

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 12 June 2013

(Extract from book 8)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Cabinet Secretary	Mr N. Wakeling, MP

Legislative Council committees

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, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, #Mr Leane, Mr Lenders, Mr Melhem, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford and Mr Ramsay.

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

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Mr Dalla-Riva, 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 Dalla-Riva, 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, Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

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

Participating member

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Mr P. Davis, Mr O'Brien. (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Ms Richardson and Mr Wakeling.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Dr Naphthine 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, Mrs Peulich, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis. (*Assembly*): Ms Ryall.

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, Ms Crozier and Mr O'Brien. (*Assembly*): 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.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr Viney. (*Assembly*): Ms Hennessy, Mr Newton-Brown 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 O'Brien and Mr Ondarchie. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Hennessey, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula 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 Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella, Dr Sykes and Mr Watt.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

President: The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

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Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

Leader of the Opposition:

Mr J. LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Lenders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Northern Victoria	ALP	Melhem, Mr Cesar ²	Western Metropolitan	LP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pakula, Hon. Martin Philip ¹	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
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Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elsbury, Mr Andrew Warren	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Guy, Hon. Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP			

¹ Resigned 26 March 2013

² Appointed 8 May 2013

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Wednesday, 12 June 2013

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

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

**ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair
Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011**

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) presented report, including appendices, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

At the outset I would like to thank all of the committee members who worked on this report: Deputy Chair Jaala Pulford, Mr Lenders, Mr Melhem, Mr Finn, Mr Ramsay, Mr Drum and Mr Barber. I would also like to thank the sponsor of the bill, Colleen Hartland, because it gave us an extraordinary opportunity to look more closely at the Victorian constitution and to consider what this chamber's functions are. It also gave us a good opportunity to look under the microscope at what the functions and roles of this chamber should be going forward. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the staff. Robert McDonald and Sarah Hyslop did an extraordinary amount of work in a very short time, and their professionalism was exemplary, so I really would like to get my appreciation on the record.

As everyone in the house will know, we were not asked to look at the policy issues raised in the bill but to address section 62 of the constitution, its impact on the bill, whether we should have taken it further forward or knocked it out altogether, as the President had suggested. Historically this chamber was set up to look at and review acts and bills that came through from the lower house. By convention the Legislative Council has never dealt with any financial bills. This was seen to be a house of review, and the founding fathers thought that was the best way for this house to operate. Indeed until

very recently it has operated extremely well in that way, but our founding fathers would not have foreseen that the configuration of this chamber would be as it is today. In this Parliament we have the two major parties and the Greens. In the former Parliament we had the two major parties, the Greens, two Independents and the Democratic Labor Party. I beg your pardon; there is also The Nationals, as part of the Liberal-Nationals coalition. I do apologise; they are so rusted on at the hip with us.

The interesting part of this, which raised the question on the constitution, is where this chamber wants to go in the future. What does it want to do? This is the debate the committee had on the issue of section 62 of the constitution. We received some expert advice from Rowena Armstrong, QC, who helped formulate the constitution here in Victoria, and Greg Taylor, another expert on the constitution who was overseas at the time. Had we been able to have a video link at the time, it would have made a considerable difference to the evidence that we received from Greg Taylor. However, we were able to obtain written information from him, and it was very useful.

We had to decide whether we adhere to the current practice that financial bills do not belong in this place and should go automatically to the lower house. We looked very carefully at the Senate processes and found that the Senate considers itself a very mature chamber and decides as a chamber what should go to the House of Representatives. The inquiry gave us an opportunity to think about where this chamber should be going in the future, and I am pleased to say that the recommendations in this report are cognisant of this issue.

We believe this chamber has the sophistication, the maturity and the configuration of different parties to be able to look at any bills that are presented — private members bills or others — and to test the case here, and then it can be sent to the lower house, which can decide, if it is a financial bill, whether or not it should be addressed. We want to take the opportunity in this place to decide our destiny. We want to be able to say, 'We believe this bill should be looked at; you have a look at it and decide for yourselves'. It is a step forward. We think it is a very good recommendation. The house can decide — the decision does not necessarily have to reside with the Presiding Officer — and we believe that is a good step forward.

In this report we have given many options to the sponsor of the bill about opportunities for a way forward, and we hope that the sponsor of the bill will take that with the graciousness in which it was

developed. Once again I would like to thank the sponsor for giving us the opportunity to have an in-depth look at our constitution at this time. I suggest everyone in the chamber should certainly look at this report. It represents a different attitude and approach for this chamber, and it gives us greater control over our destiny about what we want to decide and about the way we put up bills in the future. I commend the report to the house.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I would like to join Mrs Coote in thanking members of the committee and staff for their work on this report, and I support her comments in relation to the role and autonomy of this house in determining what it considers in its deliberations. This was a narrow reference to consider the constitutional impediments to the progress of Ms Hartland's bill on the presumptive rights to workers compensation for firefighters suffering occupational cancers. If the Legislative Council accepts the recommendations of the standing committee, committees will be able to take evidence via teleconferencing, there will be no impediment to this bill being reintroduced and there will then be no impediment to the Legislative Council considering the bill and the policy question at hand. The committee thought long and hard about the role of a legislative council in a bicameral Parliament in the times in which we live.

I will take a brief moment to make a couple of comments on the substantive issue that we considered. On the question of compensation rights for firefighters, the science is clear. The numbers have been done by the government, and that was revealed during the committee's deliberations. I would contest that the government is dragging its heels on this issue. Other jurisdictions have moved or are moving on this already. The commonwealth legislation relating to this issue enjoyed support from all parties. On the substantive policy issue in Ms Hartland's bill, the Victorian government says it needs more evidence, but this is something the government also says about climate change. I believe that where there is a political will to resolve this issue there will be a way to do so. The committee's report returns the policy question to the Parliament, which is the place where it is best able to be considered by members on its merits.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — This reference was sent to the standing committee to consider because a constitutional issue had been raised about how bills should be treated by the processes and practices of this house. Standing order 14.02 provides that:

A bill not prepared according to the standing orders and practices of the Council will be ordered to be withdrawn by the President.

It is absolutely no slight whatsoever on our very excellent President that the committee has considered, where it is suggested that a bill be ruled out of order on the basis of its constitutionality, that a new process be set up whereby the President could recommend to the chamber that the chamber itself consider the constitutionality of the bill before the bill moves to its second reading, when the substantive issues could be addressed.

It became clear when we started looking at conflicting advice on how section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975 has been and could be interpreted that it was a very large question indeed, that there would be no clear answer and that a provision that has been in our constitution since the 1880s is now being looked at in a whole new way in the light of both different styles of legislating and the practices of this house. It is for that reason that I support and hope we implement this recommendation. It will mean that in future the house itself will have some debate over the very complicated issues of constitutionality, not just in relation to bills such as the one brought before the chamber by Ms Hartland but by any bill brought before this house where an argument could at least be mounted as to its constitutionality. I expect that in future that will happen more often, so it would be timely to accept this recommendation.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to support the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee report on the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 that Mrs Coote spoke to extremely well this morning. I commend her on her chairmanship of the committee and also the deputy, Ms Pulford, and the other members of the committee, who were as one in seeking a reasonable, sensible response to the issue placed before us, and we have produced just that. I would also like to put on the record my thanks to the committee staff for doing a sensational job.

As members would know, for some time I have shown considerable interest in the role of the Legislative Council as a house of this Parliament. Without canvassing too much the issues of where we should be going as a house, or indeed perhaps a name change, it is worth looking at this report not just as a consideration of the constitutionality of a piece of proposed legislation put forward by Ms Hartland but as setting a new standard for this house in the state of Victoria. We consulted widely with constitutional experts, including those from the Australian Senate, and I believe if the

report is adopted by the Council, it will add to the relevance of this house, which will be given a new lease of life.

It is a very exciting report. I never thought it would be an exciting report; I never thought that when we considered section 62 of the constitution that the word 'exciting' would come into it in any way, shape or form. However, I believe that when history is written this report will go down as a point where the past was turned around for the better.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I would like to add some brief comments to the inquiry into the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011. I would also like to congratulate Mrs Coote because she chaired the meetings particularly well. Ms Hartland has left the chamber, but I want to acknowledge her sponsorship of the bill, because her heart was in the right place. We met many of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) firefighters who attended the inquiry, and being a CFA volunteer firefighter myself I have sympathy with what Ms Hartland was trying to achieve with the bill she initially proposed. Nevertheless, as has been said before, this was a constitutional matter in relation to section 62, and the committee's responsibility was to directly deal with that referral.

I congratulate the committee itself because it was a good demonstration of how a committee can work quickly, efficiently and with a bipartisan approach to achieve a constructive outcome, and that was the referral given to us by the chamber. I would also like to thank the committee staff. As he has done in previous inquiries by this committee, Robert McDonald did a fantastic job putting together what I believe is a good outcome for this Parliament to consider. Congratulations to all involved and to the bill's sponsor, Ms Hartland. Hopefully we will see other ways in which we can support our CFA volunteer firefighters in Victoria.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — At my first committee hearing I have to say I was quite impressed with the conduct of committee members. I hope that is going to be the standard, but that may be wishful thinking. I want to congratulate the staff on the great work they have done, because they guided us through our last meeting about trying to get an outcome. I think the job they did made us arrive at that outcome, so I say well done to them. I hope my next committee experience will be a very similar one.

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2013–14 (part 1)

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) presented report, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

This inquiry was a significant undertaking, and it is a major part of the committee's responsibility each year and a very vital component of the accountability cycle for government expenditure. A substantial amount of information has been generated by this inquiry, all of which is available to members of Parliament and the community. In addition to that, a two-part report will be produced, supplementing, explaining and analysing the information in the budget papers. The report before the house is the first of two parts, and is primarily designed to help members of Parliament navigate some of the information provided through the budget process. It contains an overview of the budget and budget papers, key details about department policies and priorities and an index of the key issues discussed at each of the hearings.

I hope, and it is the hope of the committee, that the information will enhance the debate on the appropriation bills that are currently under consideration, which are due before this house shortly. We will, as I said, table a second part of this report later this year. There will be more in-depth analysis of the budget estimates, and it will present the committee's considered views on the presentation process of the estimates and include recommendations where the committee considers that improvements can be made.

This process took quite a deal of time. From 10 May to 24 May we held public hearings with each minister and the Parliament's Presiding Officers. In total there were 50 hearings lasting over 53 hours, and what great fun it was! Many people have undertaken significant efforts to assist with the inquiry, and the committee expresses its thanks to all of them, in particular those we sent questionnaires to and those who attended the public hearings: the Presiding Officers, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer, the Attorney-General, ministers, departmental

secretaries and heads of agencies and many staff who support them as well. The committee is grateful to all of them.

I would like to in particular pass on my thanks to my Legislative Assembly colleagues on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: the chair, David Morris, the member for Mornington, who presided over his first estimates hearing and was required to conduct a very lively orchestra at times, and I have to say he presided over his first estimates hearing in his capacity as chair in his very own unique style; the deputy chair, Mr Pakula, the member for Lyndhurst; Neil Angus, the member for Forest Hill; Jill Hennessey, the member for Altona; and Robin Scott, the member for Preston. I also thank my colleague in this house, Mr David O'Brien, a member for Western Victoria Region. I thank them all for the collegiate way in which they welcomed me as a newbie onto the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

In particular I pay tribute and respect to a very professional secretariat, one that helped us efficiently, professionally and without hesitation. I note those staff members who assisted through this inquiry: Valerie Cheong, Christopher Gribbin, Alejandro Navarrete, Bill Stent, Kevin Chan, Joe Manders, Melanie Hondros and Justin Ong. We could not do our work without the support of these wonderful people. Those more experienced than I have had the benefit of their professionalism over two or three years. This was my first outing. I am grateful to the committee secretariat, I am grateful to my fellow committee members and I am grateful to the ministers and their staff who attended our hearings. I present the report to the house.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I wish to just briefly add my thanks to all members and participants, and particularly the committee secretariat. It was a long hearing, and this is an excellent report. I commend the chair for the way he has conducted the inquiry. I urge all members to read the report. In the interests of brevity, if the report has one message, it is the importance of sound financial management.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on:

Infection Prevention and Control in Public Hospitals, June 2013.

Organisational Sustainability of Small Councils, June 2013.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Taxis: industry reform

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — My statement today is about the Transport Legislation Amendment (Foundation Taxi and Hire Car Reforms) Bill 2013 and its impact on the industry. I think reform of the industry is a good thing, so long as it delivers a good outcome for its stakeholders, namely drivers, passengers and owners. The state government has failed to deliver on these outcomes — for example, in the case of hardworking Victorian mums and dads who own a taxi licence. Overnight they are looking at losing hundreds of thousands of dollars of their nest eggs and their superannuation. Banks are basically now saying, 'Your licence is worth nil'. I call on the government to carefully revisit that proposed legislation and make sure that it delivers a decent outcome that looks after the three stakeholders — the drivers, the owners and the public. Unless that legislation can deliver for these three stakeholders I think it is a bad reform.

Early Learning Association Australia: annual conference

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — As Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, one of the highlights of my year is joining with early childhood educators at the Early Learning Association Australia's annual conference. This year's conference was the first time the new name, ELAA, had been used since the change from Kindergarten Parents Victoria. While the name has changed, the values and enthusiasm remain the same, and it was wonderful to join outgoing CEO Emma King at the helm for her final conference.

Early childhood services: Bell Post Hill facility

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Last week I had the pleasure of joining Premier Denis Napthine to officially open the newly refurbished Kardinia child-care and kindergarten facility at Bell Post Hill in Geelong. The Victorian coalition government allocated \$300 000 towards this \$1.1 million redevelopment, which includes three-year-old and four-year-old kinder rooms, an art studio, a bathroom and a babies room. The Premier and I were both very impressed with the new building and the feeling of community that is so obvious at the Kardinia centre.

St Mark's Catholic Parish Primary School: kindergarten facility

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — On Thursday I joined parish priest Father Colin Xavier and school captain Amal Assafiri to unveil the plaque at the new Fawkner kindergarten on the St Mark's primary school site in Fawkner. The coalition contributed \$300 000 towards the new \$800 000 facility, and St Mark's parish contributed the remaining \$500 000 for the project. I would like to thank the school and kindergarten community for its warm welcome and congratulate the St Mark's primary school choir on a wonderful performance to celebrate the opening.

Schools: federal funding

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I was pleased to be invited to participate in and speak at the Australian Education Union (AEU) community rally on 25 May in support of the national school funding reforms as recommended by the Gonski review. The community rally was not just a collection of speeches. In fact the highlight was the entertainment provided by musicians from government schools around the state, including the all-girl soul band Sweethearts from Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College; young capella folk singers The Highway Sisters, Mabel, Bel and Ivy; and the Thornbury Primary School choir. Other speakers included popular children's author Andy Griffiths, Kambrya College principal Michael Muscat, school council president Elise Whetter from Ballarat, Meredith Peace and Angelo Gavrielatos from the AEU and the Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews.

It is worth reminding ourselves what the Gonski review pointed out — that is, that current school funding arrangements are complex, lack coherence and transparency and involve duplication of funding in some areas. It recommended that one-third of funding come from the commonwealth and that most of that go to government schools. It also recommended that commonwealth and state governments work together to instigate the reforms. It is for those reasons that I call on the Napthine government to sign on to Gonski.

Sri Lankan community: reconciliation project

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — Last evening here in Parliament House I had the honour and pleasure of welcoming members of the Sri Lankan community to launch a Global Reconciliation project called 'Ancient cultures, new futures'. It is about bringing together the four key elements of the Sri Lankan community here in Australia. Members might

be aware that the Sri Lankan community is comprised of four groups: the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims and the Burghers, of whom I am one. It is about bringing together those communities in Australia and also in Sri Lanka to get over three decades of terrorism and trouble and to demonstrate to the world that Sri Lanka is back on track and that people can work together.

I had delight in welcoming the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia, the Honourable Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe; the new Consul General of Sri Lanka to Melbourne; leaders of the Sri Lankan community, including Associate Professor Suresh Sundram from the University of Melbourne; and some of my parliamentary colleagues. It was a very important event.

Asylum seekers and refugees: drownings

Mr ONDARCHIE — At this time my heart also goes out to the families and friends of those who died on the Indian Ocean quite recently when, sadly, the boat they were on capsized. I have to say that I am not only sad but also a little ashamed and disgusted that boats went past 13 bodies in the water and did not stop to pick them up. Imagine if the bodies in the water were those of Australians. We would have demanded that somebody pick them up. It is unacceptable. As Australians we should be ashamed that that has happened. I say: Brendan O'Connor, you have a lot to answer for.

Schools: federal funding

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — The Liberal-Nationals coalition's abysmal admission that it is highly unlikely that it will sign the national plan for school improvement is a huge blow to students and education in Victoria. The Premier has labelled the national plan for school improvement, which implements the recommendations of the Gonski review, nothing more than a political slogan. The Victorian government has until 30 June to sign up to the scheme. New South Wales and the ACT have already signed up, and Tasmania is close to reaching an agreement.

The Liberal-Nationals state government is walking away from an average \$1.8 million boost to local schools under the national plan. The coalition needs to stop playing politics with the needs of our students and sign up to this once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve the way we fund schools and educate our children.

I am absolutely appalled that neither the Premier nor the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, made an effort to attend a briefing last week in New South Wales by Liberal education minister Adrian Piccoli on why signing up to the Gonski reforms was such a good idea and a good deal for schools. It is obvious that students and the education system in Victoria are not a priority for the Liberal-Nationals coalition government.

Ballarat: 3BA Christmas in July Appeal

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — It was with great pleasure that I launched the 3BA Christmas in July Appeal last Tuesday at the Salvation Army headquarters in Ballarat. The appeal has been running for 34 years and has helped 4500 families in Ballarat with additional support, helping them with the bare essentials, like surviving increasing food and clothing costs and the ever-increasing energy bills. Last year 45 pallets of food, hundreds of blankets and significant donations of clothing were raised and distributed by welfare agencies UnitingCare, Anglicare, the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul.

It was a great pleasure to be with appeal director Peter Caligari, who has been pivotal to the appeal's success. The appeal has also been supported by 3BA manager John Fitzgibbon. I urge all those in the Ballarat business community and the wider community, given the larger demand, to dig deep and help to keep our less fortunate families warm and fed this winter.

National broadband network: asbestos exposure

Mr RAMSAY — As Australian families are battling the rising cost of heating, thanks in part to the Gillard government's carbon tax, they are also battling another pink batt crisis. The national broadband network (NBN) crisis is a direct reflection of the Gillard government's rushing to accept the lowest tender for the rollout of the ill-fated NBN broadband fiasco, whereby shoddy work practices have led to asbestos-lined pits being exposed near schools, shopping centres and nursing homes all over Ballarat.

Despite WorkSafe Victoria and Comcare investigating the dumped asbestos in Ballarat, pits are being found all over Australia, forcing the federal workplace safety regulator to investigate potential harmful exposure to asbestos. Not only has the NBN rollout been underpriced and underdelivered, it has also been found to be unsafe. A message to Prime Minister Gillard: I am wearing a blue tie and I am not a misogynist.

Timboon P-12 School: funding

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — During the last parliamentary sitting week I called on the Napthine government to stop ignoring the Timboon community and make good on its promise to fund the Timboon P-12 stage 1 redevelopment. In an article recently published in the Warrnambool *Standard* the member for Polwarth in the other place, Terry Mulder, made the claim that it is the previous state Labor government's fault that the Timboon P-12 has not received funding. This is an extraordinary claim, considering that the previous state Labor government approved funding for the school prior to the 2010 election, with a \$6.5 million stage 1 redevelopment to start in June 2011. The coalition went on to win the 2010 election, and since that day it has ignored the Timboon P-12 school and the Timboon community.

The approved funding was rescinded by the current Napthine coalition government — the same government that has handed down three state budgets yet has not committed one cent to the Timboon P-12 school. The fact remains that if the Labor Party had won the 2010 election, stage 1 of the Timboon P-12 redevelopment would now be complete. Mr Mulder has no-one to blame but himself and his government, a fact he must be aware of. It is clear that the Timboon community is aware of it.

I had the opportunity to visit the school last Thursday, and it was clear that the principal, her staff and the students are doing a remarkable job in the facilities they are in, facilities that require immediate maintenance and rectification, if not a complete redevelopment, so they can form a cohesive educational environment.

I would like to thank Ms Moorfield and the school community for their hospitality. I congratulate them on their continued and tireless efforts to make the government do the right thing by these students and the local community.

National disability insurance scheme: Geelong headquarters

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — I rise to congratulate the Premier and the Minister for Disability Services and Reform, Ms Wooldridge, on the announcement last week that Geelong would be the home of the national headquarters for the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS).

The decision to locate the headquarters of the NDIS, known as DisabilityCare Australia, in Geelong will bring hundreds of new jobs to the region and provide an additional economic boost for Victoria. The

DisabilityCare Australia headquarters combined with the scheme's Barwon region office will bring 450 new jobs to Geelong, create an additional 160 jobs indirectly and provide an economic boost to the region of up to \$34 million per year.

The coalition government has long advocated for the national headquarters to be located in Geelong, and last July it offered the commonwealth government \$25 million towards establishment costs. Geelong is a leader in providing disability services to the Barwon region and has a strong local disability services sector with a history of delivering innovative services that support and empower people with a disability, their families and carers.

The launch of the NDIS will commence in the Barwon region on 1 July 2013, and about 5000 people with a disability will be able to access care and support through the NDIS over the three-year launch period. Once again my congratulations go to the Victorian coalition government on this historic announcement and for investing more than \$300 million in the first three years of the scheme to help people with a disability, particularly those in the Barwon region.

Schools: federal funding

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — For as long as the Napthine Liberal government refuses to sign up to the federal government plan for better schools by providing targeted funds available under national partnerships, Victorian schools will miss out on \$1.8 billion, which is funding they can ill afford to miss out on. The Napthine government has also failed to provide funding for the Gonski reforms in the 2013 Victorian budget.

Wallan Secondary College: funding

Ms BROAD — The government has failed to honour its promise to complete stage 4 of Wallan Secondary College. There is no funding in the budget to replace portables at Wallan Secondary College with a Victorian certificate of education (VCE) wing that Wallan VCE students should have.

These are the same portables that Mrs Petrovich complained so loudly about when the Liberals were in opposition in Victoria. Now that Mrs Petrovich and the Liberals are in government the fact is that Mrs Petrovich has gone silent, and nothing has been done over three Liberal budgets about replacing the portables at Wallan Secondary College.

The Wallan school community has quite reasonably described the portables as an eyesore, and they do not sit well with the brand new school built by the former

Victorian Labor government that Mrs Petrovich was so critical of when she was in opposition.

The fact that Mrs Petrovich will shortly depart the Victorian Parliament does not change the fact that the Liberals should keep their promises to Wallan, and Mrs Petrovich should be speaking up in support of replacing the portables at Wallan Secondary College with a proper VCE wing.

Local government: federal referendum

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I would like to use this opportunity to express my deep concern in relation to the federal government-sponsored referendum on recognising local government in the Australian constitution. As Australia is a federation of states, the balance of power between the federal government and the states needs to be maintained. I view the desired outcome of this referendum as being dangerous for the rights of states.

I am also dismayed to learn that the City of Wyndham and City of Melton councils have both chosen to use ratepayers funds in an ill-informed attempt to gain mythical federal funding, which can already be delivered through mechanisms of the state government. I urge the electors of Victoria to vote no on this referendum.

Leukaemia Foundation: Sunflower Club campaign

Mr ELSBURY — I would like to raise a topic that is a cause I have supported for quite some time — that is, the Leukaemia Foundation and its new Sunflower Club campaign. I encourage the participation of people in this chamber and certainly those outside the chamber to be involved in the Sunflower Club campaign.

I promise to all here today, all those listening and all those looking in on the web that I will not be participating in the Sunflower Club Speedo Dash at Southbank on 30 June, although I do encourage others of superior physiques to get involved and for people like me to give support.

I am selling Sunflower Club campaign badges, bears and other items from my office in Werribee to support this very worthwhile campaign.

Schools: federal funding

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I recently received letters from school council presidents urging MPs in the Napthine government to sign up to Gonski, the Gillard government's new model of funding for education. I can understand why they would be

attracted to this package, because the Prime Minister is out there saying there will be rivers of gold flowing to schools. However, when you look at the bill that was put before the Australian Parliament last week you see that there were only nine pages in it and that there was not one skerrick of detail on costs or funding or on anything to do with the model.

Gonski recommended \$6.6 billion per year. What the federal government has come up with is \$2.8 billion. However, it has cut \$3.1 billion from existing funding programs. An amount of \$258 million has come out of the national partnerships program, \$411 million out of the empowering local schools program, \$405 million out of literacy and numeracy programs, \$665 million out of the Rewards for Great Teachers program and \$203 million out of the Reward for School Improvement program and \$325 million from recurrent funding for non-government schools.

The Gillard government is taking away \$3.1 billion, it is putting in place \$2.8 billion, which will be introduced by the Australian government in the year 2017, two elections away, and it is calling for the Victorian government to sign up. Everybody knows that the Gillard government does not really want Victoria to sign up at all.

National disability insurance scheme: Geelong headquarters

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I too join my colleague Mr Koch in congratulating the Minister for Disability Services and Reform, Ms Wooldridge, Premier Napthine, previous Premier Baillieu and the people of Geelong on their work in encouraging the federal government to make the right decision to establish the centre for the national disability insurance scheme in Geelong — and I also congratulate Mr Koch. The \$25 million inducement on the table was another instance of this government putting Victoria first. It is not only a great decision for Geelong but a great decision for the whole of western Victoria.

Stawell: Powerhouse

Mr O'BRIEN — The day after that decision I had the pleasure of opening the Powerhouse in Stawell, a fantastic achievement which this government has also delivered — with a sum of \$1 655 000 from the Department of Human Services and the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure — to bring together four important community groups, including Stawell Intertwine Services the Stawell neighbourhood house, the Stawell Gymnastics Club and the Grampian Model Railroaders by providing a

base for their activities in the one building in the heart and at the start of the parklands of Stawell.

A fantastic local partnership has contributed to the success of the Powerhouse. For that I commend the CEO, Justine Linley, the mayor and all others who have worked together, including the very hardworking Bernie O'Connor and the current chief executive, Kathryn Clayton.

Country Fire Authority: Jeparit brigade centenary

Mr O'BRIEN — Last Saturday I also had the pleasure of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Jeparit Country Fire Authority. I was honoured to represent — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Mr O'Brien.

Mr O'Brien — I do not think I have had my full time. I thought the clock had not started.

The PRESIDENT — Order! No.

Mr O'Brien — It was a great night for all!

The PRESIDENT — Order! Unfortunately you do not get to carry over time from your speech on the report to add to this speech. I have been lenient with times on nearly all those contributions. I do not think any of them would qualify as a 90-second statement; they were all at least 95 to 100-second statements. However, I am in a benevolent mood.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TREATMENT AMENDMENT (ACCESS BY DONOR-CONCEIVED PEOPLE TO INFORMATION ABOUT DONORS) BILL 2013

Introduction and first reading

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008 to ensure that all persons born as a result of a donor treatment procedure, regardless of when the gametes were donated, have access to identifying information about their donor and for other purposes.

Read first time.

AMBULANCE SERVICES: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes that —

- (1) since the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis, MLC, sacked the board of Ambulance Victoria, the Napthine government's incompetence has caused the Victorian ambulance service to be in crisis;
- (2) there are alarmingly frequent stories of members of the public having to wait in pain for too long before an ambulance arrives;
- (3) ambulances are being backed up outside hospitals and unable to transfer their patients because of gridlocked emergency departments; and
- (4) morale among paramedics is at an all-time low;

and calls on the Napthine government to address the growing crisis in the ambulance service as a matter of urgency.

Virtually every sitting week I am extremely disappointed to have draw to the Parliament's attention and remind the people of Victoria of the shortcomings of the health system in Victoria and how the key indicators of the performance of that system in providing support to Victorian citizens in their time of need, particularly in relation to their health care, keep falling further and further behind what the community expects of it and what good clinical practice would mean for Victorian patients. Indeed the system's performance falls well short of the undertakings made by the incoming Liberal-Nationals government in Victoria at the time it came to office.

At the time of the election the incoming government promised to improve the response times of emergency departments, to improve response and procedure times for elective surgery, to reduce elective surgery waiting lists and, in relation to ambulances in particular, to improve the response times of ambulances to make sure that there were better clinical outcomes for patients and that the Victorian community could have confidence that resources had been provided by the government to ensure that there were better outcomes in terms of the performance of ambulances services in Victoria. On each and every one of those election commitments, in the performance it has achieved this government has failed — and failed significantly on every measure.

The promise to improve the response times in emergency departments has not been met, because adequate resources have not been allocated to the hospital system. I will draw on the government's own information, derived from the budget figures, to

confirm what I have just drawn the Parliament's attention to. Responses in relation to elective surgery have deteriorated, and Victoria now has a record number of patients on elective surgery waiting lists. More than 50 000 patients are now on the waiting lists, compared to 38 000 when the government came to office. Victorians have been sorely let down by the promises of this government.

I will spend a lengthy part of my contribution outlining in great detail on a geographic basis and a health-service basis the issue of ambulance response times and where the performance of ambulances has deteriorated. One by one around the Victorian community we have seen a deterioration in the quality of services provided by Ambulance Victoria. That flies in the face of the rhetoric of this minister; it flies in the face of his rhetorical flourishes and blame shifting, which is a hallmark of his administration; and it falls well short of the promises he made to the people of Victoria that the ambulance service would improve on all of those key indicators.

It is not just me who researched these facts. I imagine that in subsequent contributions by government members there will be lots of assertions that I am not a reliable source and that my information is not well grounded. I am confident that will occur. I am absolutely confident that allegations will be made that I am somehow responsible for the deteriorating or poor performance of the health system or that I am making it up. But I rely in the first instance on the budget papers brought down by this government within the last month and a half.

Budget paper 3 of the Victorian budget talks about the performance of the government in service delivery and programs. It clearly demonstrates that the emergency services output measure in hospitals has deteriorated and continues to perform well below what is expected by the government. That is clearly shown, for instance, on page 125, in the table headed 'Emergency services', where we can look at the emergency patients treated within the designated time frames.

For each category of patients that arrive at a hospital, depending on the urgency of their condition there is a designated time within which clinicians and hospital services are meant to respond. Category 1, representing the most urgent, critical conditions that have to be addressed immediately, is the only category where a good outcome is achieved within the Victorian hospital system. We as a community should be grateful for that, but we cannot accept what happens with category 2 emergencies, which covers patients that should be treated within 10 minutes. The target figure in the

budget papers is to achieve support for those patients within that clinical time frame on 80 per cent of occasions. The expected outcome in 2012–13 indicates that that was achieved on only 73 per cent of occasions, which is well short of the target set by the budget papers. The actual outcome for the year before is indicated in the same table, and in fact it was only 72 per cent, although the target was 80 per cent.

If we flip the page over to page 126, we can look at emergency patients who stay for less than 4 hours. The target is for that to occur on only 75 per cent of occasions, but the actual outcome in 2012–13 was 65 per cent. What that means is that if you turn up as an emergency patient at a hospital in Victoria, only two-thirds of the time would you actually be treated within 4 hours. That means that one in three patients are made to wait more than 4 hours. I remind you, Acting President, that these are emergency patients; as many as one-third of those patients are not treated within 4 hours.

