, the MCG is a place to behold, I love it, and come the middle of March next year I will be there again.

### **Auditor-General: *Obsolescence of Frontline ICT — Police and Schools***

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Auditor-General's *Obsolescence of Frontline ICT — Police and Schools* report 2011–12. It is the role of ICT across the public sector to manage information so that each agency has the capacity at any given time to provide up-to-date data to this house and to the people of Victoria — in other words, to provide a snapshot of how well or otherwise an agency is performing its role within the structures of the public service.

Information technology is a proverbial open mouth, always screaming for more funds and always running behind as the sector continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Hardware and software are planned obsolescences within the IT industry. We cannot control the information technology, but we can manage it better. I have noticed there are many and varied hardware and software programs across all agencies. There is no rationalisation of technological equipment, and maybe this is a good thing, but I suspect that it is a costly and expensive option.

This report demonstrates the lack of coordination and protection of this expensive asset. More funding is

needed to ensure that obsolete hardware and software are replaced. The Victorian Auditor-General's recommendations are worthy of support. Investing more in ensuring agencies have the logistical tools and opportunity to improve their reporting mechanisms would be a sensible approach by the commonwealth government. It is time that agencies addressed the problem of obsolete technology and began to give proper consideration to replacing and renewing outdated technology, because without proper risk management being applied our schools and police force will suffer the consequences.

The people of Victoria will not be best served by agencies burying their collective heads in the sand. This matter is urgent and the Department of Treasury and Finance must recognise it is an important issue and provide leadership and guidance in a systematic approach to refreshing and renewing vital technology tools across the entire public sector.

**Family and Community Development  
Committee: opportunities for participation of  
Victorian seniors**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to make a contribution supporting the work of the Family and Community Development Committee and its report on its inquiry into opportunities for participation of Victorian seniors. The Family and Community Development Committee is a very good committee, and it has produced a thorough and comprehensive report. It is an excellent report. I have seen a few committee reports in my time in Parliament, and it is one of the best, if not the best, in terms of ease of access to information. It has a very good executive summary, glossary and a key list of recommendations, which will no doubt be given serious consideration by the government.

I must confess that in the time since it has been handed down I have not had the opportunity to read the whole report cover to cover, but the bits I have been able to delve into provide an excellent summary of some of the issues facing our seniors, who make up a significant part of the population. The report recognises the notion of a senior or of an ageing community as something of an aged concept, in that a lot of people are now living longer, living healthier and also contributing to society, particularly on a voluntary basis, throughout the course of their lives.

After their working lives have finished many people are going on to informal and other careers or extending their traditional careers. That of course creates great benefits for our society, and the first thing we should

acknowledge — as this report does — is the great work of our seniors. However, it also creates challenges for us in terms of planning for these communities, in terms of cost provision, health provision and access to the sorts of facilities that the rest of us take for granted.

Having said that, one of the first parts of the report is about identifying seniors. The report says that at the start of the 20th century a person's average life expectancy was mid-50s. In the 1970s a person could expect to reach their mid-70s, and in 2012 a person can expect to reach their mid-80s. In that regard there will be a lot more people who will be what was traditionally called 'elderly'. This reminds me of a phrase about access issues, which is something the report touches upon, particularly in relation to buildings, which was said by an advocate for disability groups — that is, one is only temporarily abled in life. You start your life by needing assistance — for example, you are assisted by a person who wheels your pram. People often encounter accessibility issues in their life, which is what this report touches on, particularly in regional areas.

There is an acknowledgement in the report about the important role members of our community play when informally caring and volunteering; for example, in sporting organisations, religious organisations, emergency services, age-related organisations, special interest organisations and community organisations. Senior Victorians ought to be commended for their civic participation and leadership. In this regard I am reminded of the Regional VolunteerFest in Horsham, an organised event I attended recently, which commemorated and acknowledged some of the excellent work that our volunteers do in various organisations.

In relation to that issue, a relative of mine, my grandmother's sister, Belle Baker, received a commendation in relation to her work. She is over 100 years old and has continued to engage in flood recovery assistance in a hospital by securing 200 subscriptions in relation to flood recovery funds. I still recall her words, which are relevant to the main topic of this report, to her assembled guests at her 100th birthday party, which was two years ago. She thanked everyone quite efficiently and then she proceeded to scold people in the room by saying, 'All you 50-year-olds out there think you are old, but you are only halfway there. Stop complaining and get on with it!'. I think everyone who was there remembers that. That is the sort of attitude we need to encourage in people.

As a government we need to plan for our communities. I know there was some discussion earlier about

planning, including environmental planning and sustainable planning. There are recommendations in the report. There is a specific chapter that deals with the very difficult problem of transport in regional communities. I endorse certain people's words, particularly those who say people living in regional Victoria have inadequate public transport for their mental, dental, legal and financial appointments. Most towns have community cars. I encourage the government to consider this report seriously. I commend Georgie Crozier and her committee for their excellent work.

### **Bushfires royal commission implementation monitor: final report**

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — Today I will speak on the *Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor — Final Report, July 2012*. In the time that is available to me I will flag some of the issues that the monitor has reported on. They are things that have probably not been done. There is a lot to be said about the 67 recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. A lot has been achieved in good time by the previous government and the current government. A lot of good work has yet to be done.

Firstly, there is an underpinning of this monitor's report. It is the final report but the monitor is continuing to be engaged and monitor. That is part of the problem. A lot has not been done.

I will go through multiple quotes. When in opposition the current Premier and Deputy Premier unequivocally said they would deliver every single recommendation of the royal commission lock, stock and barrel. I can provide all of the relevant quotes, but they said there was no time for delay, there was no time for dithering, it had to be done and it was all urgent. But over the last 19 months we have seen a lot of the royal commission's urgent issues suddenly becoming a lot less urgent. I will go through and touch on five issues.

