

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 17 April 2013

(Extract from book 5)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry (from 13 March 2013)

Premier, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing	The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for Regional and Rural Development	The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP
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Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, and Minister for Energy and Resources.	The Hon. N. Kotsiras, MP
Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development	The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Gaming Regulation, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister responsible for IBAC (resigned from ministry 16 April 2013)	The Hon. A. J. McIntosh, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads	The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.	The Hon. E. J. Powell, MP
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Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Youth Affairs.	The Hon. R. Smith, MP
Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Consumer Affairs	The Hon. H. Victoria, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water.	The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Bushfire Response	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Disability Services and Reform	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
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 Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

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

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Mr 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, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

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

Participating member

Joint committees

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 Napthine and Mr Walsh.

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

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

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

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn, 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, Mr Ondarchie and Mr Pakula. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Hennessey, Mr Morris and Mr Scott.

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

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

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr 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

Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

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

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The Hon. D. M. DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

Leader of the Opposition:

Mr J. LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

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

¹ Resigned 26 March 2013

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Wednesday, 17 April 2013

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I 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.

As she comes into the chamber, I also acknowledge that Ms Pennicuik's birthday is today. I wish Ms Pennicuik a happy birthday.

BOSTON: BOMBINGS

The PRESIDENT — Order! I also take this opportunity to advise the house that we have received notification from the state legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which is based in Boston, that its people are all safe after the terror incident associated with the Boston Marathon. Members would be aware that Boston is one of Melbourne's sister cities.

Our thoughts are very much with people throughout the world who are touched by terrorism. We stand shoulder to shoulder with those who are trying to address the issue of terrorism. Certainly in the case of Boston we have a strong relationship both through that sister-city relationship and also through the Boston Marathon, in which so many Australians have competed over so many years — there was Australian and indeed Victorian representation at this year's marathon.

PETITIONS

Following petition presented to house:

Nadrasca community farm: future

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of concerned residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the decision by VicRoads that the reservation between Springvale Road, Vermont South, and Boronia Road, Vermont, will not be required for future road purposes and the consequent development of a structure plan for the future use of the land within the reservation, with the possibility of the land being sold by VicRoads for housing and other purposes.

This could result in Nadrasca community farm having to leave its current location at Morack Road, Vermont, and ceasing its operations in providing day services for adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, adversely affecting organisations like Yooralla, Scope, Melba Support Services, Heatherwood School and Alkira.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria urge the government to:

facilitate an affordable arrangement that will guarantee Nadrasca community farm will remain in its current location so it can continue to provide great service to the community and grow.

**By Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan)
(39 signatures).**

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Consumer Protection, April 2013.

Managing Traffic Congestion, April 2013.

Public Asset Valuation, April 2013.

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government Response to the Family and Community Development Committee's Report on Workforce Participation by People with Mental Illness.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Regional and rural Victoria: government performance

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — Regional Victoria is doing it tough, and there is no government focus on regional development. The job losses in regional Victoria are hitting communities very hard. It is not just our regional cities or our second city, Geelong; our smaller towns are also finding it hard. It is not just larger companies, such as Shell, or large manufacturing operations, with question marks over both Alcoa and Ford; it is also smaller engineering shops, cafes, retail, machinery and equipment businesses, and even hardware shops that are closing.

Portland is doing it tough. It has 6.9 per cent unemployment, with youth unemployment rates going through the roof. Portland has a unique set of circumstances. Geographically it is a significant distance from other towns and regional centres in western Victoria. It is highly dependent on two companies and has high levels of socioeconomic status indicators. It also has overwhelming natural assets that can assist in building a local sustainable economy. Government intervention is needed; a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach is urgently needed. Locals have banded together to organise forums and a campaign under the

banner of Save Our Jobs. Yet last Wednesday night no political party representatives, except for Labor, bothered to turn up at the well-attended Save Our Jobs public meeting in Portland. Labor cares. It cares about jobs. It is Labor that cares about Portland, not the Napthine government.

Scope: family fun day

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I recently had the pleasure of attending the Scope Family Fun Day with the Premier, where we made an exciting announcement for children with additional needs. The fun day was the perfect setting to tell Scope that it, along with 13 other community organisations, would deliver 500 new early childhood intervention service packages. Each of these packages is worth more than \$7000 and can help more than one child. The Premier and I were delighted to meet the many clients and families who have benefited from the hard work of Scope and organisations like it.

Road safety: Elmo Stays Safe campaign

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — I also recently joined two *Sesame Street* favourites, Grover and Elmo, to launch a new road safety campaign. The Elmo Stays Safe campaign delivers safety messages through TV ads, storybooks and activity cards with the help of some very popular monsters. It aims to prevent road and driveway deaths and injuries by educating children, parents and motorists about how to stay safe. The campaign has been developed by Kidsafe, the Transport Accident Commission, RACV, Holden, Sesame Workshop and the Victorian coalition government as part of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Maryborough Community House: facilities

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Last week I visited the much-loved 30-year-old community house at Maryborough, which has been given a \$200 000 external facelift. New facilities include a revitalised playground, a new garden, a basketball court and space for barbecues. It was great to hear that the barbecue area, with its new tables, is encouraging neighbouring residents to visit the community house. The centre attracts more than 100 Maryborough residents each week for activities including computer lessons, art and craft, and belly dancing. I would like to thank those involved, including the art and craft group present on the day, for a wonderful welcome. The Napthine government is proud to support the Maryborough Community House.

Department of Environment and Primary Industries: jobs

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to register my concern over the Liberal-Nationals merger of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). The Liberal-Nationals have already slashed 400 DSE jobs and 200 DPI jobs, and the Premier has also refused to rule out more job losses as a result of the May 2013 state budget. The Premier has promised a new ‘open for business’ culture with fewer bureaucratic bottlenecks. I can assure the Premier that those constituents in Cobram, Birchip, Kyneton, Ouyen and St Arnaud who can no longer go to their local DPI office do not agree. Open for business in Kerang, Echuca, Swan Hill and Rutherglen means speaking into an intercom because reception staff have been slashed.

This decision by the Premier to merge the departments will send environmental policy development, protection of threatened and endangered species, sustainability and action on climate change back decades. This merger completely goes against the coalition’s 2010 election promises to restore DPI to its rightful status as the lead government agency responsible for all management issues on private land. It is just another example of how the Liberal-Nationals fail to understand what is important to rural and regional Victoria.

Ballarat: government initiatives

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — It was a good news week in Ballarat last week with the Napthine government making \$177 million of funding announcements. The week started off with the Minister for Housing, Wendy Lovell, opening the Sebastopol learning hub, which provides education and upskilling for re-entry into the workforce. The minister also announced \$50 000 for the Delacombe neighbourhood renewal projects, with artwork in Doug Dean Reserve, and \$20 000 for a South West Ballarat learning and earning program for 15 public housing tenants in the Delacombe area to participate in a pre-employment program.

I was pleased to be able to announce, on behalf of the Minister for State Development, Mr Ryan, funding of \$45 000 for a master plan for the University of Ballarat’s south campus at Lydiard Street; \$70 000 for a study into the region’s heritage to determine the viability of a dedicated regional archives and heritage centre; \$60 000 for the Ballarat community hub and library planning project; and \$110 000 to Ballarat Regional Tourism to fund a destinations management strategy. I was also pleased to be with Premier

Napthine, who is also the Minister for Racing, at the Ballarat Turf Club, where he announced funding of \$650 000 for a resurfacing project as part of a \$1.3 million upgrade.

But the cream of the announcements was at Alstom Australia. I was there with the Premier and the Minister for Roads, the Honourable Terry Mulder, for the announcement of \$176 million for the purchase of eight X'trapolis trains for the metropolitan lines and \$2 million for planning for high-capacity train sets. This announcement secures 130 direct and indirect jobs and gives certainty to workers like Nicole Campbell, a first-year electrical apprentice who I met last year. She loves her job, enjoys working with the company and likes living in Ballarat. This announcement means a lot to workers like Nicole and gives them both relief and excitement because it provides job certainty and has flow-on effects. These announcements are great news for Ballarat and demonstrate a commitment to Ballarat by the Napthine government, and all of this in just one week.

Boston: bombings

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to express my outrage at the act of terrorism yesterday morning Melbourne time at the Boston Marathon held in the USA. This bomb attack took the lives of 3 innocent people and injured at least 177 people. As I stand on my feet no organisation has claimed responsibility for this evil act perpetrated on innocent civilians going about their daily activities. The organisation or individual or individuals who committed these wicked acts of murder should understand that they have achieved nothing but the infliction of pain and suffering on innocent people. They have not done anything for their cause, whatever that may be.

Lyndhurst electorate: Greens by-election candidate

Mr SOMYUREK — On another matter, on behalf of my fellow residents of Lyndhurst I take this opportunity to express my disappointment at the Greens candidate for the Assembly seat of Lyndhurst treating the people of Lyndhurst with contempt. She has spent the campaign period overseas rather than seeking the views and opinions of Lyndhurst residents. This unprecedented act of disrespect by the Greens candidate has been noted by my fellow Lyndhurst residents. The Greens candidate going absent without leave comes on top of the Liberal Party showing its disdain for the electors by not even bothering to field a candidate in the by-election.

Special schools: Officer

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Last week marked another significant milestone in the development of the Officer specialist school, with the appointment of Ms Sue Campbell as the principal of that school to take effect from the start of term 3. I am pleased to report to the house that construction of this most important new school is progressing well and the school is on track to be opened at the beginning of next year. It is a most exciting and important structure for the south-east growth corridor, and it represents the implementation of a major election commitment made by the coalition.

Monbulk Primary School: music program

Mr O'DONOHUE — On another matter, I refer to a press release issued on 26 March 2012 by former Premier Baillieu and the Minister for Education, Mr Dixon, in relation to the granting of funding under the first round of the Victorian coalition government's innovative school specialisation grants program. I was lucky enough to visit Monbulk Primary School early this week, and I was pleased to learn that having received some of this funding the school has received significant positive feedback from its students about its music education program, including from Breannan Timmermans. She wrote a beautiful piece about the importance of music to her school, to her as a student and the role it plays at Monbulk Primary School. I congratulate the school's principal, Ray Yates, and all those associated with the school. It is great to see that this investment is paying dividends.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On behalf of the house, I extend congratulations to Mr O'Donohue on his forthcoming appointment.

Fishermans Bend: municipal governance

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Last night the Melbourne City Council backed away from a contentious takeover plan for Fishermans Bend proposed by the Lord Mayor, Cr Doyle. It had been reported previously in the press that although the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, had voiced his support for this move, the Premier, Denis Napthine, had labelled Cr Doyle's proposal 'premature'. Instead the council has called on the Premier and the planning minister to return planning control for the area to a local authority. That local authority should be the City of Port Phillip.

In the previous week the mayor of the City of Port Phillip, Amanda Stevens, had expressed outrage on

behalf of the council at the Lord Mayor's suggestion that over 200 hectares of the city of Port Phillip should be transferred to the city of Melbourne, and said that the council was best placed to make decisions about the area having undertaken extensive planning for Fishermans Bend and consulted with the community for two years. She said around 90 per cent of the renewal area for Fishermans Bend is within Port Phillip's boundaries and asked the councillors of the City of Melbourne to reject that move, which they did last night.

As I said in this place on 29 August in support of Mr Tee's motion to revoke planning scheme amendment C102, which was put forward by the Minister for Planning in July last year to rezone 240 hectares of Fishermans Bend to the capital city zone, that should not have happened, and Port Phillip City Council should be the responsible authority for Fishermans Bend.

Baroness Thatcher

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise this morning to pay tribute to and give thanks for the life of Baroness Thatcher. Margaret Hilda Thatcher was born on 13 October 1925 in Grantham, Lincolnshire. The daughter of a grocer, she went to Oxford University and graduated in 1947 with a bachelor of science degree and became a research chemist. She retrained and qualified as a barrister in 1953. She became a Conservative MP for Finchley in north London in 1959, serving until 1992. She served in Edward Heath's shadow cabinet, and was appointed secretary for education when Mr Heath became Prime Minister in 1970. She challenged Mr Heath for the leadership, and after the Conservatives were defeated in 1974 she was successful. She became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1979 and won an unprecedented third term in office in 1987 with an overwhelming majority. She was appointed a peeress in the House of Lords, with the title of Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven. She retired from public speaking in 2002 after a series of minor strokes and at age 87 she sadly passed away on 8 April of a stroke. She was a remarkable woman.