If you consider the consequences of this on top of the performance of ambulance services in bringing in patients and the response times in terms of patient transfer from an ambulance into a hospital, you can clearly see that this is a major problem for the hospital system in Victoria. It is expected in the budget papers that transfers occur within 40 minutes on 90 per cent of occasions, but the expected performance for the year 2012–13 is that that will occur on only 76 per cent of occasions. The budget paper says that on only 76 per cent of occasions are patients transferred from an ambulance into a hospital within 40 minutes. That means that almost one-quarter of patients arriving at a Victorian hospital in an ambulance have to wait more than 40 minutes before they are going to be admitted to that hospital. That is an extremely distressing circumstance for patients, their loved ones and any carer for that patient, which includes in that instance the paramedics who brought them to the hospital and indeed the nursing staff who received the patients after they had been forced to wait far too long.

As a result of those ambulances queuing up at hospitals, waiting to enable the transfers to occur, inevitably there are fewer ambulances on the road at any one time because they are in fact waiting at hospitals — effectively ramping at hospitals — almost creating an ambulance car park outside a hospital, with patients inside the ambulance vehicles, waiting to be transferred into an emergency department. Those vehicles are not on the road, responding to further emergencies in the Victorian community.

Page 129 of budget paper 3 refers to service delivery outcomes for ambulance emergency services, where the target for ambulances to respond to a code 1 emergency within 15 minutes was set at 85 per cent. That has been a consistent target in budgets over many years. This government, when it came to office, promised better performance in response times by ambulances, but it did not change the target; it kept the target at 85 per cent. What has it actually achieved? It has achieved ambulances turning up to an emergency within 15 minutes on only 72 per cent of occasions. Again, what that means is that for more than a quarter of patients who have code 1 emergencies — the highest category of emergency — ambulances do not arrive at the scene within 15 minutes to pick up the patient and provide them with immediate and urgent treatment and then transfer them to hospital. That occurs on less than three-quarters of occasions where a code 1 is designated by the ambulance service, and that situation has deteriorated over the course of this government. Page 129 of this budget paper indicates that in the previous year the achieved figure was 74.8 per cent of occasions, and the government itself indicates that in this financial year it will only achieve that on 72 per cent of occasions.

The Victorian community will understand that despite the rhetorical flair of this minister, despite his blame shifting, despite the fact that he runs at every turn from taking responsibility for achieving better outcomes — which is quite consistent with his behaviour, his attitude and his actions — the performance of ambulance and hospital services continues to deteriorate across this state. Victorians have every reason to say that this is not good enough, to call this government to account, to say that they expect better from their ambulance and hospital systems and to make demands on this government to deliver what it promised.

If there is any one measure indicating that the government has led the community down the garden path and left it wanting, it is the promise to introduce new hospital beds to the Victorian health-care system. The government promised 800 additional beds on top of the existing capacity of the Victorian health system inherited from the Labor government, beyond the major projects that Labor had already committed to and funded within the forward estimates — that is, 800 beds beyond the existing capacity and the projected bed numbers that were part of the redevelopments already committed to by Victorian Labor. I would argue, and I will call on information to back up my argument, that none of those beds has been delivered. The only beds that have arrived in the Victorian health system in the life of this government were delivered in its first few months, not due to its actions or its budget allocations

but to pre-existing budget allocations and commitments of the outgoing Labor government in Victoria and the federal Labor government.

Those commitments saw an increase in bed numbers during the course of 2010–11. This Victorian Liberal government did not make one adjustment to that budget year or a decision to allocate one new bed. That is the period by which the benchmark should be established for how many beds were in the system inherited by this government. If you use that as a benchmark, then this government has actually taken bed numbers backwards. It promised in its first budget cycle an increase of 100 beds, but the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suggests in its recent report, released on 19 April, that the number of hospital beds in Victoria has gone backwards. There were 36 fewer beds in the course of 2011–12 than there were in 2010–11, the year in which this government came to office.

It was a desperate lie perpetuated by the incoming government that it was committed to increasing bed numbers. In fact it has reduced bed numbers in Victoria. It is tragic that this government talks about an increase in the health budget, and from time to time confusedly tries to shift blame to the commonwealth government for budget adjustments. If you use the same logic and the same accounting measures that the Victorian government uses to criticise federal government adjustments in health payments, this is a government that has taken \$826 million out of the health system in its first three budgets. This government has introduced three budgets and in each one of them there have been savings targets and savings measures coming out of the health portfolio. The cumulative effect of those savings is \$826 million.

The government promised a lot. It indicated to the Victorian people that it was going to grow the system, keep pace with demand, introduce an additional 800 beds and improve elective surgery, emergency response times and ambulance response times. This government has not done one of those things. Instead it has stealthily taken \$826 million out of health.

That is the appalling track record of this government. I will now detail specifically what it means for members of a range of communities right across the Victorian landscape and for patients who have been on the receiving end — in the worst possible sense of the term — of the poor performance of ambulance services in Victoria. People are not receiving the care that they deserve or the care that the government promised. They are on the receiving end of poor ambulance performance. What we have seen, as I indicated to the chamber a few minutes ago — relying on the

government's own budget papers — is that ambulance code 1 response times have deteriorated during the life of this government. In 2010–11, the first year of this government, it did not allocate any money or make any budget adjustments, and at that time the performance of code 1 response times was 77.1 per cent. In 2011–12, the following year, it dropped to 74.8 per cent. In the last financial year that figure has dropped to 72 per cent. The trend is clear: every year during the life of this government performance in relation to response times for code 1 emergencies has been significantly reduced.

What does that actually mean for patients involved in emergencies in different locations across Victoria as to how long they wait? Sometimes they are waiting in extremely dire circumstances. Take a situation in which they, their loved ones or their carers dial 000 and describe their condition. The person who receives the call at the emergency centre determines on the basis of that information that this is a code 1 requiring urgent and immediate response, which means getting an ambulance there within 15 minutes on 85 per cent of occasions. What have we actually seen? The average response time has deteriorated significantly, which for many of those patients places their lives at risk. It certainly increases the likelihood of the severity of their condition worsening, damaging their quality of life immediately or into the future, because every minute is precious whilst a patient is waiting.

However, this is not just an isolated or random outcome. There is not one metropolitan ambulance branch that has improved its average response time since the government was elected in 2010. Every single one has deteriorated, and I will give a snapshot of what that means. If you live in Broadmeadows, code 1 response times have worsened by over 3 minutes; they are 3 minutes and 10 seconds longer than they were when this government came to office. In Cranbourne response times are 3 minutes and 15 seconds longer than they were; in Essendon, 3 minutes and 22 seconds; in Footscray, 3 minutes and 26 seconds; in Frankston, 4 minutes and 22 seconds; in Gembrook, 3 minutes and 35 seconds; in Ivanhoe, 3 minutes and 54 seconds; in Kororoit, 3 minutes and 28 seconds; in Macedon, 4 minutes and 48 seconds; in Melton, 3 minutes and 33 seconds; in Narre Warren South, 3 minutes and 6 seconds; in Niddrie, 3 minutes and 20 seconds; and in Northcote, 3 minutes and 9 seconds.

In Prahran, which is just down the road from the Alfred, in a neighbourhood that is reasonably well known to me, the increase in ambulance response times is 3 minutes and 17 seconds. If you were capable of walking from Prahran to the Alfred, you would almost be able to walk there in less time than an ambulance

could get to you in the first instance. In Richmond, the increase is 3 minutes and 31 seconds; in Thomastown, 3 minutes and 29 seconds; in South Morang, 4 minutes and 3 seconds; and in Tullamarine, 3 minutes and 37 seconds. As I indicated, that is a snapshot across the metropolitan area. But it is not a mischievous snapshot; it is actually a representative snapshot of the increased waiting times for code 1 patients right across the metropolitan region.

The Minister for Health, who unsurprisingly to members in the chamber is not with us to participate in this debate at this time — —

Ms Crozier — I am here.

Mr JENNINGS — Other quality members are in the chamber, so there is no doubt there will be a range of perspectives and the government will be represented, but it will not be represented in this instance by the minister. The minister has tried to indicate that these response times do not matter. He has made promises. This is a key performance measure, and when he was opposition spokesman for health he spent a lot of his time identifying shortcomings in the system through these very measures, and yet every time he is asked a question in this chamber about the significance of these issues he refuses to acknowledge the deteriorating performance.

In fact yesterday he used the unfortunate phrase that he was proud to have been talking to ambulance service providers and clients in Geelong in the last week. It may have been a slip of the tongue and perhaps he was not quite as proud as he suggested, given that he was asked a question about the fact that on two of the last four weekends in the Geelong region there has been unavailability of ambulances for many hours. I do not think that on reflection he would be proud of this, and certainly I would hope that on reflection he will acknowledge that this is not good enough and that he will take action to remedy the situation.

This great problem of response times is inextricably linked to the ramping situation, as I indicated a few minutes ago. What is happening is that there is a coincidence of ambulances being backlogged. Paramedics cannot get through their work. They are falling further and further behind in relation to picking up patients in the first instance and getting them to hospital. They then have to wait outside the hospitals before patient admission can occur, because in the hospital system there are not enough resources, staff or beds allocated — and so the cycle continues. It is clear that interventions by the health minister are needed to remedy the situation. He cannot expect triage to happen

within the ambulance service to prevent this from occurring, as desirable as that may be. He cannot rely on suppressing demand at the patient end, because patients are in emergency situations.

When I had a heart attack I was the beneficiary of paramedic and ambulance care. At the time that I had my heart attack I was foolishly stoic and kept working for longer than I should have. Good health advice is that the instant you have some symptoms of a heart attack you should notify the emergency services and try to procure an ambulance immediately. That is the best clinical public health advice that any of us can provide. If that is the best approach to providing advice to the community, it is completely counterintuitive and counterproductive to try to remedy these emergency situations by discouraging Victorian citizens, as a first intervention, not to take the steps to secure an emergency time when they feel there is an emergency.

At the moment the minister and his ambulance service are only talking about trying to discourage Victorians. The government initiative out in the public domain is not about new resources or new efforts in either the ambulance service or in hospitals. It is not about increased resources and backup doctors, nurses and beds, where paramedics and ambulances are guaranteed to be on the job. No, that is not what the current method is. The current method of this government and the ambulance service is to look at ways in which patients can be triaged or to discourage them from calling in the first place. That is not the first-order way of dealing with this issue.

In a moment of increasingly rare candour the CEO of Ambulance Victoria, Greg Sassella, stated on 3AW on 12 May:

... we can't have ambulances sitting in hospitals while there are people needing our services.

When it comes to ambulance ramping, that is where serious changes need to be made, and perhaps the head of Ambulance Victoria was affected by the sheer weight of evidence that ambulances are struggling when he indicated that there has to be a better interface between ambulances and hospitals and greater resources should be allocated.

If members travel past major hospitals in metropolitan Melbourne, they would know the significance of this issue. They would not necessarily even need to go into the hospital. They would see ambulances lined up around the precinct waiting to get into the hospital. An indication of what occurred during the course of 2012 is as follows: at the Monash Medical Centre ambulances were ramped for an average of 1294 hours a month; at

Frankston Hospital, for an average of 1323 hours a month; at Dandenong Hospital, for an average of 1012 hours a month; and at the Northern Hospital, for an average of 1081 hours a month. By driving or walking past these major hospitals, observant residents in suburbs around the hospitals know that the ambulance service is in crisis, because ambulances with patients in them are sitting for hours and hours — more than a thousand hours a month — outside major metropolitan hospitals. That situation occurred throughout the whole of 2012.

Unfortunately Victorians are increasingly aware of these incidents. Patients are aware of them, hospital staff are aware of them and paramedics are certainly aware of the challenges confronting them. Victorians visit their hospitals and look at what is happening, and they also know about this situation because they read the papers or receive other media coverage of them.

For successive months a range of stories has been prominent in the Victorian media about these matters, and the government still denies there is a crisis in the ambulance service and tries to absolve itself of responsibility. On one level I am sorry to trade in the misery of others, but by exposing these tragic stories I am trying to encourage this government to take action by reminding it and members within the chamber of the litany of stories over the last six months that demonstrate the crisis in ambulance services. For the sake of my argument, and to do justice to those people who have had their lives threatened by less than ideal clinical practice or response times from the ambulance service in Victoria, I draw the attention of the chamber to their stories.

The first story in that six-month time frame was an article in the *Gippsland Times and Maffra Spectator* of 21 December that reported there was no weekend paramedic cover in Maffra for the weekend of 15 and 16 December.

In January an article in the *Sunraysia Daily* outlined the circumstances of a heavily pregnant woman who was bleeding. She waited 5 hours before being taken to a hospital where there was no doctor on duty.

In the *Age* of 11 February there was a story about the record levels of sick leave taken by paramedics within the ambulance service. This issue warrants further attention so I will return to it subsequently, but the story is part of the chronology of articles that appeared in the last six months about problems within the ambulance service.

In an article in the *Gippsland Times and Maffra Spectator* of 15 February serious concerns were raised about the delay taken by ambulance services to respond to an injured firefighter when an ambulance took an hour and three-quarters to arrive. Indeed from memory that firefighter was assisted by the police in receiving care because of the poor response times of ambulance services.

The *Peninsula Weekly Mornington* of 20 February contained one of a number of stories we have seen concerning the infamous ramping at Frankston Hospital. Ramping at Frankston Hospital may not be an issue that Mr Shaw, the member for Frankston in the other place, worries about. In fact he may actually think that you, Acting President, and I and other members of the opposition are being overly negative in standing up and supporting the people of the Frankston area. Mr Shaw may be quite blithely supportive of the Napthine government in relation to its performance, but, according to local press reports in the *Peninsula Weekly Mornington* in February, there was a major problem with ramping and they could almost write that story every month in Frankston.

A story in the *Herald Sun* of 13 March refers to an instance where the police had intervened to provide assistance to a patient who was the victim of a violent act when the ambulance did not arrive — at all. The police were left to take the victim of that crime to hospital.

A story in the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 27 March headed 'Bendigo ambo crisis' reported that Bendigo was left short of ambulance staff at the weekends. In the *Peninsula Weekly Mornington* of 27 March we had the tragic story of a man who drowned at Rye back beach. There were no paramedics rostered on at nearby Sorrento, there had been no relief provided to ambulance staff on the peninsula, and the response time was sorely lacking for that man, who unfortunately died.

On 28 March, the following day, in Geelong a man died after an ambulance took 4 hours to arrive after the initial call. That same day in the *Latrobe Valley Express* there was a story headed 'Stretched to breaking point', which reported that an elderly woman in severe pain with a broken hip waited 2½ hours for an ambulance in the Latrobe Valley. In the *Melton Weekly* of 2 April a story headed 'Our ambulance going AWOL' referred to the fact that Bacchus Marsh is frequently left without paramedic cover.

In the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 10 April there was a story headed 'Death after 40-minute wait'. A heart attack

victim died after waiting 40 minutes for an ambulance, according to this report. In the *Herald Sun* of 14 May a story about a dispatch system failure headed 'Tragic fire call review — ambos on lunch break' reported that a woman died of burns after an ambulance crew was not activated by the dispatch centre.

In the *Frankston Standard Leader* of 6 May there was a story headed 'Union says state must cut ambo waits or people will die'. In the *Age* of 14 May a story headed 'Patients switched to reduce delays' referred to paramedics passing patients on to other paramedics already ramping at hospitals so as to get back on the road. If it is not a measure of how the system is chronically failing that in fact we now have patient transfers occurring from ambulance to ambulance prior to patients getting into hospitals, it certainly is an indication of the breakdown in the quality of care that to enable an emergency response from the ambulance there is another ambulance that takes its spot because there is no capacity within the hospital emergency department. That is an extraordinary thing to have on the record, but that was reported in the *Age* of 14 May.

On the same day in the *Geelong Advertiser* there was an article headed 'Ambo wait takes hours — response time blow-out', which indicates that there was a meltdown of services in the Geelong area on the weekend of 10 to 12 May and fourteen serious cases were not responded to within acceptable time parameters. In the *Northern Weekly* of 7 May a report headed 'Missing ambulance triggers safety alert' indicated that Whittlesea was left without ambulance services for 11 hours.

As I have indicated to the chamber over the last 10 minutes, it is not only as a patient that you know there is a crisis, it is not only as a paramedic that you know there is a crisis and it is not only if you are a doctor or a nurse that you know there is a crisis. If you are an observant person in the local community and you see ambulances ramping outside your hospital, you know there is a crisis. In fact if you read the papers of media outlets right across the breadth and width and height and depth of Victoria, you will see, wherever you live in Victoria, there have been recent articles that indicate that the system is in crisis. If that is the case, if even the CEO of Ambulance Victoria indicates, as was done on 12 May, on 3AW that there was a crisis in ambulance performances, why is it the case that the Minister for Health does not recognise one? Why is it that the Premier does not recognise one? Why is it that we have a health minister who stands up in the Parliament as recently as yesterday when confronted with a situation that there are no ambulance services available in Geelong, and indicates that he is proud of

the performance of ambulance services in Geelong? This minister has a lot to learn about what a crisis is, and he certainly has many lessons to learn about the way in which he needs to take responsibility and take action to prevent that crisis from continuing.

Within the last few days a series of stories have been pursued both in this chamber and in the Legislative Assembly which have drawn to the attention of the government the ongoing crisis. It is a tragedy for the Victorian community that there is this litany of case studies of our citizens being let down, time and again, by the emergency response system and the ambulance service in particular. It is extremely distressing for anybody who has examined the ambulance service and realised that it is underresourced and that it is undersupported by government. In fact when asked during the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee what additional new output initiatives the government had introduced to ambulance services this year the Minister for Health indicated that \$1 million was to be spent on new program output initiatives to support ambulance services — a mere \$1 million to help this situation and to respond to this crisis.

We have a situation where the minister will sometimes tell us about the paramedics who have joined the ambulance service but he never tells us — while he keeps telling us about the handful of new paramedics that come and join the service — what the net result of that recruitment is, because unfortunately there are almost as many paramedics leaving the system as there are joining the system. In fact the growth that has been anticipated in the number of paramedics is not being delivered by this government. What is worse — this is the issue I said a few minutes ago that I would come back to — is that it is an extremely stressful situation for paramedics working within the ambulance service within Victoria. We have a workforce in which I think the most recent estimates stated that more than 10 per cent of paramedics have a WorkCover claim or are off work because of stress at any one time.

What does that mean in relation to the availability of paramedics? The rosters are at breaking point. The rosters are extremely onerous to start off with, but now with this situation of paramedics on stress leave and a reduced workforce we have rosters that often demand that paramedics be in the workplace for up to 16 hours, if not — on some occasions — longer. Workers are stretched to the limit of their capability and their endurance, and in fact you must have serious doubts about the quality of care that someone provides when they have been continuously at work for 16 hours.

It is a downward spiral in relation to the stress that the paramedics are under, the quality of the service they provide, the response times of the service and indeed ultimately the care that is provided to Victorian citizens. These are major issues that this government does not confront. It does not have the wherewithal or the determination to address these matters. It does not have the guts to come in here and take responsibility for these matters or to indicate that it is going to take action to rebuild the ambulance service, get better outcomes for Victorian patients and invest in the service as it promised it would. That is how this government should be measured. The community increasingly understands this issue, and this government must stand up and take responsibility, address this crisis and take drastic action to overcome the crisis that it continues to inflict upon the Victorian community and the ambulance service. Victorians deserve better.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to be able to rise to speak on Mr Jennings’s motion, which he just outlined to the house. I am looking forward to responding to some of the claims that he has made in his contribution to the chamber this morning. Firstly, in his opening statement he said that by pretty much every measure this government has failed. I wish to come back to a number of those issues. He spoke about a number of areas in relation to the Victorian ambulance service. He mentioned the code 1 response times, and I remind him that in the Victorian Auditor-General’s report of October 2010, *Access to Ambulance Services*, the Auditor-General found that:

Ambulances are taking longer to respond to code 1 emergencies, with the worst performance since 2004–05 recorded in 2009–10. Response times have worsened more in rural regions than in the metropolitan area, and increased funding of \$185.7 million over four years from 2008–09 has so far not led to demonstrable improvement.

From that alone we can see we had an Auditor-General who was extremely damning of the previous administration in relation to its management of ambulance services, and I want to go into that in more detail. There was an amalgamation in July 2008, combining the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Rural Ambulance Victoria and the Alexandra District Ambulance Service. I presume that was with a view to efficiency, but the facts are that what happens in rural and regional Victoria in terms of response times, the nature of the accidents and what ambulance services are faced with are very different to what happens in metropolitan Melbourne in terms of response times and access to major hospitals. We all know that. It is obvious that the major hospitals are in metropolitan Melbourne, and if you have a heart attack in

metropolitan Melbourne and need critical and intensive care, very often you are going to have a better outcome.

I want to return to that point, because there have been dramatic improvements in that area alone. Mr Jennings highlighted his own experience, and I have to agree with him about understanding the signs and commend him for highlighting his own personal issue in what must have been a very distressing time for him.

But referring back to some other areas of Mr Jennings’s contribution, for over 10 minutes he related a litany of stories, and it reminded me of one horrific true story that I have just reviewed while I was sitting here listening to a number of stories brought to Mr Jennings’s attention. I am sure that, if I went through 11 years worth of all the media accounts of people’s tragic stories, there would be many more than this one, but I raise it, in particular, because it is the story of a woman who was impaled on a fence and had an agonising wait for an ambulance in December of 2009. *The Age* stated at the time:

The mother of a woman who was impaled through the groin on a fence post in a horrific accident in northern Victoria has slammed the lengthy delay in getting an ambulance to the scene.

Heather Broadbent says her daughter Kim was left ‘hanging’ in agony for 47 minutes before paramedics arrived at the property in Yarrowonga to treat her.

...

Victorian Health Minister Daniel Andrews —

who is now the Leader of the Opposition —

described the incident as ‘unacceptable’ and today apologised to Kim Broadbent for ‘the trauma and stress she was put through’.

This highlights what our ambulance service has to deal with on a day-to-day basis, and as someone who has worked in hospital settings in both metropolitan Melbourne and country Victoria I understand firsthand the significant work that our paramedics and ambulance officers undertake on a daily basis. It is a 24-hour service, and it is absolutely integral to our overall health service in Victoria.

Before I move on to some other areas that Mr Jennings highlighted, I want to give an overview and put this issue into context, because it is important to understand that we are not always talking about emergency service situations in relation to Ambulance Victoria. Transporting Victorian patients is undertaken in various forms. Obviously we have road transport in the form of road ambulances, but we also have fixed-wing and helicopter ambulance services, and I am delighted that

it was the current government that saw an air ambulance helicopter service introduced in western Victoria. That was one of its promises when in opposition, and it has fulfilled that obligation. The service is of great benefit to the people of western Victoria.

As someone who comes from far western Victoria and has used the ambulance service herself, I know how difficult it is to provide the service. As somebody who has worked in the health industry, I can say that unfortunately it is a fact that sometimes there are waiting times associated with ambulances. There are peak periods, and we know those peak periods often happen on a Friday or Saturday evening and during wintertime when road conditions are poor. There is a whole range of factors. Mr Jennings referred to patients waiting for hours and the ramping of ambulances in 2012. I am sure that at that time there was a fair amount of industrial action going on as well, including bed closures, which possibly contributed to some of those backlogs.

Ambulance Victoria undertakes a number of services, not only the transportation of critically ill patients but also non-emergency transportation services. As well as Ambulance Victoria there is the Newborn Emergency Transport Service, or NETS, with which I am quite familiar, having worked at the Royal Women's Hospital. It often transports critically ill or very premature newborns from rural and regional Victoria to large regional centres, Melbourne or sometimes, if beds are unavailable in Victoria, interstate. That is common practice among health services. It is obviously not ideal for patients to have their newborns transported interstate, but it is, at times, necessary.

Like other health professionals, ambulance officers and paramedics are very important. They are often faced with critical and confronting circumstances. They are highly skilled and highly trained, and they provide care and treatment in some of the most difficult circumstances, whether they be retrieval, recovery, treatment or transportation. They work out of mobile units that have seen significant technical advancements over the years. That goes to acknowledging the tremendous work these professionals do in sustaining and treating people in life-threatening situations. Unfortunately there is not always a positive outcome, but very often they make the critical difference between whether somebody lives or dies. We have very high standards of health care in this state, which is recognised not only nationally but also internationally, and that is something of which we are all very proud.

In his contribution Mr Jennings spoke about the elective surgery waiting lists having blown out. There are a number of reasons for this, and I have spoken about them in the past. He well knows that the \$107 million which was ripped out of our health budget by the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, with the support of the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, halfway through a financial year, had a significant effect on waiting lists. You cannot possibly put in funding arrangements and have things set in place — especially for elective surgery or outpatient clinics — that are funded and agreed to and then have that money ripped out. Of course there will be a flow-on effect if that is done. That is exactly what happened.

Mr Jennings has said that it is this government's fault that the response times for elective surgery waiting lists have blown out. That is not true. Mr Jennings knows that the withdrawal halfway through a financial year of \$107 million has, as I said, had a significant impact on all health services across the state. In addition, the closure of the hospital beds through the industrial action that was taken has also had a flow-on effect. In some instances elective surgery has had to be cancelled, and that has also contributed to that backlog.

There were some matters raised in Mr Jennings's contribution for which the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, should take full responsibility. I am pleased that the \$107 million has been put back into Victorian health services, but we will still be left without \$368 million over the next four financial years, with the first component becoming effective in just a couple of weeks, from 1 July. Again, the way the federal government has treated Victorian patients and Victorian health services is a damning indictment of the federal government. It shows its absolute contempt for the management of health services. Members of hospital management boards and the clinicians in those health services should be commended for undertaking the work they have done in those very difficult circumstances of managing in extraordinarily challenging times, with significant amounts of money being just ripped out of their operating budgets.

I remind the chamber that when the coalition came to government there were significant issues that the previous government had not addressed. As I have already said, the Auditor-General's report on the extent of the problems within Ambulance Victoria highlighted a number of areas. When Labor came to government in 1999 its election commitment was fairly strong in its wording, but again that government was all words and non-delivery. At that time its policy stated:

Through our service improvements, aim to reduce the time it takes an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an accident from 15 minutes in 90 per cent of cases to 12 minutes in 90 per cent of cases. In addition Labor will seek to improve the service so that the response time target is 10 minutes in 90 per cent of cases within 12 months.

Mr Jennings referred to budget papers. The 2002 budget papers show a target of just 13 minutes and the 2007 budget papers show that the target had blown out again to the current 15 minutes, demonstrating that under Mr Jennings's administration Labor's policies had been completely ineffectual.

When in 2008 the then Premier made the announcement about the amalgamation of the ambulance services it was quite evident that they were underresourced and not thoroughly enough planned. The government completely failed to deliver what was promised. This government inherited that situation from the previous government, and that botched merger and mess is a significant issue that the government has had to address and is now dealing with.

In his motion Mr Jennings referred to the sacking of the board of Ambulance Victoria, which is quite extraordinary. The government has a new board in position. It had to consider the issues I have highlighted, especially the botched merger that I have referred to. The new board is made up of competent businessmen and women who are beginning to look at those issues and address what has been inherited by the coalition government.

In his contribution Mr Jennings spoke of the emergency services data. I remind the house that it is this government that has been transparent and has provided accurate data and reporting. The former government refused to show the data on waiting lists. I am sure that the Victorian public is reassured that the current process is much more transparent than the one that was undertaken by the former government. Just recently there has been a report produced on that data. It highlights the Victorian public hospital wait lists for elective surgery and outpatient clinics and the failure of the previous government to address those issues.

Mr Jennings made a number of other claims about the failures of this government. I draw the attention of the house to what the government has committed to. The government is investing more than \$151 million to upgrade ambulance services in Victoria. This will include 310 new paramedics, with 100 for the metropolitan area and 210 across rural and regional Victoria. There will be 30 non-emergency patient transport officers to improve non-emergency services and reduce the number of non-emergency transports

undertaken by rural paramedics. Those non-emergency transport services are important for people in rural and regional areas who are not able to access transport to hospitals. Those paramedics will be freed up to conduct necessary emergency work.

For the first time mobile intensive care ambulance (MICA) units and single-responder units will be placed in 10 major rural towns throughout the state, including Warrnambool, Horsham, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Sale, Bairnsdale, Wonthaggi and Swan Hill. This rollout across those areas will improve survival rates by making paramedics and dedicated MICA units available for the first time to those major regional centres. This is a significant improvement on what has been in place in the past and will provide significant services to a wide radius around those centres.

The additional funding will also cater for building and vehicle requirements associated with service upgrades in those areas, and there has been \$3.2 million dedicated to establish a motorcycle paramedic unit for the inner parts of Melbourne. As we all know, there are many more cars on the roads as a result of the growth in our population. This is an efficient way to get around the sometimes congested streets of metropolitan Melbourne and attend critically ill patients who might need first aid or paramedic services.

I also draw the house's attention to the survival rates. Everybody would agree that this is an ongoing improvement and should be received very positively. It is a good news story, and survival rates continue to have a major impact on many people. I refer to a press release of December 2012, which states:

New Ambulance Victoria data reveals people living in rural Victoria today have a better chance than ever of surviving a deadly cardiac arrest.

...

New research from Ambulance Victoria shows:

42 per cent of rural cardiac arrest patients are brought back to life by paramedics and transported to a hospital, with 29.3 per cent of these patients then discharged from hospital;

rural patients being discharged from hospital after cardiac arrest increased from 8.1 per cent in 2003 to 16.7 per cent in 2011; and

almost 40 per cent of cardiac arrest patients receive CPR by a member of the community before paramedics arrive — a 20 per cent increase since 2004.

The message and undertakings of the Heart Foundation should also be acknowledged.

I have known a number of men aged in their early 50s who lived in country Victoria and called ambulances after having a heart attack, and sadly they did not survive the experience, so I fully understand the importance of response times. The initiatives and new treatments, including the thrombolysis that is being administered by paramedics, is having a huge impact on survival rates. That is something all Victorians should be reassured about.

I want to go back and speak on the number of paramedics that have been put in place across the state. Mr Jennings made mention of the attrition rate. I can say that it has been relatively stable in recent years at around 4 per cent, which is lower than in most other health services. It is not surprising that there would be an attrition rate of some sort among paramedics. I highlight the increase in the number of paramedics that have been employed. Mr Jennings gave a bit of a shopping list of what was going on, so I am going to highlight what is actually on the ground.

In the Loddon Mallee region there are 32 additional paramedics; in 2013 there are 252 full-time equivalents, and in 2009–10 there were approximately 220. That is an improvement. New resources will be added to those which have already been added by the government, which include: six staff to the unit in Mildura; four paramedics to the Swan Hill single-response MICA unit in the peak period, which commenced in May of this year; and one internal and two contractor crews to Bendigo, which commenced in August 2010. That was under the previous government, but it was nevertheless in the last three years. Before the next election there will be additional resources provided. In Kyneton and Romsey there will be additional shifts.

In the metropolitan east area in 2009–10 there were approximately 578 paramedics. There are now approximately 713. That is an additional 135 paramedics in the area. Additional resources have been added to this area. There has been an upgrade to 24-hour service at the Belgrave unit. Throughout the whole area — Mount Eliza, Endeavour Hills, Officer, Clayton, Yarra Junction, Emerald, Lyndhurst and Pearcedale — there have been upgrades. These are significant additions to services and something those communities will be well aware of.

In the metropolitan west area in 2009–10 there were approximately 849 paramedics. In 2013 there are 897 — that is, 48 additional paramedics. Additional resources will also be going into that area.

In the Barwon-south western region in 2009–10 there were approximately 224 paramedics and now there are

approximately 259, which is an additional 35. I have to say that the survival rates in the Barwon area have also been quite notable. In 2009–10 the figures state that the survival to hospital was around 30 per cent and now it is 47.9 per cent, with 21.7 per cent being discharged alive. These are significant improvements on the previous figures, and I am sure they show a commitment by all concerned in improving survival rates.