The first issue is about powerlines. The bushfire royal commission's recommendation in this regard is quite explicit. When the previous government wanted time to consider this issue it was criticised for not caring about what was going on. The present government has said it will deliver every recommendation lock, stock and barrel. Lo and behold, the powerlines are not underground, and every possible excuse has been made in relation to why something that has such a huge economic impact at a time of rising energy bills needs to be slowed down. It is a very different story from the case that was put forward when the recommendations

were made by the royal commission. Unequivocally — members should trust me — Mr Baillieu and Mr Ryan said they would deliver all of this. Now suddenly the delivery is slow.

The second issue that Mr Comrie, the monitor, refers to is the issue of refuges, which is complex. I do not believe for one moment that there is anything simple about how refuges are handled. There might be a good refuge in the community with 20 places. If 25 people go to the refuge, then obviously that is a problem. There are issues about making homes safer and less fire prone, and all of them incur expenses. Issues in relation to neighbourhood safer places are quite challenging when there is not a neighbourhood safer place in the community. How do you do it?

The issue I have with this report is — and this is all highlighted — the government is way behind in relation to refuges and neighbourhood safer places. The answer we get to our questions all the time is that there is someone else to blame. Local government is to blame. These things are difficult; I am not pretending for one moment they are not. But this government said these things were simple and that it would deliver all of them when it came into government. But 20 months later excuses are still being given.

We have some great champions of burn-offs in this place, particularly Mrs Petrovich and many others who spent the time during the period of the last Parliament attacking the previous government for being too slow in relation to burn-offs. During the last two summers we saw those targets not being met. It is a bit rich to blame the government for the first of those summers, because the government had just come into power, it was in caretaker mode and there was a transition. But by the second of those summers, the number of burn-offs came nowhere near the target.

The excuse the government gives instantly when it is asked is, 'It is raining'. That is not new; it happens. We have seen the Mallee burnt and reburnt to achieve the target of 5 per cent of public land being burnt, but we do not see any real effort. This activity is all budget driven, and there is not an effort to strategically burn land around Cockatoo or in the Dandenongs or the Otways. It is not a strategic decision — to burn and reburn the Mallee is a budgetary decision.

When in opposition Mr Ryan was the champion of all of this, and he is suddenly finding very rational reasons — and I am not disputing them — as to why the 5 per cent target is not appropriate. He is asking, 'Are there more effective ways?'. But he and Mrs Petrovich and others were silent about that issue

when in opposition. When I asked a question of Mr David Davis about this issue last summer, he did not even know about it, which was quite a concern because he is a senior minister in the government.

The penultimate area I will turn to is the warnings. We have seen much reporting — the monitor's report, obviously, in both the *Age* and the *Herald Sun* today and on the Jon Faine radio program — about warnings. These things are not simple. But again what we are seeing is a pattern: 'It is someone else's fault'; 'It is the federal government's fault'; 'It is not the state government that is in any way responsible'. Today the Premier quite disgracefully attacked the member for Yan Yean in the Assembly, Danielle Green, over this particular matter. I know what she was doing on the day of the bushfires, Black Saturday. She was putting her life at stake defending people. I know what the Premier was doing as well, and I know whose place I would like to be in.

The final thing I will touch on is the fire services levy. For 7 years The Nationals ministers called for it during the Kennett government, and for 11 years when Labor was in government The Nationals called for it. Now we have met the first deadline, failed the first deadline and we are nowhere near it. This is a classic thing for The Nationals — to promise a fire services levy delivery in two different governments, and never deliver. I commend the report to Victorians to read. It is a good report. There is a lot more to be done out of it.

### **Auditor-General: *Obsolescence of Frontline ICT — Police and Schools***

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Following my good colleague Mr Elasmarr, I would like to make a statement on the report generated from the Auditor-General's office.

**An honourable member** — The MCG?

**Mr LEANE** — I was tempted to do the MCG. The report centred on front-line ICT particularly for police and schools. I am interested in the auditing work done in the education department. It struck me that the role that ICT plays in our schools is an enormous one, which we see on a weekly basis when we visit different schools. The degree of information technology particularly in primary schools strikes me as just amazing, when you think about how far it has come in such a short time. It makes you wonder how far ahead it will go in the time ahead of us.

Recently I was at the opening of the new federally funded building at Croydon Primary School. The

school representatives said that with some extra federal funding they recently installed a number of interactive whiteboards in all the classrooms. This is an amazing educational vehicle which assists in teaching our young people. It allows them to easily engage in activities and, to a degree, have fun. That seems a bit of an oxymoron when you are at school, but they can actually have fun using the type of equipment which has been supplied at the school.

As we all know, there is also a big role for laptop computers, iPads et cetera in both primary and secondary schools. The infrastructure and equipment required for each student is quite extensive and expensive, but it is very important. This is the way young people need to be educated for the future, because they are not going to go back to the way we wrote things out in longhand or muck around too much with long division and all that sort of stuff. There is a new world, and young people are catching up.

It is funny that if you ever want to work out how to use an application on your iPhone or a new program on your computer, the best person to go to is any relative who is around 10 or 11 years old. They are the best help desk you can find. ICT is an exciting thing and it should be supported in schools. We are moving into an exciting era. It is a sad reality that your kids always know more than you do when they get older, and that is the way it works out forever. We look forward to the next era and ICT providing for kids in the future to be educated. I hope we are still around to see it.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

That the house do now adjourn.

### **Patterson Lakes: water charges**

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Water, Peter Walsh. It concerns the Patterson Lakes precept rate and is to do with the charges levied by Melbourne Water, which is a matter of great concern to the residents of Patterson Lakes.