I subscribe to some of her memorable quotes, including, 'Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the highroad to pride, self-esteem and personal satisfaction', 'You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it', and, 'It pays to know the enemy — not least because at some point in time you may have the opportunity to turn him into a friend'. She was a remarkable woman who took on the United Kingdom

and the unions. She is going to be farewelled in London today. May she rest in peace.

Health: funding

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I think we have a health crisis in Victoria. I begin by referring to page 5 of the *Maribyrnong Leader* of 16 March. The paper reported:

Elective surgery waiting lists were rising at Western Hospital before reduced funding began to cut deep, new data shows.

According to Victorian health services performance reports for the September and December quarters of 2012, the evidence is clear. The number of people on Victoria's elective surgery waiting lists was 43 173 in the December 2011 quarter and 47 760 in the December 2012 quarter, and the numbers went up and up in every quarter along the way — all long before the Minister for Health claiming that the federal government's cuts to funding were hurting Victorians.

Is the government also claiming — and very wrongly — that the crisis in cancer care reported in October last year was also caused by anyone other than its members' own incompetence and mismanagement of health care in our state? Two million dollars would fix that problem, yet this government prefers to upgrade ministers' offices instead. I still think of that wonderful building opened by Her Majesty the Queen — the Royal Children's Hospital. It is an outstanding facility thanks to the former Labor government, and one which members of the then opposition attacked, although they are now happy to claim it as their own. The cuts to health funding and the disaster in health care in this state are theirs and theirs alone.

The facts are that the minister has failed to claim moneys, such as \$70 million in new dental money and \$50 million to meet elective surgery targets. If he does not even bother to fill in the paperwork, then how on earth can he blame anyone other than himself?

Bruce Albert Edward Skeggs, OAM

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to pay tribute to the Honourable Bruce Skeggs, OAM, who recently passed away. He served in the Victorian Parliament as the MLA for Ivanhoe and a MLC for Templestowe Province. In particular I wish to acknowledge and place on record his extensive service to local government and the community, as well as to the Parliament. Following significant challenges and setbacks in his early years, he made a rich contribution to the Liberal Party, his community and the Parliament.

I would particularly like to note his significant efforts in promoting democratic ideals.

TAFE sector: board appointments

Mrs PEULICH — I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate the 14 TAFE chairs recently appointed by the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. The chairs will now lead Victoria's TAFE institutes according to their charters in refocusing their operations and strengthening governance to ensure TAFEs are well equipped to face the challenges of an increasingly competitive training market and provide an excellent education to those who attend them.

Baroness Thatcher

Mrs PEULICH — Lastly, I also place on record my brief tribute to Baroness Thatcher on her recent passing. I note her immense contribution through her service to the Parliament of the United Kingdom and also through helping to bring down the Iron Curtain through her relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev and former US president Ronald Reagan.

Government: performance

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — In the lead-up to the delivery of the state budget in a couple of weeks Victorians are being asked to believe that we have a new government. The government's cuts to TAFE have delivered a catastrophic blow to vocational training in Victoria, yet the government adds insult to injury by telling us that there is new money invested in TAFE. Of course this money is to further embed the so-called reforms of this government. The \$50 million will in no way repair the damage wrought by cutting \$290 million, and this so-called new money will not employ a single teacher or restore a single course. It is little wonder that TAFE board chairs are being unceremoniously punted all over the state by a government that has little capacity to take on board constructive criticism.

As the budget looms, industry still waits for any sign of a vision for the state. There are mixed messages from the government about major projects, be it the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel or the east-west link, and Victorians can have little confidence that there will be dirt broken on any major project any time soon. Indeed just yesterday there were media reports that the government is holding back on Infrastructure Australia — hardly the act of a decisive, visionary government.

On renewable energy, just last week we had the Premier at the \$1 billion wind farm at Macarthur. He said, 'I think they are majestic, and I actually love them'. The government is sending mixed messages to the renewable energy industry by on the one hand professing great love and affection and on the other declaring that the 2-kilometre setback policy will not change. Victorians will not be fooled by the Premier in spite of the hype.

Russell McDonald

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I wish to pay tribute to the life of a life member of The Nationals, Russell McDonald, who recently passed away. Russell was born in Rochester in Victoria and first became involved with The National Party in the mid-1950s as a member of the Timmering branch in northern Victoria. His early working life involved spending time as a research engineer in the weapons research institute established by the federal government at Woomera near Adelaide.

At their father's passing Russell and his brother returned to the family farm to continue the life of a grazier. His brother, Stuart McDonald, served as a member of this house from 29 April 1967 to 4 May 1979. I spoke to Stuart on Friday, and the similarities in their lives and persons, including their voices and hearty laughs, were touching. Both were very well regarded members of their community and outstanding members of the Presbyterian Church, which they also served.

Russell received his life membership for his dedication to the party at all levels. He worked hard on both of my campaigns, and for that I am very grateful to him, as are Roger Hallam, Hugh Delahunty, John McGrath and many other members of The Nationals. Russell remained a great contributor and a person whose opinions were always valued. He will be sorely missed by his wife Shirley, his branch members, his church and his extended family.

Bell Street Mall Traders Association: harmony luncheon

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — On Thursday, 21 March, a harmony luncheon was again organised by Dr Haraco, the president of the Bell Street Mall Traders Association. There were over 100 attendees this year, and the luncheon included foods from Asia, Africa and Europe. Members of the community representing all nations enjoyed sampling the many different dishes which were freshly cooked on the day. My congratulations to the traders association.

Greek Independence Day

Mr ELASMAR — On Sunday, 24 March, I attended a ceremony organised by the Australian Greek Ex-Servicemen's Association to commemorate the anniversary of Greek independence on 25 March 1821. As usual the event was well organised by the association's president, Mr George Rahovitsas, and his executive committee. It was my honour to lay a wreath outside the Darebin City Council offices in Preston.

City of Moreland: citizenship ceremony

Mr ELASMAR — On Tuesday, 26 March, I was invited to attend a citizenship ceremony held at the Coburg town hall by the Moreland City Council. The mayor, Cr Oscar Yildiz —

Mr Ondarchie — A good man.

Mr ELASMAR — A very good man — and his fellow councillors made us all most welcome and later, over some light refreshments, we were able to talk with our new Australian citizens. I congratulate the mayor, his fellow councillors and the officers of Moreland council for making this event so memorable.

Early childhood services: health and development record

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — On 8 March Thomas Christopher John Philip Taylor was born. His mother is tertiary educated, bilingual and a professional, and he is her first child. The mother is very able to research and investigate all issues around children, child growth and stability. She also has a very strong family network and a support structure. But it is very pleasing to see that under the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Ms Lovell — and I wish to congratulate her — a book entitled *My Health and Development Record* has been developed.

Thomas's mother has used this as her bible. It talks about appointments to keep, growth and health records, immunisation records, birth details and what to expect at the two-week, four-week and eight-week visits and so forth. It is very detailed and easy to use. It gives first mothers confidence because it is authoritative, professional and very informative. This is an excellent tool for all new parents, and I commend the minister for developing such a wonderful and very useful tool. Not all mothers are able to have the same sort of support system and education that Thomas's mother has, but this tool will enable them to take the right steps for their children as they grow into healthy young Victorians. I commend the minister.

Shrine of Remembrance: Galleries of Remembrance

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I have pleasure in making some brief remarks today with respect to next week's anniversary of Anzac Day, and I am sure that all members of this place will participate in memorial services in their constituencies. Anzac Day was officially named in 1916 to commemorate the landing at Anzac Cove in 1915. Over 8000 Australian troops died at Gallipoli, but we should not lose sight of the fact that more than 80 000 Turks also died during that encounter.

It is important for us to note the significance of the memorial of Anzac Day, but I also wish to commend the progress being made on the Galleries of Remembrance project that is under way at the Shrine of Remembrance. It has been funded by the Victorian government to ensure that the shrine is pre-eminent as a war memorial in Victoria. We cannot overstate the need to honour those who served and sacrificed their lives in defending this country, but we also need to acknowledge those of other nationalities who gave their lives in the service of defending their people.

BAW BAW PLANNING SCHEME: AMENDMENT

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That the Council take note of the answer given by the Minister for Planning to a question without notice on 21 March 2013.

This is a minister who regularly plays to his backbench rather than getting to the facts and issues before —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — That was a puerile interjection from Mr Davis. This is a serious matter about the question of jobs being lost in Gippsland under Mr Davis's watch. This government's Minister for Planning spruiks about a project in this chamber and says it is the greatest project in Gippsland. In fact his precise words were that it was 'more than Mr Lenders's government ever did in West Gippsland'. We will get to the facts in a moment. This is a minister who regularly comes into this chamber and over-spruiks, if you like. He has talked about the great things he is doing in Gippsland, which is at odds with the facts. It would do the people of Gippsland and the people of Victoria more good if we actually had some honesty about the problems we are facing in this community and what this government is doing to address them.

In particular, we can look at the status of employment in Gippsland over the term of this government. In December 2010 when this government took office there were 145 200 people employed in the Gippsland region according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data. By May 2011, five or six months later, that figure had gone down to 141 800. The figure varies a little bit from month to month; some months it goes up a tiny bit but then goes down again the next month and so on. I am being generous in saying it was five or six months because the data shows that in April it was 136 000, but we can accept that as an unusual figure.

By September the figure was 140 700; that is down nearly 5000 people. By December 2011 the total number of people employed in Gippsland had dropped to 138 900. That is 6000 jobs lost in the government's first year of office, and it continued. That is the opposition's complaint. The minister spruiked about what he said was the greatest jobs project in Gippsland's history and talked about how fantastic the project was, but we found that by March 2012 there were 131 600 jobs in Gippsland, down from the starting point of 145 200.

I will go through the latest statistics. The employment figure in February 2013 is a few thousand above the January figure, and again I am not picking out the worst months. In two full years the figure for total employment in Gippsland has dropped from 145 200 people employed to 124 200, which is some 21 000 fewer people employed in the Gippsland region after two and a bit years of this government in office. There is a reason for that. It is because this government does not pay attention to jobs.

I am seeing Mr Philip Davis shake his head. I will be interested to hear how Mr Davis tells our constituents in Gippsland why there should be 21 000 less of them employed now than when his government came to office. If Mr Davis had been paying attention to the issue of employment in Gippsland, he would know that employment growth occurs when governments pay attention to the needs of our economy, to the infrastructure investments that are required and to the environment in which jobs can be created and grown.

Let us give some practical examples of what the decline in employment has been under this government's watch. What we have seen is a number of jobs lost in the region on quite specific projects. In the same month that the Minister for Planning was spruiking his project in Warragul, the company Drypac closed its facility in Warragul with the loss of 126 jobs. I have met some of those workers who lost their jobs and the impact on those people and their families is huge. One of the

workers I met had a very ill wife, so now he is faced with dealing with both his wife's illness and the loss of employment. These are the personal results of a government failing to pay attention to the needs of our community in terms of employment.

I have raised in this place before the issue of the Telstra call centre closure in Moe where 114 jobs were lost and had what could only be described as a flippant response from the then employment minister. Around the same time as that occurred McCormack Demby Timber was closed with a further 60 jobs gone. Murray Goulburn Co-operative Co. Ltd has cut 74 jobs. The cuts to the TAFE sector have had a huge impact in our region with 32 jobs lost at Advance TAFE and 45 jobs lost at GippsTAFE.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr VINEY — Mr Finn can respond to my speech when he wants to. What we have seen is Mr Guy claiming to be providing the greatest jobs project in Warragul and West Gippsland's history. His words were:

This rezoning is going to provide the greatest single level of job injection in Warragul's history ...

Talk about oversell! Let us have a look at Gippsland's more recent history on big projects. In contrast to the closures and job losses that I just described, let us have a look at some of Gippsland's more recent history. When the Labor Party came to office in 1999 unemployment rates in Gippsland were greater than 10 per cent. In fact the people in the Latrobe Valley today still remember the appalling state of the local economy after the Kennett government's treatment of that region; they still remember that well.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr VINEY — I must be hitting some marks here because I am getting quite a lot of interjections. It is quite good fun.