Mr Jennings mentioned Maffra and stories from the Gippsland area. Again, there are additional paramedics in that area. In 2009–10 there were approximately 190 paramedics and in 2013 there are now 255, so to say that we have 'failed on every measure' — which I think was the phrase — is completely a misunderstanding of what is going on, with additional paramedics and services across-the-board and improved survival rates in some areas. Those survival rates are obviously an important measure of ambulance performance, and a recent report on government services showed that the metropolitan rural survival rates from cardiac arrest are not only improving but are significantly better than national and international rates. These are significant statistics, and data that has been released shows that those survival rates and the work that is being conducted by our paramedics and health services is having a significant impact. We are leading the way, so to say that we are failing on every measure is quite an extraordinary statement.

I know that there has been some discussion around the attrition rate. As I said before, it is around 4 per cent, and I think it should be noted that the current financial year has seen a decline in the attrition rate and 42 per cent of paramedics who have left Ambulance Victoria have now rejoined on a casual basis. The feedback is all quite positive in some areas in relation to rosters, and again Mr Jennings referred to 'onerous rosters'. There has been significant input into a new roster methodology in some metropolitan areas. They are looking at providing greater flexibility to support the demands of paramedics in both their family and professional lives, and there are considerable pressures on a paramedic.

As I said, they often have to deal with confronting and difficult situations and it can be very stressful. Having a flexible roster system goes some way to addressing those issues, and although this new roster system has only been in place for a few weeks, as I said at the outset, the early feedback is positive. As an ongoing process there will be a number of surveys given to those staff who are involved in that roster system and who are looking for further improvements, but I think it is also encouraging that the benefits have already been

realised with those paramedics that have been undertaking that flexible roster system.

Mr Jennings referred to a number of stories in relation to what has been going on with our paramedics, but can I say there are also some very positive stories that come out of the care that those paramedics undertake. In my own area of the Southern Metropolitan Region, recently a paramedic resuscitated a young athlete at Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre, which many members would know is a facility in Albert Park. At that time the paramedic utilised a clinical trial initiative with the Alfred hospital, ensuring that this patient received groundbreaking and world-leading care. The patient actually survived, otherwise it was potentially going to be a fatal outcome. That is a very good news story.

Also recently a 17-year-old girl suffered a cardiac arrest at Southbank. Utilising their expert skills and equipment paramedics were able to revive the girl, and she has a very good prognosis as a result of that pre-hospital intervention. This again demonstrates the clinical expertise and significant improvements of our paramedics as they continually improve their training and skills and utilise technical and medical breakthroughs.

There was also a 30-week gestation delivery of a breech birth. As a former midwife I can say that a breech birth is a very difficult birth, so when this poor mother had her baby's two feet being exposed, the Southbank paramedics who attended her were confronted with two very cyanosed, or blue, legs on show. That is quite a critical situation and something that paramedics need to deal with. It is not easy and it is very difficult to deal with, but nevertheless they stayed with that woman. They handed her over to the mobile intensive care ambulance paramedics, who delivered the baby in very challenging circumstances. A breech birth is not an easy one, especially the presentation of two feet. That is not normally the case, and again they were able to deliver the baby and get that baby to care where it recovered very well.

These are all good stories about what our paramedics are doing on a daily basis, and there are many more that we can highlight. At times there are sad and tragic outcomes, but as someone who has worked in the health industry, I understand the challenges. I understand the difficulties of what is very often faced by ambulance officers who have to do retrieval on country roads, or in remote areas at times. They are faced with very challenging circumstances. I think they all should be supported in whatever way they can be in relation to the ongoing professional work they undertake. I would like to place on record my support

for them in relation to the work they undertake throughout the state to provide a service to all Victorians.

I have to say that the motion Mr Jennings moved in the house today does not indicate what is happening on the ground. Yes, there are tragic stories, as I have said, but this government has done much to improve our health services. We have a growing and ageing population that is challenging for all Victorian health services, we have the additional challenge of a federal government that has ripped money out of a set budget halfway through the financial year, our health services have particular seasonal and other demands and there has been industrial action, which at the time also closed some beds, contributing to the waiting lists. These are all realities of the Victorian health service.

Overall, we have put more money into the health service. We have put \$151 million into Ambulance Victoria and are looking to improve that service. I say again on behalf of the government that we will not be supporting Mr Jennings's motion in the areas he has highlighted.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — It has been really interesting listening to the debate because I feel I have sat through this debate several times in the past six years. We had similar debates under the previous government when the current government, then in opposition, made the same claims about ambulance services. What is really interesting is that both Mr Jennings and Ms Crozier are right: there were problems with the previous government, and there are problems with the current government, so we should move beyond who is to blame and just get on with the job.

It is quite clear that we need an effective, well-resourced, well-paid ambulance service that can deliver the kinds of lifesaving services that Ms Crozier talked about, especially in terms of very unusual circumstances and where they need to be there quickly and be able to deliver the kinds of services that are required. That is why I find it very interesting that in the previous government there was a problem around the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) with the union, and currently there is a major dispute around the union's EBA and issues that have arisen over the Footscray mobile intensive care ambulance unit, the need to rebuild the Sunshine ambulance service and the fact that there is a lack of a building at Wallan. These issues continue.

I am always a bit surprised that we talk about the incredibly high skill of ambulance officers and the

kinds of wonderful services they deliver, but then governments dispute those officers' right to a proper pay increase and proper conditions to make sure that their work is not so stressful that they have to continually take sick leave and put the service at risk. I remind members that last night, in the blink of an eye, we gave ourselves a significant pay increase. If we can do that in this chamber, I think the government should be able to resolve the dispute with the ambulance union and resolve the EBA.

The Greens will be supporting this motion. Mr Jennings has raised a number of important issues, and my memory is that we supported the government, when it was in opposition, on similar motions, because we believe such things as ambulance services and health should be above party politics.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I would like to begin my comments in support of Mr Jennings's motion by paying tribute to the men and women of Ambulance Victoria. Notwithstanding the fact that the services they provide have for many years been at the centre of more than one political fray — and Ms Hartland has drawn attention to that — their day-to-day work cannot be called into question.

At a personal level, each and every one of us is indebted to Victorian paramedics for coming to rescue us when we are in danger and for delivering us into the expert care of medical staff. Day in, day out paramedics work in complex and hazardous environments where there is no margin for error and nerves are strained. Their expertise, bravery, dedication and care deserve our highest admiration. But while they — along with police, firefighters and emergency services personnel — must be held to account, we need to take care to avoid disproportionate attacks on their professionalism when mistakes are sometimes made in a moment of crisis. There should be no confusion between appropriate modes of accountability that go to improving performance and a tendency to want to find blame or scapegoat individuals. We have an obligation to make sure that Ambulance Victoria and front-line paramedics are supported through first-class resourcing and administration that free them from avoidable workplace stress.

Regrettably, in our view this government is not doing the best it can for paramedics; it is doing the opposite by adding further pressure to already highly pressurised work. Mr Jennings's motion calls the health minister to account for his administration of ambulance services in this state and asks the house to note that the sacking of the Ambulance Victoria board in 2011 was a mistake that led to a crisis in the ambulance service that has caused unnecessary suffering and dislocation in the

service. Mr Jennings's motion holds that the minister's incompetence has resulted in ambulances being unable to transfer their patients into hospitals because emergency departments are gridlocked.

I want to single out the second of Mr Jennings' charges against the government that:

... there are alarmingly frequent stories of members of the public having to wait in pain for too long before an ambulance arrives ...

It is always important to step away from the data and the statistics at some stage and to consider how the management and administration of the ambulance system directly affects individuals and their families. From time to time — and we have heard this again today — Labor has raised the plight of individuals in Parliament not only in relation to the performance of Ambulance Victoria but also in relation to other areas of state service delivery. Those of us who held seats in this chamber during the period of the previous government will remember that day after day, week in, week out, the now Minister for Health relentlessly asked the then Labor government question after question about the Victorian ambulance service. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that; that is what oppositions do, and I am sure that Mr Davis, as the current Minister for Health, expects nothing different from the current shadow Minister for Health, Mr Jennings.

I went back to *Hansard*, as I suspect some other contributors did as well, to review the then opposition's line of attack. I am as appalled now as I was then at the no-holds-barred, lurid, tabloid accounts of the suffering of people sheeted against the Labor government. I thought then and I think now that Mr Davis overstepped the mark. Without real evidence, relying exclusively on media reports, he suggested, for example, that the death of a child, the injuries of a young man bashed in a Melbourne street, the extreme agony of elderly people suffering heart attacks and a particularly tragic story Ms Crozier drew attention to in her contribution of a person left impaled on a fence were attributable, in their context, to paramedics not arriving quickly enough at the scene. I should add at this point, of course, that the government and the then Minister for Health, Mr Andrews, the member for Mulgrave in the other place, took full responsibility for these tragic circumstances.

Of course Mr Davis's intention at the time was to lay blame at the feet of the Labor government, but he forgot that the words spoken in this chamber go beyond this place. Indeed in his contribution this morning Mr Jennings, ever mindful, apologised to the house for having to trade — I think these were his words — in

the misery of others. But in detailing these tragic stories Mr Jennings, in my view, exercised a respectful restraint that entertained no lurid or sensational details. I guess to some extent, to be fair, that is in the eye of the beholder. We needed then, during the debate in our last term, and we need now to appreciate that these graphic accounts can cause pain to the people and the families who were involved in these incidents, that they cause untold stress to paramedics and emergency staff, who can feel that they themselves and their teams have failed, and that they can undermine community confidence in Ambulance Victoria.

Mr Jennings's motion takes us back to the point where the health minister sacked the board of Ambulance Victoria after a period of only nine months in government. There have been consistent challenges in getting better ambulance response times, and the Auditor-General drew attention to this during the time of the previous Labor government in his October 2010 report *Access to Ambulance Services*. Ambulance Victoria's annual report for 2010–11 showed that the organisation was unable to lift its response times and that it was losing money and was unable to cover its operations in the face of growing demand. But the Auditor-General also said that Ambulance Victoria had achieved much since the merger of Victoria's three ambulance services. He cited the move towards state-of-the-art call taking and despatch for the whole state and improved strategic planning for the regions.

During the time of this government Ambulance Victoria's need for more funding and delays in transferring patients into hospital have been the causes of the failure to meet the response time targets. It has been abundantly clear that these are the issues, and Labor has said so. Ambulance Victoria pointed to figures in the Auditor-General's report that showed that productivity had risen, with Ambulance Victoria responding to an additional 786 588 incidents.

Despite the fact that productivity improvements could only go so far without additional resources, Minister Davis and the coalition government put no investment into the ambulance system. Mr Davis's frustrated response was to sack the board of Ambulance Victoria and install what he called a group with a better skill mix. Mr Jennings called this for what it was — a scapegoat for the coalition's lack of constructive action. In the nine months the government had been in office at that stage, it had put not one new doctor, not one new nurse and not one new bed into Victoria's hospitals, and consequently the health service in this state had been decimated.

The crisis, which grows worse each day, of course needs to be understood in the context of the May

budget and the budgets before that, which have seen a relentless and reckless attack on health funding. This year's health budget failed to repair the damage of the previous budget cuts and ripped an additional \$209 million out of health, taking the total budget cuts in the health portfolio to \$826 million. It is no wonder then that health services are suffering and that the capacity of hospital and ambulance staff to perform is being severely eroded. There was already a blow-out in ambulance response times at the time the budget came down, with nearly 30 per cent of regional urgent cases not responded to within the required time, yet the May budget had nothing in it that even recognised the problem.

The budget failed to address ambulance response ramping times or the parlous state of emergency departments. A matter of days after the budget was handed down, the head of Ambulance Victoria, Greg Sassella, said the time taken for ambulances to transfer patients into hospitals was a cause of the delays in ambulance response times. Labor's Wade Noonan, the member for Williamstown in the Assembly, pointed out what was happening on the ground between 7 May and 11 May at Monash Children's hospital, at Western Hospital, at Sunshine Hospital, at Northern Hospital, at Geelong Hospital and at the Austin. This is the way Labor presents evidence. It is the way it should be presented and not the tabloid variety of the coalition in opposition that I mentioned earlier in my remarks.

The fact is that ramping, for example, has doubled since the coalition came to government and ambulance response times have gone backwards for the third consecutive year. The disastrous withdrawal of \$820 million from the health portfolio is the principal cause.

In Eastern Victoria Region the evidence is in the figures. I have taken, by way of a sample, the communities of Millgrove, Somerville, Rosebud, Officer, Baxter, Mooroolbark, Hastings, Lilydale, Beaconsfield, Pakenham and Mornington. Mr Jennings, of course, gave a much more comprehensive snapshot of these shortcomings right across the state, but I confine myself to these. The figures I have obtained show that, over the time of this government, response times in the areas represented by the towns I listed have increased variously by 1.38 minutes to 3.35 minutes. An increase of this margin needs to be considered in the context of a person sustaining a serious and potentially life-threatening injury or condition where a delay of seconds, much less minutes, can mean life or death or seriously jeopardise the level or rate of recovery. These increases, as I have indicated, are not sporadic or one-offs; they show a consistent trend that needs to be taken very seriously.

Of course these facts on the ground have a powerful impact on paramedics — the men and women who staff the ambulances upon which each and every one of us at some point relies. We know that morale is at an all-time low and that the reason for this is that paramedics are not being given the necessary recognition, respect or material support they need — the equipment and facilities they need and hospitals need — to do their job properly. In the face of this, morale eventually plummets when paramedics cannot manage the constant and onerous overtime that Mr Jennings also detailed in his contribution.

To understand this we need to reflect on what paramedics see during a rostered shift. It is serious injury and profound trauma — direct, raw human suffering that most of us will never need to experience. People working at this level of intensity need rest. They need calm to keep doing what is an extraordinarily demanding job, and relentless overtime erodes this important downtime. The Ambulance Employees Association secretary, Steve McGhie, has spoken about a survey of his members that showed that around half of them would leave Victoria to work in other states — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr SCHEFFER — Because conditions and wages in this state make the job just too hard, Mr Davis. This crisis in the ambulance service is now beyond anything we have previously seen in this state, and the Minister for Health's intransigence is dragging down what remains of the government's credibility. There is a palpable sense of alarm across the community.

I support Mr Jennings's motion and join him in calling on the government to address this growing crisis. Our key concern is that the government has not delivered what it promised at the last election, and of course it clearly refuses to take any responsibility for the tragic slide which is happening in ambulance services across the state.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Swinburne University of Technology: Lilydale campus

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to Peter Hall, the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. I note that recently the Premier stated he is proud of his government's TAFE reforms. Taking that into account, I refer the minister to the case of Karen, a former manager of industry-based learning at

Swinburne, Lilydale, who, like 240 of her colleagues, will be out of a job on 1 July. As the minister responsible, is Mr Hall proud that his TAFE reforms have eliminated jobs, courses and future training opportunities for students in the outer east?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — It is almost asking for an opinion, President, but I am happy to answer the question. I am proud that the reforms have led to a 22 per cent increase in student enrolments between 2011 and 2012. I am proud that TAFE enrolments between 2011 and 2012 grew by 7 per cent. If you take that back to 2010 and the full impact of reforms between now and then, you will see the increase in terms of student enrolments is more of the order of 40 per cent rather than 22 per cent. They are facts of which I am proud.

Supplementary question

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am not too sure whether the minister said he was proud of the results at Lilydale and the effect of his reforms. What has the minister done for people like Karen and her colleagues to help them to reskill and retrain so as to be able to work in their local area, seeing as the skills they utilise now are being removed from Lilydale?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I would hope Mr Leane's colleagues might ask the federal minister that exact question, because the load at Lilydale was predominantly higher education rather than vocational training. Mr Leane asked me an extraordinary question; he asked me whether a person trained to train people can be retrained in skills they can use in the community. It is an absurd question. But I say this to Mr Leane: where people seek assistance for retraining because of retrenchment, there is available support through the Industry Transition Fund, which this government has set up. It is a fund worth \$6 million per year and is the very fund which a large number of employees from Ford, amongst others, have the opportunity to access to help them acquire skills for re-employment.

Health: refugee services

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to Mr Davis in his capacity as Minister for Health, and I ask: could the minister inform the house of the forthcoming national meetings at which refugee and asylum seeker health might be discussed?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her question and for her strong

advocacy for health services in the south-east, particularly for her advocacy for refugee and asylum seeker health, noting that Dandenong and the south-eastern metropolitan Melbourne are the areas of the country that are experiencing the largest growth in refugee and asylum seeker arrivals.

I indicate to the house that at the Standing Council on Health on Friday I will be seeking to build a collaboration with the commonwealth and other states to ensure that there is a more coordinated response to the increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees. I indicate very firmly to the house that Victoria welcomes the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees coming through and very firmly puts on record that the government is determined to work with both the commonwealth and other states to ensure that proper services are put in place.

What we know is that the number of asylum seekers and refugees coming to Victoria is disproportionately large for our share of the population, and we welcome that flow. But it is clear that additional support from the commonwealth is required. In the recent budget the state government put in \$22.5 million of additional money over four years. That focus on refugee health seeks to make sure that services are provided at community level — appropriate, culturally sensitive services in terms of interpreters and other significant backup.

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Clinic at Doveton is an exemplary case of a clinic supported by Southern Health that is able to deliver those services. I want to pay tribute to the support of GPs and organisations in the south-east in responding to the significant flow of refugees and asylum seekers to Victoria. What is occurring is about a threefold increase this financial year compared to the previous financial year. There is therefore a significant cost involved. Not all asylum seekers — and there are many different categories and many different layers to this — are entitled to the full support of Medicare. Many of those asylum seekers and refugees thereby fall back on state provision, for which there is no specific compensation by the commonwealth. This means that dental care, hearing services and interpreting services are increasingly being funded by the state government without adequate commonwealth support.

I put on the record my thanks to the commonwealth Minister for Health for expanding Medicare coverage late last year to a wider group, but it is still inadequate cover. The fact is that when asylum seekers and refugees come to this country they do have specific needs and requirements. There is a need for catch-up

immunisation. It is often the case that younger asylum seekers and refugees have no history of dental treatment and there is a huge amount of catch-up work required. It should be appropriately delivered, and the state government is determined to play its part. It has put its money on the table. What it needs is equal support from the commonwealth to make sure that the resources are in place.

That is what we will be seeking on Friday. Northern Health and Western Health in particular are facing these increasing challenges. We want to treat people in the community in proper settings to save them from falling back into our emergency departments. The opportunity is there on Friday for a collaborative national response, and I will work with other governments to achieve that.

Swinburne University of Technology: Lilydale campus

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. I note that recently the Premier stated that he is proud of his government's TAFE reforms. I refer to the case of Amy from Healesville who had to move out of home to live in the inner city in order to continue her TAFE course, as Swinburne will be closing its Lilydale campus in a couple of weeks. I ask the minister: is he proud that the TAFE reforms are splitting up families in the outer east and forcing students to continue their Swinburne courses as far away as Hawthorn?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — For Mr Leane's benefit, if you lived in country Victoria, then you would be travelling a long way in some instances to participate in training or indeed in education.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. P. R. HALL — You would not always have public transport either, as Mr Elsbury says. Notwithstanding that, I appreciate the fact that some students do travel significant distances to participate in training, but it is not within the state government's control to dictate the place of delivery of every instance of training. Indeed our providers of training, whether they be public or private, make decisions about where courses will be held and what those courses will be around the state from year to year. That a student has been inconvenienced by the fact that an organisation has decided to change the venue in which it delivers training is unfortunate, but it is not directly in the control of the state government.

Supplementary question

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I remind the minister that the chancellor of Swinburne University of Technology is on the record saying that the Lilydale campus would be closed due to state government TAFE reforms. Taking into account that these are reforms the minister and the Premier have said they are proud of, I ask the minister what he has done to assist young people like Amy in a situation where they have to leave home and relocate to be able to continue their TAFE course.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — What have we done to assist young people relocating for the purposes of education? Mr Leane will be well aware of my personal interest in the position of students who have to relocate, particularly from country Victoria to Melbourne, to participate in education. This government has done more than any other government in Victoria in recent history in terms of addressing that particular problem. The Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund, about which I am about to make some further announcements, is a program in which this very issue has been addressed with a \$20 million allocation. The provision of more courses in regional and outer urban areas is something this government has a very proud record of supporting.

Landmate: future

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Corrections, Mr O'Donohue. I ask the minister to update the house on the future of the popular Landmate program and its importance for regional Victoria.

Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE (Minister for Corrections) — I thank Mr O'Brien for the important question about the Landmate program. I am very pleased to advise the house that there will be a renewal of funding for the Landmate community works program. Last week in Wangaratta, with the member for Murray Valley in the other place, Mr Tim McCurdy, I was very pleased to announce that Landmate will now be funded through the Department of Justice, which will ensure its continuation. Landmate has been a very important and valuable program in our regional communities for more than 20 years. It is important both to the communities that receive assistance and the prisoners who provide it. Landmate has been of enormous benefit to people and community organisations in the north-east for a long time, and I know there is strong support for it to continue.

I can inform the house that many members of the coalition, including Mr Tilley, the member for Benambra in the Assembly, Dr Sykes, the member for Benalla in the Assembly, Mr Ramsay, Mr Koch and Mr O'Brien, have been vocal advocates. They are not Johnny-come-latelies, like some on the other side of the house, in raising this issue. They are not Johnny-come-latelies like those who have raised the matter with the wrong minister. Members of the coalition have been advocating to me for the continuation of this program since the day I was sworn in as Minister for Corrections, and I thank them for making very clear to me the importance of this program to their communities and also to prisoners. Landmate sees teams of prisoners from Beechworth, Dhurringile, Ararat and Langi Kal Kal prisons going into the community and carrying out environmental and agricultural work.

As an aside, if I can respond to the question I was asked by Mr Tee yesterday, I am advised that the commissioner for corrections was at Dhurringile yesterday, and she has reported to me that minor rectification works are well under way. They relate to departmental standards as opposed to safety or security standards and were identified during the usual construction inspection process. I have also been advised that these rectification works will be completed without any additional cost.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, while I am sure the house and I are interested that the minister is responding to a question asked by Mr Tee yesterday, I thought the process of the house was that he would seek leave to do so or would do it in writing. I seek your guidance. He was asked a question by Mr O'Brien on the Landmate program, and in responding to that question he was referring to a question asked by Mr Tee yesterday. While I am not seeking to stop him answering Mr Tee's question, I put to you, President, that it is out of order as a response to the question he was asked by Mr O'Brien.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the point of order. As members are aware, I am not in a position to direct ministers on how they answer questions, albeit sometimes I do suggest they might be a bit more apposite to the questions that are actually asked. In this case there is nothing to prevent Mr O'Donohue, in responding to a question from Mr O'Brien, from providing some remarks in respect of other answers he has given in the session. It would seem to me that he feels that Mr Tee warranted a further response than was given yesterday and has sought to incorporate some remarks in his response to Mr O'Brien on this occasion. I think the substance of

Mr O'Donohue's answer goes effectively to the point that Mr O'Brien has made and that these other remarks are simply additional information, but Mr O'Donohue will no doubt bear that in mind as he proceeds with the rest of his answer.

Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE — Over the years, Landmate participants have taken part in fence building and mending, large-scale tree planting, weed removal and other activities of benefit to nearby communities and the broader environment. Landmate crews have also been on hand to assist during the flood emergencies that have devastated parts of Victoria over the last three years.

Victoria's recidivism rate is the second lowest in the country and well below the national average, and it is programs such as Landmate that contribute to that good result. People serving sentences in our prisons are given new skills and a sense of purpose that help them to travel a new path once they are released. In doing so, they are also contributing to the communities in which Landmate's work is done.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On a point of order, President, in the middle of the minister's response and your ruling on the previous point of order, we had an adviser trundling across the space behind the opposition benches. I put to you that it is distracting and annoying for ministers responding to questions to have people rumbling backwards and forwards behind the opposition benches. It would be much better if advisers were able to restrain themselves during the question time period.

Mr Viney — On the point of order, President, as you well know — and for the edification of the house — you and I have discussed the question of space for opposition advisers. You pointed out to me that it would be extremely expensive to provide a door out one way because of electrical works, as I understand it, in that area and that therefore the only solution is for advisers to be able to access the length of the gallery. We agree that it is not ideal, but it is the only access, and therefore I think it is disingenuous for the Leader of the Government to raise this point of order when it has been a matter of considerable discussion and negotiation.

Hon. D. M. Davis — Further to the point of order, President, the government reluctantly accepted this solution, but there have also been points made by you in the past that there would be some understanding that people would not be moving backwards and forwards and that there would be some restraint during the question time period in particular.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank the Leader of the Government for raising this matter. I find the behaviour of opposition advisers to be within the bounds of what I would consider to be most acceptable, inasmuch as I think there is very little movement of advisers between the opposition box and their leaving the house. I do not see that there is anything approaching a procession, which might give me cause for concern. On the rare occasions that advisers do leave the chamber, I would be surprised if ministers were distracted by that movement, which is no greater than the movement of the staff of the Parliament around the table on the floor of the chamber or the clerks moving to undertake their activities. I do not see that it is a significant problem, and I did not see in any way that Mr O'Donohue's response was distracted by any movement on that occasion.

Mr Tee — On a point of order, President, coming back to Mr O'Donohue's response to Mr O'Brien's question, yesterday Mr O'Donohue took on notice my supplementary question, and I am wondering — perhaps I am seeking clarification rather than raising a point of order — whether Mr O'Donohue has in his view now discharged his undertaking to provide further information to me.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Is that Mr O'Donohue's understanding?

Hon. E. J. O'Donohue — Yes, it is.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I must say that in that context I am a little concerned about the discharge of that matter and the manner in which it has occurred today — the fact that it has been rolled into what I would consider to be subsidiary remarks in a more substantive response to a question from a government member.

Hon. E. J. O'Donohue — I am happy to provide additional information to Mr Tee in writing if that would please him.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That would be my preference.

Gordon Institute of TAFE: car parking

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. I refer the minister to comments made by the Minister for Public Transport on Bay FM that parking problems at the Geelong railway station could be fixed by simply asking Gordon TAFE students to park elsewhere, and I can cite the reference for the minister. Is it now the government's

policy for the TAFE sector to fix the government's problems with railway station car parking?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — No.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I must say I am not sure that this actually falls within the jurisdiction of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, but at any rate he has dispatched that question.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his concise answer. The challenge would be to get less than two letters, but I thank him for his succinct answer. The minister has said it is not government policy for train commuters to be accommodated by TAFE car parking, but as we know, TAFEs and railway stations are effectively co-locating now to help students get there by public transport, and this will be an ongoing problem. As the minister responsible for the TAFE sector, is the minister an advocate for students who are being told by the public transport minister not to park near their TAFE?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — In response to this supplementary question, I am always happy to work with TAFE institutes and public transport organisations to resolve parking issues where there is some common use. In this particular instance I have not been involved in any discussions, nor have I been approached by anybody at the Gordon to address this particular matter. But if there is a need, I am more than happy to sit down and work with train users and TAFE institutes to resolve those issues.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, I am quite distracted by the fact that the next person asking a question may wish to ask one of the Minister for Planning, who has left the chamber, trying to find Mr Davis's term. The government does not have Dorothy Dix questions, so my point of order is: how can any member have confidence that their minister will be present when Mr Guy has already trundled out of the chamber and distracted himself?

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, President, it is interesting to note that at the beginning of question time only 8 of 16 opposition members and only 1 of 5 shadow ministers were present. However, my point of order has been taken care of by the fact that Mr Guy is now present.

The PRESIDENT — On this occasion I will not uphold the point of order. From time to time it is

necessary for members to leave the chamber for a range of requirements — perhaps to take a phone call, receive a message at the door or whatever. In those circumstances we recognise that as necessary for members and extend that courtesy to them. I have no doubt that if the next question had been from Mr Davis to Mr Guy, he may not have stood in his place, I might have requested another member of the government to stand in their place and I would have accepted them as the person posing the question. I am not necessarily anticipating who is to stand in their place to take a question. I am giving some guidance, but that may well change, and I need to take that into account when I chair question time.

Higher education: regional and rural students

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — Apparently we have a new standard of obligation to be in this house at all times, according to the opposition.

I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. Can the minister update the house on the progress of recent initiatives of the Napthine government that will increase the rate of participation and attainment in higher education in regional Victoria?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr Davis for his interest in this particular matter, and I am sure that Mr Leane will also be interested because it goes to the very funding project that I spoke about in passing in response to his question, that being the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund, a \$20 million commitment made by the government at the last election which is seeing some real improvements in opportunities for students who live in regional Victoria to access higher education.

We know that as a result of cost and distance the participation rate of students in higher education in regional Victoria is significantly lower than for those who live in metropolitan areas. If one looks at the rate of participation from year 12 completers last year, it can be seen that 39 per cent of school completers from regional Victoria are now enrolled in higher education as opposed to 58 per cent of completers in metropolitan areas. There is a significant disparity between the two groups, and I suggest that knowledge is not the reason for it. There are factors that relate more to cost, distance and perhaps in some cases aspiration. Nevertheless, there is a need to address those factors. I might add that since 2011 there has been a 2 per cent increase in regional participation in higher education, so that is at least a trend in the right direction.

What is the government doing to try to address that situation and improve opportunities for regional students? Members would recall that the creation of the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund was designed to do exactly that, to encourage partnership formation between providers at all levels, particularly at TAFEs and universities but equally through adult education, at a school level and also through private training providers, to develop partnerships that will provide more opportunities for students to enrol directly in either higher education programs or pathway programs. Last year I announced the first round of those successful projects in the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund with \$10.4 million released to seven different projects, which saw something like 1900 students enrol directly in a higher education program or a pathway program.

Today I am in a position to announce the results of the second round of funding from the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund: a \$9.55 million allocation, with eight successful projects to receive funding. The projects cover all regions in Victoria and form some very good partnerships between TAFE, universities and adult education providers.

By way of example I will cite just one of those successful projects to illustrate the sorts of outcomes that can be achieved. One of the eight successful projects is providing tertiary education pathways for the food, tourism and hospitality industries, and the successful proponents here are a consortium led by William Angliss TAFE in partnership with SuniTAFE, GippsTAFE, in Mr Davis's electorate, and South West TAFE. The coalition government is providing funding of \$790 000 to this project, which has a value of \$1.33 million. What it will mean is that some of the hospitality and tourism programs that begin in our TAFE institutes will articulate directly into higher education programs delivered by William Angliss. It will mean that those students participating in regional Victoria will have a defined pathway into a higher education degree. This particular program will benefit 180 students, but collectively the eight successful projects will benefit almost 2000 students.

Vocational education and training: enrolment data

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to Mr Hall in his capacity as Minister for Higher Education and Skills. I refer to the minister's answer to my question of 20 February regarding TAFE enrolment numbers and whether foundation studies were double-counted and his answers more generally to my questions on the financial viability of our TAFEs.

The *Victorian Training Market Quarterly Report* is now four weeks late; is that to avoid scrutiny by this Parliament?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Far from it. What I want is to be in a position to be able to report accurately to the Parliament. Because there is a delay in the returns of some of the training activities of a couple of TAFE institutes I am not in a position to provide that accurate information to the Parliament. That is partly due to the implementation of a new student management system amongst 9 of our 14 stand-alone TAFEs. When I have accurate information which I can put before the Parliament and the people of Victoria I will do so.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer, but if I read his answer correctly — that two of the TAFEs are having trouble in providing the data, or even more TAFEs — what I ask him, given that we are about to go into a long winter recess from this Parliament and there will be no scrutiny of the minister, is: will he table in the Parliament all the data from the TAFEs that have provided it before Parliament rises for the winter break?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Yes.