There has been consternation in the community for some years about the water quality of the Quiet Lakes as well as some of the increasing charges anticipated by Melbourne Water for providing water of primary contact quality. In fact it has been championed in the past by Mrs Peulich in this house and by Ms Asher, now the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, that this is an unfair arrangement and that the

agreements that were entered into by Melbourne Water when the suburb of Patterson Lakes was established should be reviewed to remove the onerous burden on the residents.

In this chamber Mrs Peulich called on me when I was Treasurer to 'ensure that these residents are not financially punished by some inappropriate determination for price rises'. She also said that I should 'advise the member for Carrum that it was her responsibility to ensure that these residents are not financially punished'.

These are honourable things for a member of Parliament to say, but now in 2012 I am interested in whether Mrs Peulich and Ms Asher still have the same view: that it is the responsibility of the member for Carrum in the Assembly — a different member for Carrum now, Donna Bauer — to make sure that these rates — —

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On a point of order, Acting President, I do not think the member is able to direct an adjournment matter to the member for Carrum or any member other than a minister.

**Mr LENDERS** — On the point of order, Acting President, I am seeking action from the Minister for Water and referring him to comments by other members of Parliament.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr)** — Order! Mr Lenders is seeking action from the Minister for Water. I ask him to continue.

**Mr LENDERS** — I am pleased that Mr Davis is defending his Liberal Party colleagues, but what I am seeking here is action from the Minister for Water to deal particularly with statements by Mrs Peulich and Ms Asher that it is the obligation of the member for Carrum to make sure that these precept rates do not go up under Melbourne Water's watch. The precept rates will probably go up in the order of 400 per cent under the water plan. It is nothing to do with the desalination plant and nothing to do with carbon tax. It is all to do with how the waterways of this part of Melbourne are being managed.

What I am hoping is that the Minister for Water will actually sit down with the residents of Patterson Lakes — some 400 of them were at a general meeting not so long ago and are very concerned about this — and perhaps bring Mrs Bauer along with him. Mrs Peulich said it was the responsibility of the member for Carrum to 'ensure that these residents are not financially punished'. I would ask the minister to bring along the member for Carrum, and perhaps also

Mrs Peulich and Ms Asher, who had views at the time, and sit down with the 400 residents and explain why the precept rate is going up at the level it is and also hold Mrs Bauer to the obligations Mrs Peulich said were in place for the member for Carrum: that it was her responsibility to stop these rates from going up.

### **Caulfield Racecourse Reserve: governance**

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Premier. It is in regard to Caulfield Racecourse Reserve, which the Minister for Health, who is in the chamber, would recall was the subject of the Select Committee on Public Land Development inquiry in 2008.

I direct this to the Premier because it concerns a letter that I know has been written to the Premier by Cr Jim Magee from the City of Glen Eira, who was recently elected chairman of trustees. He said:

The trustees are appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister for Crown lands, the Hon. Ryan Smith. The trust is comprised of six nominees of the Melbourne Racing Club (MRC), three councillors of the City of Glen Eira and six nominees of the minister.

Those arrangements appear to date back more than a hundred years.

During the inquiry the committee found that:

... The day-to-day management of the Crown land is in the control of the Melbourne Racing Club under delegation from the trustees.

... Evidence indicates the trustees' practice has been to meet once a year ... Their meetings are not open to the public, minutes of meetings are not made public nor is there any public release of financial statements.

Mr Magee as chair was concerned about these issues. He wrote:

The Department of Sustainability and Environment publishes 'Committee of Management Responsibilities and Good Practice Guidelines' ... The trustees received a copy of the guidelines and advice from the Office of the Victorian Government Solicitor ... on 24 February ... that in his opinion:

It is clear that members of the general public could reasonably form the view that the nominated trustees may experience a conflict between their private obligations to the club and their duties as trustees, which could influence their decision making in relation to reserve tenure issues.

...

The majority of trustees have decided not to accept the advice or guidelines.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve is Crown land with a commercial value of approximately \$2 billion. The land is used for a range of purposes, including racing-related, recreational and commercial purposes; however, as was discovered in the public land inquiry, the land is not used much as a public park, which was a clear purpose of the original trust deed. It is also not clear whether or not the trustees are governed by the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978.

My request to the Premier is that he investigate the governance arrangements of Caulfield Racecourse Reserve with a view to ensuring that the Crown land is subject to appropriate governance arrangements and that the process for establishing leases over this land meets all government requirements. As I said, it is not clear if and how the trustees are governed by the Crown land act and whether the 100-year-plus arrangement in place is consistent with modern ideas of good governance and the avoidance of conflict of interest.

### **Roads: Essendon Airport retail precinct**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Roads. I think it would be safe to say that one of the great success stories of recent years is the retail and DFO development at Essendon Airport. Despite the economic downturn and despite the effect of the carbon tax and other policies of the federal government that are impacting deleteriously on various aspects of the economy, the DFO and retail development at Essendon Airport is booming. It is a commercial boon for the north-western suburbs of Melbourne and is a hive of activity, particularly on weekends. I am often a customer there; you get some great bargains there, which is always very handy. It is also a great jobs hub for our part of Melbourne.

As is often the case in these sorts of circumstances, there is a downside, which is the traffic bedlam which often surrounds this particular development. On public holidays, weekends and particularly leading up to Christmas the mayhem that occurs surrounding this development is quite extraordinary. To attempt to get in or out would add perhaps an hour or more to a trip there, and it has to be said that that end of Bulla Road is not built for the traffic load it is currently carrying.