Latrobe Valley house prices had crashed to the point where people in the Latrobe Valley were somewhat trapped because they could not sell their properties and move to other regions to get jobs. Jobs had gone, house prices had crashed and the local economy showed no apparent prospects of new growth. As a result of that, on coming to office the Bracks government established the Latrobe Valley Ministerial Taskforce, and as a result of the initiatives of that period we slowly and surely saw employment grow in the Latrobe Valley and house prices stabilise and then improve. The circumstances facing people in the Latrobe Valley were

vastly improved, and this occurred as a result of considered and considerable government investment, whether it be investment in things like the regional fast rail project, which, by the way, for Mr Guy's benefit, included 1100 jobs, more than double, in fact two a half times, those involved in the project that Mr Guy is saying is the biggest jobs project in Gippsland's history — —

Mr P. Davis — That is not what he said.

Mr VINEY — I say to Mr Davis that this is Mr Guy's comment:

This rezoning is going to provide the greatest single level of job injection in Warragul's history, and it is happening under this government.

Mr P. Davis — In Warragul, correct. Three cheers; you got it right this time. You can't verbal the minister and get away with it in this house.

Mr VINEY — No amount of shouting by Mr Davis is going to change the fact that his minister oversold this project — —

Mr P. Davis — You're trying to misrepresent the minister.

Mr VINEY — We are used to his insults; we do not even worry about them. But just for the record, the minister accused the Labor Party of being boring and of being Soviet-loving apparatchiks, which most of us on this side find somewhat amusing. I listened to the minister on Jon Faine's radio program; I am not sure whether it was Jon interviewing him or someone else, but I listened to him on that program personally attacking the Leader of the Opposition because that is his manner. His manner is to overstate and oversell.

Let us have a look at some of Labor's projects. The regional fast rail project on the Gippsland line — that is, the Pakenham-Traralgon component of it — delivered 1100 jobs. Mr Davis might not like us mentioning this, but let us consider the desalination project. Over the course of that project 10 500 jobs were created. At its peak there were 4500 jobs in that project. The Latrobe Community Health Centre project in Morwell created 126 construction jobs and the Gippsland Water Factory created 300 jobs. Mr Davis could look at the police and law courts complex. I do not have job figures for it but tens of millions of dollars were invested in that complex in Morwell. These were the investments in the Latrobe Valley and West Gippsland that delivered and created the jobs that this region needed.

Mr Davis may not see people in Warragul as being among those who work in the Latrobe Valley, but I assure him that many do. Investments in the Latrobe Valley assist Warragul and investments in Warragul assist the Latrobe Valley. That is part of the region's growth and development. Therefore it is far from being the greatest single project in West Gippsland, as Mr Guy was spruiking. It may well be a good project and it may well be a project delivering a number of jobs at a time when we desperately need them, but I think the concern that the opposition has about this minister is his continued style in this place — that is, playing to his backbench for whatever purpose. Some of us speculate that it is leadership ambition, and there is nothing wrong with ambition, but I would have thought that achieving further career aspirations in politics comes from delivering and talking to the community about the things that are needed by the community, rather than playing to your backbench in this place.

When you have a look at this particular project you see it is being developed by a company called the Jana Group, which is a big operation in Warragul, West Gippsland. It is the company undertaking this particular project, the retail and commercial development zone in the area extending from Queen Street in Warragul. It is also the company that has undertaken the new housing development that sits between Warragul and Drouin. In fact, that development has made those two towns much closer to merging, which some people think is a good thing but many people do not — many people like the idea of the two towns being separated by some rural land. It is a big project and is developing a lot of housing in that area.

The principal person behind the Jana Group is John Castle. John is a strong Liberal and a strong supporter of the Liberal Party. I make no criticisms of him in that regard. It was his company's trucks that in 2006 towed trailers around the Legislative Assembly electoral district of Narracan bearing signs promoting the then Liberal Party candidate for Narracan, Gary Blackwood, who is now the member for Narracan. I do not think the company had the same name at that time, but the company's logos were on the sides of the trucks, so there was no secrecy about this. The land I just referred to, between Drouin and Warragul, which until recently has been farmland and is now the site of the Jana Group development, has been the site of large billboards promoting Gary Blackwood at every election.

As I said, I have no problem with Mr Castle using his company's resources or spending his company's money, or his personal money — or however he is doing this — on helping the Liberal Party and Mr Blackwood; however, I am concerned about the

Minister for Planning coming into this place to spruik and oversell the company's development. That kind of behaviour blurs the lines between the political interests of the minister and what he is saying in this place. When a minister gets up and spruiks a project there ought to be some degree of caution about that.

Mr Guy spruiked this project as providing 400 jobs. It is, if you like, a whitegoods and homemakers retail facility — I think those are the words Mr Guy used in his speech about the project. I understand and have been advised that while the company has estimated and advised Mr Guy that the development will provide 400 jobs, there is actually only one signed-up tenant for this project. No-one can say how many jobs it will provide, because the various retailers employ different numbers of people per square metre. A whitegoods store may well employ 3 to 5 people and a hardware store may well employ 20 to 50 people, so there are different levels of employment in the different elements of such a development. Mr Guy is relying on the company's press releases and advertising in saying that it will provide 400 jobs, but with only one signed-up tenant at this stage that is again too much of a stretch for a minister to make in this place. It is a strong statement for a minister to make in this place when there is no real confidence around those estimates.

The final comment I will make in relation to this is that Mr Guy's suggestion, in his answer to the question, that the conurbation of Warragul and Drouin is a good thing would presumably be agreed with by Mr Castle and the Jana Group, which is undertaking the development that is bringing the conurbation together. This is where the lines need to be more carefully considered when ministers come in and play to their backbench in the way that this minister has.

It would be far better for this place and for this government if there were a focus on job creation through the investments that governments need to make in infrastructure — for example, the failure to purchase more V/Locity trains for the Gippsland line and the lack of investment in the maintenance of those lines, which, as Mr Davis well knows, has again resulted in the closure of that Gippsland line train between Trafalgar and Bairnsdale. We have been through this once before. Government press releases have outlined that there is an indefinite closure of that line, so we have that problem.

We need a whole range of investments in health. We need investment in the next stage of the Latrobe Regional Hospital. We need investment in the Traralgon bypass. We need further investment in the West Gippsland Hospital. We now have a situation

where people in TAFE colleges are losing jobs. Those colleges will not be able to provide the training and skills support that the local community needs to make sure that our young people and people entering the workforce, or people involved in restructuring the workforce, receive the training they need to give them a secure future.

We need further investment in roads. We need further investment in rail. We need further investment in our health services. We need further investment in our education system. We now have a situation where the government has stopped the regeneration and redevelopment of every school in the state, including all those in Gippsland. There are schools in Gippsland and West Gippsland that were in line for those investments under the previous government — —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr VINEY — Is Mr Ondarchie laughing? Mr Ondarchie should go and have a talk to the people of Morwell about the Morwell Primary School regeneration project, which we had already started — —

Mr Finn — On a point of order, Acting President, during the course of Mr Viney's address to the house this morning he has on a number of occasions directed his comments directly at members on this side of the house, clearly in contravention of the standing orders, which require him to address his comments through the Chair. I ask you to bring him to order on that count.

Mr VINEY — On the point of order, Acting President, I will give members of the government the undertaking that I will not refer to them if they will stop interjecting and just listen to the advice I am trying to give them.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr VINEY — Members opposite might like to laugh. The fact is that when they came to office there were 145 000 jobs in Gippsland. After two and half years that figure has declined to 123 000, so 22 000 jobs have disappeared under their watch. They may well laugh, but I can assure them that the people of Gippsland are not laughing. The people of Gippsland will remember that every time they have had Liberal governments employment has declined in Gippsland. Under Labor employment increased every month for 11 years. Even during the global financial crisis employment increased. Even during that time — one of the toughest times that Victoria has faced since the

depression — jobs grew. The economy grew under our watch.

Under the coalition's watch we are in recession and 22 000 jobs have been lost in Gippsland. Well may those opposite laugh. Well may the Minister for Planning spruik the projects of his mates. Well may he get up in here and accuse the opposition of being soviet apparatchiks and of being boring and of whining. That is fine. He can do that and play to his backbench.

We on this side of the house will focus on the concerns of the people of Victoria and Gippsland, and those concerns principally centre around jobs. It is a job that gives you a future. Just ask the people of the Latrobe Valley, who under the Kennett government could not get a job or sell their house and move to a new area to give themselves a better prospect. Just ask them. They know that it is jobs that secure their future.

This government either does not care or does not know what to do. If that is so, its members should either change their position or get out of the way, because they are holding back this state; they are holding back Gippsland. I thank them for laughing and for demonstrating their lack of concern. I thank them for the responses they have given me in this debate today, when I have been taking them through the facts. Members opposite might not want to invest as Labor does. They might not want to do the hard work such as that which went into Labor's job plan for Victoria, which has 67 different initiatives for Victoria.

The government might not want to do that hard work, but the people of Victoria will ultimately decide that if it is not going to do the hard work and deliver for them, they will push it out of the way. That is when the people of Victoria and the people of Gippsland will start to see an investment in jobs, infrastructure, schools, TAFE colleges, roads and the train system — a train system that we invested in for Gippsland that resulted in a 40 per cent increase in patronage because we made the trains faster, more reliable, more regular and modern. They are the things in which we invested for the people of the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland. We put back the train from Bairnsdale. We put back the train that those opposite got rid of.

If you go through the employment history of Gippsland since the 1990s, you will find that every time the Liberals are in office the people of Gippsland lose jobs and that every time Labor is in office we invest in them. We believe that people having a job secures not only their future but the future of their children. It is Labor that does those things. It is Labor that does the building.

It is Labor that does the investing. It is Labor that secures people's futures.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — After that hullabaloo I think we better just go back and review what it is that we are debating. We are noting the Minister for Planning's answer to a Dorothy Dixer — which the previous Premier promised would be eliminated; but that is another promise that fell by the wayside, possibly the first broken promise of the Baillieu government — from Mr O'Donohue to Mr Guy in relation to Baw Baw planning scheme amendment C96. The purpose of that amendment is to rezone a piece of land about 1.6 kilometres outside Warragul's town centre for a bulky goods retailer, which the Minister for Planning says will support 400 jobs. But for that to come to pass the people of Warragul need to have some money in their pockets in order to purchase the types of bulky goods that are to be sold there. Mr Viney in his contribution went reasonably wide in talking about the various economic, service and infrastructure needs of West Gippsland and in the process opened up a broader debate that is worth having, particularly in relation to Warragul.

You could get yourself a reasonably cheap house and land package in and around Warragul and in that vicinity. That is no doubt the reason why many people move there while continuing in many cases to commute back to the big city — for some it is Dandenong and for others it is all the way through to Melbourne itself. In his answer Mr Guy said:

It is important that this rezoning is put in place to ensure that West Gippsland is not just — like the previous government wanted it to be — a dormitory town for jobs in the eastern part of Melbourne.

I would have thought living in Warragul and having a job in the eastern part of Melbourne is not a bad way to make a living. In fact I would have thought the fastest way to put money into the town of Warragul would be via the pockets of those commuters coming home each night from their employment. Having got your affordable house in Warragul, what is likely to be the single biggest cost item in the family budget? It is transport — no doubt about it. There are things that this government could do or that the previous government could have done to cut the cost of transport and make it more convenient or easier for the citizens of Warragul.

Unfortunately earlier this week we got the performance data from V/Line with regard to punctuality for those short-haul services — the ones that come out of West Gippsland and go right into the city. What we have seen is that throughout 2012 punctuality has hovered at about the 75 per cent mark, and that is with V/Line's

definition of 'punctual' being less than 6 minutes late. V/Line is no longer just, as some people might think of it, a service for people to go on a country holiday or for people to head off and visit the grandchildren.

I use V/Line all the time now, and I can tell you that for those satellite cities around Melbourne — Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and of course those in West Gippsland — this is a serious commuter service. People rely on it to get to work. They cannot simply come in and tell their boss that they are late again because of something V/Line did. If they are relying on this service to make an appointment or to meet a connecting public transport service, then 6 minutes late is too late. 'On time' needs to mean literally on time. So 75 per cent of trains being more than 6 minutes late is not an acceptable state of affairs for someone who wants to rely on the service; and in fact that is not a figure that has improved throughout 2012 with the Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder, in charge.