Planning: Docklands

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My question this afternoon is to my good friend and colleague the Honourable Matthew Guy, the Minister for Planning.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Just like Mr Lenders, I am delighted that he is in the house with us at the moment. Could the minister inform the house of what recent action he has taken to advance employment growth — jobs — in Melbourne's Docklands?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I want to thank Mr Ondarchie for a very important and sensible question in relation to employment growth in Melbourne Docklands and of course in the city as a whole. I am pleased to inform the chamber that I have approved a new office block to be built in Docklands at 1000 Latrobe Street, which when fully occupied will bring the number of jobs in that precinct to around 60 000. Over time this will see Melbourne Docklands growing to be an employment suburb in its own right. It will be on the doorstep of our western suburbs and

importantly will be one of the premier urban renewal precincts in the Western world. I have approved now nine towers in the Melbourne Docklands — employment towers. We will actually see in this instance a 23-storey building about 90 metres high with, as I said, around 60 000 square metres of office space. There is a real sense of growth in Docklands when it comes to employment.

This government is determined to get Docklands right. What we inherited was 10 years of neglect in a suburb that had been underplanned and had limited community investment. This government is going forward to ensure that job growth is paramount in that suburb. It is not just about building apartment towers; it is about putting jobs in a place where people can walk to work, where they can cycle to work, where they can live where they work and of course where they can have a sustainable lifestyle into the future.

As I said, we are determined to get Docklands right. A hungry wolf is stronger than a satisfied dog, as many might say —

Mr Jennings — Your grandmother.

Hon. M. J. GUY — As my grandmother did say, Mr Jennings: a hungry wolf is stronger than a satisfied dog. We on this side are hungry wolves when it comes to getting Docklands right. We are not just putting up with being satisfied dogs after having a meal and letting others do the work. Some might put that tag to a lot of others, but I say on this side of the house that we are like hungry wolves that want to get that precinct right. That is why we are investing in the Jim Stynes Bridge, and that is why I was recently at Docklands for the extension of the tram network to the corner of Collins and Bourke streets, where we will soon open the new library, the new community centre and the new open space for people who live in that precinct. This government is getting Docklands right. It is important to make sure that we put those employment towers in an area where people are living.

This is the story of making urban renewal work. It is about employment precincts with residential precincts; it is not one or the other. That is why Docklands will be a success when it is built out in the year 2020 or so. It is only 52 per cent complete now. I have approved new structure plans which incorporate that employment growth, and community infrastructure facilities will be built in that suburb to ensure that we have a world-class urban renewal precinct. Of course the precinct that I bequeath to the next planning minister — no doubt a Liberal or a Nationals member — will certainly be a lot better than the one I inherited from the administration

of the former Minister for Planning, the member for Essendon in the Assembly, Justin Madden, who might have been very lazy, some would say, about Docklands and what was there, but I will just say it is important to get employment growth in Docklands. That is what this government is doing: ensuring employment growth where people live, so that we can make sure that Docklands is a world-class urban renewal precinct now and into the future.

East–west link: planning

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning — when he gets his breath back. The minister recently received a referral under the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009 from his own government for its east–west road tunnel project. Section 5 of that act says that a project proposal for the purposes of this act is a document containing ‘all of the following’, including subsection (b), ‘designs prepared for the declared project’. In the published version of the proponent’s project proposal there are no designs for this proposed toll road. Did the minister see any designs before he made his various decisions that have now got the assessment of the project under way?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr Barber for his question, and I note his wonderful blue tie. I am wearing a blue tie, and I notice the Labor leader and a number of us on this side of the house are wearing blue ties. I just note that out of interest. I am colourblind, but there might be a tinge of blue over this side; it is lovely to see.

As Mr Barber knows, the east–west project is one of the most essential infrastructure projects in Melbourne which is needed right now. This government is determined to get on with building the east–west project, obviously involving the private sector. The plans and the processes that needed to be followed and still need to be followed in order for that project to proceed will continue over the coming few months, as members can imagine, and that material is being provided to my department. We are going through the planning phase at the moment. When the plans are ready, when the details are sorted out and when conceptual designs are brought forward by private sector organisations that may be interested in doing that, I am sure that they will all be made public via the mechanisms that will be there to determine the project at that time.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I ask the minister: what other proponent, under any of the acts that he administers — the planning and environment act, the environment effects act or a different project under this act — would be allowed to get away with putting before him a one-page, generic, verbal description of its project and have the minister then take that project forward for assessment under those acts?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am a little concerned that the supplementary question is hypothetical, but nonetheless I will let the minister proceed to an answer.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I am not sure how a one-page document is a ‘verbal’ document. That aside, I will take it that Mr Barber is saying a one-page —

Mr Jennings interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Obviously some professors in the opposition want to ‘verbalise’ their points of view on that. I simply say that I am not sure that the premise of Mr Barber’s supplementary question is correct. The second point is that the processes this project will go through are rigorous; they will set clear environmental, noise and visual assessment standards that will be world best. Indeed I am very sure that the project Melburnians see as a result of what this government puts down as a process will be one that will meet those tests and, importantly, meet an infrastructure test that this city needs and will be proud of — unlike those opposite — for many years to come.

Children: early intervention services

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. I ask: can the minister inform the house how the Napthine government’s \$34.3 million investment in 1000 early childhood intervention service (ECIS) packages will ensure best practice in early childhood disability support?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in early childhood development in the state of Victoria. In fact I note that prior to entering Parliament he was a board member of Kindergarten Parents Victoria. Mr Dalla-Riva has a longstanding interest in early childhood education and care in this state.

This government is committed to continuous improvement in the delivery of early childhood intervention services in Victoria. As the chamber knows, we have allocated 1150 additional places for early childhood intervention services since coming to government, at a cost of \$42 million. That includes the 1000 places that were in this year’s budget. These additional places will be delivered in line with evidence-based best practice in early childhood intervention, identified in the *Early Childhood Intervention Reform Project — Literature Review* that was done by the department.

These improvements will promote our ECIS improvement agenda by requiring best practice. Examples of best practice include: provision of services that include family-centred and parent-to-parent services in everyday settings; the provision of services in early childhood education and care settings, maximising the use of universal and other targeted services; the use of a key worker approach, which is supported by a trans-disciplinary team, universal and other targeted services; and the provision of information, support and resources in a collaborative, timely and effective manner.

Requiring ECIS service providers to demonstrate that they are able to identify and implement best practice ensures that those many new families who will be able to access a package will get the best services available. I have no doubt that by promoting and ensuring best practice all ECIS users will ultimately benefit from the best available programs here in Victoria.

AMBULANCE SERVICES: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**Debate resumed.**

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I would also like to speak on Mr Jennings’s motion, which I will not bother restating. Suffice to say that the government will not be supporting it, predominantly because the coalition government was elected to fix the mess that Labor left behind and to build a future. Building the future and improving the performance of various state agencies and services requires us first of all to address the problems.

We know of Labor’s record: the previous Labor government had 11 long years to invest significantly in Ambulance Victoria, and its failure to do so was very strongly acknowledged by the Auditor-General in his report to the Victorian Parliament in 2010. In that report the extent of the problem was made abundantly clear. It disclosed that in the preceding six years Victoria was

suffering its worst ambulance response times. That is a problem and a legacy that this government and this minister have inherited. Despite this motion, members must also remember that in its election commitment of 1999, when Labor was elected by default with the support of three so-called Independents to form government, it said:

Through our service improvements, aim to reduce the time it takes an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an accident from 15 minutes in 90 per cent of cases to 12 minutes in 90 per cent of cases. In addition Labor will seek to improve the service so that the response time target is 10 minutes in 90 per cent of cases within 12 months.

That was an election commitment that Mr Lenders would have been involved in penning. In his capacity as head of the Labor Party's organisation, he probably authorised that particular policy, and yet in 2010 the Auditor-General found that in fact indicators of ambulance performance over the preceding six years had been the worst ever. The 2002 budget papers show a target of just 13 minutes and the 2007 budget papers show the target had blown out again to the current 15 minutes, obviously demonstrating the total failure of the fulfilment of Labor's election commitments and policies.

On 1 July 2008, when the then Premier, John Brumby, announced the merger of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Rural Ambulance Victoria and the Alexandra District Ambulance Service, he also promised:

... big improvements to on-ground ambulance services across the state ... and improved response times right across Victoria.

Those of us who have been around the block a few times and have been in this place in various capacities know that words are very cheap for Labor members. They are full of plans. Regrettably, those plans are rarely implemented effectively. We saw that in the failure of a whole range of policies, of which obviously this was one.

Despite all those commitments and the merger of the ambulance services, the Auditor-General's 2010 report *Access to Ambulance Services* states:

Ambulances are taking longer to respond to code 1 emergencies, with the worst performance since 2004–05 recorded in 2009–10.

The Auditor-General went on to conclude of the botched ambulance service amalgamation under the then Minister for Health, now Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews:

... it is clear that amalgamation has not yielded the expected improvements in service response times.

Clearly members of the Labor Party have a very short-term memory. They are absolutely fantastic — they are masters, magicians — at trying to extricate themselves from any responsibility for the mess that this government has inherited and Liberal and coalition governments typically inherit after prolonged Labor administrations. Daniel Andrews's ambulance service merger was clearly unplanned. It was certainly underresourced and it did not deliver as promised. The lasting impacts remain from the botched merger as this government and this minister have had to clean up the mess.

As the next step this government has put in a new board for Ambulance Victoria to help address some of those issues. A competent business-based board has been put in place to begin the process of cleaning up the mess left behind by the previous Labor administration, including Daniel Andrews as the then Minister for Health.

What has the coalition government done under Ted Baillieu and now Denis Napthine? It is investing more than \$151 million to upgrade ambulance services in Victoria. As well as putting in place a business-based board, the government will deliver 310 new paramedics: 100 paramedics for metropolitan Melbourne and 210 for rural and regional Victoria. There will be 30 non-emergency patient transport officers to improve non-emergency services and reduce the number of non-emergency transports undertaken by rural paramedics.

For the first time, mobile intensive care ambulance, or MICA, single-responder units will be placed in the 10 major rural towns of Warrnambool, Horsham, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Sale, Bairnsdale, Wonthaggi and Swan Hill. This rollout will improve survival rates by making dedicated MICA units available for the first time in these major regional centres. The MICA units will service a radius of 70 to 80 kilometres around these centres. The \$151 million allocated by the government will also cater for building and vehicle requirements associated with the service upgrade. In addition to that, there is \$3.2 million to establish a dedicated motorcycle paramedic unit for inner Melbourne. Given the traffic congestion in Melbourne, the dedicated motorcycle paramedic unit will be more mobile and it will be able to get faster to where the paramedics need to be.

This government is doing a lot to help clean up Labor's mess and improve survival rates. The survival rates of patients are a very important measure of ambulance performance. The recently released *Report on Government Services 2013* shows that metropolitan and

rural survival rates from cardiac arrest, which is the largest cause of premature death, were not only improving but were significantly better than national as well as international rates. In response to a question asked by Mr Leane, that is something about which government members would be proud. It shows we have good grounds on which to build a stronger ambulance service, and this minister and this government are attempting to do what they can to do so. Clinical outcome measures have been incorporated in the budget and survival rates are now reported in the Ambulance Victoria annual report.

An important part of continuing to improve the ambulance service is now bundled up in the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations with the ambulance paramedics. The current EBA expired on 16 November 2012, and negotiations with the Ambulance Employees Association of Victoria — their union — for a new agreement have been under way since that time. I have been contacted by many of my constituents who are most disturbed by an element of the union campaign, which sees ambulances defaced with political messaging, including writing over windows. My older constituents in particular are saying that they find the tactics used in this particular industrial campaign very confronting and intimidating. The hardworking ambos deserve to have a more responsible industrial campaign, one that certainly does not make people feel distressed and disturbed, as they do by the current one. It includes political messages on ambulances, which are public property. Writing on the windows of cars may be a safety issue and even a breach of road rules.

Limited protected industrial action by members of the union has been taken since 1 March. It has been predominantly a media campaign. These actions have not impacted on patient services, except of course the messaging on ambulance vehicles, which people — not patients so much, but others — who see those things have generally found very distressing.

Ambulance Victoria has provided a number of options for discussion in an attempt to reach a settlement. I am advised that these include the possibility of pay increases far greater than 2.5 per cent for most paramedics by amending the way existing allowances are paid to make the system fairer for those staff working night and weekend shifts and by making some adjustments to penalties and leave. Apart from indicating that it does not support adjustments to leave and penalties, the union, I understand, has not made any constructive alternative proposals and instead continues to campaign and press for a 30 per cent pay claim.

We also saw the teachers union, the Australian Education Union, initially press for a 30 per cent pay increase. We saw it depart from that claim and ultimately form an agreement, and I would suggest that the Ambulance Employees Association of Victoria start being more amenable to some of the suggestions that have been put on the table as result of the desire of Ambulance Victoria to resolve the dispute.

In relation to unfilled shifts, Ambulance Victoria has made every effort to ensure that an appropriate level of response is provided to the community. I understand it has adopted some strategies and measures, which include rostering reserve paramedics and requesting that paramedics work overtime. Ambulance Victoria is obviously mindful of needing to prioritise cases to ensure that more serious cases take precedence, and those are always difficult issues. Ambulance Victoria has recently proposed that parties participate in voluntary conciliation with an agreed member of the Fair Work Commission as an independent chairperson. I am disappointed, and I am sure that many hardworking ambulance paramedics would also be disappointed, to know that the union has failed to endorse or accept that proposal. I believe the union should accept this offer. I believe many of our hardworking ambulance officers and their families would like to see the dispute resolved, and this would be a constructive way of arriving at an outcome that is acceptable to both parties and the community.

With those few words I indicate that the government understands the importance of this challenge and has taken significant steps to fix a legacy of poor policies that were poorly implemented and left by the former Labor government. It is for those reasons that the coalition will not be supporting this motion.

Sitting suspended 12.57 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Mr P. Davis — On a point of order, Deputy President, I am concerned that the house may be deficient, given that the Leader of the Opposition is not present. Having made a point at question time about the absence of members, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should be waited upon lest he fail to return.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! There is no point of order.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise and speak in support of the motion that has been put forward by Mr Jennings regarding the state of ambulance services in Victoria, particularly the state of ambulance services in rural and regional Victoria and in my electorate of Northern Victoria

Region. Of course I will be speaking in support of this motion.

Throughout Victoria, and particularly in rural and regional Victoria, there is a crisis in our ambulance services. We are facing some serious challenges. If we look closely at the contributions to this debate by the government members, it is very difficult to see how those challenges are going to be met and what sort of action they intend to take to improve the quality and standard of our ambulance services throughout Victoria. More particularly, given my particular responsibilities, it is difficult to see what they are going to do for rural and regional Victoria and specifically northern Victoria.

The government seems hell bent on simply putting its head in the sand and refusing to acknowledge the stresses and real challenges in our services. Those challenges are only going to become more difficult as time goes by if government members are not prepared to step up to the plate and make some decisions. The enterprise bargaining dispute that is currently under way needs to be resolved. More resources need to be put into our ambulance services to ensure that we have the high quality and standard of care that we expect from our ambulance services and that our ambulance services officers throughout the state are trained to deliver at the critical times when we need it — that is, when it could mean life or death for us.

However, if you listen to the contributions from members on the other side, the impression you are left with is that they have done a lot, that there is nothing wrong and there are no challenges to be met. The government is putting forward a fairly scary position. People are listening to what it has got to say about our ambulance services, because people around Victoria, including my constituents, are very concerned about the state of play in ambulance services in Victoria. They are listening to what the government has to say, and I am sure they are every bit as disappointed and concerned as I am about the sorts of responses we have heard from the government as part of this debate today.

We are seeing delays in patient handover processes at our hospitals, particularly in Northern Victoria Region and other rural and regional areas, and that constantly frustrates and is of concern to paramedics and ambulance officers. When ambulance officers deliver a patient to a hospital they have to go through the process of handing the patient over to the accident and emergency services department. Ramping occurs because they cannot simply leave the patient on a trolley somewhere. The handover process has to have been gone through before the ambulance officers are

free to leave the patient in the care of the accident and emergency department and move on to the next job.

What happens is you get the ambulances backing up and the patients on trolleys queuing up. I have been there myself on a trolley, as many others in this chamber have, and I have been there with relatives when they have been taken by ambulance to hospital. You see the ambulance vehicles queued up out the front — or at the side of the hospital, usually — and when you get into accident and emergency there is a queue of trolleys from the ambulances, often with the two paramedics from each waiting with the patient in the queue for the accident and emergency staff or other hospital staff to be able to do the handover and take responsibility for the patient.

Ramping times are increasing in our hospitals. Ambulances are having to wait until a bed becomes available and accident and emergency staff are able to do the handover and take responsibility. These delays in patient transfer at hospitals are taking ambulances and paramedics off the road for longer than ever before. I am not saying that this ramping has not happened in the past and that there have not been delays — of course there have been. If you have a big emergency — a big accident or a major catastrophe — you are going to get patients backing up at accident and emergency as they are delivered there by ambulance officers. But that is not what we are talking about now; we are talking about the general run-of-the-mill process. That should be fairly streamlined, where a patient can be handed over fairly quickly, not only for the good of the patient but also to free up the ambulance and paramedics so that they are able to go on to the next job.

The head of Ambulance Victoria, Greg Sassella, said that the time taken for ambulances to transfer their patients into the care of hospitals is having a really big impact on response times — that is, the response time for an ambulance to be able to get to a job when somebody has called 000.

We know that the Ambulance Employees Australia delegate for Shepparton and Mooroopna, which is in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region, Mr Paul Almond, said that half of the region's resources are sitting there — he was talking about the ramping — at accident and emergency at hospitals waiting to be released. Mr Almond advised that some days ambulance crews could wait up to 3 hours to off-load patients before they could go back on the road again and that this caused a huge flow-on effect. He said that recently four ambulances and one mobile intensive care ambulance unit were ramped outside the Goulburn

Valley Health emergency department because there were no beds available.

It is a very real problem that is having a detrimental effect not only on the hospitals and the patients but also on the ambulance officers — the paramedics — and the people who experience an emergency and need an ambulance to be available to respond.

The recent budget papers of the Liberal coalition government show that in 2012–13 just 72 per cent of code 1 ambulance emergency incidents were responded to within 15 minutes. That means that some 30 per cent of cases are not being responded to within 15 minutes. I know that Victorians expect and deserve a better service than that. They expect that when they call an ambulance they will be able to get an ambulance quickly and will not have to wait for long periods of time.

If I take a bit of a trip around my electorate of Northern Victoria Region and look at ambulance response figures, I find them alarming. Health professionals in our hospitals, our paramedics and members of the community more generally are alarmed by what is happening. In Bright you can expect to wait 24 minutes for an ambulance; 19 minutes if you live in Alexandra or that area; 21 minutes in Pyramid Hill and St Arnaud; in Yea, 22 minutes; and in Tallangatta, 24 minutes. This might not seem like a long time, but if you are waiting there with a loved one who is experiencing an emergency, whether it be a heart attack, a haemorrhage, just severe pain, a broken limb, a severe asthma attack or a seizure — any number of things that can occur — or even if you are waiting not with a loved one but with somebody you have come across on the street or in a workplace, it is a long, long time to wait while someone is in pain and agony or is unconscious or haemorrhaging. It is a long time to wait. If you are the person who is actually experiencing the heart attack, the bleed, the break or the asthma attack — whatever the emergency might be — it is a long time, too. It is a very long time if you are the patient waiting for that ambulance to arrive.

To hear the government respond to these kinds of issues, where people are having to wait longer and paramedics are raising concerns about the ramping — which is one of the reasons why ambulances are not responding as quickly as we would like; sometimes they are just not even out on the road because they are waiting at a hospital — you would think that they really do not matter at all and can be very readily and easily brushed over. We are not hearing anything about what the government intends to do to fix this situation. They can be the longest 24 minutes or 21 minutes of your life

if you are the one waiting for an ambulance or you are there with somebody waiting for an ambulance.

We recently heard about the death of a Victorian man — this occurred in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region — who waited 40 minutes for an ambulance while having a heart attack, and that has renewed calls from paramedics for more resources to be able to cope with these demands. The man waited 40 minutes for an ambulance to arrive from Bendigo — he was in the Sunraysia area — after going into cardiac arrest just in March this year. Details of the incident, released by Bendigo paramedics, revealed that the man's partner phoned 000 and was told to begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation — good advice — before an ambulance from Bendigo was directed to respond. It took 40 minutes, and by the time the ambulance arrived the man had died. According to case details the ambulance crew members from Heathcote were unavailable at the time because they were on a fatigue break. This is just one very drastic incident where perhaps if the ambulance paramedics had been able to get there sooner with their equipment and expertise, that gentleman would not have died.

Recently the *Sunraysia Daily* reported that there was a radio outage between 12.00 noon and 3.00 p.m. that left ambulance units without radio contact, leading to a crew attending the wrong address to treat an elderly woman who had gone into cardiac arrest. By the time the ambulance arrived at the correct address that elderly woman, too, had died. Ambulance Victoria is currently reviewing the circumstances around this case, as I am sure that it is doing in regard to the incident in Bendigo. The availability of our paramedics when we need them is a matter of life and death. It can mean the difference between somebody living and dying, between somebody having a quick recovery and having a very slow recovery, between somebody experiencing permanent damage or disability and being able to recover and lead a normal life.

Moving to one of the other issues I want to talk about — and again we have not heard any member of the Napthine government mention this — it is very important that our ambulances be fitted out with the right sort of equipment and that our paramedics have all the equipment they require to be able to do their job. It is not only about them having the necessary training and expertise — and of course they are very highly qualified and well trained. The Baillieu and Napthine governments have failed to equip ambulances in Victoria with the facilities that are needed to deal with obese patients. Let us face it, obese patients are more likely to require an ambulance because they have a

whole range of medical conditions and are more likely to suffer from life-threatening medical emergencies.

They have comorbidity problems as well. The coroner is preparing to investigate two deaths in regional Victoria where a complex patient ambulance vehicle (CPAV), a specialised ambulance with facilities for shifting and carrying large patients, allegedly failed to arrive on time. Labor funded five CPAVs when it was in government, but the current Liberal-Nationals government has not lifted a finger, despite an increasing proportion of our population being diagnosed as obese. Of the five CPAVs currently in operation, two are located in metropolitan Melbourne while the other three are in Geelong, Bendigo and Sale. This is certainly something that the government needs to address.

We know the Council of Australian Governments recently released its fourth report on the national health-care agreement, which showed deteriorating obesity figures. According to the report, adult obesity rates have continued to rise to the staggering number of 63 per cent of Australians being overweight or obese in 2011–12. That is an increase of 2 per cent in the past four years. Seven in 10 men and half of all women are above their healthy body weight. It does not stop with adults either. The report revealed that our kids are getting more unhealthy, with 7.6 per cent now considered to be obese and an additional 17.7 per cent overweight. In Victoria the towns of Shepparton, Wangaratta, Benalla and Wodonga are the state's fattest in terms of those classified as overweight or obese, and 65 per cent of the population in the towns of Bendigo, Echuca and Mildura is characterised as being overweight. I think there is definitely a need for this whole issue of obesity to be addressed by the government. It certainly shows that we are going to need more and more complex patient ambulance vehicles. As our population becomes more obese and more overweight, we will need special equipment to be able to deal with it.

Our ambulance services are in a state of crisis, including in rural and regional Victoria. Paramedics are currently negotiating their enterprise agreement. I think that if the government does not get this sorted out, if it does not come to the table in good faith, negotiate and get this agreement settled, we are going to lose more paramedics. We have already heard from Mr Lenders today about the number of paramedics who are on stress leave at any one time. It is a very high level. It is very important that our paramedics be properly remunerated, it is very important that proper roster systems be put in place; and it is very important that there be proper procedures that work, allowing our paramedics to get to their patients in a timely way, get

them to hospital, hand them over and get back on the road again.

This is not happening anywhere, whether it be in metro Melbourne or in rural and regional Victoria. It is not happening in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. Something needs to be done about it. This government needs to step up to the challenge. It needs to finalise negotiations with the paramedics, it needs to look carefully at ambulance services and it needs to make sure that we have a well-equipped, well-trained, properly remunerated and functioning ambulance service, so we can all rest assured that if and when we should need an ambulance, we are going to get one and get it in a timely way. I support the motion.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — In rising to make my contribution to the debate on the motion moved by Mr Jennings, I am sure that it will not be any surprise to opposition members that I will not be supporting the motion. But before I put my response to the elements of the motion, I want to place on record my personal thanks to Ambulance Victoria. This month marks two years since I had a very bad accident in my home and found myself lying near my front door with two bones in my right leg smashed after falling down stairs. In fact my foot was only hanging on by the soft flesh. I have to say that I was fortunate an ambulance arrived within a reasonable time. I was not in a condition to have a stopwatch in terms of the arrival time, but I can say that it was a blessed relief when those two male ambulance drivers arrived and started to give me pain relief and some confidence that I would survive the accident. They attended to me in a most caring and professional manner, and I will never forget their approach.

Because of the terrain my house is built on, access to my front door is through a flight of steep stairs. Because of the condition I was in, a second ambulance had to be called to get me out of my home. I understand that there are four ambulances in the state that are equipped with something like a stair-climbing chair instead of a stretcher. It took time for that ambulance to come, so by the time I arrived in hospital probably 1 hour and 30 minutes had elapsed. People have told me this. The fact that both the first response and then the follow-up response, with the specialised equipment to evacuate me from my home, came through the way they did is very much a frightening blur, but what shines through is the care I received from Ambulance Victoria. I applaud the work of paramedics in Victoria and am personally indebted to them for what they did to start the repair of my right leg and get me to hospital.

I did not have an experience of ramping at a hospital because I chose to be transported to the emergency department of Knox Private Hospital and was able to be triaged immediately in that setting. My comments are based on my personal experience, and when paramedics came to shift me from the acute hospital to my rehabilitation hospital, the service, care, sense of humour and so on that the paramedics provided me with made those experiences so much better rather than it being frightening and painful.

Unfortunately Mr Jennings started his contribution with a lot of pejorative language. He said the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis, 'sacked' the board of Ambulance Victoria. An incoming government likes to review the structures of departments and government agencies, and it seems there was so much lacking by way of reform of Ambulance Victoria, as set out in the Auditor-General's report of October 2010 *Access to Ambulance Services*, that there had to be a new way of doing things. The coalition government led the way in establishing a new board and putting it into position. The orientation of that board was to apply the skills of what was regarded as a competent business-based board to embark on the process of, frankly, cleaning up the mess that was left by the Labor government.

The contributions to this debate of the proponents of this motion and the subsequent speakers in support of it are disappointing because clearly there is much amnesia and short-term memory loss present in members of the state opposition. They seem to forget their poor record, which spanned 11 quite painful years, and the people who are victims of their ineptitude. They failed to invest significantly in Ambulance Victoria, and the extent of the problem was reinforced by the findings and commentary of the Auditor-General back in 2010.

What is really important in terms of what the beleaguered Labor government, under both Bracks and Brumby, left by way of a legacy for the incoming coalition government — what we had to clean up and what we had to deal with — is put very stridently in a Labor policy document from the 1999 election. It states that Labor would:

... aim to reduce the time it takes an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an accident from 15 minutes in 90 per cent of cases to 12 minutes in 90 per cent of cases. In addition Labor will seek to improve the service so that the response time target is 10 minutes in 90 per cent of cases within 12 months.

If we go back to 2002, the budget papers show a target of 13 minutes, and the 2007 budget papers show that the target had blown out again to the current 15 minutes. We see that Labor policies were completely ineffectual over that period, between 2002

and 2007. Even though I am sure that Labor applied itself, it did not do so in a correct or effective way.

As a means to rectify this, the Premier of the day, John Brumby, announced a merger between the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Rural Ambulance Victoria and the Alexandra and District Ambulance Service back on 1 July 2008. With this announcement he promised that there would be big improvements to on-the-ground ambulance services and response times right across the state.

If we have a look at the Auditor-General's report, we see that one of the major themes is the issue of disparity in terms of ambulances and staff on the ground across rural Victoria and the contrast between that situation and the resources that are available to people living in metropolitan Melbourne. Perhaps this is what the former government had in mind, but the Auditor-General sharply criticised what he described as unfinished work on behalf of that government's erstwhile endeavours to bring about the successful merger.

It is worth saying that some things were achieved — for example, moving towards a state-of-the-art call-taking and dispatch service for the whole state and improving strategic planning for rural regions — but there were still a number of challenges that were left unresolved. The time between the announcement of the merger and its implementation was short — perhaps a desperate measure of a panic-stricken government — and only limited funds were provided to systematically deal with the cultural issues.

When I hear about things such as the morale of paramedics in this state being low, I wonder about some of those issues that are sheeted home to the coalition government by the people who are saying this government is not doing everything it possibly can to resolve the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) situation with paramedics in the state. I wonder just how endemic some of those cultural issues are that affect the morale of our paramedics. They are issues that are labelled as problems associated with the regime of the enterprise bargaining agreement, but it might be something deeper and of a long-term nature, harking back to this stalled merger process between the three ambulance entities in this state. It is interesting to see how convenient it is to sheet home the blame and to have amnesia and selective memory when people are arguing the case. The facts belie those arguments.

Through the merger process there were some inefficiencies. There was a trend back in 2008, reported on in 2010, towards deteriorating ambulance response

times evident prior to amalgamation, and that was not arrested. The amalgamation process, under the watch of Labor, did not provide the dividends that it was meant to. It continued to be an inefficient proposition. It was a signature problem of the Labor government that it did not attend to a lot of detail, and the left hand never knew what the right hand was doing. That was a constant theme of the administration during Labor's time in government. We saw ambulance response times worsen in rural regions more than in the metropolitan area. Even when Labor threw funding at the problem over four years it did not lead to any demonstrable improvement. This was a systemic, philosophical, ideological problem of oversight, strategic management and strategic planning.

Another example of what happens when Labor does get on the Treasury benches and into government is that it does not have the wit or the wherewithal to drive reform. I think that comes from the dearth of experience in business that we see not only in state government but also, to the chagrin of all Australians, in abundance in the federal government. The Auditor-General has concluded that there is unfinished work from the amalgamation process. The coalition government has inherited the problem to be fixed.

What has the coalition's response been? I am proud to place on the record what the government has done. First and foremost we are investing \$151 million to upgrade ambulance services in Victoria. Through the investment we will be able to deliver 310 new paramedics in Victoria. That will augment the number of paramedics in the metropolitan area by 100. Importantly, because we saw the widening gap between the number of paramedics available in metropolitan Melbourne and those serving rural areas, there will be an additional 210 paramedics across rural and regional Victoria. To supplement this, there will be 30 non-emergency patient transport officers to improve non-emergency services and reduce the number of non-emergency transports undertaken by rural paramedics. I would imagine that logistically this is an important initiative. So there are three initiatives: \$151 million from the government, 310 new paramedics — 100 for metropolitan Melbourne and 210 extra across rural and regional Victoria — and 30 non-emergency patient transport officers to ease the burden on paramedics and address the logistical reality, freeing up paramedics to respond to real emergencies where it is a life and death situation.