There is no doubt that the DFO and commercial development at Essendon Airport is here to stay. People are voting with their feet, and they are most certainly voting with their cars. I believe we must address a major problem that has developed over recent years. I ask the minister to direct VicRoads to institute a traffic

review of the area leading to and from the DFO and commercial development at Essendon Airport.

This is an issue that affects many thousands of people. I have spoken to a number of people who travel vast distances to visit this particular commercial development. Such a review and an improvement of traffic conditions surrounding the development would be a major plus for many thousands of people right across the western suburbs and even people in Mr Ondarchie's area of the northern suburbs. People travel from places as far away as Thomastown as well as from places such as Werribee and Point Cook. The development has a large catchment area. I ask the minister to direct VicRoads to investigate what can be done, and we will see if we can get a better deal in this area for the people of the north-western suburbs.

### **Seaspray: caravan park**

**Mr VINEY** (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith. It concerns the new caravan park at Seaspray, a project costing some \$4 million which will see a new caravan park located a bit back from the foreshore and the foreshore where the existing caravan park is located restored to open space foreshore.

I recently met with a number of Seaspray residents who were very concerned about a lack of transparency around the project, particularly the impact on the local community hall. It would appear that in 2008, under the previous government, the draft plans for the \$4 million project were presented to the community and there was general community support for the project. However, in the time between those plans being presented to the community and the current construction period, the plans have changed. This has resulted in a significant amount of the car parking in front of the community hall being taken up by the project, in particular by the caretaker's residence and office.

The community has become divided about a project that is generally well supported, and I think that is very unfortunate. The action I am seeking from the minister is that he visit the community and see whether he can intervene to get some common sense prevailing and some changes, particularly the restoration of some of the car parking in front of the community hall. The impact of the project as it stands will mean that people in Seaspray coming to use the hall, especially those with disabilities or others requiring easier access, will be required to park some distance from the hall. This is unfortunate and somewhat unnecessary, given the amount of land available.

I ask that the minister undertake this intervention in part because it would appear that the community's representations to Mr Philip Davis and the local lower house member, the member for Gippsland South, Peter Ryan, who is also the Deputy Premier, have been to no avail. I met with the residents, and I think they are reasonable people wanting to find a compromise and a solution. I think a compromise and a solution can be found by reverting to the original plans, which would see the entrance and the caretaker's residence set back a bit from the hall. At the moment the fence line between the front of the hall and the project leaves only 3 metres, which would make it almost impossible for vehicles even to come to the front of the hall, turn around and exit to the car park a bit further away.

I spoke to people who had no idea that the plans had been changed until construction started. As I said, I ask that the minister intervene, consult with the community and rectify what is a fairly straightforward problem.

### **Animal welfare: funding**

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and it relates to the range of measures the coalition government is putting in place to boost animal welfare in Victoria. I commend the minister, who, with Treasurer Kim Wells, launched the \$1.6 million Animal Welfare Fund last week.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — It was puppy love.

**Mrs PETROVICH** — It was puppy love. This fund will offer assistance to animal welfare groups across Victoria, including animal shelters, organisations promoting responsible animal ownership education, community cat or dog foster care networks, and groups that provide relief facilities and services during an emergency.

An example of one such group doing this important animal welfare work is Project Hope Horse Welfare Victoria, a well-known and respected equine rescue organisation. This group originated in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region in 1973 when Val Collingwood of Wallan wrote to *Rider* magazine regarding the number of neglected horses in Australia. Her letter struck a chord, and the organisation grew from there, relying on donations and the work of dedicated volunteers. Over the years this group has rescued and rehabilitated countless horses from appalling neglect.

One of the most distressing cases the group has been involved in occurred in Kyneton, and I will briefly

describe this case, which I witnessed firsthand, to give members an idea of the work that these volunteers do. On the afternoon of Tuesday, 27 March 2007, an anonymous report from a concerned local was made about a horse with an untreated injury to her eye, poor body condition and a foal at foot. Project Hope representatives visited the Kyneton property, and the smell at the gate told them that things were not good. They soon found a number of dead and severely malnourished horses and called in the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals) to assist nearly 50 horses which had been starving on the 60-acre property. Sixteen were dead, and 10 of the remaining 30 horses were at high risk. Several had to be euthanased due to their extremely poor condition.

The RSPCA located the absent owner, and after lengthy negotiations the owner agreed to surrender 24 of the horses. Within days the Project Hope team had moved them to appropriate facilities to begin the long road to rehabilitation and re-homing. Five years on, the group still has contact with these horses and is ensuring that they have suitable ongoing foster homes.

This Animal Welfare Fund will offer much-needed assistance to groups like Project Hope by easing the burden of fundraising, allowing them more time and energy to devote to their animal welfare efforts. I ask that the minister continue to support legislation, funding and education programs aimed at protecting abused and neglected animals in Victoria and promoting responsible pet ownership.

### **Ballarat Community Health: funding**

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health, and it is my lucky day because he is in the chamber, so hopefully I will be able to get an answer on the spot.

**An honourable member** — I wouldn't count on it!

**Ms PULFORD** — You can't blame a girl for trying.

My adjournment item relates to Ballarat Community Health, an incredibly valuable service in my electorate that provides alcohol and drug services, mental health services, counselling, refugee services, clinical and allied health services, general practice clinics and health promotion. The matter I wish to bring to the minister's attention relates to the health promotion component of Ballarat Community Health's services. It provides services in six locations across five local government areas and many diverse communities. The health service was told of a significant cut to its integrated

health promotion funding effective from the start of this current financial year. The planned reduction in funding is 26 per cent this financial year, with an additional 13 per cent the following year, something which I believe is occurring across all Victorian health promotion work. This is in addition to a 10 per cent cut to the integrated health promotion budgets of women's health services.