What if you are living out on the edge of Warragul or in some of the new areas around Warragul that Mr Viney referred to? Taking the bus to Warragul station is not really going to be an option. There is a nice map showing the Warragul bus network, but while the network looks good on the map most of those services run barely a few times a day and not at all on Saturdays and Sundays. Because everybody in Warragul just stays home on the weekend, do they not, Mr Davis? Why would they need a bus? What it means, though, is that to get yourself to the station in the morning you have to own a car.

Mr P. Davis — You can ride a bike.

Mr BARBER — You could ride a bike. I would like to see a bit more of that. But your choices are really for your partner to pack themselves and the kids in the car, drive you down to the station early in the morning and drive home again, or for you to drive your car to Warragul station and leave it sitting there all day. It is a very expensive option when you consider that the simple running costs of owning a car are as much as the petrol itself. Do you really want to have your very expensive car sitting in the very expensive Warragul car park — which I notice the government was planning to upgrade in its last budget — for perhaps 10 hours a day doing nothing when another member of your family could use it? Imagine what it would do for the citizens of Warragul if they could sell one of their family cars and the breadwinner of the family was still perfectly capable of getting to work each day without driving their car.

We have to say that overall the government has delivered very little in the way of new public transport services in either the city or the country. If we go back to the most recent budget papers and have a look at the bus services in regional towns' bus services, we see that service kilometres grew from about 20.4 million kilometres last year to only 20.9 million kilometres predicted for this current budget year in terms of town buses across all of those regional centres of Victoria. There has been virtually nothing by way of expansion. There will be no more frequent services, no more timely services and no chance whatsoever for Warragul to have a bus meeting each train under those kinds of settings. In terms of the frequency of the V/Line trains and long-distance coaches there was no growth in the last budget.

Since 2010–11, when those services ran 21 million kilometres, we have seen just 21.8 million kilometres provided, which is a minuscule improvement. My prediction is we will see nothing more allocated for those services in the May budget. My point is the minister can rezone all the land he wants for either housing or employment centres in places like Warragul, but the people who live there have limited family budgets and they are not being assisted by anything the government has done.

Likewise, people make choices about where to live, including going to live in Warragul. The planning scheme amendment C96 documentation projects that there will be considerable population growth in West Gippsland, and obviously it will not all come from people having babies, Mr Davis. There would have to be a considerable number of people moving into the member's electorate by choice in order to —

Mr P. Davis — It is a desirable place to move to and have a family.

Mr BARBER — There is no doubt, Mr Davis, that there are a lot of great things about Warragul. As I said, there is affordable housing, a pretty good public school system, the opportunity to attend a regional university or TAFE as you grow older and of course great access to a nearby natural environment — you can zip up to Baw Baw any weekend as a short trip. But there is one thing missing, and that is the basic level of public transport, which could mean having four members in one family does not require owning four or more cars. If there is one thing the government could do in its forthcoming May budget to make Warragul better and to make the intended benefits of this planning scheme amendment come about, it would be to invest seriously in public transport for Warragul and the West Gippsland area to keep up with the population growth

this amendment document anticipates and which the minister was spruiking.

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I would like to congratulate the previous speaker, Mr Barber, on his erudite, rational and constructive contribution to this debate — —

Mr Barber — You didn't think the Greens had it in them, did you?

Mr P. DAVIS — Sometimes I wonder. But like a laser beam, Mr Barber actually dealt with the matter before the house. He actually spoke to the motion, unlike the mover of the motion, who gave us an extensive diatribe about everything but this motion. What I heard from Mr Viney was a general, broad-ranging contribution about matters totally unrelated to the motion, which deals specifically with a ministerial response to a question without notice on 21 March advising the house in regard to amendment C96 to the Baw Baw planning scheme. I did not hear anything of substance from Mr Viney in relation to that matter.

What I heard him talk about was the privatisation of the Latrobe Valley baseload power stations, which of course was initiated by the Cain and Kirner governments under the watch of Mr David White, the then Minister for Minerals and Energy. I heard him talk about the desalination plant at Wonthaggi, a liability on the population of Victoria to the extent of its net present value of \$6.1 billion, which Victorians will be contributing to for the next 27 years and which so far has not provided any water security to the state. He also talked about investment in public transport. Again, these are matters that do not pertain directly to the motion before the house.

Mr Viney talked about matters inconsequential to this motion because this motion goes to a matter which in my view is quite narrow. It relates to an announcement about the approval of a planning scheme amendment at Warragul. Planning scheme amendment C96 — a rezoning which is being facilitated with the Baw Baw Shire Council — will lead to the development of a \$45 million retail centre between Warragul and Nilma and will provide goods to a community which, as Mr Barber alluded to quite correctly, is a growing community. Those goods will include white goods, furniture, camping and outdoor equipment, building material and other homemaker products.

Baw Baw Shire Council has been very constructive; the public position of the council has been to positively support the rezoning. It advised that its view was that

the rezoning did not need to go through a public exhibition period because it was a technical change from an industrial zone to a special use zone, giving more confidence to the council and the developer, which would better facilitate planning and design outcomes. That special use zone gives the council control over what retail uses will be permitted and protects the site from being developed for general purposes. This is particularly relevant because of the wastewater treatment plant near the site.

I acknowledge in my contribution today that this rezoning is important to the Warragul community because it provides a very significant incentive for additional capital investment. There has been no dispute about forecasts which show the potential to generate about 400 jobs as a result of this investment.

I think Mr Viney was trying to take issue with a comment made by the Minister for Planning. During his response to a question without notice on 21 March the minister observed that this would be a very significant boost to the local economy. It is true that *Hansard* shows that Mr Guy said:

This rezoning is going to provide the greatest single level of job injection in Warragul's history ...

Mr Viney tried to conflate the minister's answer to a question without notice with a whole list of his confused — I think that is the only way I could put it — views about what issues he would like to prosecute. Mr Viney wished to prosecute a case more generally about the economic disposition of Gippsland.

We should not be confused about what this planning scheme amendment proposes and what it deals with narrowly, which is the development of a retail hub at Warragul. It is not a panacea to every economic imperative affecting Gippsland. However, I do point out that in terms of referring to the impediment to economic growth, there is absolutely no doubt that one of the major impediments in the central and west Gippsland region is the lack of incentive for major infrastructure investment in baseload power generation, which has been one of the major employers in central Gippsland for many decades. There are a number of reasons for that which I do not intend to go into at this point because it would be inappropriate.

My view is that in moving the motion Mr Viney widened its scope so substantially that we could spend a whole day having a discussion about every aspect of economic policy in Victoria, but given that he did open the matter for further consideration I will touch upon it briefly. The reason there has been no additional baseload power generation investment is that the

privatisation process — which I have to say had a bipartisan view, notwithstanding Mr Viney trying to ignore the fact that it was the Cain and Kirner governments which initiated the first steps to privatisation — has led to a significant increase in the availability of baseload power stations because of improved performance.

As I recall, under the former State Electricity Commission of Victoria the availability of baseload power was something of the order of less than 65 per cent, and with privatisation it moved up to be better than 95 per cent; in fact I think the optimal estimate is about 98 per cent availability. It does not mean those power generators are running at 98 per cent all the time; it just means they are available, and that is because of improved efficiency.

That, overlaid with the federal government's anti-coal policy framework — in other words, its approach to greenhouse policy, which has seen the introduction of new initiatives at a commonwealth level — has caused a drop in interest concerning the utilisation of brown coal as a baseload power generator because of the onerous costs of investing in that industry and penalties therefore associated with the generation of electricity from brown coal now. We have a combination of those two factors — increased availability of baseload stations tied with the commonwealth government's policy framework — which has created great uncertainty about the investment opportunities in the future development of baseload generation from brown coal.

I suggest that if Mr Viney were to look in the mirror, he would find that at a macro level it is easier to explain why the associated coalfields of the Latrobe Valley, which could be one of the significant drivers for economic prosperity for Gippsland, are presently a liability. It is because of commonwealth government policy.

I do not intend to take Mr Viney's default invitation to comment on every aspect of his contribution, because I want to come back to the substance of the motion. The substance is that Mr Viney sought to take note of the minister's answer in relation to a planning scheme amendment in the Baw Baw shire, specifically at Warragul. The minister answered, in my view quite accurately, that this planning scheme amendment will afford the opportunity for some major significant retail investment. Rather than accepting the attempted verballing of the minister by Mr Viney, I draw the house's attention to the fact that the minister was referring to the jobs that would be created at Warragul, not in the wider Gippsland context, and in making that

observation he accurately made the point that it would be potentially one of the major investment decisions available in — —

Mr Viney — 'More than Mr Lenders's government ever did in West Gippsland'.

Mr P. DAVIS — Mr Viney seeks to continue to attempt to misdirect the house in terms of the minister's position. I will quote from *Hansard*, albeit that that might not accord with the rules of the house, and I will refer specifically to what I understand the minister had to say during the course of that question time. He said:

This rezoning is going to provide the greatest single level of job injection in Warragul's history.

In my estimation that is a correct statement.

Mr Viney — What about the one above it? You are ignoring it.

Mr P. DAVIS — In the sentence above that he said — —

Mr Viney — No, in the paragraph above it.

Mr P. DAVIS — Mr Viney has called on me to read the one above it. I am reading the one above it. In the previous sentence the minister said:

We on this side of the house have great pride in seeing the Baw Baw C96 amendment come through to provide that certainty for West Gippsland, to provide certainty for 400 jobs in Warragul.

Does Mr Viney dispute that he said that? That is from *Hansard*. Mr Viney can misrepresent people if he likes, but he should not do it in this house where he cannot get away with it. The record speaks for itself. *Hansard* speaks for itself. The minister came into this house. He was asked a question by Mr O'Donohue. The question that Mr O'Donohue asked was:

Can the minister inform the house what action the government has taken to facilitate jobs and investment in West Gippsland?

The minister made an announcement in the house that he had approved a planning scheme amendment, which, as I have reported to the house, the Baw Baw Shire Council worked with the proponent and the minister to facilitate. It is going to be a delight to see that capital investment made, and it will generate 400 jobs. Mr Viney may rant and rave, talk about every other incidental issue that he can think of and drag into this debate a whole range of spurious unrelated matters, but it is hardly relevant to talk about a desalination plant

at Wonthaggi in the discussion about a particular narrow planning scheme amendment at Warragul.

Mr Viney may disagree, but I come back to my opening remarks where I said that like a laser beam Mr Barber got to the issue, which is that Warragul is a great community in which to live. Access to Melbourne for those who migrate to Warragul is pretty comfortable. There are very good commuter rail services to Melbourne.

I have not been updated recently, but my recollection is that the last time I had a look more than 18 per cent of residents in the workforce in Warragul were commuters who work outside the Baw Baw shire area.

Predominantly they work in Melbourne — I think 13 per cent — and the balance work elsewhere throughout Gippsland. That is very obvious first thing in the morning if you happen to be commuting, as I sometimes do, in terms of both the saturation of cars parked at the railway stations at Warragul and Drouin in the Baw Baw shire and, importantly, the traffic on the road, which I have to say is increasing enormously. The reason people move to Warragul is that, as Mr Barber said, it is a low-cost housing option compared to buying a new home in Melbourne.

Mr Barber — But a high-cost transport option.

Mr P. DAVIS — It is one of those interesting things, is it not? If you live next door to your place of work, you can walk to work. If you live down the road a little bit, perhaps you can ride a bicycle. If you live a little further away from your place of work, you have to look at alternative transport arrangements, which would be a motor car or public transport of some sort, and there will be a cost associated with that.

What I hope to see over the long haul is that we progressively improve access to transport to in effect allow people to have that choice, whether it be road or rail. These are chicken-and-egg things. The larger the population — the more the population of Warragul grows — the more demand on the services and the more service provision there will be. At the present time I think most people would regard the commuter options from Warragul as being very satisfactory, and people vote with their feet. I know a lot of people who commute to Melbourne on those early trains.

I am going to conclude my remarks by simply coming back to saying that while I am very tempted to pursue the Trojan Horse that Mr Viney has put out there today to facilitate a wider debate about the general provision of services and economic stimulus to the whole of the Gippsland region, this motion before the house, which

is that the house take note of the minister's answer to a particular question on 21 March concerning the Baw Baw planning scheme, is so narrow in my view as to be limited to speaking about the fact that planning scheme amendment C96 for rezoning in the Baw Baw shire, which is supported and facilitated by the shire council, will generate \$45 million of investment and 400 jobs.