I have a lot of respect for Ms Kaye Darveniza, and I listen closely to what she has to say on issues to do with health and hospitals, because of her career as a nurse and her time working within the system. I listened

closely to her contribution to the debate. It was a very impassioned contribution, and we expect nothing less from Ms Darveniza. However, she skipped over an important initiative that we in the coalition government are proud of. For the first time mobile intensive care ambulance (MICA) single-responder units will be placed in 10 major rural towns. I looked at the towns listed: Warrnambool, Horsham, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Sale, Bairnsdale, Wonthaggi and Swan Hill. In terms of the Northern Victoria Region electorate of Ms Darveniza, I count Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga and Swan Hill as major regional centres. Yet Ms Darveniza did not include this in her contribution today. In a way it was mean spirited not to congratulate the government on this initiative and on placing MICA units in five of the major centres in her electorate. I wonder why that was, and I put that question. It is a disappointment and an opportunity lost to provide some balanced input. I would like to underscore that point.

The rollout of the MICA units will improve survival rates. Life and death has been a major theme weaving through everybody's contributions. We are talking about improving survival rates by making dedicated MICA paramedics available for the first time in major regional centres. The MICA service will also have a radius of 70 to 80 kilometres around these centres. If we get our old-fashioned compasses out and draw some circles around these centres, we can see that a lot of rural Victoria will have MICA ambulance coverage for the first time. When we see a MICA ambulance racing down the street our hearts race too, and we hope they are able to get to that suffering patient, somebody perhaps on the threshold of death, in time.

The presence of the MICA ambulances must contribute to lifting the spirits of the people in these centres in a big way and provide comfort for people supporting those who are chronically ill, subject to asthma attacks, heart disease and so forth. Even though it has not been mentioned by the opposition, it must provide an enormous measure of relief to see those MICA ambulances on the landscape responding as they do. It is important to mention that the funding of \$151 million incorporates money for building and vehicle requirements associated with the service upgrade. We are talking about fitting out ambulances.

There is \$3.2 million to establish a dedicated motorcycle paramedic unit for inner Melbourne. That is a fantastic and important initiative considering we are talking about a congested and often gridlocked Melbourne. How do we feel when we can hear an ambulance, with its siren and flashing lights behind us, but we cannot move out of the way? This will mean

that a paramedic can launch themselves onto a motorcycle, get to somebody in distress and provide an emergency service in situ. This is a really important initiative that addresses the reality of the congested and often gridlocked metropolis that Melbourne is nowadays. I am proud that our government is providing that initiative.

Clearly central to the argument put forward regarding the issue of the morale of paramedics is the rather protracted process associated with the enterprise bargaining agreement for ambulance paramedics. The EBA expired, as I understand it, on 16 November last year, and the negotiations for a new agreement — and I underline the term ‘negotiations’ — have been under way since August 2012, several months before the expiry date. We cannot accept the argument that the government has not been prepared to respond to what is being brought forward by the Ambulance Employees Association of Victoria during the EBA negotiations. The government started this process many months before the expiration of the EBA.

What is happening? Members of the union have been involved in some industrial action, which is protected by the Fair Work Commission, and which commenced on 1 March, primarily in relation to a media campaign. Ambulance Victoria has provided a number of options for discussion in an attempt to reach a settlement to stop this protracted process, which may or may not be affecting the morale of paramedics in Victoria. These options include the possibility of pay increases significantly greater than 2.5 per cent for most paramedics by amending the way existing allowances are paid, making the system fairer for those staff who work night and weekend shifts, and by making some adjustments to penalties and leave, so there is flexibility being shown on behalf of the government.

We wonder who is not listening and who is pursuing other aims and objectives, with the paramedics as grist to the mill; perhaps they are the aims and objectives of the Ambulance Employees Association of Victoria. I wonder whether the union is explaining its case, as I am elucidating the government’s position now. Apart from indicating that it does not support adjustments to leave and penalties, the union has unfortunately not made constructive alternative proposals. It is doggedly pressing on with its claim for 30 per cent over four years.

In relation to unfilled shifts, Ambulance Victoria makes every effort to ensure that an appropriate level of response is provided to the community. That is a no-brainer. These people are dedicated to that process, which is something everybody wants. I am sure that

people are working to the upper limits of their energy reserves to achieve just that. Strategies include rostering reserve paramedics and requesting that paramedics work overtime. Ambulance Victoria constantly prioritises cases to ensure that the more serious cases take precedence.

I have made some points that unpick the case that Mr Jennings has made, but parenthetically I would like to say that I was at a shopping centre in my electorate over the long weekend. A person had a bad fall and injured themselves very significantly, and an ambulance was called. When I made my way out of the shopping centre and saw the ambulance parked and about to load the patient, I saw that the ambulance was covered with signage for the industrial campaign that almost completely covered the windows of the ambulance. People in the vicinity were looking askance at the ambulance, which had been spoilt, if you like, with campaign slogans hastily written. It looked like the ambulance had suffered a graffiti attack.

They were a professional crew of paramedics, whom we all admire and respect immensely, but this was a bit of an edgy experience for people in the immediate area and I do not think anything was gained by despoiling the ambulance’s appearance of professionalism in that way. I ask paramedics not to ruin the look of ambulances during their industrial campaign. I understand that there are a number of means for them to get their message out, but I think it provides disquiet in the community to confuse the livery of ambulances and make them look like victims of graffiti attacks. I conclude my comments on that point and reinforce the fact that I cannot support Mr Jennings’s motion.

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to sum up the arguments we have heard during the course of today’s debate on the sorry situation of the ambulance service in Victoria. I listened intently, either in the chamber or in my office, to the contributions made by members, but I did not hear government members refute the unassailable fact that the significant budget savings made by this government adversely impact upon the performance of the hospital system. The \$826 million of savings that have been embedded within the first three budgets of the current government were not refuted, and the government did not take the opportunity to allay the community’s concerns that its promise of additional beds is not being delivered.

Government members did not take the time to prove something other than to comment on what the budget papers say: that the response time for treatments within emergency departments is deteriorating and now only

73 per cent of emergency cases get treated on time, or that the rate that transfers from ambulances to hospitals happen within 40 minutes has reduced to only 76 per cent, even though there is a 90 per cent target. The government was not able to refute the truth demonstrated in the budget papers that ambulances responding to emergencies by arriving to support Victorian patients within 15 minutes has reduced to 72 per cent. The government was not able to refute the truth that over the course of 2012 at a number of major hospitals around metropolitan Melbourne, including the Monash, Northern, Frankston and Dandenong hospitals, there were on average more than 1000 hours per month in which ambulances were ramping outside those hospitals. The government did not refute the poor outcomes for patients, and in some cases tragedies, that occurred over the course of the last year and were reported in the media and drawn attention to during the debate. No apology was issued on behalf of the government today that it feels some degree of culpability or responsibility for those outcomes.

In her contribution Ms Crozier drew the attention of the chamber to a most unfortunate and traumatic experience, which included a time delay in an ambulance arriving, suffered by a Victorian citizen during the time when the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, was the Minister for Health. Ms Crozier had the good grace to acknowledge, if inadvertently, that then Minister Andrews apologised and took responsibility for that outcome at the time. He sincerely apologised to the family of that patient and the people of Victoria about that unfortunate incident and gave guarantees such a thing would not occur again. These are the sorts of acts of a responsible minister that we on this side of the chamber have called upon the current minister to demonstrate. He should stop blame shifting and trying to indicate that it is somebody else's responsibility. He should assume responsibility for his ministerial role and his obligation to meet his promises to the Victorian people to make sure that there are improvements to the hospital system and the ambulance service. He should take action to turn the situation around so there are better outcomes.

One government member after another lined up today primarily to do two things. The first was to blame the previous administration in Victoria. That blaming was sometimes intermingled with arguments criticising the federal Labor government. The second thing government members were encouraged to do was blame the ambulance union for organising paramedics, who had the audacity to pursue their industrial claims through an enterprise bargaining agreement negotiation process, and criticise and accuse paramedics of causing bad outcomes for patients through the prism of their

industrial action. Again, this is blame shifting. The government is not assuming responsibility or working assiduously to ensure that the ambulance service in Victoria responds to these challenges and is adequately resourced and encouraged to remedy problems experienced by the Victorian community.

I moved this motion to remind the Parliament of the importance of these very issues. During the course of this debate today the Premier was asked a question in the other place about an adverse outcome for a patient who was waiting in Melton for an ambulance that did not arrive. The Premier's response was consistent with the response of the Minister for Health in the sense that compassion and concern were not displayed and sorrow about the bad outcome for the patient was not conveyed. The daughter of the patient, who was sitting in the public gallery, was most distressed. She drew attention to her circumstances and left the Parliament. These are real issues and incidents happening in Victoria each and every day.

Mr Drum — Was it just a coincidence that she was there in the chamber?

Mr JENNINGS — Regardless of the cynicism of Mr Drum, who is trying to draw attention to himself in this matter, as a member of the government he should take some action to remedy this situation, rather than seeing everything through the prism of an orchestrated opportunity to mount a convenient argument that it is somebody else's fault.

Mr Drum interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Drum!

Mr JENNINGS — The reason why I allowed Mr Drum's cynicism to be conveyed on the public record is that it is consistent with the government's callous attitude in response to issues currently experienced by Victorian citizens.

Ms Crozier — Did you read the front page of the *Saturday Age* and see the Premier?

Mr JENNINGS — I reiterate my point: cynicism can be conveyed in any number of ways, and the government is currently and comprehensively demonstrating its cynicism to the Victorian people. It should assume responsibility for better outcomes for patients, and provide better care and greater backup for paramedics, who on behalf of the community are out there every day doing a job which most of us would not be up to doing. We should thank, congratulate and support them for that. We on this side of the chamber encourage the government to reflect on these issues. On

behalf of Victorians the government should take action to improve the ambulance service to get better outcomes for patients and the people who work within that service.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 19

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

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	Peulich, Mrs
Finn, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Ramsay, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Hall, Mr	

Motion negatived.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Questions on notice: reinstatement

The PRESIDENT — Order! I wish to advise that Ms Hartland has sent me two questions that she placed on notice which she considers have not been responded to effectively by the ministers involved. In the case of question 9459, which was a question to the Minister for Housing in relation to the ‘Pathways to a new Victorian social housing framework’ consultation and policy development, it is my view that that is a three-part question and that some of the parts have not really been addressed by the answer. I think it might well be possible for the minister to provide some further information in keeping with the questions that were put by Ms Hartland, so I do ask that that question be reinstated.

In regard to question 9016 I have some difficulty in a number of respects. In the first instance I think some parts of this question, which was in relation to public housing and the provision of air conditioning in public housing and in common areas related to housing centres or complexes, have certainly been answered, and I think it is a little difficult to determine whether or not

the answer covers some of the points that Ms Hartland was seeking answers on. I think there is some coverage of those points that she considers were not satisfactorily answered, but more importantly I had some concerns that the minister might not actually be able to answer some of these questions because they would relate to the privacy of the tenants. One part of the question seeks information on how many tenants over a certain age have heat-sensitive diseases or disabilities. Obviously some tenants may well have presented and said that they had some difficulty with some problem and were seeking the assistance of facilities in that respect, but other tenants may well not have presented with any sort of information that would suggest that they had those sorts of difficulties. They may have been seeking the air-conditioning facilities, for instance, without divulging what their personal circumstances were.

So I think there are some parts of this question that, as I said, the minister would have great difficulty in answering, and some of them do go to the personal issues of tenants and therefore there may well be privacy considerations. On balance I have decided to reinstate the question, but I indicate to Ms Hartland that if a response from the minister came to the effect of taking into consideration some of the matters that I have just raised with regard to my reservations in terms of what the minister may be able to provide in response to this question, then I think she would need to accept that, because I think that is a valid issue with regard to this question. I do ask that the question be reinstated but I think the minister might consider that answer very carefully.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed from 8 May; motion of Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria):

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council —

- (1) on Tuesday, 7 May 2013, a copy of the independent site assessment updates referred to in the former Premier’s response to the adjournment matter raised on 14 November 2012 regarding flooding in the lands between the Princes Freeway and Wallace Street, Morwell, tabled in the Legislative Council on 19 March 2013;
- (2) any brief from VicRoads to the consultants engaged to assess the relevant site, or any correspondence detailing the scope or expectations of the investigation;
- (3) the original report of investigations into this site undertaken by GHD for VicRoads on 24 March 2011, including the brief or other documents that detailed the requirements of that investigation; and

- (4) any correspondence or briefs between VicRoads, the minister for transport or his office, the Premier or his office and the member for Morwell about this site in relation to flooding, or the requests for action that were raised in adjournment debates by the member for Eastern Victoria Region Mr Matt Viney, MLC, on 14 August and 14 November 2012.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make a contribution on behalf of the government on the motion requiring that the government table certain documents in relation to flooding in the lands between the Princes Freeway and Wallace Street, Morwell. For the record I note that whilst this motion was listed six days ago I had to extract the notice as it was provided because Mr Viney had already made his contribution. I think it is important perhaps to reiterate what the motion is requiring the house to provide. I must say from the outset that in accordance with the normal processes of documents being sought within this chamber and following the work of Mr O'Donohue in terms of dealing with these particular matters on a Wednesday, the government will not be opposing the motion, with the usual caveats of which members are aware. Some documents have been requested. A motion was moved on 8 May requiring that the government table in the Legislative Council:

... a copy of the independent site assessment updates referred to in the former Premier's response to the adjournment matter raised on 14 November 2012 regarding flooding in the lands between the Princes Freeway and Wallace Street, Morwell, tabled in the Legislative Council on 19 March 2013 ...

I do not know whether we need to consider these things, given that the advice I have been provided with states that the government is required to table something in this chamber by Tuesday, 7 May, and it is now 12 June. I will seek the guidance of the Clerk on that matter.

The production of documents motion also requested that the Leader of the Government table:

- (2) any brief from VicRoads to the consultants engaged to assess the relevant site, or any correspondence detailing the scope or expectations of the investigation;
- (3) the original report of investigations into this site undertaken by GHD for VicRoads on 24 March 2011, including the brief or other documents that detailed the requirements of that investigation; and
- (4) any correspondence or briefs between VicRoads, the minister for transport or his office, the Premier or his office and the member for Morwell about the site in relation to flooding, or the requests for action that were raised in adjournment debates by the member for Eastern Victoria Region Mr Matt Viney, MLC, on 14 August and 14 November 2012.

As I indicated, the government will not oppose the motion, although it is of course conscious that some of those matters may relate to cabinet confidentiality and other forms of privilege. While Mr Viney is in the chamber, I will seek some clarification, because the motion that was provided to me requires that the Leader of the Government table documents in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 7 May. The date specified in the motion has passed. I am happy for the opposition to move an amendment, if it needs to, to extend the date. With those caveats, as I said, the government will not oppose Mr Viney's motion.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I appreciate that the government has said that it will support the motion, and I compliment Mr Dalla-Riva on his eye for detail. I will move an amendment to change that date. I move:

That the words '7 May' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words '25 June'.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — The Greens will support this motion. We think it is an absolute travesty that Mr Viney has been pursuing this matter since August last year. It is a small, simple, localised matter. The government seems to be unwilling to adopt any kind of transparency in relation to it, and of course that is becoming a disturbing pattern on matters as small as this flooding beside a highway or on matters as large as the \$8 billion that the government thinks it is going to blow on a toll road while telling us absolutely nothing about it. It is the subject of past and no doubt future motions of the same ilk as that put forward by Mr Viney, so the Greens will support the motion.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — Briefly, in conclusion, I thank the government for indicating that it does not oppose the motion. This is the first documents motion that I have presented to this place, although I have spoken on many, and on many occasions when in government I delivered the same speech that Mr Dalla-Riva delivered.

I want to correct something I commented on in my original contribution when I was describing the type of drainage that might be required on this site. I have had further consultations with locals, and they want me to clarify that perhaps the drainage required would be a covered, rock-filled trench. In my non-engineering ignorance and in an attempt to be brief and use language that everyone could understand, I might have been a little too brief, because the works will require a bit of engineering.

Going back to the original issue, which is that there is a problem in terms of the land being saturated in what we describe as no-man's-land — between the houses in Wallace Street and the freeway, and particularly the sound barrier — we want to reiterate that the residents are concerned about that water seeping into their backyards, and after rain events or in the winter times it is particularly difficult. I want to return to the point that in addition to the original GHD report that I am seeking, having received a copy of a report not via the government but via the local newspaper — it was not released to me despite my request for it — it seems apparent to me that GHD was given the wrong brief. It is critical that I have not just the report I have received from the local newspaper but the original GHD report, and we need the brief that was provided to GHD because, quite frankly, it appeared to be answering the wrong questions.

I thank the government for its indication that it is allowing this request to proceed. I also want to thank the Greens for their support, and I hope that at the end of this process these documents can be produced and I can continue to work with the people of Wallace Street in Morwell to ensure that they get an outcome that will protect their properties into the future.

Amended motion agreed to.

TOBACCO AMENDMENT (SMOKING IN OUTDOOR AREAS) BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 28 November 2012; motion of Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan).

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on Ms Hartland's Tobacco Amendment (Smoking in Outdoor Areas) Bill 2012. I know that in previous debates in this place she has spoken a number of times in relation to smoking and its effects, and I understand that she is very passionate about the health and wellbeing of Victorians; I acknowledge that.

I would like to say at the outset that in relation to Ms Hartland's motion there are a number of issues that the government would like to address, and I also point out that this government, like previous governments, has been very supportive of measures that will improve health outcomes for all Victorians, and one of those is to reduce the incidence of smoking within our population and to decrease the uptake of smoking by younger Victorians. That is something that opposition members would also be very supportive of, and I know

they have been in previous times, so I make that acknowledgement.

The government has undertaken a number of legislative reforms in relation to the cessation of smoking and the promotion of health and wellbeing, and I have spoken on those matters in previous times as somebody who has seen firsthand the effects of smoking and the chronic diseases it causes, whether they be respiratory disease, the effects of vascular disease that then moves on to cardiac disease or eye problems, or the way it contributes to very poor outcomes for people with diabetes. These are all an enormous cost to the individual but also a significant cost to the Victorian health system. In Victoria alone smoking takes approximately 3800 lives each year and has a financial cost of around \$6.8 billion annually. We are speaking of significant numbers in both loss of life as well as health costs.

Even though there has been significant progress in this area, smoking is a major contributor to chronic disease, but it is the leading avoidable cause of cancer and the associated effects of that dreadful disease. As I have also acknowledged, there has been bipartisan support on this issue since the introduction of the Tobacco Act 1987. Over the time since that act came into being legislative reforms have been undertaken by previous governments. These reforms have included advertising and sponsorship bans, as well as smoking bans in a range of settings. There have also been attempts to denormalise smoking. When most of us were growing up it was quite the normal thing to see people smoking. In fact some of the advertisements we saw on television when we were growing up were particularly iconic — —

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Ms CROZIER — They were cool, as Mr Hall suggests. There were a number of them, and in fact my uncle was the Marlboro Man, so I was fully aware of it. We thought he was really cool. Nevertheless growing up in the 1970s and 1980s smoking was, for many people, quite a normal part of their daily life. But thankfully time has moved on, and the ban on advertising and the denormalisation of smoking has helped people to quit and has helped protect Victorians from the devastating health effects of smoking.

It is important to note that legislation and regulation, whilst important, form just one part of the integrated public health response to tobacco control. Other initiatives have been taken, such as including taxation on pricing and packaging restrictions. We have also had debate in recent times and subsequent legislation

introduced at a national level for plain packaging of cigarettes.

This government is certainly proud of its record in relation to the continued strong history in this state of taking action to promote the health of Victorians and reduce smoking-related harm. The last annual survey of smoking prevalence in Victoria found that smoking rates are at their lowest ever, at 14.4 per cent, down from 15.35 per cent in 2010 and 21.2 per cent in 1998. This continuing decline in uptake and in smoking rates is a very positive sign for all Victorians, but still there is more to be done.

This government has taken a number of legislative steps, and I have spoken about those in the past. I remind the chamber of them. The government has banned smoking on all patrolled beaches. That ban was effective from 1 December 2012. It has excluded tobacco products from shopper loyalty and rewards programs, effective from 1 March this year. In February the government announced its intention to introduce bans on smoking at children's playgrounds, skate parks, public swimming pools and sea baths, and children's sporting events.

In an ongoing initiative the government provides new and updated graphic health warning signs to be used next to price boards at retail outlets. These new signs align with the commonwealth's graphic health warning images used on tobacco product plain packaging and help reinforce the message that smoking has significant harmful health consequences.

Each year the Victorian government invests more than \$9 million in tobacco control initiatives, including the smoking cessation programs, antismoking advertising campaigns and education and enforcement activities, with a particular emphasis, as I said, on the sale of tobacco to young people. The government is particularly concerned to target young people to highlight to young Victorians the harmful effects of smoking and to try to highlight that it is not cool to smoke. Recently the government also provided an additional \$1 million to Quit Victoria to allow the airing of the moving new TV campaign Last Dance.

A number of other projects have been established which focus on delivery of smoking interventions by health professionals. They include an oral health initiative and a pilot program to deliver brief smoking interventions in the hospital context. It is worth noting that we have come a long way. In the 1980s, when I was working in the hospital and health sector generally, and even in the early 1990s, it was commonplace to have smoking rooms in hospitals. While we were

receiving our reports staff who smoked would light up and smoke quite freely, and even patients on the wards had a designated smoking area. It is hard to believe that it was not so many years ago that that activity was allowed.

The government is concerned about a number of issues relating to Ms Hartland's amending bill. I refer to the status of the consultation process that has been gone through. It is unknown whether consultation on the proposed outdoor drinking and dining smoking bans has been undertaken with, for instance, the Australian Hotels Association and Restaurant and Catering Victoria.

In contrast, the public consultation undertaken by the government for the proposed legislation that I spoke about earlier — that is, in relation to the playgrounds, skate parks, public swimming pools and sea baths, and children's sporting events — has concluded recently. A separate consultation was also undertaken with local councils. That consultation process allowed for the essential gathering from the stakeholders of information and data on the technical issues to inform the drafting of the legislation that the government intends to bring forward.

The Department of Health also received a number of public submissions. In total there were 7824 responses, comprising 599 responses to the online survey and 7225 submissions that were received by email to the no.smokinghealth.vic.gov.au email address. Many of those submissions came from the Keep Fresh Air Fresh campaign, which calls for the introduction of a ban on smoking in outdoor dining areas. Understandably people involved in that campaign had significant interest and therefore significant input into this area.

Of the 599 responses to the community survey, 99, or 16.5 per cent, were submitted on behalf of a number of organisations. They included 65 sporting organisations and clubs, 7 public health organisations, 15 local government bodies and 3 parent or family organisations. The online survey that was conducted of councils was more detailed. Various elements had to be understood. The survey required extensive data and provided for the councils to make comments. Of the 79 councils, 73 responded in full and 3 made partial responses. It is my understanding that there was a completion rate of about 92 per cent. The preliminary analysis of feedback on that consultation process showed that the proposed bans were supported in principle by most respondents, including local government and the public health, sporting and recreation, and parent organisations, as well as those

individuals who put in submissions. So the government has undertaken extensive consultation.

Another area of the government's concerns about Ms Hartland's amending bill is that it is unknown whether there has been any consultation with the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Government on smoking bans at transport locations. Ms Hartland's bill effectively moves provisions regarding smoking at public transport stops from the Transport (Conduct) Regulations 2005 to the Tobacco Act 1987. Unintentionally, I think, but nevertheless, this creates complexity in enforcement. It will create confusion, as it will be unclear whose role it is to enforce the provisions. Another bureaucracy will be needed to enforce the new law, so there will be duplication and additional costs to the Victorian taxpayer. That area needs to be looked at.

In Victoria the Transport (Conduct) Regulations 2005 prohibit smoking at rolling stock, tram and bus stop shelters and under covered areas at train platforms. The regulations require occupiers and owners of public transport property, so far as reasonably practical, to display acceptable no smoking signs at rolling stock, tram and bus stop shelters and under covered areas of train platforms. Authorised officers, or ticket inspectors, employed by the public transport system are responsible for enforcing the smoking bans, and any complaints are referred to Public Transport Victoria. So we already have in place an enforcement process that is working well. As I said, the proposed amendment would confuse and create complexity, and there would be a duplication of process or an additional cost to the taxpayer. As I said, Ms Hartland's bill moves any provisions regarding smoking at public transport stops from the Transport (Conduct) Regulations 2005 to the Tobacco Act 1987, and the enforcement of the law would be confused.

Another area of the bill that is of concern to the government is that it is also unknown whether local councils have been consulted, although there are enforcement implications for local councils. As I said, there has been significant consultation on the process. Under the Tobacco Act, in Victoria smoking is prohibited in outdoor drinking and dining areas where there is a roof in place and there are walls that cover more than 75 per cent of the total notional wall area. Ms Hartland's bill broadens the scope of the current ban to include smoking in outdoor drinking and dining areas.

There are a number of concerns that will also be highlighted in this particular area. The bill allows for a licensed premises to provide a designated outdoor

smoking area that meets the following criteria: it must not exceed 50 per cent of the outdoor area, it must not be placed immediately next to an entrance to an enclosed area, it must have a buffer on its perimeter, it must have a single entrance no wider than 1 metre, it must have no roof or partial roof, it must exclude persons under 18, no food or drink must be served, no food must be brought in, no entertainment must be provided and it must display a notice that provides prescribed information. Occupiers of licensed premises must prepare a smoking management plan.

There are significant issues in relation to all those aspects. It is unknown whether consultation has occurred in the drafting of this bill or whether organisations that will be greatly affected, such as the Australian Hotels Association and others, see those as major impediments to their ongoing business.

In relation to designated outdoor smoking areas I would also like to speak to the issue of smoke drift, which is not specifically addressed by Ms Hartland's private members bill. Smoke drift is a major concern in other jurisdictions, and it needs to be considered. As I said, there are a number of implications and areas that the government is concerned have not been addressed in relation to Ms Hartland's bill. The government is looking at potentially introducing smoking bans at children's playgrounds, skate parks, public swimming pools and sea baths and children's sporting events. There is more reform to be done in this area, and this government is committed to improving the health of Victorians by decreasing the rates of smoking in established smokers and decreasing the uptake of smoking by younger Victorians.

On behalf of the government I indicate that it will not be supporting Ms Hartland's Tobacco Amendment (Smoking in Outdoor Areas) Bill 2012.

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very grateful that Ms Hartland has made sure that the Parliament addresses the ongoing need for tobacco reform in our community. I congratulate her on that, and I congratulate other people in Victorian community organisations who have played and continue to play a role in reducing the incidence of smoking in our community by making sure that young and old Victorians are well informed about the dangers of smoking and are encouraged to find ways they can reduce the incidence of smoking and the number of places in which smoking can occur in public places. This helps protect our community from the adverse health outcomes caused by exposure to passive smoke.

My contribution follows that of Ms Crozier. Without necessarily giving her a backhanded compliment, I congratulate her on speaking on behalf of the government. She walked a long, high tightrope during the course of her presentation as she made sure she said the right things in relation to the principles and intention of this reform.

Mr Finn — She always says the right things.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes. At the same time she gave no undertakings on behalf of the government in terms of whether it is going to support this legislation now or in the future, but there was a clear implication. It was a highwire act and a very long presentation. My tightrope walk will be on a shorter piece of rope and not quite so high, because the Labor Party in Victoria has supported and will continue to support tobacco reform.

I will briefly run through some of the issues that we have enacted through legislation. On this occasion we are not giving false hope to Ms Hartland that we will be voting in support of her bill today, because fundamentally this is an initiative that should be taken by government with all the stakeholders well and truly embedded in the process. The government should take responsibility for coordinating the legislation, liaising and working out transitional arrangements. Unless the government is up for this reform, it is not going to occur. As Ms Crozier has outlined, notwithstanding the good intentions of significant institutions such as Quit, Cancer Council Victoria and others who are fellow travellers in this regard — —

Mr Barber — And the Heart Foundation.

Mr JENNINGS — And the Heart Foundation.

Mr Barber — And the Australian Medical Association.

Mr JENNINGS — I agree with Mr Barber; there are a lot of organisations. He may want to just create a list. I am saying that they have done a good job and that they are actually with the program. But none of those players — the government, which is in charge of public health policy, or the department — can actually identify the transitional arrangements and the plan that they have worked out in conjunction with commercial businesses in Victoria to enable that transition to take place.

The briefing Ms Hartland provided with the bill — which I benefited from, and I am sure she was generous enough to share it with others — and the briefing that was provided to me by Quit and Cancer Council Victoria drew attention to the reforms that have taken

place in other jurisdictions, such as New South Wales and South Australia. Very good reforms have been enacted in legislation, but they have long-term transitional arrangements. Ms Hartland knows this and Mr Barber knows this, but he probably will not interject on this subject because he knows the transitions will not take place in those jurisdictions until 2015 or 2016. That is what I said at the time of my briefing, at the time of my conversations with Quit and Cancer Council Victoria and in any conversations that I have had with any industry body or relevant community member in this regard. I said there needs to be a transition plan to enable the final stages of these reforms to take place.

Where can the government, these institutions or the proponents of this bill draw attention to the consultation that has actually been had with industry players — the Australian Hotels Association, the Australian Retailers Association, any restaurant associations, or stakeholder bodies — that indicates there is a plan to implement the intention of this policy? That is the fundamental area that I will be looking forward to. That is the area the opposition will be looking forward to, and in fact that is the challenge that I would be happy to embrace by working through those issues if I had the good fortune to be on the other side of the chamber and in government.

Mr Barber — You won't vote for it now, but you would do it in government. Is that the deal?

Mr JENNINGS — I have said what I said. Mr Barber does not have to fit up what I said. I have said what I have said, and I am very comfortable with what I have said, because I am not being disingenuous with anybody. I have made it pretty clear what we are doing. I have made pretty clear the reasons we are not giving our support today, but we support the ongoing reform of the field to provide for greater public health outcomes and our track record in government is totally consistent with that.

The way in which we administered our responsibilities in government in this field in fact received bipartisan, tripartisan and industry stakeholder support as we implemented those reforms. That is the way in which it should be done, and it is the government of the day that is in the best position to be able to drive these reforms. Until the government signs up to these reforms, whether it be the current government or whether it be a future government of which I would be very happy to be a part to implement these sorts of undertakings, we will not be supporting any motion which will not even get out of the Legislative Council.

The role of this house plays an important part in reminding us of the importance of taking action on tobacco reform. It gives us an opportunity to go through recent and past histories of our association with good reforms of which we can all be very proud. Mr Finn may not actually make a contribution in that form, but others may.

Mr Finn — Would you like to run that past me again?

Mr JENNINGS — I did not necessarily want to invoke or generate conflict with Mr Finn. I made that statement just in case he was worried that I was being presumptuous, because I had made a comment that many of the people who contribute to this debate would be very happy to associate themselves with the reforms that have taken place in the past. We have in fact hand on heart supported them, but then I felt the need to distance Mr Finn from perhaps prematurely bundling him into this group.

Mr Finn — It will be five years off the smokes in August.

Mr JENNINGS — That is excellent. In the spirit of inclusion we have finally found a resting place for Mr Finn in terms of bridging the divide between us. There is no reason for me to walk the tightrope over that journey, because that loop in fact has been closed off. I am very pleased about that. I am very pleased that we can find within the community a level of agreement about the desirability of these reforms and people taking action in relation to reducing the health risks and limiting the circumstances by which people will be receiving passive smoke. I emphasise that this is best done with government introduction and support, the facilities of government and the public health institutions that are available to it to deliver on these intents. Until the government of the day agrees to it, then ultimately it will not pass the chamber. It will not actually do anything but draw attention to the issue.

Mr Barber — It is too hard.