The Victorian government's health website quotes the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, which defines health promotion as:

... the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realise aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities.

The charter recognises that health is influenced by more than genetics, individual lifestyles and the provision of health care, and that political, social, economic and environmental factors are also important contributors to health. We are currently faced with something of an obesity epidemic. Smoking remains no. 1 on the list of preventable causes of cancer, and there are daily reminders in all of the communities we represent in this place of the high cost of drug and alcohol abuse.

The Baillieu-Ryan government on this occasion has decided to slash funding to a body that conducts programs to raise awareness of and provide information to the community on healthy living. I ask the minister to review this decision and restore funding to preventive health, because it is the right thing to do and because it also makes budgetary sense. The long-term cost of cutting funding to these important programs will far exceed any savings.

### Local government: green light plan

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Local Government, and it relates to the green light plan. Under a funding partnership agreement with the Baillieu government the Great South Coast program was to replace 7660 streetlights with energy-efficient bulbs across municipalities including the Colac Otway and Corangamite shires, the city of Warrnambool, and the Moyne, Southern Grampians and Glenelg shires. The federal Labor government has contributed \$1.4 million for the project, and the Baillieu government promised \$1.6 million through its green light plan,

The municipalities that make up the Great South Coast indicated that they are fully committed to the program, which it is said will save the Great South Coast councils almost \$10 million by 2030 and pay for the initial cost outlay in four to five years through electricity savings. However, the state government has broken its promise to provide this money and reneged on its support for local councils in their efforts to lower costs and decrease their impact on the environment.

Ratepayers in these municipalities have now come to the realisation that what the government has essentially done is drop its commitment like a hot light bulb and hand regional Victorians in these municipalities a bill for \$1.6 million. This issue is being played out in the wider community. It is a cost issue for communities about which there has been ample discussion. The *Colac Herald* of 27 July has the headline 'Ratepayers facing bill from broken promise'. The *Portland Observer* of 30 July has the headline 'Green lighting tick despite dim decision from state'. The *Age* of 3 May has an article by Josh Gordon with the headline 'Green programs to be cut'. This additional cost burden is simply not sustainable for local government, particularly for rural councils with a low rate base.

I request that the minister take action and honour the promise made by this government to immediately reinstate state government funding for the green light plan to all local government areas in western Victoria that had committed to the green light plan.

### Housing: government policy

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter this evening is for the Minister for Housing, and it relates to the Baillieu government's release of its *Pathways to a Fair and Sustainable Social Housing System* discussion paper. This paper explains how public housing now houses the most vulnerable in our society: 55 per cent of residents in public housing in Victoria are elderly singles or single parents with children. The paper also refers to how the ageing population will put further demand pressures on the public housing system. With almost 38 000 people on the waiting list, the government is not investing in public housing as the previous Labor government did. In fact the budget papers, which I would urge Mr Ondarchie to look at, indicate a 2 per cent cut in social housing investment in 2012–13 compared to 2011–12 and a 1.5 per cent cut in housing support and homelessness assistance.

In comparison, the previous Labor government invested more than \$500 million over a two-year period to build new homes and deliver more than 4500 new social and

public housing dwellings in Victoria. This was on top of the \$1.5 billion stimulus package delivered by the federal Labor government. This funding resulted in many social housing projects in my electorate, in suburbs such as Reservoir, Fitzroy, Richmond, Carlton, Melbourne and Broadmeadows. These are projects that I am proud of, even if I do not get invited to their openings by this government.

This discussion paper spells out the government's agenda. It refers to Britain's Cameron government recently making changes to limit tenure for public housing tenants. It also refers to their 'big society' policy, which is code for 'small government' forcing disadvantaged people to rely on charities. I question whether the government's agenda in putting out this paper is to move towards American Tea Party-type policies and shift people away from social welfare and support from the state to reliance on philanthropy and charity. It looks like that is the plan.

The paper refers to the reduced rental revenue that has arisen and to people staying in public housing for longer. It mentions what the Auditor-General referred to as 'people with complex needs'. It talks about how private rental is so much higher than public housing rent. So the government is planning to put up rents and limit tenure to get people to drop off the waiting list. Given that the script Mr Ondarchie was given, which he went on with for 43 minutes, did not address any of these points, I ask the Minister for Housing to address the concerns that public housing tenants in my electorate have expressed to me and to categorically rule out increased public housing rents, fixed-term tenure and the wholesale privatisation of public housing stock in this state.

### **Aged care: federal funding**

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing, Mr Davis. It relates to the federal aged-care funding shortfall that was highlighted earlier this week. I am pleased that in relation to the specific area of palliative care the state government provided an additional \$34 million in last year's budget, and last August the Minister for Health launched the policy document *Strengthening Palliative Care — Policy and Strategic Directions 2011–2015*.

On Monday night's *Q&A* program on the ABC the federal Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, spoke of the important role that aged-care facilities play in the palliative care area, especially for the frail and the elderly. This was only a day before Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) released a

report revealing that the industry was going to be facing huge reductions in funding. That organisation examined changes to the federal government's aged-care funding instrument and predicted that aged-care providers would face a revenue reduction of more than \$750 million over the next two and a half years.

I want to again commend the Minister for Health for the initiatives and support he is giving to this very important area within health care. This is in contrast to the actions of the federal Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, who is obviously ripping money out of this area — that significant amount of \$750 million.

Firstly, I ask the minister if he is aware of the media release that was put out by LASA following the *Q&A* program on Monday night — on which the federal Minister for Mental Health and Ageing appeared — which highlighted its concerns about the federal government's funding cuts to this area. The action I seek from the minister is that he do what he can to protect the elderly and the frail, especially around palliative care services in this area, and that he do what he can to address the inaction of the federal minister and the federal government in relation to that funding shortfall.