That is outstanding, and the other initiatives taken by the planning minister in the Gippsland region over the last two and a half years have led to a very positive view about the framework for investment in the region. We expect there to be ongoing investment and job creation as a result of the planning scheme amendments. I congratulate the Minister for Planning on being such a decisive minister. He is prepared to be accountable but also to take action on decisions that are required to enable the community to get on with its business. If Mr Viney has a difficulty with that, he should say so. However, from what I heard of Mr Viney's contribution to the debate today, what he was saying was that he would like to be back in government. I wish him well in that endeavour, but he will have to wait a while.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — The simple question asked by Mr O'Donohue on the Thursday of the last sitting week prompted a tirade from the Minister for Planning that left everyone in the house speechless. Quite extraordinarily it was the President who could not bear it any longer and who checked the minister's outburst and brought him back to Mr O'Donohue's question about what action the government was taking to facilitate jobs and investment in West Gippsland.

When you look at the minister's statement and you get past the hyperbole — and there is hyperbole there; Mr Viney pointed it out and Mr Davis cavilled around it — and you look at the basics of it, from my reading of *Hansard* the minister said there are going to be 400 jobs created through a \$45 million investment in a retail centre in West Gippsland. The minister said after that that this is more than Mr Lenders's government ever did in West Gippsland. He was quite clear: this initiative is more than anything that was ever done in West Gippsland by the Labor government over 11 years. It seems absolutely clear to me and absolutely incontrovertible.

Returning to the minister's general comments, when you get past the personal attacks and the slinging off and attempts at sarcasm to diminish opinions and policies that are not to the minister's liking, the Dorothy Dix question from Mr O'Donohue was simply giving the minister an opportunity to talk about

amendment C96 to the Baw Baw planning scheme. Short of all the nonsense in the minister's answer, the simple point he wanted to make was that amendment C96 will bring 400 jobs and a \$45 million retail centre to West Gippsland. On this side we applaud the development, and if what the minister says is true — that is, that there are 400 jobs and a \$45 million investment — we are delighted, but I reiterate and note Mr Viney's observation that the 400 jobs are a projection and that we will have to wait and see. One signed-up tenant for the development is the lowest possible starting point you could have.

Moving to broader matters, as we know, jobs are the single biggest priority of the Labor opposition, and they were the single biggest priority of the Labor government. That is why our record was second to none over our 11-year period in government. During that time Victoria consistently led the nation in job creation, even through the global financial crisis, so the minister's attack on Labor — his temperamental outburst — was entirely misplaced. The government is so starved of positive news on the jobs front that it needs to make a meal out of every morsel that it finds, but while 400 jobs is a very good thing, one swallow does not make a summer.

In Gippsland the single most important fact that is staring the government in the face is that there are 22 000 fewer jobs in Gippsland than there were before the election, and there is no way around that fact. Victorian government investment in Warragul is not the invention of the current government, and the minister will know that a great deal of work was done in the Warragul and West Gippsland area by the previous government.

The explanatory note to the planning scheme amendment points to the projected significant population growth for the shire of West Gippsland, which is amongst the highest in the state, and indicates that this requires significant additional urban land supply. The explanatory note points out that extensive strategic planning has been carried out in Warragul and Drouin over the last 10 years, and of course 8 of those years were during the time of the Labor government. The explanatory note adds that the shire is currently preparing a settlement plan to manage the growth and the development of the whole shire over the next 30 years, into the time of the next Labor government and perhaps a coalition government after that and perhaps another Labor government after that.

For the minister to claim, as he did in his answer to Mr O'Donohue's question, that the current step in this long development stands for the whole exercise and for

him to think that he can claim it for the coalition and try to use it as a stick with which to hit the previous government is quite frankly ridiculous. It is clear that this is an ongoing project. It started during the term of the Labor government and it is being continued by the coalition government.

This project is the same as just about all the other projects that this government associates with; it is a project advanced and developed by Labor and inherited by the coalition. It brings the coalition, and the planning minister in this instance, no credit not to recognise in a mature and straightforward way worthwhile projects that are being collaboratively developed, by the Baw Baw shire in this instance, and that have been inherited from the previous government and from work that has been done by many people.

If a government was confident with its own vision and program, if it was made up of a party that knew why it was in government, and not one such as the present government, which is really an opposition with a series of departments, it would own good projects and it would continue to develop them in the interests of Victoria. To Mr Davis's credit, in his contribution he acknowledged the changes made during the Cain and Kirner governments in relation to energy policy. He acknowledged that those changes were broadly bipartisan, and that is the kind of approach that I would endorse. We need to see more of that and not the hysterical remarks that are typical of the planning minister. By contrast, the posturing of the planning minister is puerile and pathetic. The unnecessary jibes at the former government are unworthy of a Victorian government minister.

To return to the explanatory note for amendment C96 to the Baw Baw planning scheme, we see that back in 2009, well over a year before the 2010 election, the background economic analysis and the Warragul town centre plan predicted that a further 4.4 hectares of land would be needed to accommodate the projected demand for retail space. While the 3-hectare site contained within the Warragul town centre has been zoned for business since 1998, the current initiative is to step this up, and that is of course welcome. The government is to be commended for those things it has done to support good development and job creation in Baw Baw.

The development and growth in Warragul, Drouin and indeed Pakenham is a consequence of the infrastructure investment of the previous Labor government. This has already been referred to in Mr Viney's contribution, but it is important to mention it again. Look at the restoration of the Gippsland rail and the improvements

to the Monash and Princes freeways, in particular the Pakenham bypass. Leaving aside the work we did on education, health services, fire and emergency services, police stations, water management and tourism, as well as the work we did in forging countless business and community partnerships, we also — again I refer to the contribution Mr Viney made on the water factory — created 4000 jobs at the desalination plant and committed to the Warragul railway precinct project. These were major investments that were made over 11 years of the former Labor government. They should not be forgotten, because they underpinned the employment drive that was remarkably successful in Gippsland. The retail centre the minister speaks of for West Gippsland would quite frankly not have been possible without the enhancements to the Monash and Princes freeways and the Pakenham bypass, which was a major achievement.

If I could just digress slightly, another example of this is the 800 additional jobs that will come out of the proposed expansion of G. & K. O'Connor Pty Ltd's abattoir in Pakenham. The planning minister trumpets it, but the expansion is feasible only because of the abattoir's proximity to the Pakenham bypass and hence the easy, fast access it has to the port. This has to be understood in a broad way both historically and also logistically at this point in time. There is absolutely no need for the grandstanding, for the hyperbole, for the personal attacks and for the belittling of previous efforts, which the Minister for Planning seems to think will improve the standing of the coalition in job creation and investment in West Gippsland or anywhere in Victoria.

The Minister for Planning, who is now in the chamber, said in his answer to Mr O'Donohue's question today that the difference between the coalition and Labor is that the coalition believes in growing regional Victoria and in putting actions in place to make things happen, whereas Labor does not share these beliefs and is incapable of acting. This is of course nonsense. Labor's track record speaks volumes for the efforts put in by the previous Labor governments over their 11 years of administration, which coincided with, as I said earlier, the global financial crisis, the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression. The point is that Labor took responsibility for dealing with the circumstances that Victoria faced. We developed a plan to manage the situation, and we delivered results. We invested in Victorian industry and business, we invested in training and skill formation, we invested in services and we invested in infrastructure that would promote the future economy of the state, and through all of this we helped industry and business create jobs, which gave working

families income that sustained them during the crisis and beyond.

Labor kept expenditure under control. We delivered surpluses, and we did not embark on a slash-and-burn austerity program that drove down investment and undermined jobs growth, as this government is doing. There is no better example of how this coalition government's obsession is impacting on Gippsland than the disastrous decision to cut \$290 million per year from the TAFE system on top of the \$100 million that was pulled out in the government's first budget. As a result of this decision GippsTAFE lost around \$10 million — about a third of its budget — and 32 staff were made redundant, around 60 courses were cut, fees were increased and campuses were closed. Advance TAFE faced staff cuts of 45, with 36 courses cut and eight campuses, outreach centres and offices closed.

The fallout from the TAFE cuts ripples through all the businesses, industries and livelihoods right across the community, which is why there has been such a profound reaction to the actions of the government. The government also cut \$30 million from the Chisholm Institute of TAFE, which resulted in the axing of 220 jobs across the Berwick, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Frankston, Mornington Peninsula and Bass Coast campuses. At the end of last month we learnt that the government has purged at least half of Victoria's TAFE board chairpersons, amongst them David Willersdorf, the highly respected chair of Chisholm TAFE. In Mr Willersdorf, Chisholm had a successful business leader as its chair, and he was dumped ostensibly because, as Mr Hall, Minister for Higher Education and Skills, who is now in the chamber, said, the board needed to strengthen its economic credentials to be more commercially focused. It really beggars belief.

As we know, Victoria is contracting. Some say it has slumped into recession, and this is attributed to the collapse in government investment and the slide that has been reported as the worst since 1990–91. We know that this is in part due to the high Australian dollar, but it is also true that households have lowered spending and are paying down debt in reaction to their profound sense of economic insecurity and their concern and mistrust about what the future holds for them.

The other major factor is cuts to government spending — and to be fair I refer to both Victorian and commonwealth government cuts — which has reduced spending on schools, hospitals and transport by 1.5 per cent. Our criticism of the Victorian government is not that it is seeking to rein in spending but that it is doing it

so recklessly. It has failed to keep an eye on the economic and social impacts of its austerity. The funds ripped out of TAFE is a disinvestment that, as I said, not only demoralises citizens who want to get ahead but damages the economy and production. When the Minister for Planning trumpets the success of a land-rezoning package in Warragul he loses sight of the larger picture of what his government is doing through its disastrous cost cutting of public services and its failure to invest in infrastructure.

While the government's attack on TAFE is the starkest example of what is wrong with this government's approach, the shedding of 4200 public service jobs is another example. In West Gippsland where Minister Guy is ecstatic that a possible 400 jobs will be created as a result of the new \$45 million retail sector — and I reiterate the important points Mr Viney made — his government has at the same time slashed funding to the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority resulting in the sacking of 17 staff members. The loss of 17 people may not be very many, but they are highly skilled people, and that slashing of funding at the last budget negatively impacts on the work they do which is about the health of rivers and the environment. Those 17 jobs equates to 17 families. Not only do those 17 people now have to find some other place for their skills to be exercised but there is also a loss to the economy and the environment. The loss of those 17 jobs has an important multiplier effect.

The slow leaching away of jobs in Gippsland has included the loss of 126 jobs at the Drypac meat packaging firm in Warragul, an organisation which Mr Viney spoke eloquently of, and, going back a little, the 114 jobs lost in Moe when the Telstra call centre moved to the Philippines. The 114 people who lost their jobs are still there in Moe. Hopefully they have found some other employment, but those families suffered from the hit that they received two years ago shortly after this government came to office. It is fair enough to say that governments cannot prevent private organisations from making job cuts, but it was this government's failure to respond in a constructive way that is the issue. There is also of course the loss of 60 jobs at McCormack Demby Timber, one of the largest hardwood producers in Victoria, and, as has been mentioned, the announcement by Murray Goulburn last year that around 300 jobs would disappear — a number of them in Gippsland.

Gippsland of course is but one part of Victoria. Every day we see news of companies right across the state closing their operations as they try to consolidate in the face of a government that is prosecuting a crude austerity program at a time when it should be

implementing careful and targeted investment initiatives. After nearly two and a half years in office and at a time when economic pressures require governments to actively engage in economic development and strategic investment that will lead to job creation, this government still has no jobs plan and relies on the borrowed glory of land rezoning and retail projects such as that trumpeted by Minister Guy for West Gippsland, projects that were years in the making and where much of the heavy lifting was done by the Baw Baw Shire in conjunction with the previous Labor government. I commend Mr Viney for calling the house's attention to Mr Guy's remarks in response to Mr O'Donohue's question because we need to expose the superficiality of this minister's response.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — As Mr Scheffer was talking about the Minister for Planning's manner of overselling things and of his personal attacks and vilification of members of the opposition, the minister walked through the house. Not having spent any time in the house during this debate, and without even taking his seat, he started personally attacking Mr Scheffer.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr VINEY — Mr Drum should just listen. He constantly interjects with nonsense. He has not even heard the point I am making, and he is interjecting. As Mr Scheffer was making his comments about the Minister for Planning's behaviour in this chamber, the minister walked through the chamber and, without even taking his seat, started having a go at Mr Scheffer on a personal level. When I called him on that he started having a go at me.