Mr JENNINGS — Mr Barber may be terribly distressed that I have in fact been honest in my contribution in the chamber today. I have pointed out the reality that 19 versus 21 votes does not get something up. It does not get something up, does not implement it, does not do the hard work in relation to going out and implementing something. Hard work is what I am interested in. Really effective work is what I am interested in. Today all I am doing is talking, and I know that is the limit of what I am doing. I know that, and for that reason I will support the intention of these

reforms but actually say they have got a long way to go before they will be implemented.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — While I am disappointed, I am not surprised; and I will address a number of comments that have come from Ms Crozier and Mr Jennings. I would never have introduced this bill if the government had actually acted. Almost a year ago I put the government on notice, saying that this kind of legislation had to come in or the Greens would act. The government chose to ignore that. My office has spent a great deal of time putting this legislation together. We do not do this just for a bit of fun because we do have enough work to do. I totally agree that the government should introduce this kind of legislation. I totally agree the government should be doing the consultation with all of the stakeholders, but the government has not done this work and so there was no choice but for the Greens to take it up.

On the issue of consultation, I can say that we did write to the Australian Hotels Association, but it chose not to respond to our letters asking for a meeting to discuss this legislation. I would have been more than happy to have referred this bill to a committee. I even had a motion drawn up that it should be referred to the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee for inquiry. I think that could have dealt with the issues around consultation, but unfortunately I am not going to be able to do that.

I think we also should think about who it is out there in the community who supports this kind of legislation. This is not the Greens saying that this should happen; it is the Australian Medical Association, Cancer Council Victoria, Quit and many local councils. Indeed the Municipal Association of Victoria in its 2011 inquiry into smoking in outdoor areas said that this is the kind of legislation we should be working towards. If we actually want to reduce smoking rates, we want to be able to show young people that smoking is not desirable, it is not cool and it is not nice. The way we do that is by having more and more places where you simply cannot smoke.

I would like to finish by talking about the addiction of tobacco. In the last few days I have had a lot of comments from various journalists and in emails and so on that people who are really addicted need to be able to smoke and need somewhere to go et cetera, and that I am taking away all kinds of pleasures that people have. I understand this addiction all too well. My mother died at 60. She had lung cancer, but she smoked right up until the end, until she slipped into that final coma that killed her.

I know that when we have talked about smoking before, a number of people in this chamber have talked about the family and friends they have lost to smoking. My reason for bringing this bill into the Parliament is to again attempt to stop the next generation from taking up smoking. But it is not because I do not understand the addiction; I understand it all too well.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 3

Barber, Mr (*Teller*)
Hartland, Ms

Pennicuik, Ms (*Teller*)

Noes, 37

Atkinson, Mr
Broad, Ms
Coote, Mrs
Crozier, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr
Darveniza, Ms
Davis, Mr D.
Davis, Mr P.
Drum, Mr
Eideh, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Elsbury, Mr
Finn, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hall, Mr (*Teller*)
Jennings, Mr
Koch, Mr
Kronberg, Mrs
Leane, Mr

Lenders, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Melhem, Mr
Mikakos, Ms
O'Brien, Mr
O'Donohue, Mr
Ondarchie, Mr
Petrovich, Mrs
Peulich, Mrs
Pulford, Ms
Ramsay, Mr
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Scheffer, Mr
Somyurek, Mr
Tarlamis, Mr (*Teller*)
Tee, Mr
Tierney, Ms
Viney, Mr

Motion negatived.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house —

- (1) notes that the documents relating to the east–west link, ordered by the resolution of the Council on 17 April 2013 to be tabled in the Council by 7 May 2013, have not been received by the Council;
- (2) notes the letter of 7 May 2013 from the Minister for Public Transport in response to the Council’s resolution;
- (3) affirms the privileges, immunities and powers conferred on the Council pursuant to section 19 of the Constitution Act 1975;
- (4) affirms the need to protect the high standing of Parliament and to ensure that the Council may properly discharge its duties and responsibilities; and
- (5) requires the Leader of the Government to table by Tuesday, 25 June 2013, a copy of —
 - (a) all documents relating to the ‘Route alignments peer reviewed and short-listed’ and ‘Communications and engagement strategy

finalised’ referred to on page 3 of ‘East–west link reform and investment framework — stages 1 to 6, August 2012’, which formed part of the east–west link submission to Infrastructure Australia;

- (b) the agenda, minutes, any attachments to the minutes and any presentations or materials tabled in relation to each meeting of the department of transport’s east–west steering committee to date;
- (c) all documents (including invitees list, agenda, minutes where they exist and the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation used) relating to a briefing, held on 17 July 2012 at the Treasury building, on the development of a business case for the east–west link; and
- (d) all minutes and other documentation of meetings held with over 40 entities by the Minister for Roads and/or department of transport representatives relating to the proposed east–west tunnel infrastructure project, which are referenced in the media release ‘East–west link is declared under major transport projects act’.

I have brought this motion seeking various documents in relation to the proposed east–west tollway. Previously the Council unanimously supported a similar motion, as far back as mid-April, but the documents have not been provided.

In relation to some of the major infrastructure spends that have gone through this Parliament in the last six and a half years, I have witnessed an absolutely dreadful decline in the standards of disclosure and transparency. This \$8 billion car tunnel, according to the Premier, is going to entirely change the transportation system in Melbourne, by shifting the Hoddle Street traffic jam to Flemington Road. It is probably going to be the single biggest infrastructure project built in Victoria, but the level of arrogance that the government is displaying — complete contempt, actually — towards the community that might like to know a bit more about its proposition has absolutely staggered me. It is because the government, in putting forward this proposal, is simply a puppet of the people — the small handful of people — who expect to make megamillions out of building it.

This project has no rationale, no detail, and no benefit-cost assessment; it is just one bit of shape-shifting spin after another — from uninformed spokesmodels for the merchant banking and heavy construction industries, throwing out what they hope will be convincing, glib-sounding lines that might fool some of the people some of the time.

A couple of years back, when government members signed away their political futures to this massive boondoggle, they probably convinced themselves that it

was a winner. But in the last few months — in fact in the few months since I first requested this information through the chamber — we have seen them flipping, flopping and floundering as they try to explain exactly what this project is, what it is going to do and how the numbers will add up. The government spokespeople, who have tried to make the case for this thing — the Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for Roads and the rest of them — can feel the mounting frustration from journalists, members of local communities along the way and various types of analysts from academia and even from business who have asked pretty simple, basic and fundamental questions, like ‘How many cars will ride on it?’, and have been given absolutely nothing but those same glib assurances.

It is not just those people who are frustrated, by the way. An associate of mine turned up towards the end of the most recent industry briefing. This is where the industry members, who expect to make hundreds of millions of dollars in deal-arranging fees alone — never mind the actual construction works — get what is supposed to be a fairly exclusive insight into the project. The public is not allowed to attend these things; it is not even allowed to know what was presented to the assembled merchant bankers and lawyers. We are not even allowed to know who was on the list of those who were invited or who attended — although of course all the merchant bankers who attend these things would know each other. They all know who was there, but we are not allowed to know.

An associate of mine came in at the end of the briefing last week, when it was breaking up, and saw a particular gentleman grilling the presenter from the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure in the time after the formal presentation. This person was asking some pretty fundamental questions, like ‘What is the tolling arrangement?’ and ‘Is a set toll going to be put forward as part of a tender?’, and requesting other details, such as ‘Who is wearing the risk?’, ‘What is the model?’, ‘What are the objectives with regard to risk?’ and so forth. The person asking these questions of the somewhat flustered department of transport spokesperson was actually Alan Stockdale, the current president of the Liberal Party. I am not sure if he is still at Macquarie Bank, but until recently he was its manager of assets and infrastructure deals. At the moment he has some sort of role with one of the big law firms, which will no doubt want to be on the team that makes the winning bid.

That is when I truly understood what this project is for. You only need to understand what the Liberal Party is all about. It is not about serving the public good. When the Liberals get into government they start jacking up

taxes and devising new schemes to transfer all that public wealth to their rich merchant banker mates.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BARBER — The reason this road tunnel is so big, the reason Mr Finn cannot narrow the cost down to the nearest billion or two, is that that is the fastest way to take money from the public and give it to your rich mates — \$8 billion in one great lump. And what do we get? We get to pay for it, and we get to move our traffic jam a few kilometres down the road.

Since October last year I have been making various inquiries along these lines, including about some of the documents that are covered by this motion. Back in October the department of transport had certainly looked at a number of different route alignments in terms of where this road tunnel might go. What have we learnt about that so far? We have learnt that it is going from east to west. We have two dot points on a map and a line in between. I think there are quite a number of people along the route and at either end of it — including out in the electorates covering the western suburbs — who might have their houses up for auction, for example, and would like to know even what some of the possibilities are for the route. At the moment they have nothing.

The release of that document with the east–west link route alignments which was prepared by the department of transport was refused in full. There is of course a steering committee that is supposed to be making this happen. We keep hearing the government glibly saying, ‘We’re doing a lot of work. It’s all happening. It’s very exciting. We had 40 meetings; we’ve been so busy’. But if you ask, ‘Okay then, show us the minutes of your steering group’, the answer is, ‘No, sorry; you’re not going to see those’.

There has been a lot of talk about stakeholders in this chamber. The government has been very busy with a whole series of stakeholder meetings, the stakeholders being all the people who are expected to take truly staggeringly massive fees out of this project just for arranging the deal. Before the thing is even built hundreds of millions of dollars will flow into the pockets of that millionaires factory that then, of course, simply recycles the money back to the Liberal Party as election campaign donations. It is a convenient system. If you can just turn the wheel faster, the money goes even faster from the taxpayer — and some motorists who will pay a toll, but mostly the taxpayer — to the merchant bankers and the Liberal Party to keep them all very comfortable.

The excuses for refusing to provide this material just go on and on. Sometimes it is that the information is commercial in confidence. It is commercial in confidence to know whom you are briefing, even when the briefings are in fact open to all the people being briefed. My favourite reason as grounds for refusal was that it was something to do with cabinet — not that the documents had been to cabinet, not that the documents had been prepared for the consideration of cabinet, not that the documents had been prepared by a minister who might be thinking of bringing it to cabinet, but just that the documents were kind of ‘cabinety’. They kind of related to some matters that this particular FOI officer predicted might be looked at by cabinet some time down the track. Cabinet might look at this tunnel some time later and say, ‘We do not really want to give you the documents’.

It is very convenient that that particular ground of refusal was taken, by the way, because it means that the FOI commissioner — the one this government set up and boasted about with great pride — now cannot look at the material and cannot even look behind the material to consider whether or not the claims of cabinet confidentiality were spurious, let alone get to actually making a decision about whether the material should be released. It is very convenient at the end of what the Linking Melbourne Authority understands by this stage is going to be quite a crusade on my behalf to just winkle out one skerrick of a relevant fact in relation to this east–west toll road. It really does stagger me. It takes such a staggering level of arrogance, even Olympian heights of arrogance, to say, ‘We are going to spend \$8 billion of your money, and all that we’re going to tell you about what and why is that there are two dot points on a map and a dotted line in-between’.

Then we get to — and this relates directly to the materials requested by the Parliament — the so-called assessment process under the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009. What an absolute travesty! Members should check out the project proposal that is on the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure website in relation to this proposal. It runs to a short number of pages. There are about one and a bit pages under the subheading ‘Project proposal’, and what is in those one and a half pages could best be described as a generic description of what a freeway is.

The government is putting forward its proposal to the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, who is responsible for assessing the project, and the proposal has in it a broad shaded area on a map, saying, ‘We are going to do stuff in this area’. Then it has a one-and-bit-page generic description of a freeway, saying, ‘It is going to have asphalt, and there is going to be digging, and there will

be some noise during and after construction, and there will be trucks going around it, and some cars will drive on it too. Based on that, Minister Guy, we would like you to make an assessment of our proposal to decide whether and how it should be assessed under this Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act’.

Just imagine if a private developer who wanted to build a giant apartment block lodged an application with the minister and said, ‘We are not going to show you any designs, but it is a building. It has walls and stairs and windows and all the usual sorts of things, and we want you to give approval on that, and you can add conditions after, if you like, that say what is to be done according to a certain way’. Minister Guy has in fact received many planning permit applications that have come to him, either by intervention or in his role as responsible authority. He has received a whole slew of different proposals, from residential marinas and roadworks in country areas to power stations and the like. The documentation on those things is usually a few inches thick — there is an extraordinary amount of detail provided — but when it is the government that is the proponent, seeking permits from the government to do its activity, absolutely nothing is provided.

I would put it that the minister’s decision to send this project for further assessment under that act is in fact unlawful and should be set aside. I think if the courts looked at it, they would set it aside because the minister can only start making decisions about assessment when he has a project proposal in front of him. The Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act, for all its other faults, actually defines what a project proposal is. Section 5 states:

For the purposes of this Act, a project proposal is a document that contains all of the following ...

It then lists paragraphs (a) to (j). Paragraph (b) is ‘designs prepared for the declared project’. This is a travesty of a piece of assessment legislation, but even the Labor Party, which put this legislation together and brought it into the Parliament in 2009, actually anticipated that major transport projects to be facilitated under the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act would actually have a set of plans to go with them. There would actually be designs that said, ‘This is what we want to build, this is how we are going to build it and this is where it will go’. What this government thinks it can do — this is where the arrogance comes in — is put two dot points on a map, draw a line between them and say, ‘That is kind of roughly where the freeway is going to go. Here are some shaded areas, and here are some possible impacts, because, hey, we’re going to do it through a closely settled residential

area, and we might very well have to stick off-ramps up through the middle of precious inner city parkland'. These are the kinds of expectations it has in terms of impacts.

This completely shafts members of the community, who are going to be behind the eight ball all the way as they try to work out what the proposal is and how it might impact them so as to participate in this process. This is a fast-tracked process, by the way; there are strict time lines for each step of the process to be taken by the minister. This completely corrodes the integrity of administrative decision making because you are in effect making decisions about impacts on a hypothetical, ghostlike project. It poisons the process all the way through until you come out the other end, and then there are a bunch of permits to be issued relating to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Environment Protection Authority works approval, heritage permits, soil contamination, construction management plans — who knows? There will be all the usual stuff involved in a major project, but everything has been done the wrong way round.

No doubt the minister at the end of this process will be looking to grant a series of permits that say, 'Yes, you still haven't decided what the project is, and you still haven't told anybody about it, but here are some generic projects that involve you coming back to me later and meeting various conditions to the satisfaction of the minister'. This is all so that the government is never held accountable for the project, and the private bidders get to design the project themselves for their own benefit. They get to design the project that they would like to have built if they could have thought it up from the beginning.

That makes it hard for people like Mr Finn to come in and say that it is a good project, because he is as completely in the dark as the rest of us. He can spruik the benefits of what he believes the project is going to do, but he does not have a shred of evidence behind him. He cannot tell you how many cars will drive on it, he cannot tell you what the toll will be and he cannot tell you where you will be able to get off. That is the kind of thing people want to know when they are in a tunnel: when am I going to get out? He does not yet know. He cannot tell you the impact on inner city congestion.

Mr Finn will come in here as a man of the people standing up for the little guy. Mr Finn will stand up for the battler stuck in his car on the West Gate Freeway, blood pressure going through the roof. That is the act, and he pulls it off very well. But who is the little guy he is really standing up for? His name is Alan Stockdale,

president of the Liberal Party. Let the good times roll. The people down at Macquarie Bank have got so much money they could not possibly know what to do with it. What do you do with that much money? You can only drive one car at a time; you can only swim in one pool at a time. Money is just how you keep score at that level. You get your first \$100 million, and you want to work out how to get your next \$100 million.

Mr Elsbury — The politics of envy come out, do they?

Mr BARBER — I will tell Mr Elsbury who is envious: anybody who has not got public transport. People in Mr Elsbury's area who do not have access to public transport are envious of people who have got public transport. They are not envious of people who pay tolls to sit on roads and see the traffic jam move from Hoddle Street to Flemington Road. I will tell him who else will not be envious of the toll road: anybody within about 500 metres or maybe 1 kilometre of the toll road mouth. That includes West Footscray, Parkville West, Parkville Gardens and some parts of Collingwood. We will find out where the project is supposed to be built when and if the government deigns to tell us, apart from saying, 'It's east-west, so you've got to be for it'. I do not think anybody who tries to use a motor car to get around Melbourne, certainly for a long-distance daily commute, can be anything but envious of those who have public transport connecting their home to their work, school and study.

You have to actually go out and ask people what they want: 'Do you want us to spend money on schools and hospitals or do you want us to spend money on transport?'. Most people would say, 'Schools and hospitals. We'll struggle along with transport'. If you ask people do they want money spent on public transport or on freeways, the vast majority will say public transport. This exercise has been done. Poor Mr Elsbury is screwing up his little face in distaste, getting more pinched as we get closer in the discussion. We have taken off a few layers of this amazing Christmas present the government has put under the tree for us with its bow, and now we are getting the sense that not much is going there except more tolls, longer commutes, more pollution and more cars. One day, after all this posturing, all this bravado and all this bluster from the two lonely members from the west — who are not even getting anything out of this particular investment, because it goes from Collingwood to Kensington — when we have seen how that looks — —

Mr Elsbury — Have you heard about Footscray and the people in Essendon and in Moonee Valley?

Mr BARBER — I have heard about it. I have heard that the Moonee Valley City Council — —

Mr Elsbury — You have heard about it? But the trams do not go there.

Mr BARBER — Trams will not be going anywhere under Mr Elsbury's government. It blew all the money on a car tunnel. For \$8 billion you could probably extend the trams all the way to Shepparton. I will make a prediction right now that by the time this Liberal government leaves there will not have been 1 metre of extra tramway added to Melbourne's already extensive network. I do not think it is going to add 1 metre of tram track before it shuffles off.

Hon. D. M. Davis — We added a lot in the late 1990s, such as in Box Hill. All those were Kennett government initiatives.

Mr BARBER — I will take up Mr Davis's invitation. Melbourne is said to have the biggest tram network in the world in terms of kilometres of paired track. There are a couple of Polish cities that try to challenge that record from time to time. But Los Angeles, well known as the freeway capital of the world, has actually stopped building them and voted for a resolution to provide funding for the expansion of its light rail system. I am sure Mr Finn would have taken advantage of that system when he was there because he would have wanted to learn more about public transport. When that building program is finished Los Angeles will have more kilometres of light rail track than Melbourne does.

Mr Finn — It is a bigger place.

Mr BARBER — It is a bigger place; I admit that. They are starting from a long way back. But the point is they have turned the corner. They built freeway after freeway to connect every freeway to every other freeway. They were always going to build that next freeway that would be the freeway to end all freeways, to suddenly and miraculously open up transport so that everybody could get where they were going so much faster than they wanted to.

It is a bit like the pharaohs and their pyramids. They also believed the pyramids would transport them to heaven, just as Mr Finn tells us that connecting three already totally overcrowded freeways to each other will transport us to heaven. But the real problem the pharaohs had was that so much of the workforce was involved in pyramid building. They were pyramid schemes designed to get money to the lucky guy who was ready to catch the dollars that flew out the other end when the wheels stopped spinning. They had these

pyramid schemes going, building one pyramid after another, but half the population was involved in pyramid building, so they could never stop. If they stopped building pyramids for a second, those people would have been rioting in the streets because they were unemployed.

That is exactly where we are at; it is not even an analogy. It is a direct description of the situation that we in Victoria are in. When the Labor Party piked out — and I use that word deliberately — on putting the freeway mouth in Kensington, the road building industry wanted a consolation prize, so they got Peninsula Link and some expansion works along the Western Ring Road, which was of course going to solve all our problems, but now it is chock-a-block again.

Mr Finn — It has improved out of sight. When was the last time you drove down the ring-road?

Mr BARBER — About a month ago. I am sure they have moved the bottleneck out of Mr Finn's sight, which is all he really cares about: out of sight, out of mind; get the traffic into the next suburb, and we've solved the problem. Now that that work has finished, they are squealing. The big construction firms, the merchant bankers, the deal-makers and the people who structure all these public-private partnerships want some more action. It is a pity that the government did not move with alacrity in the last two and a half years to get some of its rail projects up and going — the ones it promised to build, not to study, when in opposition — because those projects would now be about ready to go and we would be building railways instead of this dopey, daft, unexplained, spin-bedecked, 8-kilometre hole in the ground.

It would be nice if we could obtain some of the minutes of the committee that has been steering this project and find out exactly where the government has got to and get answers to the questions this chamber ought to be asking — answers that the residents of Parkville Gardens want to know and that Alan Stockdale wants to know — about what exactly it is that the government has planned, where it is at and what the purported benefits are.

The Labor Party has been asking for the business case to be released, and that tickled me. The business cases for all of Labor's major projects were more secret than anything. Simply by putting the business case, as it proceeds through Treasury, on a trolley and wheeling it through the cabinet room a few times guarantees that we will never see the business case. But there is an economic appraisal that is being carried out. It is being

funded by Linking Melbourne Authority and will form what is provided to Infrastructure Australia, so the government will be sharing it with the federal government. It will no doubt be sharing it within the bureaucracy as it tweaks its project to try to make the numbers add up, which they will not, by the way. Members only have to read the Meyrick and Associates study that Sir Rod Eddington put forward to see that the numbers will not add up. It is a benefit-cost ratio loser.

With these documents we would all be able to understand a little more about this project. Because we do not know how many cars will drive on it, we do not know how many fewer cars will drive on the West Gate Freeway. Modelling is being done, for sure, but it is looking at travel time savings. Mr Finn has not been briefed; he cannot tell us. He is offering a mirage — a heat haze on the horizon! If Mr Finn sat down and thought about it, he would realise that this will bring more cars onto the same freeways, which are already intolerably crowded.

The public transport system is intolerably crowded as well. I have never heard Mr Finn complain about that. He is a road rage specialist. He does not have quite so much rage when it comes to the way public transport is run and managed. The government will struggle and come to look more comical, as it has over the last few weeks, when it has been completely incapable of actually explaining what its project is.

These documents were all ordered by a previous resolution of the Council. Some of the same documents have been refused under FOI requests. The Premier and his ministers keep copies of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 in their private bathrooms; they use them as toilet paper. However, some of these documents will see the light of day. The government is clearly stalling. There was a resolution on 17 April that the documents be provided by 7 May, yet here we are on 12 June requesting the same material while the government briefs the industry, the deal-makers and the people who at the end of this process will have enriched themselves by hundreds of millions of dollars. But the government will not have been able to look the community in the eye and provide them with one skerrick of an economic fact, of a traffic congestion fact or of a fact about the impact on their property values and their urban livability. The government is simply a puppet of the small handful of people who expect to make big bucks out of this project.

What we are about to hear from the government are the same lame lines that have been falling flat in the last few weeks as it has struggled to cover for the complete inadequacies of its planning and consideration of this

stinking great road. It will simply go along with all the other roads that have been built, as traffic jams and destroyers of livability that ultimately create a mess of a city, which someone at some point will have to turn away from, as Los Angeles has now done. The government will have to set a new direction, which is something that most members of the public have already worked out that they want.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak on the motion moved by Mr Barber, and it was good to hear some emotional input from Mr Barber on a matter that he feels passionate about. Equally, though, we in the government are passionate about ensuring that the people of Victoria are well aware of the coalition government's intent to build the east-west link.

I was in the chamber and heard about 95 per cent of Mr Barber's contribution, and I noted he used a lot of rhetoric in his perception of people of a particular persuasion or people from this side of the chamber who wore a certain colour. Some members might argue that I am lucky I am not wearing a blue tie, although Mr Barber is wearing a blue tie today. We have been very clear about building the east-west link. There are no secrets about the process. It was outlined in the recent budget papers, and a media release put out by the Premier's office outlined the coalition government's plan to build the east-west link. A whole range of issues are out there in the public domain, and I know other speakers will talk on those issues, but in terms of those arguments this is an important project.

It seems to me that we could have replaced Mr Barber's speech with the speeches on the CityLink project, because members in the then opposition were opposed to CityLink. They said it would bring doom and gloom to the city, that it was going to be destructive et cetera. The CityLink project has delivered great benefits to Victoria and in particular to Melbourne.

In my previous role as Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade I noticed some of the logistical capacities or advantages that Victoria, and in particular Melbourne, has in moving products throughout a very large city. When you compare Melbourne with other economies around the world you see it is well positioned for the logistical movement of industry. Why is that important? Because we do not have vehicles or produce tied up for hours on end on our roads. Unlike other places I have been to, we do not have shut down roads during the day resulting in industry only being able to move goods at night. Recently I visited a place where all the road transport vehicles had to wait until a certain time before they

were allowed on to the freeways. The building of the east–west link provides some solutions to issues we see every day.

I live in the eastern suburbs, and I have lived there most of my life. It is interesting to note the blockages that occur on Hoddle Street. For members who are old enough, what was the car park called?

Mr Finn — The south-eastern car park.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — The south-eastern car park was not really designed for anything other than for people to park and watch each other. That situation was dealt with so that products could be transported across the city. As I said, the east–west link is an important project, but I was somewhat perplexed by the assertion of Mr Barber that these projects involve huge amounts of money. If one looks at major road projects, it can be seen that a lot of them are funded by superannuation funds because superannuation funds see road projects as good, long-term investments for their members. There is a reason for that, because the funds know they are stable and they know they will deliver a good return over many years. We have made no secret of that in terms of the commitment by the government. A press release from the government of 7 May says:

Mr O'Brien said the east–west link would be delivered as a public-private partnership, with financing sourced from the Victorian coalition government, commonwealth government and the private sector. Toll revenue is expected to partly offset the costs of the project over the longer term.

Mr O'Brien was quoted as saying:

There is a clear role for the private sector in delivering this project.

The coalition government will call for expressions of interest later this year to deliver the project under a public-private partnership arrangement, with a view to awarding a contract in late 2014.

As has been indicated, we see this as a nation-building piece of major infrastructure. We already know there is a funding contribution of \$1.5 billion from the commonwealth government that will ensure the timely delivery of the east–west link. In his contribution Mr Barber said there was some confusion about the Eastern Freeway. Let me put on the record that the Premier has said a 6-kilometre eastern section of the east–west link, from the Eastern Freeway to CityLink, will be the first stage of the 18-kilometre project.

In the same media release the Premier was quoted as saying that:

This ... project will reduce chronic congestion issues ... at an estimated capital cost of between \$6 billion and \$8 billion.

That is not the straight figure of \$8 billion as indicated by Mr Barber. It is also important to note that we know exactly where the east–west link will start. It will start at the end of the Eastern Freeway — and where will it join, Mr Finn?

Mr Tee — He's got no idea.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — At the Tulla.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! Mr Dalla-Riva should direct his remarks through the chair.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Mr Tee does not know, and I want to put that on the record, because there is some confusion about the east–west link. Labor members think it is going to go via Mildura or somewhere else.

Mr Finn — It joins the Western Ring Road.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — That is right, and then it joins the Western Ring Road. I was putting on the record that we know where it is starting and we know where it is finishing. We know it will go underground, we know there are various stages and we roughly know the cost. We know it is going to be a public-private partnership.

Mr Tee — Somewhere between \$6 billion and \$8 billion.

Mr Barber — What are a couple of billion between friends? And we are talking about friends.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I will get back to Mr Barber's point in a minute. I will take up Mr Tee's interjection. He was a member of the former government that built the desalination plant. It splashed money out there like there was no tomorrow. It is still being splashed — no pun intended. It is amazing that members opposite had no idea.

Mr Leane interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! Mr Dalla-Riva has the call.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I was taking up Mr Leane's interjection — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! Mr Dalla-Riva, to continue.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I will continue, Acting President. As I have indicated, the east–west link is a major piece of infrastructure, an

18-kilometre road connecting the Eastern Freeway at Hoddle Street with the M80 ring-road at Sunshine West. As was indicated, the statutory planning process for the east–west link stage 1 is now under way, and the project is expected to go to market for procurement by late 2013. I think our process will probably be less inclusive of Trades Hall than was the process for the desal plant. I think there were some backroom deals being organised when the desal plant was being sorted out.

Mr Finn — All sorts of brown paper bags flying around.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — You could make that accusation. I would not say that, but there may be others who might assume that, which is interesting because I did not hear Mr Barber talk about the brown paper bag shuffle that occurred with Trades Hall and the desal plant project, and some of the backroom deals that were occurring there. Where were the processes in place there? There were actually none.

Hon. D. M. Davis — We were talking about documents here today. Where are the AquaSure documents?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Where are those documents? It is interesting to note that we have been very clear. The planning study for the eastern section of the east–west link will be conducted under the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009 with a comprehensive impact statement expected to be released for public comment by the end of the year. It is also important to note, for Mr Barber’s consideration, that for more information on the planning study and the opportunities to be involved people can visit www.linkingmelbourne.vic.gov.au. It might be difficult, but those who have access to a computer can visit that site.

The project documents on the east–west link are available on the government’s planning website: www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning. There is a flora and fauna report, the preliminary land use report, the European cultural heritage database assessment report and the project proposal. The Linking Melbourne Authority project proposal was submitted to the Minister for Planning on 10 May 2013 and is publicly available. There are also scoping directions, which were published by the Minister for Planning on 27 May 2013. There have been industry briefings. Briefings were held on 17 July 2012 and 6 June 2013 to inform industry representatives about the east–west link, including national and international financiers, engineering consultants and construction firms. The

government will provide the documents sought by the Legislative Council as soon as possible, subject to the usual caveats about cabinet process, cabinet-in-confidence and commercial-in-confidence matters and of course the public interest.

We will be opposing this motion because we do not see the need for what Mr Barber is asking we provide. We have been very clear through a number of forums as to our intentions. We do not resile from the fact that we believe stage 1 of the east–west link is an important part of that project for the Victorian community. We see it as important in ensuring that people are able to move about Melbourne, and we see it as part of the ongoing development of the construction industry that will provide 3200 jobs. We see it as an important part of the coalition government’s budget approach. As has been outlined, that involves state-shaping infrastructure — providing for a record investment in major projects to boost productivity and improve livability. This project was committed to by the coalition government. I know the Greens are opposed to it. The reality is that they are playing politics with this. We are just getting on with the job of looking after industry by ensuring that there is a road project that will sort out — —

Mr Barber — Hence all those brochures in the federal electorate of Deakin. You wouldn’t play politics, would you?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — You talk about playing politics. It is good to see that the potential future Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, has already committed a substantial amount of money to this road project. It is interesting that those who play politics are those opposite, those who wanted to put money somewhere else.

Mr Finn — He’s got my vote.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I think he will get a lot of votes as a result of that, but so will we, because we know it is the right thing to do. We know it is the right thing to do for the people who live in the eastern suburbs and the northern suburbs. We also know it is the right thing to do for people living in the western suburbs. We know it is the right thing to do for those who have businesses and need to move product between various centres across the state. It is important to note that this is part of our state-shaping infrastructure commitment through the budget process. We do not see the need to undertake Mr Barber’s approach. As I have indicated in my speech today — —

Mr Leane — The secret state.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I have to put on the record that it is with laughter that I take up the interjection by Mr Leane, because I cannot believe Mr Leane, who was part of the union movement, is talking about a secret state, when the Bracks and Brumby governments went to great lengths in terms of the north–south pipeline, the desal plant and a whole range of projects they were involved in to keep everything quiet. As I have outlined, we have been very clear about the east–west link proposal. We have been very clear that we intend to build this — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — And I take up again the interjection of Mr Barber: two dot points on a map. I think the conspiracy theory of Mr Barber is that it will start at Hoddle Street and will somehow mysteriously sneak up to Mildura via, probably, North Korea or maybe somewhere else — Wangaratta. It might go to China, or it might even go somewhere else, and then it will eventually get back.