### **Schools: education maintenance allowance**

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon. The matter I raise concerns the state government's decision to scrap the school contribution of the education maintenance allowance (EMA) and increase the payment to families, which is causing widespread concern in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region.

I recently discussed this issue with the Echuca South Primary School council president, Maree Loader, and the Yarrawonga College P–12 school council president, Carolyn O'Dwyer. Ms Loader informed me that Echuca South Primary School calculated that it will lose \$16 000, which will have an enormous impact on this small primary school. The school's specialist programs, such as those involving netbooks, may have to be cut back, and camps and excursions are now in jeopardy. While the school has a dedicated group of hardworking parents, Ms Loader said it would be impossible for it to raise anything close to that amount because it already struggles with fundraising activities and there is a limit to how much more pressure the school can place on families or expect the wider community to contribute.

Ms O'Dwyer from Yarrowonga College P-12 said that the finance unit of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development had confirmed that next year the school will be more than \$42 000 worse off than the funding levels for this year. Ms O'Dwyer indicated that the loss of school-based EMA funding will directly affect the programs and services provided to her school's students. Without this funding the school will no longer be able to provide parents with assistance for uniforms, book lists at the beginning of the school year and payments for camps and excursions during the school year.

Parents who receive the EMA have in the past been able to rely on the school to deduct costs for their children's education from the school-based payment. While both schools are doing their utmost to communicate the effects of these changes, there are genuine concerns that they will be unable to recoup money from the families, which will result in a black hole in the schools' budget. Both school council presidents informed me that they were concerned that if families find themselves struggling to pay for everyday living expenses, they will be forced to use the money for other necessities rather than for their children's education.

Given that at the last election the Liberal-Nationals coalition promised it would ensure that children had the best start in life and a safe and caring environment in schools and that learning and support in classrooms would be key to the provision of education, my specific request to the minister is that he restore the EMA to schools so that they have the funds necessary to support students in a caring environment.

### Responses

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — Eleven matters have been raised today in the adjournment debate. The first concerns a matter raised by Mr Lenders around Patterson Lakes and the charges levied by Melbourne Water. I have absolutely no doubt that the member for Carrum in the Assembly and the various members for South Eastern Metropolitan Region, including Mrs Peulich, will strongly advocate on behalf of their local communities. I think it is a bit rich of Mr Lenders to raise matters when he is one of the architects of the desalination project, which for the next 27 years will mean Victorians will pay more through their water bills. Up to \$2 million a day in additional costs will be passed on in water costs to Victorians through the water agencies for metropolitan Melbourne, so it is important that people understand that Mr Lenders is one of the architects of that project.

**Mr Lenders** — On a point of order, President, the specific matter I raised in the adjournment concerned the precept charge. As I outlined, the precept charge has nothing whatsoever to do with normal Melbourne Water billing; it is an issue regarding the canals of Patterson Lakes, and so I would ask you to hold Mr Davis to answering the question and ask that he not give a general political narrative on an area about which he was not asked.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — On the point of order, President, I know Mr Lenders is very touchy about his involvement in the desalination plant and matters related to it, but his matter clearly relates to charges that relate to water — —

**Mr Lenders** — No, it does not. Precept charges have nothing to do with usage.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — They are charges that are paid by people in particular areas.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister's response to the adjournment item does stray from the issue that was raised, so I ask the minister to focus on that issue, which is the precept charge at Patterson Lakes, rather than broader water issues.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — President, as you know there are charges that are laid by a number of authorities. The key thing here is that I know local members will advocate strongly for their local community. I will certainly pass the matter on to the Minister for Water, but it is relevant that charges can be levied from other sources.

I also note the matter raised with me by Ms Pennicuik for the attention of the Premier relating to various matters around the Caulfield Racecourse and the old deed. Ms Pennicuik and I are both very aware of these matters, having both been members of the public land committee during the last Parliament. It was clear that the deed required not just racing as a purpose, but also public recreation, and the public land committee made a number of recommendations around that. I think there has been a significant response in that regard.

In terms of the specific matters that were raised regarding Jim Magee, the chair of the board of trustees, I am informed that he may not have consulted with all of his trustees; he may have stepped out and made a number of comments on his own without the full support of the trustees. It is important that we are consistent in meetings as well as in the public environment. Not to detract in any way from the broader issue of greater public access to the parkland, I think there is — —

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — If one wanted to talk about governance, Mr Magee may not have set the highest standards, as Ms Pennicuik outlined in her matter. But I will certainly pass this matter on to the Premier. I will also take the liberty of passing it on to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, who is directly responsible for the trustees and the land.

Mr Finn raised a matter with me about roads, particularly the roads around the Essendon DFO. Mr Finn and I have a long history relating to Essendon Airport and its development. We both remember a time in the early 1990s when Labor was determined to close it. I remember in the early 2000s I moved a motion in this chamber to support Essendon Airport, and Labor, consistent with its party policy — and to my knowledge its party policy remains the same — was determined to close it and level the area to make it available for housing.

**Mr Finn** — Turn it into a block of flats!

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Nonetheless, the commonwealth, which is responsible for airports, has allowed retail development to occur on that site. There is no doubt about the economic significance of development to the area and the jobs that it has generated. Equally people will be aware that an inquiry of this Parliament back in the early 1990s looked at precisely the issue of commonwealth land and state planning regimes being out of sync and the need to align the two. This is a classic case in point. Development has occurred without dovetailing properly with the road and other planning requirements that are necessary for the smooth movement of people.