Mrs Coote — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Scheffer, as Mr Viney has said, was on his feet when the Minister for Planning came into the chamber. Mr Scheffer is an adult. In this chamber he knows how to defend himself. I ask you to rule against Mr Viney's point of order. Mr Scheffer could have defended himself.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! There is no point of order. I call Mr Viney to continue.

Mr VINEY — I am not taking a point of order; I am not defending Mr Scheffer's honour. He can do that perfectly well himself. I am pointing out the dishonour shown by the Minister for Planning. The fact that he would do that proves the very point that the opposition is making, that the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, uses his contributions in this place for the purpose of one job, and that is promoting his own career advancement.

He did not use it to answer the question from Mr O'Donohue. He did not use it to express concerns about the 24 000 people who have lost their jobs in Gippsland since this government came to office — going from some 145 000 people to some 120 000 people employed in Gippsland. I quoted the precise figures earlier.

That is the issue. The issue is that Mr Guy uses the chamber to spruik projects and to spruik his own political smarts by using terms for the opposition such as Soviet apparatchiks and so on. He displayed that kind of behaviour in answer to a question about a serious matter — that is, the loss of jobs in Gippsland, in this case in Warragul and West Gippsland. It is fantastic that 400 jobs are proposed to be created on this project in Warragul, if everything goes to plan. The point we have been making is that it flies in the face of the hundreds of jobs that have been lost in Warragul and West Gippsland in the last few months.

The issue we raised here is that the creation of jobs is something that requires careful nurturing. In modern times the creation of jobs in our economy requires careful nurturing across a range of activities, whether it be investment in skills through TAFE colleges or whether it be investment in infrastructure, making our towns more livable or improving public transport like our massive investment into the Gippsland rail line when we were in office. What we are saying is that the lack of attention to that careful nurturing from this government in the two and a half years it has been in office has resulted in Gippsland losing 24 000 jobs. Mr Guy's answer to Mr O'Donohue's question did not touch on the broad issue that employment in this state needs careful nurturing.

He should not be coming in here and spruiking the projects of mates. He should not use the office of minister to spruik projects of supporters of the Liberal Party. That is not the job of a minister. The minister ought to be carefully considering his words and investing in Victoria's future, not attacking the opposition.

Motion agreed to.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (ROOMING HOUSE STANDARDS) BILL 2013

Introduction and first reading

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to ensure that rooming house owners cannot

opt out of the rooming house standards established under the provisions of the act and for other purposes.

Read first time; by leave, ordered to be read second time forthwith.

Statement of compatibility

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 ('charter act'), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rooming House Standards) Bill 2013.

In my opinion, the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rooming House Standards) Bill 2013, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter act.

I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

This bill is a simple amendment to close a loophole in regulations around rooming houses in Victoria. The regulations enacted by the minister and due to come into effect on 31 March may not be able to be effectively enforced due to rooming house owners exploiting the provision of s 91A of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 ('the act'). The amendment seeks to make clear that rooming house owners and residents who enter into tenancy agreements are still bound by any regulations made pursuant to s 142C of the act.

Human rights issues

I do not believe that there are any human rights issues raised by this bill.

Conclusion

I consider that the bill is compatible with the charter act because it does not limit any human right protected by the charter act.

Brian Tee, MLC
Member for Eastern Metropolitan Region

Second reading

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill closes a loophole created by the government when it introduced minimum standards for rooming houses in 2012.

Specifically, the bill seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to amend section 94(1A) to ensure that rooming house owners cannot opt out of the

rooming house standards. Currently, section 94(1A) of the act allows for rooming house provisions to not apply where a tenancy agreement has been entered into by a resident and a rooming house owner in respect of a room in a rooming house.

The bill seeks to correct this glaring oversight on the part of the government which provides an 'escape hatch' for dodgy or rogue rooming house owners to avoid complying with the minimum standards as set out in regulations due to take effect on 21 March this year. This situation could effectively deny vulnerable residents basic standards of safety and amenity the rest of us take for granted.

Despite the government's loud pronouncements when in opposition that it would do everything necessary to drive rogue rooming house owners out of the industry, it has fallen well short in government by enacting only some of the recommendations of the Foley report of 2010. Not only have they gone back on their word, the government has botched changes to the law by allowing this gaping loophole to exist.

Labor's bill will provide that if a tenancy agreement is entered into by a resident and a rooming house owner in respect of a room in a rooming house, the rooming house provisions do not apply to the occupation of that room by that resident while the tenancy agreement continues save for any standards established by any regulations made pursuant to section 142C, and the obligation of the rooming house owner to comply with those standards including under section 142B.

The Public Interest Law Clearing House homeless persons' legal clinic and the Tenants Union of Victoria identified this legislative deficiency in a joint submission made on 24 December 2012 to the Coroners Court of Victoria regarding a coronial inquest.

The bill is time sensitive with regulations due to take effect on 31 March this year.

The opposition will not stand by and allow the law to continue to exist in its current deficient state and calls on the government to support the bill.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 1 May.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house calls on the Napthine government to fund its outstanding election commitments when it delivers its 2013–14 state budget.

This is an important motion because it is the last opportunity this chamber has to call on the government to honour its election commitments. It is worth noting that we are starting from what is a very low base. We have a government that was elected to, in its own words, 'fix the problems'. Instead we have seen a continual decline in and a continual strangulation of the Victorian economy. We have seen Victorian families suffering — and they will continue to suffer — at the hands of this government. We have seen unemployment rise slowly but steadily; Victoria's unemployment rate is now the second highest in the country. We have seen industries like the manufacturing industry being decimated. We have seen the construction industry on its knees. We know that the construction industry is a major employer; in fact it is the second largest employer in the state.

The coalition has not only failed to fix the problems as per its election commitment, but in a bizarre twist it has seen things get worse, due principally to inaction and to a failure to deliver infrastructure projects. The failure of the government to act has resulted in more congestion and has seen companies, including those in the construction industry, slowly but surely leave the state. We do not have a pipeline of infrastructure investments that we saw under previous governments of both political persuasions. We have a gap in infrastructure investment by this government, which means that the skills and the jobs are moving interstate or, indeed, are completely disappearing. In the first nine months of 2012 alone 33 000 construction jobs were lost.

In the past year 31 jobs were lost each day. Each day 31 families have been left to struggle to pay their bills and 31 families have lost an income earner to help pay the bills. The government's promise to fix the problems is now sounding very hollow to those families. The government's failure to provide an infrastructure plan and an infrastructure pipeline, and the jobs and the security that come with that, is a cruel blow to many of those families. The government's failure to take the jobs issue seriously and its failure to provide any sort of job plan are a terrible blow to those families. Instead of an infrastructure plan and a jobs plan, all that Victorian families are seeing is more and more road congestion, fewer and fewer transport services and its members struggling to pay the bills.

We have seen a government that promised to fix the problems in the health sector overseeing a system that is in crisis. We have seen hospitals closing wards, we have seen emergency departments sending patients away and we have seen a cut of some \$600 million from the health system. Instead of fixing the problems, there has been a gutting of the health budget and \$600 million being ripped out of the system. The price that has been paid for that neglect has been paid by Victorian families. Elective surgery waiting lists are at an all-time high: 55 000 Victorians are waiting to get the services that they need to live comfortably and to address their ongoing health issues.

Box Hill Hospital, in my electorate, is struggling to survive with these budget cuts. It has the second longest waiting list, with 2865 people on that list. We have about 7.6 patients per 100 who have had their elective surgery cancelled or postponed. We have 8 per cent of ambulance transfer times that are below the 90 per cent state target. Nearly 40 per cent of category 3 emergency patients are not being seen in the required time, which is 14 per cent below the state target. So instead of fixing the problems, we have seen a massive cut to the health budget that has delivered for Box Hill Hospital and hospitals right across the state slower response times, more people on elective surgery waiting lists and greater suffering out in the community.

The government promised that it would cut elective surgery waiting lists. It promised that it would reduce waiting times in emergency departments. It promised 800 new beds in the hospital system. After two and a half years and this government's first two budgets, we have yet to see any evidence of those 800 new beds. There is not one extra bed added to the system as far as we can tell and as far as the community can tell. This budget will be an important measure of the government's commitment to the health system, its commitment to restoring some dignity to the lives of people who are unwell and to restoring some hope to those who are in need of our health system.

Since this government was elected we have seen an increase in unemployment. As I said earlier, we now have the second highest unemployment rate in the country and the highest of any mainland state. But the impact of this has really been felt by young people; in Victoria we now have a youth unemployment rate of 18 per cent. The government's response has been to slash funding to the TAFE system. This impacts across the board but in particular in regional Victoria.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr TEE — Mr Barber, it has come at a time when more than ever we need to match skills with jobs and to give our young people the opportunity to have careers and jobs. At a time when we need to give young people the skills they need so they can fit into the employment market, at a time when youth unemployment is at 18 per cent, what this government has done is cut, cut, cut. We have seen the closure of Swinburne University of Technology's Lilydale campus and cuts to its Croydon campus, and Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE is selling its Greensborough campus, so these cuts are having a real impact in terms of where young people can go to get the skills they need to fit into the jobs they need.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Mr TEE — Mr Hall, this is in stark contrast to the growth we saw under the previous government. What people out there are witnessing is these campuses closing down and courses no longer being offered, and it makes it harder and harder for young people to fit into a system which is shrinking.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Mr TEE — The other impact of your cuts, Mr Hall, is an increase in fees, making it harder for disadvantaged people to get into these courses and to get these opportunities. Then of course at the management level we are seeing the structure unravel. We have seen the chairs of over half the TAFE boards sacked. We have a tsunami of high youth unemployment — 18 per cent — and an economy in recession, and the government's response is to make cuts that have seen campuses close, fees increase and fewer courses being offered. In a sense the government is creating a perfect storm. We know what is at risk here: the lives of those young kids who might not have an opportunity without TAFE. We on this side are worried about those young people who might fall through the cracks because they no longer have the TAFE system to pick them up and give them the skills they need to find employment.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Mr TEE — Mr Hall might protest, but the truth is campuses are closing, courses are being cut and fees are going up. There are few opportunities, and even fewer opportunities for those who do not have the funds to get into the courses that are being provided.

Another example is the School Focused Youth Service, which makes sure that 10 to 18-year-olds — vulnerable children — are connected to the services they need. It is about making sure that kids who are struggling are

connected to the services they need so they do not drop out of school. It is about making sure that young kids with a disability can stay in school because they have the support and the services they need. In my electorate alone the program helped some 9000 students last year. The service's funding runs out at the end of June and it may well then disappear. This debate is an opportunity to draw a line in the sand and make sure that the most vulnerable kids — those who are likely to drop out of school and those who are living with a disability — do not fall through the cracks because they are not connected to the support and the services they need. This is not an expensive program — it costs about \$119 per student — but it is just another example of the glaring gap between the promise to fix the problems and the actions being taken which are making the problems worse.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr TEE — You can talk the talk, Mr Drum, but when are you going to walk the walk? When are you going to put in place the services — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr TEE — These services were funded by the former government without any — —

Mr DRUM — You had 11 years.

Mr TEE — Yes, and these services were in place. We saw a massive growth in TAFEs and a massive expansion in services to look after the most vulnerable, and you are saying, 'Oh no, that's okay — we'll cut those services, we'll leave the most vulnerable people to fall through the cracks?'

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr TEE — Particularly in regional Victoria, Mr Drum. I hope that at least in your caucus you are pointing out the impact that these cuts are having on regional Victorians, Mr Drum.

I turn now to aged care. Even the most vulnerable in the community are at risk when it comes to this government. We have seen the closure of 179 public sector aged-care beds. We have been told that there might be cuts of some \$75 million to public sector residential aged care. Home and community care (HACC) services across the state have seen a 2 per cent cut. Despite the fact that we have an ageing population, we have seen bed closures, and cuts to residential aged care and HACC funding.

Instead of fixing the problem and supporting those people who have contributed all their lives, those opposite are cutting the funding put in place by the previous government. Those opposite ask, 'What did the previous government do?'. We put services in place. We funded them appropriately. We looked after young people. We looked after those in aged-care facilities. Government members are now going through each of these supports, one by one, and cutting them, affecting some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Kids are going to fall through the cracks. People who are getting older, those who are vulnerable and those who need our health services have been targeted by this government. Members opposite sit there and say, 'What did you do in government?'. In government we provided those services and we funded them. What are members opposite doing in government? They are cutting those services. Who has been affected? It is the most vulnerable in our community.