It is interesting to note that Mr Barber has a conspiracy theory: the two dots are somehow a conspiracy that means it is going to go somewhere other than where we said it will go. Being rational, if I were to build a freeway between where we said it would start and where we said it would end, that is where it would go; on Mr Barber's rationale, it might even go via Frankston. I would have thought that if it is between the Eastern Freeway at Hoddle Street and the M80 ring-road in Sunshine West it would be fairly clear that it has to go somewhere that way.

Mr Finn — Somewhere between east and west, I would have thought!

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Let me write that down: somewhere between east and west. I tell you what, why don't we call it a link? Then we will call it an 'east–west link'. That is marvellous; that is marketing at its greatest.

Hon. D. M. Davis — What about the west–east link?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Or we could have, as the Leader of the Opposition says, the 'west–east link'.

Hon. D. M. Davis — It only goes one way, though.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — But they say it only goes one way, so this is madness to its greatest extent. The bottom line is that I am being flippant because of the interjections, but it is interesting to note that it was almost as if you could see that Mr Barber — whilst he

was erudite in making his point — was proposing to release his *Hansard* speech to his Greens comrades to say, 'Look at me: how strong am I at opposing this road project? Let's bring back the horse and cart. Let's bring back the buggy. Let's bring back something that is from history.'. The reality is that any modern city now needs a modern transport system. Those who have been overseas will recognise that Melbourne is very privileged because of CityLink and other projects and that we need to continue to develop these projects.

Mr Barber — Overseas they are all jealous of our freeways. People go back home with photos of the freeways, and they say, 'Look at what Melbourne has got'.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Mr Barber needs to lift his eyes above Brunswick Street and look at what is occurring in parts of the developing world and in developing economies. If we do not keep one step ahead, those economies will completely and utterly override us in terms of their capacity to deliver industry and growth — —

Mr Barber — And train lines.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Train lines are part of that, absolutely. But this is a project about road infrastructure, and I try not to bring the two together, because this is a project to create an east–west link. You have asked for documents on the east–west link.

Mr Barber — You would scare yourself if you had to argue roads versus rail, wouldn't you? You would get an almighty fright.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — This is not about roads versus rail. This is a commitment by our government to deliver an east–west link. I know Mr Barber is playing politics with it, but I can assure him that this major project will be received well by people right throughout Melbourne and throughout Victoria, by industry and others. On that basis, on the basis that there is a lot of material out there and on the basis that we have been very open and transparent, we will be opposing the motion moved by Mr Barber.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion. Our concern about this proposal is that it came from a very bad place from the government. It came from a government that had done nothing for two years and was scratching around for a project. The government knew it was in trouble; the polls were showing that people had lost faith in it. The government decided it would change its leaders and try to create a sense of momentum and a sense that

it was doing something and that it cared, so it pulled the rabbit out of the hat. It pulled the project out of the hat.

All you have to do is look at what has been around in terms of the lack of documentation, the fact that there is no business case and the evidence that the Minister for Public Transport, Mr Mulder, gave to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), where he did not put a case for this project but made a very articulate case for a second river crossing. Mr Mulder says that the east–west link will carry 140 000 cars, but he says that the West Gate Bridge carries 160 000 cars — so we have a very articulate spokesperson in Mr Mulder for a different project to the one that the government ended up choosing. There can be no doubt that the reason the government ended up with this project is not based on any compelling argument but simply on the politics of the situation. It is simply based on the realisation that the government needs to be seen to be doing something and the thinking that maybe this will help the federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott.

Our concern with the project is the lack of documentation; the fact that there has been a lack of planning; that there is no business case; that the argument has been made for a second river crossing; and that the argument for the duplication of the West Gate Bridge is much more compelling. As Minister Mulder said, there is a larger traffic flow in that direction. Also, as he said at the PAEC hearings, the bridge is 1970s technology; it is old technology.

If you want to see why the project does not stack up, have a look at what the Auditor-General said in his report in April this year called *Managing Traffic Congestion*. He says about the new east–west link that:

... analysis to date ... indicates that it is likely to:

marginally increase congestion to city-bound traffic in other parts of the freeway network during peak periods ...

Mr Barber — Increase?

Mr TEE — ‘Increase’, he says.

Mr Barber — It is going to make the problem worse?

Mr TEE — He says it will:

... attract new road users and, therefore, additional traffic both along the east–west corridor and wider network ...

Mr Barber — Mr Finn said it was going to get better.

Mr TEE — For Mr Finn’s benefit, that is at page 29 of the Victorian Auditor-General’s report of April. He has had a look at the project, and he says that it just does not stack up. He says also that the project will:

... result in some reverse mode shift from public transport to cars ...

The Auditor-General says further that:

These issues may adversely impact the net benefits of the project and have not yet been transparently quantified or fully assessed.

We on this side support this attempt by the Greens to make sure that some more documents are made available, because as I said, Mr Mulder, the Minister for Roads, says that it does not stack up and the Auditor-General says that it does not stack up. There is no business case. If we look at the budget, we see that it allocates some \$294 million, which is about 3.6 per cent of the cost of the project. There is no funding. Even if Mr Abbott, the federal Leader of the Opposition, is elected, and you add his promised \$1.5 billion, there is still a huge shortfall in the budget for the project. It does not stack up economically, it is not a priority, it does not stack up financially, there is no funding for it, the Auditor-General has put a big question mark next to it and the minister responsible seems to be advocating for a different project, so we on this side consider that there is a requirement for more information to go out there.

We consider that that requirement is well and truly endorsed when you look at the impact that the project will have. In its east–west link project proposal document the Linking Melbourne Authority says that the area that will be affected is predominantly residential in suburbs such as Clifton Hill, Collingwood, Abbotsford, Fitzroy, North Fitzroy, Carlton, North Carlton, Parkville, North Melbourne, Kensington, Flemington and West Melbourne. If members look at the Linking Melbourne Authority report, they will see that the issues it raises in its project proposal go to things such as land contamination. It looks at the fact that some of these soils contain significant amounts of iron sulphides and says that these soils:

... are referred to as acid sulphate soils because they can become highly acidic when exposed to oxygen by excavation.

Mr Ondarchie — Really? Like the Royal Children’s Hospital?

Mr TEE — There are significant issues with the contamination of the soil, but the difference is that there has been no analysis, there has been no work and

nothing has been revealed. Nobody, including the minister, backs the government on this project, and yet for this thought bubble the government will be exposing large communities to potentially very contaminated soil.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr TEE — Let me tell members opposite what the Linking Melbourne Authority says about the project:

Tunnel construction ... may involve blasting, tunnel boring and cut and cover.

Members on this side have had a look at the site. The only area where you can have cut and cover is at Royal Park. Under 'Project design', the report of the Linking Melbourne Authority refers to the need for the construction of ventilation structures. Again there is nothing about them out there in the community. The government is not being honest with the community about what the blasting will involve, what the construction of ventilation structures will involve, where they will be located, how high they will be and what will come out of that area. The report also refers to the installation of noise and screening barriers. Again there is no information out there about where they will be and what impact they will have.

What the community and taxpayers are being asked to do is to fund a major project which has not a single supporter, which the Auditor-General and the responsible minister question and which has no funding and no business case. Today members of the government have turned up and said that they will vote against the motion which they have already supported. All that the motion effectively does is extend the time for the provision of — —

Mr Barber — It is giving them an extension on their homework.

Mr TEE — It gives an extension of time on government members' homework to provide the documents.

If members look at what the Minister for Public Transport, who is also the Minister for Roads, told the house, they will see that in his letter to the chamber in response to the initial motion he says:

Regrettably, the government is not able to respond to the Council's resolution within the time period requested by the Council. The government will endeavour to respond as soon as possible.

What appears to be the case is that the minister has indicated that the government has not had the chance or

the time to respond to the resolution, notwithstanding the fact that the resolution was some two months ago now, on 17 April. Here we are, in effect two months later, providing a further extension of time, and the government is voting that down. All that is being sought by the Greens is an extension of time; they are not seeking an expansion of the documentation that was listed in the earlier resolution and that the government had agreed to provide. There was an earlier resolution seeking the same documents as are sought now, they were not provided in time, there is a proposal for an extension of time and government members are saying that they will vote against that extension of time.

It does not make any sense other than that government members have quite clearly made up their minds not to release the documents — that is, effectively to not respond to the resolution. No justification has been provided for the refusal to provide the documents or to accept the extension of time. No request has been made and no amendment has been sought to be made to the motion to seek more time. Two months seems to be a long enough time to provide the documents that have been requested.

Members on this side are concerned about the questions that have been raised about the project, we are concerned about the financial impact of it and we are concerned about the impact of it on the community. We are concerned about the fact that the views of the Auditor-General have not been addressed — that is, that those very real concerns have not been picked up. We consider that more documents should be provided and be out in the public arena so that we can have a better and more informed debate. That is really what this motion seeks. We are surprised, I suppose, at the government's refusal to engage effectively in the debate. It is not as though the government has responded by saying, 'Look, these categories of documents can't be provided within this time', 'These categories of documents won't be provided for a set number of reasons' or 'We need a further extension of time to do our homework'. Instead, the government is basically just closing down the discussion, without providing any reasons as to why the documents cannot or will not be provided.

We on this side think the debate has taken an unfortunate turn today in terms of the government's opposition to this motion. We think it is a very sad day because of the government's refusal, in effect, to engage in the debate. It has refused to entertain the motion and to go through why the categories of documents will not be made available. We think it is a sad day in terms of this project and this debate, and we would urge the government to reconsider its position.

All that is being sought by this motion is an extension of time. In refusing that, the government has turned its back on the request and on the public's need for further information. We will be supporting the motion, and we will be urging the government to reconsider its position.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I have sat here for the last hour or so, and I can fully understand why the benches opposite are empty. I can fully understand why there is only one member of the Labor Party and one member of the Greens in this chamber. Two-thirds of the Greens have abandoned the chamber altogether, and all but one member of the Labor Party has gone as well. I can understand why. It was a toss of the coin. Members could listen either to the lunacy that was being spewed by Mr Barber earlier, which had to be heard to be believed, or they had the prospect of listening to Mr Tee. I can fully understand how the prospect of listening to Mr Tee would clear the chamber; he would clear the benches. I say to Mr Tee in all sincerity that the greatest contribution he could make — indeed the greatest contribution that I am going to suggest that he makes — to this project would be to actually dig the tunnel himself because I reckon he could bore through anything! He has done so again this afternoon. It was absolutely extraordinary.

A friend of my wife, who is a nurse, made the mistake of telling my wife one day at work that she voted for the Greens at the last election.

Hon. M. J. Guy — Don't tell your daughter.

Mr FINN — I would not tell any of the daughters. That would not be a good idea at all. Since that time my wife has taken it upon herself to educate this particular young lady about exactly what the Greens stand for. This young lady was under the impression that the Greens stand for planting trees and mowing grass or something — whatever people think Greens are supposed to do — but my wife has taken it upon herself to educate this particular lass about what the Greens really stand for. I will tell you what I am going to do: when today's *Hansard* is produced I am going to photocopy it and give my wife a copy of Mr Barber's speech. She can then give it to this young lady —

Mr Tee — Are you going to get it autographed?

Mr FINN — We might get it autographed. My wife will be able to give this young lady, chapter and verse, evidence of exactly what the Greens stand for. I thought I was listening to Uncle Joe Stalin. What an extraordinary feat by Mr Barber. I thought that sort of thinking came down with the Berlin Wall. But no, not here in Victoria; we have the Greens. Of course we also

have Mr Tee over there spouting the same sort of thing, except nobody actually stayed awake long enough to hear it. Mr Barber would like to have us all living in trees, but only if that did not harm the trees. As we know, the Greens have a much higher regard for trees than they do for human beings.

I ask the question: why do we have to do this every week? How long is this going to go on for? Every week we have a beer on a Friday night, footy on a Saturday, roast dinner on a Sunday, and on Wednesday it is fairytales with Uncle Greg. Every week he speaks on the east–west link. If I am sick of it, I am quite sure that a lot of other people are getting pretty sick of it.

Mr Ondarchie — It is like *Remember When*.

Mr FINN — It is like *Remember When*. Perhaps next time we have a vacancy on the other side of the chamber Bruce or Phil could fill in. It could be absolutely sensational for the cause. Why do we have to go through this every week? It has been my view for a very long time that there are a number of dreadful sins in this life. I know Mr Barber does not believe in that sort of thing, so I will not push it with him. Of all the great sins in this world there is one that I believe tops the list and that is the sin of waste. Once you have wasted something, there is no way to get it back.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — As Mr Ondarchie suggests, this particularly applies to time. Today we have again wasted an inordinate amount of time debating something that we debated two weeks ago and two weeks before that. Do we have to do this? Why could Mr Barber not just get up and incorporate in *Hansard* the speech that he gave two weeks ago? I am going to give much the same speech that I gave two weeks ago, and I can tell members that —

Mr Tee interjected.

Mr FINN — I advise Mr Tee that nobody would know or care about the speech he gave two weeks ago — or at any time, for that matter. You just switch on Captain Snooze and we are all off to sleep. I wonder what on God's earth the Greens have in mind with regard to the east–west link. Certainly it is a vitally important project for the future of Melbourne and Victoria. It is most certainly vitally important for the future of Melbourne's west. It is going to happen. Is it the Greens' strategy to try to talk this thing out until such time as we all give up and walk away? That is not going to happen. If that is Mr Barber's strategy — if he thinks he can bore us into submission — that is not going to happen.

After listening to his contribution this afternoon I have to say it was remarkable to say the very least. Mr Barber took us to Los Angeles (LA). He took us through various parts of California on the freeway system. Having recently travelled on the freeway system in LA I had some sympathy with what he was saying, because clearly not a cent has been spent on those freeways for many a long year. That would be because California is broke, and why is California broke? It is because they have all the green policies in California, and you cannot afford to turn the electricity on over there. That is why California is broke: it is because they let the Greens run the show. When Mr Barber gets up here and starts to lecture us about LA and what is happening in California, he is the one in this place who should be taking responsibility for why California is broke and why California cannot afford to fix its freeways. It is the Greens, the green policies and people like Al Gore, Ralph Nader and all those sorts of nut cases we have seen over decades in the United States who have forced the people of California into the financial strife they are in today, where they cannot afford to fix their roads.

We were taken from LA in California to heaven. He took us to heaven. I did not think I would ever see the day when I would hear Greg Barber and heaven mentioned in the same sentence, but here we have the day when Mr Barber took us to heaven and back. What a load of nonsense that was. He then tried to explain the concept of an onion, à la Shrek style — there were layers upon layers — and by that stage I was seriously thinking about going outside for a drink. Quite frankly, even though coming up on either 11 or 15 August it will be five years since I gave up smoking, I very seriously thought about taking it up again while listening to this bloke this afternoon. Fair dinkum, he would drive a Jehovah's Witness to drink! What we have heard from this bloke here this afternoon was absolutely extraordinary. Is it any wonder that the Greens are on the way out? Is it any wonder that this bloke over here is going to lose his seat at the next election?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! Mr Finn will address the member by using the word 'member' or the member's name.

Mr FINN — I have been doing so, Acting President. I did not call him Shrek; I said he was talking about Shrek. There are a number of people around here that I could refer to as Shrek, but I would never refer to Mr Barber as Shrek, because he is not a green; as we all know, in fact he is a red. That is the bottom line of Mr Barber's contribution this afternoon. He and the Greens showed their true colours today. They are not

Greens; they are reds. That is what they are: they are reds. Some of the nonsense that came out of Mr Barber's mouth was straight out of the manifesto of the Communist Party of Australia circa 1953. Where has he been for the last 60 years? He still actually believes this nonsense. He still actually believes it is the evil Liberals who are going to lead us all to rack and ruin, and it is the nasty capitalists who are going to eat our children in bed at night. I mean, this man needs help. He honestly needs help. It is just the most extraordinary nonsense that he came out with today, and I almost feel sorry for him.

As Mr Ondarchie knows, I am a compassionate man, and I see this poor individual, Mr Barber, over there jabbering on with some nonsense from the middle of last century; it is rampaging paranoia at full pace. In fact I would go as far as to say that Mr Barber's paranoia could give Black Caviar a run for its money; that is how well it is galloping. He gave us a tirade about the evils of capitalism, the evils of investment — and of merchant bankers. Apparently he seems to think that all evil comes from merchant bankers. I have to say I do not know a huge number of merchant bankers. Mr Elsbury tells me he does not know many merchant bankers either. As for Mr Ondarchie, I do not know; he might know a few more. We may canvass that a little bit later on, but the bottom line is that if you do not have people investing money, the world does not go around. The whole show just comes to a screeching halt.

We had Mr Barber coming here today attempting à la what happened in the City Square to occupy Spring Street. That is what he was attempting to do here today. I am surprised that he did not pull out a sleeping bag and a tent. That was his effort here today: to give us the whole left tirade, the old nonsense we have heard from the left for so long. Ever since I was a kid we have heard the same thing over and over again, and here today we had it from Mr Barber.

You would have thought that the man was a sophisticated, educated and learned man.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, that is what I thought. A bit over the odds, Mr Ondarchie; that is a fair point. This man is a former Yarra City councillor. I mean, he has reached the heights. You cannot get much better than being a Yarra councillor, but he has come in here today with this nonsense that I find absolutely astonishing.

I will not go on much longer, because I know that Mr Elsbury wants to say a few words. The big question

that Mr Barber wanted answered was: why are we going ahead with this project? Why are we going ahead with the east-west link? I say to Mr Barber, through you, Acting President, we are going through with this project because it is good for Victoria. We are going through with this project because it is good for Victorians.

Mr Barber made a prediction. He actually got something right, so it is a red-letter day in a lot of ways. He got this right. He made a prediction. He said that I would come in here and I would represent — I think he referred to them as — the 'little man'. That is his reference to, I presume — —

Mr Barber — The battler.

Mr FINN — The battler, if he now wishes to refer to them as the battlers. He said that I would represent the little man, and yes, I will.

Hon. M. J. Guy — He doesn't represent me!

Mr FINN — Not that little, Mr Guy, not that little; so you can relax.

Hon. M. J. Guy — I'm only 5 feet 7, and he doesn't represent me!

Mr FINN — The only man I know who Steve Price looks up to, and that's a good thing, too.

Mr Barber came in here and correctly said that I would talk about people in my electorate, I would talk about those people who actually work for a living — those people who get up in the morning, go to work, do their day's work and get back in their car and go home in the hope that they will see their family that night.

It is interesting that Mr Barber could not actually come to use the word 'family', because that of course is something that the Greens are totally opposed to. Children are the great enemy of the environment, apparently, according to this mob over here. One should not encourage them and one should actively discourage them, if not just kill them altogether, as we have heard in previous debates in this house.

But that was from Mr Barber, who said that I would represent the little man, and he is right. Because I have been in the situation where I have had to drive extensive distances to go to work, I have put in my 8, 9, 10 or 11-hour days, I have been paid and paid tax at the end of the week or fortnight, and at the end of each day I have had to get back into my car and drive another 1½ hours or 2 hours to get home. I know what a difference, for example, the EastLink project would

have made to my day when I was working at Wantirna and living in Sunbury. Instead of it taking me 2 hours to get there and 2 hours to get back, that time would have been cut in half. It would have made a huge difference.

I feel for those people who right now — at 25 past 5 — are stuck on the West Gate Freeway, those people who are stuck on the Tullamarine Freeway, those people who are stuck on the Eastern Freeway. All they want to do is go home and see their husbands or their wives, or go home and see their kids. All they want to do is what families have done for generations, and many generations before them. They have had their day at work. They have put in their 8 hours. They now just want to go home and enjoy what they work for. They want to go home, put their feet up, watch the telly, maybe have a beer, or a scotch perhaps, play with the kids, go to bed, get up and do it all again tomorrow. But what this crowd over here will tell you is that they cannot do that, not until they have run the gauntlet of the Greens anti-road policies. Because that is what it is all about. The Labor Party and the Greens hate freeways.

In years gone by I have gone into extensive detail about John Cain, a former Premier of this state.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — John Cain, Jr. I think John Cain, Sr was probably a man who had a lot more common sense than his son, which is not saying a great deal, but he probably did. I recall the stories of John Cain, Sr ordering his driver not to travel on freeways.

Hon. M. J. Guy — John Cain, Jr.

Mr FINN — John Cain, Jr. I do apologise, Mr Guy. I recall John Cain, Jr ordering his driver not to travel on freeways. We had a situation where the Premier of the state would be travelling up hills and down dales and up side streets and down back alleys to avoid travelling on a freeway because he had some philosophical objection to travelling on a freeway. That is what gave us the south-eastern car park. We all remember what a debacle that was.

That is the thing, I have to say, that I have never been able to understand about the Greens. They oppose freeways and they oppose ways of getting cars from one dot to the other. They oppose that, but they are more than happy for those cars to sit spewing out emissions, spewing out carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. They are happy with that. I would have thought that if there was any logic on that side of the house at all, if there was any logic from the Greens at all, they would support freeways, they would support

tunnels, they would support things which allowed cars to get from A to B as quickly as possible, that would cut the emissions and would stop that dreadful CO₂ stuff that the trees breathe and die without. All that would be stopped if cars were given the opportunity to get from one place to the other as quickly as possible. I would have thought that that was logical, but, as we know, logic and the Greens are mutually exclusive, and particularly on this subject.

There is no sense that has come from Mr Barber this afternoon. I can assure him and Ms Hartland, and Ms Pennicuik for that matter, that I will make it my solemn duty to inform the people of Werribee, to inform the people of Point Cook and to inform the people of Caroline Springs and the other outlying areas in the western suburbs that it was the Greens who did everything they could to stop the east–west link. This is something that they will wear like a crown of thorns come the next election. They will wear that, because the people of the outer west want the east–west link more than they want anything else. They want to be able to get to work and to get home and see their families in a way that they should, in a way that is only reasonable. In this day and age it is a nonsense that people should be stuck for literally hours, in some instances, just trying to go about their daily routine. I will leave it at that. I will certainly not be supporting this motion, and I urge the house to likewise oppose it.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Ambulance Victoria: report 2011–12

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to make some additional comments on Ambulance Victoria's annual report 2011–12. Once again I congratulate the chairman, Just Stoelwinder, and the board and staff of Ambulance Victoria on their commitment to providing high-quality care and medical transport. Financial viability and operational performance have been the focus of the organisation since the new board was appointed in August 2011 by the Minister for Health, David Davis. In terms of performance, while Ambulance Victoria has not met a historically based response times target, it continues to provide a world-class response in medical emergencies. The community holds high expectations of the service and expects quick and timely responses.

Ambulance Victoria achieved a number of significant highlights, which are outlined in the annual report. I spoke about a number of them when I last spoke on the report, but in addition to those I would like to refer to

some more highlights which I think are significant. Ambulance Victoria responded to a record 801 853 incidents, including emergency and non-emergency cases, an increase of more than 1.7 per cent on the previous year. These included 129 932 emergency road incidents in the five rural regions. Ambulance Victoria responded to code 1 calls — that is, with lights and sirens — within 15 minutes in 74.8 per cent of cases, and in areas with a population of more than 7500 the response was 79.8 per cent within 15 minutes.

While these response times are below target, there is a range of challenges facing Ambulance Victoria which account for this, and I will talk a little bit about those. During the year Ambulance Victoria added 65 paramedics to the rural regions of the state. This allowed it to provide new dedicated night-shift crews in some areas and extra day crews in other areas. This is an attempt to offset the increasing issue of paramedic fatigue and workload — again, a very big challenge that is facing Ambulance Victoria and which needs to be addressed. There are a range of other ways in which this can be addressed. Of course, we welcome the new mobile intensive care ambulance single-response units which began operating in both Wangaratta and Wodonga. We hope that we are going to see more of those throughout rural and regional Victoria in the future.

As I said, Ambulance Victoria continues to face serious challenges, such as its patient prioritisation capabilities and delays in patient handover processes at hospitals. Particularly in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region and in rural and regional areas of the state this remains very frustrating for paramedics, and results in ramping up at accident and emergency departments at hospitals. Ramping times at hospitals will continue to increase until beds become available, and these delays in patient transfers at hospitals are taking ambulances off the roads for longer than ever before. At least \$210 million was cut from the budget, and that is only going to make these problems worse. The head of Ambulance Victoria, Greg Sassella, has admitted that the time taken to transfer patients from ambulances into the care of hospitals is having an impact on ambulance response times. Paramedics are now being worked longer and longer without breaks — at times they never get to have their breaks — and the workload is increasing, requiring overtime and causing response times to blow out.

Before the last state election the Liberal Party said Victoria deserves the highest quality ambulance service. However, now it is in government ambulance response times have gone backwards for the third

consecutive year, placing Victorian lives at risk, which is just not acceptable.

Auditor-General: *The State of Victoria's Children — Performance Reporting*

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak today on the Victorian Auditor-General's report *State of Victoria's Children — Performance Reporting*, which was produced in May. This is another indication of just how open and transparent the Napthine government is. That has been a hallmark of our government, and this is another report that scrutinises some very important issues. I will reiterate how this report came about, which I think is important in a historical sense, just to get the record straight.

In 2005 the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 came into effect, creating a new focus on cross-government collaboration for the planning and delivery of services to children and young people in Victoria. This act established a Children's Services Coordination Board, which includes key government departments responsible for delivering children's services — namely, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health, Human Services, Justice, Planning and Community Development, Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance, as well as the Chief Commissioner of Police. The act requires the board to report annually to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development and the Minister for Community Services on the outcomes of the government's actions in relation to children. The state of Victoria's children (SVC) report was first published in 2006 as an annual report to allow the board to fulfil its obligation.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development coordinates the development of the state of Victoria's children reports with input from all departments and agencies represented on the board. This is an important issue. A very important program called Services Connect has been established at the Department of Human Services. It connects all elements of the Department of Human Services, which means that a person who is the recipient of assistance only has to deal with one case manager. In some instances there have been up to 10 case managers, all of whom have given different advice. We have coordinated all this under the guidance of the Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge. This very effective program has been piloted in Geelong and Dandenong and is now going to be run throughout the state.

This coordinated approach has been particularly useful. People find that it helps them enormously, because instead of having to fill out innumerable forms and tick a number of boxes, they can go to what is virtually a one-stop shop. As I have said in this place before, this fits into the state disability plan. We have locked a range of other departments into the state disability plan so that a person with a disability can get services from the departments of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, Health, Justice et cetera, as well as from Human Services. It is pleasing to see that this model of incorporating other departments is working across many levels. It is breaking down the silo approach, which is important for good governance and most of all for the people concerned.

I was very pleased to read a media statement from Minister Lovell on the state of Victoria's children report, which stated:

The coalition government is committed to improving outcomes for young Victorians, and helping local governments access this important information, through direct contact, and through its publication on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's website.

Minister Lovell also said:

As Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, it's been wonderful to see local councils using the information to form their own policies and approaches to better cater for children in their local areas.

The State of Victoria's Children — Performance Reporting found that SVC reports contain valuable information about Victorian children's health, development and wellbeing. They are recognised within government and beyond as valuable tools for understanding how children and young people are faring in Victoria and make an important contribution to the evidence base underpinning policy and program development. The government's decision to publicly release SVC reports reflects a commitment to make information about the welfare, safety, learning and development of children available to those in a position to influence children's lives through policies and programs. Finally, the SVC reports have the potential to significantly influence service delivery.

Once again, the government is open and transparent, coordinating a whole range of actions and activities which benefit the individuals, and most importantly of all it gives us a very good snapshot of what is happening to our children's health in this state and enables the policy-makers and stakeholders to develop well-intentioned and very good government policies into the future.

Auditor-General: *Tertiary Education and Other Entities — Results of the 2012 Audits*

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My statement tonight will be on the Victorian Auditor-General's Office report, *Tertiary Education and Other Entities — Results of the 2012 Audits*. The summary of the report concludes that, notwithstanding some areas for improvement, Parliament can have confidence in the adequacy of financial and performance reporting and the internal controls of the entities audited.

The Auditor-General makes 17 recommendations. Most of those are directed towards TAFE institutes and universities with regard to key performance indicators, quality of data, internal processes et cetera, but on reading through the report, particularly with regard to the TAFE sector, there are some concerning aspects in it that highlight the impacts of the competitive funding model that was put in place by the previous government and has been continued by this government. For example, regarding financial sustainability, the report finds that the operating results for TAFEs deteriorated again in 2012, with the overall operating surplus falling to \$58 million, a decrease of 39.1 per cent; in 2011 it was \$100.5 million, down by 32.5 per cent; and in 2010 it was \$149 million, up by only 14 per cent. Based on that three-year trend TAFEs will be heading for an operational deficit.

Regarding individual TAFE results, operating results were lower for 10 TAFE institutes in 2012 compared with 2011, with 4 TAFEs recording deficits and a further 2 with marginal surpluses. The Auditor-General found that the underlying results for the TAFE sector have been declining over the last five years, indicating that expenses are growing faster than revenue and posing a long-term risk to the financial sustainability of the entire TAFE sector. One-third of TAFEs face a more serious medium-term risk to their sustainability.

Just under 80 per cent of TAFE assets are land, buildings, and plant and equipment, and during the three-year period from 2009 to 2011 TAFEs spent on average \$120 million per year on capital assets, including asset replacement. The Auditor-General found that the capacity of TAFE institutes to self-finance has fallen from 15 per cent to 11 per cent over five years and this poses a number of problems for TAFEs, including an inability to replace assets in a planned and timely manner and the risk that the asset base will deteriorate over time if asset renewal falls below depreciation rates.

Page 32 of the report shows that the Auditor-General found that only 4 of the 10 TAFEs that generated an operating surplus reported an improved underlying result in 2012. The report says:

The worsening position indicates that expenses are growing faster ...

During the past five years, 9 of the 14 TAFEs recorded a deficit at least once.

On page 30 of the report the Auditor-General found:

The underlying result, liquidity and debt-to-equity results are positive, with all TAFEs recording risk assessments of low during the past five years.

However, deeper analysis revealed that the average underlying result for TAFEs has decreased since 2010 ... The decline highlights the challenge for the sector to achieve positive financial operating results following changes in the funding model.

... Cash generated from operating activities decreased 41.9 per cent from 2010 to 2012 and now represents less than 10 per cent of underlying revenue balances.

The capital replacement indicator also declined over the five-year period.

The Auditor-General also found:

Changes in the funding model have resulted in TAFEs cutting expenditure viewed as 'non-essential', including construction of capital assets. Payments for property, plant and equipment decreased by \$53.5 million (35.6 per cent) ... in 2012.

He additionally found:

Changes to the legislative framework and funding model ... mean that TAFEs are more reliant on tuition fees for generating a major portion of their operating revenue.

These issues pointed out by the Auditor-General in his report should concern the Parliament as to the impacts and risks that the competitive funding model has imposed on the TAFE sector.

Auditor-General: *Management of Staff Occupational Health and Safety in Schools*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report, *Management of Staff Occupational Health and Safety in Schools*, dated May 2013. While I was reading this report my mind went back to a meeting I attended some time ago with the principal of Heidelberg Primary School in Cape Street. This school is very close to my electorate office in Burgundy Street, and while it is true that this school is very old — I believe it was constructed over a hundred years ago — the state of disrepair is shocking.

The federal government building education reform allocated a large sum of money for all school maintenance, but I understand that it was not sufficient in this instance to fix up the multitude of required repairs that had been allowed to accumulate over several years. I am not saying that some repair works have not taken place; I am saying that there was not enough financial assistance provided to the school to repair it to a standard where it is safe for the children and the teaching staff who work there.