As requested by Mr Finn, I will pass this matter on to the Minister for Roads, Mr Mulder, who I think will be very keen to look at this issue, and seek some response to this matter. I agree with Mr Finn on the importance of the retail activity surrounding Essendon Airport, but equally I understand his point about access and traffic.

Mr Viney raised a matter for me for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change concerning the new Seaspray caravan park. He talked about the process of this particular proposal and its impact on the community hall. I note that he referred to plans that were discussed in 2008 or thereabouts and that these plans appear to be different, he indicated, from the ones that are proposed now. I note that there is enthusiasm by local members, including the member for Gippsland South in the Assembly, Peter Ryan, and

Philip Davis, to strongly advocate on behalf of their local communities — —

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I am simply being quite clear, given the comments of Mr Viney, that I know Philip Davis and Peter Ryan to be very strong advocates for their local community. I am also aware of the determination of this government to see economic development, growth and jobs. It is a fact that the previous government did not act on these matters, and there was no development in this particular case. I would imagine, without being familiar with the details of this specific issue, that there would be a process in operation that is determined to get a good outcome for the community and to see that economic development happens in a way that it did not under the previous government. It is with enthusiasm that I will pass this matter on to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, who I know will be interested to take it up as requested.

Mrs Petrovich raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security concerning animal welfare, and she told a story which can only be regarded as heart wrenching. I pay tribute to her personal commitment to animal welfare, particularly to horses, and to her longstanding interest in riding and the welfare of horses. The members of the groups she referred to are exemplary members of the community and deserve to be strongly supported, and I welcome the support provided through the agriculture minister's good offices for these groups. I have no doubt he will want to continue that support as he too has a personal commitment to animal welfare, as does the Treasurer, as we know from his strong advocacy on behalf of puppies and his focus on protecting vulnerable dogs. With some enthusiasm I will pass this matter to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and I note again the commitment of the member in raising this matter.

Ms Pulford raised a matter for me concerning Ballarat Community Health and adjustments to its integrated health promotion funding. It is true that in difficult economic times the government has to make some difficult choices. We are aware of the challenge that is presented to it in these times. I strongly support the role of community health centres and services around the state, and I pay tribute to the broad range of work that is undertaken at Ballarat Community Health. Ballarat Community Health, like a number of other community health centres, receives funding from a number of sources — commonwealth, state and private — and I note its budget in the last financial year was about

\$7.5 million. The government obviously strongly supports prevention activities, and these occur through integrated health promotion as well as through other mechanisms. Health promotion is a critical focus for the government, and it occurs both in specific communities and through agencies like Ballarat Community Health.

Ballarat Community Health has an important role in raising a whole range of health promotion issues, and it does a very good job. It is true that there is a modest reduction in its integrated health promotion funding this financial year, and we will work with the sector, in particular that agency, to ensure that we support it in every way. I am determined to make sure that community health centres have access to Health Purchasing Victoria, for example, to enable them to lower some of their costs. I think in the longer term a lower cost structure will help provide a broader range of health promotion services. The government has sought to avoid any reductions in direct service delivery, and that is achievable in this case.

I note the matter raised for me by Ms Tierney for the attention of the Minister for Local Government concerning the green light plan and opportunities for a reduction in power costs through green lighting. I will pass that on to the Minister for Local Government and ensure that she is able to respond. Mr Finn's point that we have not heard a bleep out of Ms Tierney in terms of opposition to the carbon tax is pertinent as that tax will impose additional costs on councils and communities around Victoria.

Ms Mikakos raised a number of matters with me for the Minister for Housing. I am not quite sure where to start in the long list of issues she raised, which was something of a repeat of a speech she gave on a motion that was the subject of a debate in the chamber this afternoon. I am not seeking to debate or refute those issues. I will pass the matter to the Minister for Housing for her attention as requested, but I want to put on the record that some of the extravagant and, frankly, bizarre claims made at the end of the member's contribution may be responded to in the negative. The government has no plans to do some of the outlandish things which were listed at the end of the contribution.

Another matter Ms Mikakos raised concerns the Australian Unity development of the Carlton Wellbeing Precinct. This is a project that has broad support across the community — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order!

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I was fortunate enough to be at the sod turning on Monday afternoon. It is a very good project, and it has bipartisan support, which we welcome. I make the point — —

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order!

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — No, I was listening to what Ms Mikakos said. This is an interactive process at this point — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have asked for order several times.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — With the President's indulgence, and in direct response to the matter raised by Ms Mikakos, I might very briefly say something about the precise aspects of aged care and the contribution I made yesterday. I have a number of serious concerns about the future of projects like the very good Australian Unity project that we are talking about. That project will be put at risk unless the commonwealth government provides certainty and predictability — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — You have raised a matter related to aged services, concerning the Australian Unity's Carlton Wellbeing Precinct. I am indicating I attended the opening of that on Monday afternoon, and I am indicating — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — You actually mentioned the precise project, the Australian Unity Carlton Wellbeing Precinct, in relation to aged care — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — No, you actually mentioned it in your adjournment matter. I have it carefully written down here. I take notes as we go through, and that is what you said.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I advise Ms Mikakos that this is not a conversation. She has raised a point in her adjournment matter, she has sought an answer from the minister and the minister is providing an answer. In fact Ms Mikakos is expanding the scope of the

minister's answer by her constant interjections. It is not a conversation.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I will wind up by saying briefly that one of the points amongst a number that I made, aside from my strong support for the project, is that large projects of this nature require significant financial contributions from major banks and major project developers, and that requires certainty and predictability into the future. That certainty and predictability has been put at risk by the commonwealth government's failure to be very clear about aspects of its changes to the ACFI (aged-care funding instrument) formula — that is, its changes to the funding of residential aged-care and other related services. A key point I made was that unless that is cleared up we will actually experience much greater difficulty in attracting large players — large construction firms and large financiers — to the development of projects of the scale of the one in Carlton to which Ms Mikakos referred.