Nadrasca community farm, in my electorate, provides a great support service for some of our most vulnerable people, such as people living with a disability. This government was elected on a promise to keep this farm as open space; it was keeping this reserve as open space. VicRoads is now undertaking consultation to try to turn this open space into a housing development. The government is trying to convince the Nadrasca community farm that it ought to move; discussions are under way to try to get it to move. People at the Nadrasca farm do not want to move and nor should they have to. All they want is for this government to honour its election promise, which was made very loudly and clearly in the lead-up to the election, that this farm and the Healesville freeway reserve will be kept as open space.

Members opposite are not only wriggling away from that commitment but they have turned their backs on it. They are out there trying to convince the community that building housing on this open space is a good idea. They are trying to convince the farm and those very vulnerable people on it that they need to move when they do not want to. This government was elected on a promise that Nadrasca would not have to move. All of a sudden that commitment has disappeared.

Funding for education and schools in my electorate has not been delivered. Templestowe College was promised \$5 million, which has not been delivered. Blackburn Primary School was promised \$3.8 million, which has not been delivered. Boronia Heights Primary School was promised \$15 million for new classrooms, which has not been delivered. The government has been in

office for two years and my electorate is still waiting to see Rowville police station operating 24/7 as promised.

This is a timely motion as it is the last sitting week before the budget; it is an important motion. We are seeking that the government do no more than honour its election commitments. We think those opposite should have no problem supporting a motion that does no more than ask the government to do what it promised the electorate hand on heart it would do. While Victoria is in recession and the youth unemployment rate is at 18 per cent, when young people cannot get a job and the Victorian unemployment rate has crept up to be the second highest in the country, it is not the time to cut the support and services needed by the most vulnerable in our community, whether they are struggling students, older Victorians or those in need of our health services.

When the economy is in recession we need to make sure for the sake of business and those wanting a job that we educate our young people so that they have the skills they need to connect to the jobs that are out there. That has never been more important now that we have a shrinking job market. It has never been more important to make sure that we have the infrastructure and projects in place and to instil confidence in the development and business community that there are a stream of projects in the pipeline so that they hold onto their staff.

At the moment the business community tells us it needs to let go of employees because there is nothing in the pipeline. There are no infrastructure projects, so a lot of those jobs are disappearing. We have seen businesses move from working full time to nine-day fortnights. Increasingly they feel they have no alternative but to let go of their staff. This is a critical budget. I hope the government can deliver on its promises. I hope it can deliver some confidence to the business community and to Victorian families who very much feel that they were neglected in the last two budgets.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — It is always a pleasure to rise in this place and follow on from Mr Tee because he tends to be very strong on motherhood statements and very short on detail. Yet again Mr Tee gave us motherhood statements about the fact that the government does not have a jobs plan. I would like to know what *Securing Victoria's Economy* is. If that is not a jobs plan, what is it? It sets out exactly where the Victorian economy is at the moment. It sets out a range of initiatives that this government is putting in place in order to secure our future. We have seen the biggest trade missions ever. Ministers have been to India and China twice, as well as to the Middle East and Japan. The Minister for Employment and Trade is continually

working with overseas markets. If that is not a jobs plan, I do not know what is.

This is a cheap and pathetic attempt by the opposition to try to pick up on unemployment rates when it knows very well what the impact of the high Australian dollar has been. The opposition has latched onto every piece of bad news that has hit Australia during a time when we face extremely high competition from our competitors. We are an exporting nation. I am sure Mr Tee and others in the Labor Party do not need me to give them a 101 lesson on these issues. It is just nonsense to suggest that somehow or other this is our fault. Labor had 11 years to put a framework in place, during which time debt and spending spiralled through the roof to unacceptable levels and the projection of debt in the forward estimates put this state in a difficult position.

Mr Tee spent a large part of his contribution talking about the TAFE sector and training. Yet at the time Labor lost office it had allocated \$850 million in its budget that it claimed it would spend on training in this state in the out years. The Labor Party told Victorians that it was going to spend \$850 million on training in the out years. Labor got that wrong by about \$400 million, but it wants Victorians to forget about that; it wants Victorians to gloss over that. I think financial management and Labor should never be mentioned in the same sentence.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Housing: public official access

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Housing. Is the recent decision to restrict access by public officials to public housing towers a decision she made as minister or a decision of her department?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for her question. What I can confirm for her is that early last year I did ask the department to review its policies relating to access to common areas of the housing estates and also to the secure areas of the housing estates. This followed an increase in complaints from tenants regarding their concerns about people who were doorknocking in secure areas. This included stuffing pamphlets into doors, which alerted people to the fact that no-one was at home. Tenants also raised concerns about not being able to access community rooms for social, recreational and cultural activities due to bookings from people from outside the

estate. Early this year a flyer was distributed advertising meetings in rooms that the department required for its Cooler Places program.

Policies were developed back in 2007 under the then Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne, the member for Richmond in the Assembly. These policies existed and they controlled access to mailrooms and also the type of activities that could take place in the common areas. However, the department had not been terribly vigilant about enforcing the guidelines established by Minister Wynne. But if we look back to 2007, we see that media reports on three occasions — in November 2007, August 2007 and again in October 2008 — highlighted that the Greens were denied access to the mailrooms under Richard Wynne. This article states:

Housing minister Richard Wynne wrote to Mr Barber last month announcing a new system in which the delivery of political information to high-rise estate residents would need to be 'negotiated'.

That was Labor's position: that the Greens needed to negotiate with it in order to have access to the housing estates. The Socialists also had concerns and difficulties in accessing the housing estate. What was Mr Wynne's answer to them? It was to put it in the post. He said that all political representatives had access to the electoral roll and could personally address material to residents. In August 2007 the now federal member for Melbourne, Mr Bandt, was refused access to the mailrooms on an estate. An article from that time refers to the department's new guidelines, and it says:

Political parties wanting to communicate outside of election periods can do so through Australia Post.

The guidelines that have been implemented recently by the department are not even that tough. Mr Barber asked the department last week for access to the mailrooms, and he was given access to those mailrooms despite the department having concerns about some of the material contained in his pamphlet.

The department recently published its new guidelines, which clarify access to secure mailrooms — which is less strict than it was under Labor — as well as activities in common areas and community facilities, and the department made it clear that access to secure areas is only available to tenants who have swipe card access or to visitors who tenants invite to their apartments. This is consistent with access to all private apartment buildings that have swipe card access.

I am aware that the opposition and the Greens have raised some concerns about the new guidelines, in particular access to the community rooms. I stand by the department's guidelines for access to secure areas

and the mailrooms and activities in the common areas. However, I have asked the department to conduct a further review of access to community rooms that will allow these facilities to be used by groups from outside the housing estate, providing that it does not interfere with the tenants' use of these rooms or the department's needs.

Supplementary question

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — If it was the minister's decision, a decision she has now informed the house that she took advice on from her department, why did she say in a radio interview on Thursday, 4 April, that she was not responsible and that the decision was a department policy?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I did not say I was not responsible. I said these were department policies, and they are department policies. As I said, I asked the department to review its policies based on complaints from tenants. The department reviewed its policies and has published new guidelines. Concerns have been raised about access to community rooms. Those community rooms are provided for the use of tenants for their cultural, recreational and social activities and also for very important programs like Cooler Places. I have asked the department to review the guidelines to make the community rooms available for people from outside the estate providing they do not interfere with the tenants' use of those rooms or the department's need for those rooms to provide important programs like Cooler Places.

TAFE sector: governance

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. Can the minister update the house on any important developments with respect to the governance of TAFE institutes?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Ms Crozier for her question and her interest in vocational training in Victoria. If members were observant yesterday, they would have seen amongst the list of papers tabled in the Parliament was a list of the 14 stand-alone TAFE institutes' new constitutions. These are very important documents which establish exactly what the role of each of those 14 TAFE institutes is. Members of the opposition should be familiar with that legislative process given that it started in 2010 under the previous government. It put in place a process that would see the reconstituting and therefore the reappointment of all TAFE governing

boards. Legislation passed by this Parliament last year finalised that process.

Yesterday there were a couple of significant milestones in terms of governing TAFE institutes. There was the tabling of constitutions, and I also had the pleasure yesterday afternoon, after Governor in Council approval, of announcing the chairs of the 14 stand-alone TAFE institutes in Victoria, who are all very capable people.

I want to put on record the new chairs: for Advance TAFE, Scott Rossetti, for Bendigo TAFE, Margaret O'Rourke, for Box Hill Institute of TAFE, Suzanne Ewart, for Chisholm Institute of TAFE, Steven Marks, for GippsTAFE, John Mitchell, for GOTAFE, Michael Tehan, for Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, Peter Lewinsky, for Kangan Institute of TAFE, Michael Brown, for Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT), John Gibbins, for South West TAFE, Mike Weise, for SuniTAFE, Leonie Barrows, for Gordon TAFE, Brian Williamson, for William Angliss Institute, Michele Allan, and for Wodonga TAFE, Tony Brandt. Each of these people is very capable, but it seems to me that the opposition has been having a bit of a crack in the last week or so since they were announced, suggesting that some of them were not the best people to occupy those particular positions. If that is still the case, opposition members should say so now if they do not think they are appropriate people; they should name them.

In its crack at this process last week it is interesting that the opposition suggested I was walking around the state sacking co-chairs of TAFE councils. Nothing could be further from the truth. The legislation requires the reappointment of every single TAFE council, and each of those positions was awarded on merit. I do not think the opposition was very sincere when its members did this, because at one particular stage the shadow minister, Steve Herbert, the member for Eltham in the Assembly, had a press release running all around the state for each of those chairs being occupied by somebody different. Their names were published on the ALP website, but now only two remain on the ALP website. It seems Labor has retracted many of those names; and perhaps there should be an explanation as to why that would be. The two that sit there at the moment are Chisholm TAFE and Box Hill TAFE. Holmesglen TAFE and NMIT were quickly withdrawn, as were others.

I say to the opposition that if it has a problem with those who the Governor in Council has appointed to those positions, it should let me know now. I also want to say that as part of this process the legislation requires

me to appoint the first half of those TAFE councils and then consult with those councils on the balance of those boards. I inform members that the interim appointments that I have made without exception are existing members of boards prior to the changes that occurred yesterday. It is not that I am throwing all those people out; it is that I am recognising they have made a great contribution and, apart from two cases, previous chairs have accepted my invitation to continue. I thank them for it. I thank them for their new endeavours to ensure that TAFE institutes will be well led by new boards that are being appointed.

Schools: special religious instruction

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills in his capacity as the representative in this chamber of the Minister for Education under standing order 8.01. On 12 October last year I asked him a question about a memo sent to schools by the department regarding supervision of students who do not attend special religious instruction (SRI). This followed a change in approach from parents having to opt out of special religious instruction to requiring principals to obtain advice from parents as to whether or not they wish their children to attend SRI, including the use of the consent form GC566. My question is: is the department monitoring compliance with the original memo and the requirement of principals to obtain parental permission, and how?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I note Ms Pennicuik has asked me this question in my capacity as the representative of the Minister for Education. Because it is Ms Pennicuik's birthday, but also because she gave me notice 1 hour ago that this question was to be asked, I will attempt to answer it in this way. I did check up on this question, and the *Hansard* record shows the matter was raised on 12 October 2011, so this particular matter was raised 18 months ago. In the last hour I have tried to seek an exact answer to her question. I do not think what has just arrived for me is an exact answer, so it is a question I will need to take on notice, given it is for the Minister for Education. I give a commitment to the birthday girl that I will get back to her from the minister in due course.

Supplementary question

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Sorry, Minister, I had the year wrong but the date right. Therefore the department has had 18 months to monitor how this is going. When the minister is following this matter up with the Minister for Education could he also

ask the minister if the department is also monitoring how parents are made aware that they actually have to opt in rather than opt out?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I will certainly include the requested information in the answer that I will seek from the Minister for Education.

Planning: Geelong regional growth plan

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Planning, and I ask: can the minister inform the house what action the government has taken to plan for sustainable growth of the Geelong-Barwon region?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr O'Brien for his very important question. The greater Geelong region, and of course the area around that G21 area, the Barwon region, is no longer simply viewed as Victoria's second-largest city but as Australia's twelfth-largest city. What we are seeing is the growth of a major Australia powerhouse, both in sustainability terms and economic terms, and of course in population terms.