This report reads as a good report card for our state schools in terms of the WorkSafe Victoria statistics. Though I am of the opinion that much more needs to be done to ensure a safer working and learning environment in many of our schools across Victoria, it would appear that WorkSafe claims by teaching staff have been reduced by 8 per cent over the last three years. This is no doubt partly due to the massive capital injection of funds by the federal Labor government's building education reforms. Maintenance works have definitely improved the safety aspects of those schools which ensured that those works were carried out.

I was interested to read that private or non-state schools have consistently outperformed government schools in regard to WorkSafe claims over the last five years. This has been attributed to the fact that private schools pay their own WorkSafe premiums, the rationale being that it is in their financial interests to ensure that occupational health and safety is a priority. This will of course keep their WorkSafe insurance premiums to a minimum. Another incentive is having a happier and safer staff, together with an effective risk management strategy.

I do not think government schools fail to identify workplace risks to their staff. They believe the government has a responsibility to provide them with a safe working environment, and I agree with them. I maintain that WorkSafe Victoria still has a large role to play in identifying potential risks in government schools, but as the Auditor-General points out, there are no proper reporting or monitoring mechanisms in place to evaluate the results of inspections. Given that WorkSafe has determined to pursue hazards deemed by it to be high risk and that fewer inspections are taking place across all schools, I foresee that by this time next year the Auditor-General's report will show a decrease in WorkSafe performance across all government schools. I support all of the Auditor-General's recommendations.

Law Reform Committee: sexting

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise this evening to speak on the Law Reform Committee inquiry into sexting and the report that was tabled in this place only a couple of weeks ago. The committee's report is very interesting as are the issues that have been raised and the recommendations made by the committee. The committee was asked to conduct this inquiry following a number of media reports that teens were being charged with child pornography offences after sending explicit images of themselves or their peers by email or phone. We know that mobile phones have made life easier for us but they have also brought with them new challenges, and this is one of them, which this report highlights extensively.

The issues that the committee was asked to look into were whether child pornography charges are appropriate for minors who participate in sexting; the extent to which young people are listed on the sex offenders register for sexting-related offences and whether registration is appropriate for these offences; and whether there are adequate legal and other protections available to people who are affected by sexting-related incidents. There are very significant and serious consequences for people who may not quite understand what they are doing.

I was looking through this report and I noticed that the origins of sexting were discussed. There is reference to a number of celebrities who have been the subject of various articles in the media in relation to sending explicitly worded text messages to women. I do not need to highlight who they are. I think that they are probably quite embarrassed by it, or they should be embarrassed, although it does not seem to have stopped them. Nevertheless, these people have a profile within our community, and I do not think it is good for young people to see them as role models when they behave in this way.

The report went on to look at a number of areas in terms of the education about sexting, sexting and the criminal law, young people and the criminal justice system, the appropriateness and adequacy of criminal laws and non-criminal law and sexting. I note that the report cites a case study of a young couple in Florida in the United States who unwittingly emailed digital pictures of themselves engaged in sexual conduct to somebody. They did not realise the implications of what they were doing in sending the images. This was quite a well highlighted case in the United States and could have had dire consequences for those young people because of the conduct in which they had engaged.

This material can obviously be very explicit, and there is the potential for it to be distributed as pornography. I think that that is a real concern because, as I said, it may be done in an innocent manner by young people but the potential for these images to fall into the wrong hands, as has been highlighted in this report, is quite significant. Once these images are posted on the internet or sent by mobile phones or circulated using other technology we have a real issue with people who have engaged in such behaviour and then later realised the implications of what they have done.

I would also like to say that the government has taken this issue very seriously. It has been working in relation to cyberbullying, another issue that is closely related to the issue. It has worked with Facebook to tackle cyberbullying, which can potentially be very closely aligned to sexting and other actions. I note that in June last year the Victorian coalition government and Facebook held a virtual presentation on safety and security for secondary school students. I also note that earlier this year, in February, more than 22 000 students in years 4 to 6 learnt about cyberbullying, including issues such as keeping online photos private and dealing with inappropriate content. I congratulate the government on those initiatives. I also congratulate the Law Reform Committee on having prepared this very useful report.

Auditor-General: *Collections Management in Cultural Agencies*

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report *Collections Management in Cultural Agencies* of October 2012. This report refers to the National Gallery of Victoria, the Public Record Office Victoria, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the Arts Centre Melbourne, the State Library of Victoria and Museum Victoria. It would be fair for the average member of the community to say that there are many more wonderful facilities around the state, so it should be noted from the outset that the report refers to the key cultural agencies of our state and not to every museum, gallery or library, whether operated by the government or municipal authority or managed in private hands. Yet at some stage I would respectfully suggest that the Auditor-General or some other independent public authority establish guidelines that can be automatically transferred to all other such bodies to ensure that the highest standards of compliance are in force at all times.

I have heard a number of stories about the poor management of some collections that deeply worry me. As we head quickly towards the 100-year anniversary

of World War I, I cannot help but think of all those collections in RSL buildings and those still in private homes, in boxes and under floorboards, that are not being well maintained and are not accessible by the public at large. This report highlights the same concern. The fact that there are some serious deficiencies in our key cultural agencies is something that should worry all of us in our collective role as protectors of our state's cultural history.

I note that there are extremely professional people in this industry, and I know only too well how far out of their way these people go to help others. For that aspect of their work I commend them accordingly. For example, the Public Record Office Victoria is working with RSL clubs to preserve their historical collections through seminars, advice and regular newsletters. However, overall I am referring to collections amassed over 160 years and worth, in monetary terms, well over \$5 billion, although many items in every area would be beyond any real monetary value.

Again I commend each agency for putting more and more of their collections online so that they may be viewed far more broadly, especially by those too far away to easily travel to our central Melbourne-based venues. The Auditor-General praised the agencies for their work, but the audit summary conclusions states:

... there are systemic issues related to storage pressures, gaps in collection documentation, inadequate performance reporting on collection management and the need to make collections more accessible online that require attention.

None of this should make any of us comfortable. The key problem, of course, is storage. As collections grow, more space must be found to store them, and such space must be unlikely to cause or allow deterioration or other damage. Also, because the collections are large and have been held for so long, accurate and up-to-date record keeping has been a problem, with items being rediscovered in the Melbourne Museum, for example, that have not been seen for around 100 years and thus effectively forgotten. Staff are doing their best, but as a Parliament we should start thinking about what more we can do to assist them in the future, or we risk losing parts of our heritage that can never be replaced. For instance, the audit summary also states:

The National Gallery of Victoria reports only 66 per cent of its collection is stored to an acceptable industry standard.

We cannot afford to lose any part of the gallery's amazing collection due to poor or substandard storage. Eight million visitors per year would not be happy if this were to occur, as collections would lose their intrinsic value.

The Auditor-General's report highlights the pluses but also the negatives within the various agencies. Given that his specific area of expertise is financial, I was impressed with how well he appeared to understand the collections and their importance far beyond the mere organisational issues involved. His recommendations are thus more powerful, and we need to review them with an eye to implementation. In conclusion, I am well aware that this report demands that we increase allocations in the state budget, but if we fail to do so we will lose something far more valuable than the dollar value that others have placed on the collections.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee: livability options in outer suburban Melbourne

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to provide some commentary on the December 2012 report of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee inquiry into livability options in outer suburban Melbourne. One of the areas I want to focus on is the notion of residential densification in Melbourne's growth areas. The committee received evidence from Chris Banks, the chair of the Growth Areas Authority, who referred to the increasing demand for denser and more diverse forms of residential living in Melbourne's growth areas. It is important to make the point that quite often residential developments in the growth areas have in the past not reflected the actual demographic make-up of families in this part of the 21st century. Mr Banks said, as quoted in the report:

... we are no longer a family-dominated demographic and 60 per cent of our households are of one or two people. Therefore in the housing forms we offer ... we are building for a much more eclectic mix of households, as two out of three are now one or two people. That is why the apartment is becoming a more acceptable housing form, when it was not 20 years ago, and that is why [in] our growth suburbs, our new suburbs, we are encouraging more housing diversity ...

The committee received evidence from stakeholders in the development industry as well, and there is a growing acknowledgement of the importance of increased residential densities and housing diversity, which is central to the question of housing affordability. Mr Andrew Whitson, Stockland's general manager for Victoria, said:

We tend to develop in a low-set configuration, so most of the housing stock that comes to market is single-storey. The percentage of two-storey homes within our community is in the single figures and below. What it means is that we utilise land very quickly as we accommodate population growth. As we utilise the land, we need to provide more and more services, facilities and amenities in an efficient manner, particularly when you look at transportation infrastructure. If

you are utilising the land more quickly you have to extend the roads, you have to extend the public transport system and you have to extend all of the hard infrastructure — the water and sewerage — in all of those areas. We cannot continue to consume land at that rate and create what we believe are sustainable communities.

The committee went on with its commentary:

It is important to note that smaller residential dwellings and increased densities can include freestanding dwellings as well as apartments, town houses and dual occupancies. Mr Chris Banks informed the committee that smaller lots are increasingly popular with homebuyers in growth areas due to their relative affordability and cited the example of a 'town cottage' home that was offered by Delfin in Golden Grove in Adelaide in 1995, which had proven particularly popular with people in the over-50 age bracket.

...

There is some indication that land developers and builders are taking time to adapt to the demand for increased diversity of housing stock at a range of price points for homebuyers.

A particularly good and creative example is the city of Joondalup, which the committee visited through the course of its inquiry. Joondalup is 26 kilometres north of the Perth CBD and is the brainchild of the late entrepreneur Robert Holmes à Court. The report says:

While homes in Joondalup are relatively expensive, the suburb incorporates a number of urban design principles that represent best practice, particularly with respect to medium density development in the context of the Australian suburbs.

...

Town house development in Joondalup is notable for the extent to which it has achieved activated street frontages through the 'rear-loading' of garages. Garages are accessed via laneways, which are markedly different from the laneways found in older inner suburban areas. Such laneways are typically part of a mews environment and are integrated with the surrounding area through paving, street furniture, landscaping and waste disposal access. The committee was informed that town houses in Joondalup typically provide for the addition of studio apartments —

or secondary suites, if we look at the model of Vancouver, British Columbia —

above garages, which are separately accessible to tenants and which provide an ideal residence for students and single persons.

The committee's commentary is:

... that the Joondalup model of urban densification is readily adaptable to the model of secondary and tertiary suites that the committee observed in Vancouver ...

This is one point that I want to make quite consistently. It is a very important means for us to achieve densification in outer suburban Melbourne.

Ambulance Victoria: report 2011–12

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to make a statement on the 2011–12 annual report of Ambulance Victoria.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LEANE — I think Mrs Peulich is amused by how slowly I am talking on this report, and there may be a reason for that.

There has been a lot of discussion about ambulances in this chamber, especially today, and in the other chamber over the last two days. I think it is fair to say that there are some problems with the Victorian ambulance service, not just because of some of the individual stories that have come out in recent times but as a result of the lack of funding for the whole health service that began when the Baillieu government came to power. The issue is that despite the government promising quite a lot in health, including 800 hospital beds, none of it has come to fruition, which has put a great weight and burden on the health service. The thing with health services is that, if you do not keep up and do not put more money into the system, it can turn into a crisis, which we have now reached.

Paramedics who work in our system report that there is a lack of morale and problems relating to ambulances ramping at hospitals, waiting to safely dispatch their patients in the healthiest condition they can. This is all part of the lack of funding for ambulance services. There were promises made that a number of new hospital beds and an injection of funds into the hospital system would be delivered, but unfortunately they have not come to fruition.

Members in the chamber may have noticed that a protest by paramedics was held yesterday on the front steps of Parliament House. The paramedics expressed dissatisfaction in a number of areas with the way they are being treated due to, for example, the burden that has been put on the health system and delays in finalising a pay agreement for these important public servants, whose efforts for the people we represent in our electorates are appreciated. Yesterday the Parliament passed a bill that will increase the salaries of members of Parliament, but the salary issues of the paramedics are unresolved. That is part of their issue, and it is a fair thing for them to bring up. It has been a hard road to bring their agreement to fruition. Some members of the chamber may disagree, but I think our salary issue was not hard for us to solve.

The morale of our paramedics is low. Their major issue is that the Victorian ambulance service has not received the injection of funding and support it expected. This government has not been forthcoming, and that has caused the jobs of the paramedics to be much harder. It will be good if Ambulance Victoria's next annual report shows an injection of funds into the system for more paramedics and vehicles, and plans to support paramedics in solving their issues, but we know that is not to be the reality. There is a lesson here: it is important not to let the health system fall down, because you can never catch up, and that is a problem this government will face.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee: livability options in outer suburban Melbourne

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I also rise to follow Mrs Kronberg's contribution on the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee's inquiry into livability options in outer suburban Melbourne of December 2012. It is an excellent report; it is not the first time I have complimented Mrs Kronberg's committee on this report, and it will probably not be the last time. This is a weighty report in every sense of the word because it deals with a very important issue — namely, livability options in outer suburban Melbourne. The report also deals with population issues not just in Melbourne but throughout Victoria, including the electorate of Western Victoria Region, which I represent.

At first blush some of the key findings of the report sound as if they do not necessarily agree with each other, and in a sense they pose challenges. I will take the house through one of the key findings, which relates to the challenge of directing growth into appropriate areas. The key question posed by the report is: how do we accommodate this growth, given that Melbourne's population is expected to grow substantially? In the inner city there are amenity constraints, and we have a legacy from the previous government's failure to properly plan for infrastructure growth in our outer suburban areas and the whole of Victoria.

Mr Finn — Point Cook.

Mr O'BRIEN — For example, Point Cook, and Mr Finn has advocated strongly for Point Cook. Recommendation 2.5 of the report notes the need for infrastructure and growth plans which are:

... aimed at directing future population towards areas with the greatest and current future capacity for infrastructure provision.

The report also identifies that there are opportunities for growth in regional Victoria but that previously there was not the necessary planning to facilitate and encourage growth in these areas. The government took leadership on this issue well before Mrs Kronberg handed down the committee's report — and I note the Minister for Planning is in the house. The government's response is nevertheless complementary in picking up on many of the issues raised by the committee's report.

We have various strategies and policies in place, including the Regional Growth Fund and eight regional growth plans that are being progressively rolled out and implemented. Our policies will be adopted and put together in a cohesive vision under the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, plus the other important infrastructure ministries. They will direct future growth not just into the near future but for many years to come, and that will be a legacy we leave for our descendants.

This government has seen fit to extend the opportunities for growth areas themselves to be identified by councils, which will help in relation to some of the issues Mrs Kronberg's committee identified — namely, that there is a growing population and a problem with infrastructure provision in these areas. Under this government, with the passage of the Planning and Environment Amendment (Growth Areas Authority and Miscellaneous) Bill 2013, councils now have flexibility to identify future areas of growth, not just in outer suburban metropolitan Melbourne but all over regional Victoria, including great opportunities around Geelong to fix up some of the planning legacies left by the previous government in the Torquay and Surf Coast areas.

More personally, in terms of the areas I represent in the far west of the state, I note that today the Southern Grampians Shire Council has finally put up for consideration some strategic growth areas in the township of Dunkeld, which has great potential to accommodate not only farming people but also people who wish to enjoy the southern Grampians lifestyle, the best that has to offer and the best that the community can provide. This report identifies some challenges that have resulted from the legacy of the previous government's failure to plan, and it has been met by the strategic vision outlined by this planning minister in conjunction with other key ministers in relation to regional development, including the Deputy Premier, who is now also the Minister for State Development. We look forward to this government continuing to plan into the future, respond to these issues and direct the population to where infrastructure can be provided, will

be provided and is budgeted for. I commend this report to the house.

Ambulance Victoria: report 2011–12

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I wish to make some comments today around the Ambulance Victoria annual report 2011–12 and do so at a time when Victoria's ambulance system is in crisis; it is in crisis in Melbourne and in crisis across regional Victoria. What we know is that ambulances are backed up at hospital doors. People are waiting longer. People are missing out. There was an extraordinary outburst in the Legislative Assembly during question time today from a woman who experienced some very tragic personal circumstances directly related to the crisis in our ambulance service.

Our paramedics do an amazing job in very difficult circumstances. It is a job that is not for the faint-hearted, as I am sure all members would agree, but \$826 million has been taken from the Victorian health budget and the consequences are starting to reveal themselves in the quality of health care that Victorians are getting in our hospitals and in transit to our hospitals via the ambulance service.

The response time for code 1 ambulance emergency incidents, the percentage responded to within 15 minutes, in 2010–11 was 77.1 per cent. The following year, 2011–12, it was down to 74.8 per cent and the budget papers for 2012–13 show just 72 per cent of code 1 ambulance emergency incidents are being responded to within the target of 15 minutes. That is extraordinary. That is close to a third of people needing an emergency ambulance response who are waiting for more than 15 minutes. If you are having the kind of emergency that requires a code 1 ambulance callout, chances are you do not have 15 minutes to spare. These are people who are experiencing a crisis in their health, and what they are getting from this government is a crisis in the health system. It is just not good enough.

There have been some extraordinary stories revealed in recent weeks about the way in which this is affecting Victorians in Melbourne and across our regional communities. There are delays in patient handovers and there are ambulances ramped up at hospitals all over the state. For members in electorates like mine there are of course very large population centres and then many much smaller population centres, towns that have only one ambulance, where diversions are occurring because hospitals do not have the capacity to take on patients. These areas are often left uncovered for hours and

hours at a time, and this is simply not good enough. The government has a moral responsibility to provide emergency health care for Victorians. It is what Victorians expect from government and the Napthine government is failing to deliver this most essential of services.

The Ambulance Victoria (AV) report indicates that AV provides emergency medical response to more than 5.5 million people in an area of more than 227 000 square kilometres. That is no simple undertaking and what the employees, ambulance officers and other support staff within the workforce of Ambulance Victoria need from this government is proper resourcing and proper support.

I will provide just a couple of examples of what this crisis means. Towns between Kangaroo Flat and Melbourne on 27 May and on the evening of Saturday, 1 June, were left with no ambulance coverage. That is a very large number of people in many communities. On 8 June there was no ambulance coverage for the towns of Cowes, Grantville, Wonthaggi, Leongatha, Korumburra, Foster, Moe, Traralgon, Maffra and Sale, and in my electorate — and indeed the Premier's electorate — of Warrnambool paramedics are so concerned about the crisis in our ambulance service that they are taking vehicles home when they are not rostered on, so that they can respond. It is simply not good enough.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee: livability options in outer suburban Melbourne

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to make a few comments on the report of the Outer Suburban Interface Services and Development Committee inquiry into livability options in outer suburban Melbourne, which, as I have mentioned previously, is quite a mouthful. But it is a very good report, and, as Mr O'Brien mentioned earlier, makes quite a significant contribution to the future of the state and particularly those areas of the outer suburban area that I represent — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! There are six or seven conversations happening in the chamber. I ask those who want to converse to do so outside the chamber.

Mr FINN — I am staggered that they would have spoken over you, Acting President. I am very pleased to speak on this report. I have commended Mrs Kronberg in the past for her role as chair of this committee. The report has in fact been referred to by some, irreverently,

as the Book of Jan. We will have a reading of that at some future date, but I particularly want to make reference this evening to the part of the report which refers to planning for livability.

I am particularly pleased, when I am referring to 'planning for livability', that the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, is in the chamber, because Mr Guy has taken a great deal of interest in housing diversification. He has taken a great deal of interest in ensuring that one size fits all is no longer the case. Not so long ago we had a minister for planning who made quite a name himself; that was Mr Madden, according to my recollection, but I have no idea whatever happened to him — one day he was in here and then we never saw him again. He made quite a name for himself by insulting his own constituents in places such as Caroline Springs and Tarneit by referring to homes of some substance as 'McMansions'. I am sure members of the house will remember that.

This is something that we as a government have made a thing of the past; we have made that very clear. I am delighted to say that this is a report that also supports the premise that people have a right to choose what sort of house they live in. What people can afford and what their needs are should dictate what sort of house they live in. It should not be dictated by some bureaucrat or some minister sitting in Spring Street.

I am delighted to say that Mr Guy has also taken that view, and he supports the diversification of housing, not just in the outer suburbs but also in some of the older, more established areas such as Footscray. We are seeing I think a rebirth of Footscray as a result of Mr Guy's efforts, and I was down there just last Friday having a look around with Mr Elsbury; the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Wells; and a number of Victoria's finest. There were a number of discussions and a number of comments made regarding the new developments that will transform Footscray from what it has been over a long period of time to a new and vibrant city — almost a capital city of its own — in the inner west. That is almost entirely as a result of the efforts of Mr Guy, and I take the opportunity whilst he is in the chamber this evening to thank him for that.

Talking about high-density and low-density housing in the outer suburbs is very important, because while some people can afford a substantial building, there are others who of course cannot. They should be given the opportunity to buy a townhouse or maybe a unit of some kind — something that is much smaller and appropriate to their needs. Those who may not have a

family just yet or those who may be living on their own would be open to that diversification of housing.

I congratulate Mrs Kronberg, and I commend this report to the house and indeed to the minister.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Melbourne Water: Gardiners Creek Trail closure

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Water, Peter Walsh. Along Scotchmans Creek in the east of Melbourne, through my electorate, is one of the most popular bike paths in the metropolitan area. Hundreds of people use it frequently as an alternative to driving cars into the city, for recreation and just as an easy way to get around. It is very attractive, and it is a bike path that I have used from time to time.

Over the last few years we have seen very good moves by both the previous government and the current government to upgrade the bike track. A lot of work has gone on, requiring sections to be periodically closed down. At the moment there is a section being closed down due to works by Melbourne Water to widen part of Gardiners Creek and — correctly — to prevent houses from flooding. This is part of Melbourne Water's flood mitigation scheme and is a good thing.

I have been told by a number of constituents that this section of path will be closed from mid-July to December, so for the best part of half a year. This means that a lot of the cycling traffic will be diverted though very busy streets in the cities of Stonnington and Boroondara. For example, the path between Burke Road and Toorak Road will be closed from mid-July to December. Bike and pedestrian traffic will need to be directed onto Great Valley Road and into Wills Street, crossing over the very busy Burke Road onto Carroll Crescent — which those of us who have memories of the time before the Monash Freeway was completed will remember was one of the most congested pieces of road in Melbourne — before being directed across the railway line and then onto Tooronga Road before rejoining the bike path.

A number of people have put to me that there are other ways that this could be done, including by creating some temporary path work from the Burke Road South

Reserve alongside Coles headquarters. This would not require too much car parking space to be sacrificed, and it would keep cyclists and pedestrians off the road. The action I am seeking from the Minister for Water is that he consider this correspondence and this issue and that he look to whether these methods are an easier way of dealing with much-needed maintenance than the proposal that Melbourne Water has before it at the moment. Hopefully we can find a solution that will enable people to be off the roads, on their bikes and enjoying recreation while Melbourne Water is getting on with its important work.

Public transport: disability access

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Public Transport. On 4 June I had the great pleasure of travelling to Traralgon. I met with the Latrobe City Council, a number of advocates, community representatives from six Gippsland disability action committees and six rural access workers, as well as someone I have worked with quite a lot, Karleen Plunkett, for whom I have the highest regard.

The discussion was around the state disability plan, and it was about issues that have arisen out of the state disability plan, which I take this opportunity to say is a plan for all Victorians with a disability and their carers and other stakeholders. It is a plan that, fortunately, everyone has embraced, and we are working to make it a tool for this sector.

I intended to go right around the state, but I went to Traralgon at that stage to get some feedback on the state disability plan and to see how it is unfolding. I remind the chamber that one of the aspects of the state disability plan is to coordinate with other departments — justice, health, education and transport — so that people with disabilities have a seamless transition when they operate between any of those departments. This will take us some time, but if we work out what the problems are, we will be able to address them as they arise and make quite certain that they are dealt with.

It was particularly interesting for me to be in Gippsland. I know Gippsland has some public transport issues, geographically. With the spine of the mountains running down the middle of Gippsland it is very difficult in many ways to get around on public transport, but the people with disability who were there with us the other day had some constructive ideas that they wanted to discuss to see what could be possible. They talked about issues such as school buses and how they could be more flexibly used, and they had a

number of very constructive ideas about transport in particular. I know the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, the member for Narracan in the Assembly, lives in Gippsland and is very aware of this situation, so the action I am seeking from the minister is for him to encourage his parliamentary secretary to have a forum with Karleen Plunkett and all the other representatives to see if some solutions for public transport access for people with a disability in Gippsland can be addressed.

Western suburbs: truck action plan

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is in regard to trucks on suburban streets. I ask the Minister for Roads why VicRoads has stopped policing curfews on streets in Yarraville, Footscray and surrounds, and what action is being taken now — not 10 years from now — to reduce the suffering of people living in suburban streets who endure constant rat runs as large trucks seek to avoid curfews and police patrols. In many ways this same pain is experienced by people in the cities of Moonee Valley and Moreland due to rat runs caused by drivers seeking to avoid CityLink tolls. Why is it that Liberal governments make decisions that are extremely detrimental to citizens in the north and the west? Why is it that people in Footscray, Yarraville, Seddon and Maribyrnong are drowning in fumes and noise? It is because this government is failing them. I ask the minister to take action now before it is too late for residents.

Maribyrnong defence site: warhorse commemoration

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I rise tonight to speak about Sandy, a war veteran that returned after service for his country. Sandy would not even have been 10 years old when he went over to Gallipoli but never got off the boat because he was not needed. Sandy was a light horse used by the Australian Army during World War I.

Mr O'Brien — A Waler!

Mr ELSBURY — A Waler, Mr O'Brien, that was taken over to Gallipoli but was not off-loaded until he was needed to undertake some work in France. The interesting story of Sandy is that he was the only horse to come back. After the triumph of Beersheba and many other battles in which the light horsemen participated and showed great valour, unfortunately their steeds were either sold to the local population or to the armies that were staying in Europe, or they were shot. That seems quite a shame for animals which did so much for our soldiers, not only transporting them

into battle but also assisting in the return of our soldiers from the battlefield to hospitals.

When he eventually died Sandy was buried at the Department of Defence site in Maribyrnong. The *Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Veterans' Affairs* states that one of its funding aims is to:

Ensure the history of the former defence site at Maribyrnong is remembered should that site be developed as housing.

I ask the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in his role of protecting the history of our war effort and honouring the memory of the light horsemen and the steeds that took them into battle, to look at the possibility of preserving a section of that site, should any development be undertaken, so that people from the western suburbs and the rest of Victoria can get a full appreciation of the important role that these animals played during this dark time in our history. Such preservation would show recognition of the efforts that were made to get Sandy back from the battlefield when it was very difficult to repatriate soldiers, let alone animals.

Target Australia: job losses

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Premier, and it is in relation to the 260 jobs that have been cut at Target's Geelong headquarters today. Target workers in Geelong had been on edge for over a week, since Target announced that it would be seeking job cuts, but it was only today that many workers learnt that they were no longer required. Many others saw family, friends and colleagues lose their jobs.

As I understand it, having spoken with Ingrid Stitt today and with one of the Australian Services Union shop stewards at the National Celtic Festival in Portarlington on Sunday afternoon, the workers at Target headquarters are like an extended family. People look out for each other and have very close bonds, so for those who are losing their jobs today it will be incredibly heartbreaking and difficult, as it will be for their families, but it will also be difficult for the colleagues they leave behind.

Of course the emotion was felt in the car park at headquarters today, and it has been conveyed on TV screens across the nation. It is clear that there will be a massive upheaval in many people's lives. The jobs that will be directly affected number 216, and a further 44 people who are contractors will not have their contracts renewed. This comes on top of other job blows that Geelong has suffered in recent times. It was

only on Wednesday of the last sitting week that I spoke in this house on at least two occasions about the Ford announcement, and many people who are affected by that announcement have family and friends who are also affected by today's announcement, so the combined impact of job losses on the family pocket will be significant.

This news comes on top of what we heard earlier this week about job losses at another iconic Geelong company, Godfrey Hirst Carpets, which was also covered in the *Geelong Advertiser* on Monday. We have also seen Qantas job losses and uncertainty around Shell and Alcoa jobs. The action I am seeking tonight is for the Premier to demonstrate leadership and create a comprehensive jobs plan that is focused on securing and creating jobs in regional cities such as Geelong. I also call on the Premier to outline the processes and specific programs he will put in place to support the recently retrenched workers at Target in Geelong.

Aged care: residential facility closures

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter is for the Minister for Ageing. I wish to express my concern at the growing number of public sector residential aged-care facilities closing under this government. Since the coalition came to government Victoria has lost 179 public sector aged-care beds, four facilities have closed, one has been privatised and another one is due to be closed very soon. This year's budget reveals that more high-care and low-care beds are expected to go.

We have seen Ballarat Health Service's Jessie Gillett Court, Koroit Health Service's Koroit Nursing Home, Western Health's Hazeldean Nursing Home and Melbourne Health's Parkville Hostel all close. The Rosebud residential aged-care facility has been sold to a non-government provider, and recently it was announced that the Thomas Hogan Aged Care facility would close by 30 June.

In reply to a question from me on 30 May, in true Orwellian-speak, the minister claimed that residents from a facility that was closing were exercising a choice to go to a different location. I was contacted by a resident at that facility, Ms Brenda Thomas, who strongly refuted the minister's claims. In an email to me she stated:

Residents are not happy to move elsewhere as they have felt safe and secure here and having to separate from friends and familiar faces has been an ordeal.

She also said:

... residents were informed that they had until 30 June to find another facility to reside.

Private providers are providing more bed capacity in that region. Whilst those providers do in fact have a role to play, by closing that facility the minister is effectively taking from that local community a choice of aged-care options. Whilst the minister continues to muddy the question of whether he approved these closures, his government's agenda for public aged care is very clear. In the government's budget update released in December last year, \$75 million in cuts to public aged care and a significant shift from public sector aged care to non-government providers were foreshadowed.

The latest Department of Health figures for public sector residential aged care that are posted on the department's website date back to September 2012. The figures have been posted irregularly in either April or May and then again in September over the past two years. I call on the minister to now release the latest figures for public sector residential aged care so that Victorians can see for themselves how many more aged-care beds have disappeared under this coalition government.

Responses

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I do not have any written responses. I will obviously refer Mr Lenders's matter for the Minister for Water, Mr Walsh, in relation to Scotchmans Creek to the minister for a response.

I will refer Mrs Coote's matter for the Minister for Public Transport, Mr Mulder, around the state disability plan and transport issues for those with a disability, on which she has done an enormous amount of work, to the minister and have him reply to her.

I will refer Mr Eideh's adjournment matter in relation to VicRoads issues to the Minister for Roads, Mr Mulder, as well and seek a reply for him from the minister.

Mr Elsbury raised an issue in relation to the Maribyrnong defence site. He asked whether the matter in relation to Sandy, a light horse buried on that site, should come within the state government's realm. The matter that he has raised is very important and I will get the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr Delahunty, to provide him with a response in writing.

I will refer to the Premier Ms Tierney's matter in relation to the unfortunate job reductions in Geelong that Target has announced. That is very difficult news,

and I will have the Premier respond to the member in writing on that.

Ms Mikakos raised for the Minister for Ageing, Mr Davis, a matter in relation to residential aged-care beds. I will seek a written response for her on that matter.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I wish to raise the fact that I have three overdue adjournment matters. The first one, from 7 February, was directed to the Minister for Education and related to the School Focused Youth Service. The second one was directed to the Minister for Community Services on 20 February and related to the Right Step program. The third one was to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development on 21 March and related to kindergarten funding. I am seeking an explanation as to why these three adjournment matters are now outstanding.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — The responsibility for those matters is not within my realm. I will certainly find out for Ms Mikakos why the responses are overdue and provide her with an explanation and, indeed, seek to have those responses given to her as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.43 p.m.