Ms Crozier raised with me a matter concerning the aged-care funding shortfall, and she drew my attention to the news releases in recent days by the Victorian branch of LASA (Leading Age Services Australia). It is very clear that LASA, the relevant industry association for aged-care service providers, is increasingly concerned about the impact of the commonwealth government's changes to the ACFI formula made through Minister Butler, the federal Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, and related changes in the commonwealth package that was brought down recently.

My concerns here are similar to those I outlined to Ms Mikakos. It is clear that the changes to the ACFI formula will result in a significant reduction in funding for the aged-care sector. LASA has calculated that there will be a \$750 million shortfall, and aged-care service providers will face that in the next two and a half years. I note that LASA has undertaken some independent financial analysis of the changes that the federal government is implementing.

I make the point that these changes have been implemented from 1 July. We are now at the point where the exact nature of the changes is still murky and hard to tie down, but again they are changes required by the aged-care sector to get the very best result for their communities. We need to understand those changes. It is clear that the changes to the ACFI formula will result in significant funding shortfalls, and those shortfalls will hit country and regional providers and not-for-profit providers harder than others. LASA has done analysis across the country, and I pay tribute to the

work that has been done. It is a high standard of analysis of what is a very complex area.

Ms Crozier has correctly raised this matter and pointed out the impact of this, and she has sought from me an action. Let me explain what we intend to do. We have certainly taken up the matter with the commonwealth minister. I raised this at the meeting of health ministers recently — indeed on Friday. At our request it has been agreed that a meeting of ministers for ageing or aged care, as they are described variously in different states, will be held with the commonwealth minister in the very near future to discuss these changes.

There is a clear impact on state health and community service systems as a result of the changes made by the commonwealth to the aged-care funding instruments and those impacts are potentially quite serious. We will take this up with the commonwealth. We will do it in a way that looks after the interests of Victorian seniors, giving them the maximum number of options but seeking to manage the cuts that appear to be embedded within the changes to the aged-care funding that have been introduced by the commonwealth to the tune, it seems, of more than \$750 million over the next two and a half years.

Ms Darveniza raised with me a matter concerning the education maintenance allowance, claiming that funding to schools had been reduced. I am sure that funding in aggregate to schools has not been reduced. I note the Echuca and Yarrowonga examples to which she drew attention. I will pass the matter she raised on to the Minister for Education, but I want to assure communities that funding in the aggregate for schools has in fact increased.

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — Pursuant to standing order 4.13, I raise a matter relating to responses to adjournment matters. A minister is required to respond to an adjournment matter within 30 days. There are two outstanding adjournment matters that have been raised by me for Mr David Davis on 5 May and 8 December last year, and there are eight outstanding adjournment matters that have been raised by me for the Premier. I have raised a series of adjournment matters for other ministers which I will not mention now because while Mr Davis might be the Leader of the Government in this place, he does not represent those ministers in this place.

The reason I raise these matters and ask Mr Davis for his comment is that I am at a bit of a loss to know what more to do. On 11 October last year I raised a similar matter with Mr Davis, who assured me he would get the responses for me, as he periodically assures

members when questions on notice are asked or when matters are raised on the adjournment. He says, 'Well, basically I'll answer them'.

Those matters that on 11 October last year Mr Davis said he would get responses to related to one for the Premier that was raised on 10 February 2011 that still remains unanswered. In October last year Mr Davis said that he would get a response for me. There is another one that was raised for the Premier on 2 June 2011 to which Mr Davis said he would get a response, and he has not done so. There is one that was raised on 5 May last year for Mr Davis himself. In this house he earnestly said that he would get a response to that. He wrote it down, as he is doing now, and said, 'Trust me; I'll get you an answer'. I still have not got that response. There is a series of other matters that were raised after 11 October last year, so they are a separate issue.

I am asking Mr Davis to provide an explanation partly about the ones that have passed 30 days — that is, since 11 October last year — but particularly the three, including one for himself, that he said to me in this house he would get a response to. It was not just to me that he said that. If he wishes to check *Hansard*, he will see that the President actually pressed him on this, and he assured me and the house that I would get responses promptly. That was on 11 October 2011. I ask Mr Davis about the 11 general outstanding matters that have been raised for him and the Premier, but particularly the three matters to which he promised to get responses to me for which I am still waiting.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I will have followed up each of those matters, but I will do so again and I will seek to get those responses for Mr Lenders as swiftly as I can. I am happy to do that and to be very clear about that for Mr Lenders.

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — Under standing orders I can take note of the answer with no time limits on my contribution and no need to give notice. I move:

That the Council take note of the explanation.

I will not take up any more time of the house than I need to, but I say to the minister that it is 10 months since the minister, under the scrutiny of Parliament, said he would get those responses. The 30-day time frame for adjournment responses was an issue he voted for in the last Parliament — I will not mention who moved it, because that would be reflecting on the Chair, Acting President — and he spoke to it as a measure of accountability. It is now 10 months since he got up in the house and undertook to provide those responses.

The point I make, in taking note of the explanation, is that it sets a fairly poor example for other ministers when the Leader of the Government cannot deliver two responses from the Premier — he has managed one of the three that he promised at the time; I will give him that — and he cannot manage to provide a response to a matter that was raised for him. I just give notice to the house that I will be watching these matters in particular. I am disappointed that the Leader of the Government in this place treats the house with so little respect that again and again he comes in and says he will deliver but does not make an effort to respond even to a matter raised in his own portfolio of health.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** —  
The house now stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 6.54 p.m**