It was my pleasure to be with Andrew Katos, the member for South Barwon in the Assembly, at the launch of the G21 regional growth plan. This is the first regional growth plan that the government has launched and it is very significant indeed. Importantly it identifies residential land supply across the region for the next 30 to 40 years to accommodate population growth from around 300 000 to around 500 000 people. It identifies employment land to accommodate around 80 000 new jobs over the 40-year life of the regional growth plan. It strengthens and protects existing major employment zones, including at central Geelong, Corio, Lara, Avalon Airport, the port of Geelong, Armstrong Creek, Torquay, Jan Juc, Ocean Grove and of course Colac. Importantly the growth plan has a great focus in identifying areas which will be future and indeed current agricultural areas which are going to be so important for the future development of the Geelong-Barwon region.

This document will also significantly enhance our natural and landscape assets, including the Otway Ranges, the You Yangs Regional Park, the Bellarine Peninsula, the Great Ocean Road, the Otway coast and the Barrabool Hills.

This document has gone through a range of consultations since it was released in August 2011. As I said, there has been consultation, discussion, the

drafting of the document and discussion with all the councils — Queenscliffe, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Colac Otway and Golden Plains — all of which had their mayors representing them at the launch of this document to set the scene strategically for the future of the Greater Geelong region over the next 40 years.

Represented in this chamber by Mr O'Brien, Mr Koch and Mr Ramsay, this area of Victoria is seeing its best years well and truly coming ahead of it. As I said, what we are seeing in the Greater Geelong region is the growth of a major city of Australia in the future now beginning its journey as that city of the future. Greater Geelong has a huge amount to offer, and not just from the beautiful township lifestyles of places like Winchelsea or places along the Bellarine Peninsula. It has a great future ahead of it as an economically sustainable city and as a city with outlying towns and regions coming together to work in an area that has world-class beaches, magnificent schools and growth areas in Geelong that can accommodate nearly 150 000 people.

This government is putting more and more money into the regional rail link project to ensure that we can get people commuting between Melbourne and Geelong more quickly. That project is going to be delivered not only on time but in a framework where we will see a greater level of efficiency between Victoria's two largest cities.

Mr Ondarchie — And the football team.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I will make no comment on the football team. The Premier has made plenty of comments about the football team, as has Mr Ondarchie.

I would simply say that Geelong is a city that has its greatest years ahead of it. On this side of the house this government wants to see Geelong fully realise its potential as a great city. That is why we have done the work in this regional growth plan, work that was denied and was never delivered by the previous government; it was ignored by 11 years of Labor. As a government we set out to get these regional growth plans to happen, and unlike any other government we have delivered them.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thought we were going to get through that answer without a reference to Geelong's football team. I am looking at whether there is snow available yet for my football team.

TAFE sector: board appointments

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is addressed to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. I listened to his answer to the Dorothy Dixer asked earlier with some interest. Can the minister confirm that he had contacted each of the TAFE board chairs to advise them that they had been sacked prior to the information being made available to the media?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — First of all, I want to absolutely reject the terminology used by Mr Lenders, where he suggested that I had gone around sacking them. The legislation meant that boards had to be reappointed for each of the TAFE institutes, and that is a process I undertook. Did I consult with all of the TAFE chairs prior to the information being made publicly available? I had met 13 of the 14 existing TAFE chairs at that time, prior to any media commentary on this particular matter. I assure the member that it was not of my doing that the content of conversations that I may have had with the previous 13 chairs seemed to become the subject of media attention; it was not of my doing.

Mr Lenders would know that I am at least a respectful person, and I thought it my duty to meet with those 14 people individually prior to anything being made public or any recommendations the government might make, so I endeavoured to do that. As I said, there was some media attention prior to me meeting with the 14 stand-alone chairs at that particular time. Beyond that, there were two TAFE chairs who due to certain circumstances — one of them was overseas — I was not able to meet face to face, but I personally contacted all of those people and spoke to them.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — We may be debating semantics on whether someone losing their job is sacked or not reappointed, but I will let that pass.

I thank the minister for his answer, but how does he account for the fact that at least one TAFE board chair found out that he had been sacked by hearing a radio news report of it while driving to the minister's office on the afternoon of Thursday, 28 March?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thought I made it very clear. By the way, I drove to the TAFE institute to meet with the chair of that particular institute. That was a scheduled appointment, and its time suited both that TAFE chair

and me. Those appointments were all locked in sometime prior to that, and as I said in my answer to Mr Lenders's question, it was not of my doing that information was conveyed to the media by some person. I do not know who that person was — it certainly was not me or anyone from my office — and it was entirely inappropriate when I had not personally met each of the TAFE chairs, which, as I said before, I endeavoured to do.

I apologise sincerely to that person. It was not something of my making, but it was something that I felt was most improper, and I will be angry if I ever find out who the person was who conveyed that information to the media.

Aviation industry: pilot training

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I direct a question without notice to the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry. Can the minister update the house on Victoria's pilot training sector?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry) — I thank Mr Davis for his question and for his interest in what is an important part of the Victorian aviation and aerospace industry and an important export market for the Victorian economy.

Both Boeing and Airbus forecast that by 2030 there will be demand for around 30 000 new commercial airlines, and within the Asia-Pacific region around 12 000 will be required over that same time frame. Of course this creates enormous demand for cabin crew and for pilots over the next two decades, and Victoria is particularly well located to meet some of that demand in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the same time we are also seeing major reform take place in aviation in China, with the Chinese government announcing that it is deregulating a lot of its currently military airspace and making that available for civilian aviation operations. That too is creating enormous demand for pilot training. We are well located in our region, where there is substantial demand coming out of China and substantial demand coming out of India, and Victoria is very well placed to meet this demand. We are a market which is regarded as having particularly good infrastructure — the best infrastructure in Australia — and the Victorian government, through the Regional Aviation Fund, is committed to further upgrading that airport infrastructure which is used by our flying training sector. We have good weather, we have benign terrain and we have low congestion in our airspace around

Melbourne and Victoria, which is also particularly suitable for pilot training.

In addition to that, Australia is regarded at an international level as having a very solid regulatory environment which is respected around the world, and that means that a pilots licence gained in Australia is well regarded by markets in China and India. In Victoria we have a very strong Chinese community and a very strong Indian community, both of which are welcoming to students from those respective markets. We have all the building blocks in place for very strong growth in our flying training market.

I am pleased to report to the house that Victoria is already kicking goals in this marketplace. We have companies such as CAE Oxford based at Moorabbin Airport. I was delighted in 2011 to open its new headquarters at Moorabbin, which is now providing flying training to Vietnam Airlines and providing flying training to Jetstar Asia. We have companies like Tristar Aviation, also at Moorabbin, providing pilot training in the Indian market. There are companies like Singapore Technologies located in Ballarat, which is providing pilot training in the Chinese market.

Last week I was delighted to be in Mangalore with Moorabbin Flight Training Academy, which is based in Mangalore but named for Moorabbin. Moorabbin Flight Training Academy is providing flight training to students from China Southern Airlines. That school has now trained more than 200 students from China Southern Airlines over the last seven years, and it has been operating from Mangalore. I was delighted on the super trade mission to China in September to meet some of those pilots who are now flying between Australia and China and who were trained in Victoria, so it is a great success story for Victoria.

Many of these companies that are now operating in the export market have participated on Victorian government super trade missions, be they missions to China or missions to India. They have seen the benefits of participating in those missions, and indeed we expect further announcements of the international training opportunities which arise from those missions. The Victorian government is committed to working with those companies and committed to growing what is a very important export opportunity for the Victorian economy and for the aviation industry.

Housing: public official access

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Housing. Will the Department of Human Services guidelines restricting access to public

housing by members of Parliament impair the minister's ability to do her job, or does not she believe that it is necessary to meet with people living in public housing on public housing estates?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — As I said in my earlier answer, I have asked the department to review those guidelines. They are the department's guidelines, but I have asked it to review them given the concerns that have been raised. They will be reviewed, and we will see the final guidelines when that happens.

Supplementary question

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — In light of the minister's answer, can she guarantee that the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, will not be prevented from accepting an invitation to attend a tenant meeting on the Atherton Gardens estate on 24 April because of her ban?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I await the department's review of these guidelines. They are its guidelines. I await its review, and we will see the outcome.

Aboriginal affairs: health initiatives

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My question is to my colleague Mr David Davis in his capacity as Minister for Health, and I ask: can the minister inform the house of recent government initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question and for his longstanding interest in Aboriginal communities in Victoria. Many of our country members have strong links with the various Aboriginal communities around our state. I know Mr Koch has had a long association with the western side of the state and knows many of the Aboriginal communities in that area.

I was very proud to join the Premier in Geelong at the Geelong Football Club — and we were talking about football clubs just before — for the announcement by the government of \$61.7 million in Closing the Gap money. Let me be quite clear about how this operates. This is a national partnership agreement: commonwealth money and state money. The money finishes on 30 June. This is a pre-budget announcement because it is an announcement we regard as being of some significance. The \$61.7 million is an increase in funding for Aboriginal health in Victoria. It is important that the commonwealth now matches that

money and puts significant resources on the table to match that significant increase in funding. We know the Closing the Gap objectives are very important because they directly reflect a lower standard of health of many Aboriginal Victorians and indeed Aboriginal Australians. It is critical that there are significant resources to achieve health outcomes that will address many of the key challenges.

I was proud to be joined at that launch by Aboriginal members of the Geelong Football Club. I welcome the strong initiative of Geelong through its support of the Deadly Choices program for stronger Aboriginal health outcomes. The focus is on what can be done in a preventive way to ensure that Aboriginal health is improved statewide. I think the example of key footballers from Geelong is something that is important. With the Aboriginal community, as with the broader Australian community, role models are also very important. Geelong should be commended on its preparedness to sign up to a reconciliation action plan and its preparedness to look at how it can work with Aboriginal communities in the Barwon south-west region. However, this is a broader statewide story, and I know Mr Jennings would support very much what I am saying here.

I was also pleased to be joined by Jill Gallagher, the chair of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO). Its ongoing role is very important. I welcome the commentary by VACCHO in its news release where it welcomed the government's investment. The news release lays out some key priorities for the state and commonwealth governments.

I know VACCHO very strongly supports the Victorian government's request to the commonwealth that it come forward and match that money. We are concerned that the Closing the Gap money at a commonwealth level will not be renewed in its entirety. We want to be sure that the Victorian Aboriginal health money remains and that it increases. We want to be sure that that our Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations are able to go on with the very good work they are doing around the state. I indicate to the chamber that I have written to the federal ministers — to Warren Snowdon, the Minister for Indigenous Health, as well as Tanya Plibersek, the Minister for Health — to seek their support in this matter.

What is also important here is the support of other organisations, not just VACCHO. I welcome the support of the Victorian Council of Social Service in its news release welcoming the government's commitment

to the Closing the Gap Aboriginal health outcomes. I will quote from it. It states:

We now need the federal government and COAG to commit to the national partnership agreement on closing the gap in indigenous health, as the current funding agreement is set to expire on 30 June 2013.

I also welcome the support of the Australian Medical Association and other key groups across the state. This is something that I think is beyond party politics. It is something that has broad support in Victoria.

Housing: public official access

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Housing. Has the minister received legal advice about the new guidelines that restrict access by public officials to public housing towers, as updated on 18 March 2013?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — Ms Broad keeps asking questions about the same thing, and I am going to keep giving her the same answer. This was a review by the department of access to areas that it controls. The department has reviewed those guidelines. The department has actually lessened the guidelines when it comes to access to the secure mailrooms. The access to secure areas for doorknocking is no different to what it is in private apartment buildings. If you live in the Eureka Tower, you have secure access to the building, and I believe Ms Broad actually lives in an apartment where there is secure access. You need a swipe card to get in and people cannot access those buildings for doorknocking.

Tenants raised concerns. They raised concerns not only about people knocking on their doors but about pamphlets being shoved in their doors, which alerted people to the fact that they were not home. One tenant rang into the ABC last week and said some of the materials and people who were doorknocking were aggressive, and they were upset about it. This was a review by the department. The department is looking at these areas. It will review the access to the community facilities, which are private facilities owned by the director of housing. We will see the outcome of that review when it is finished.

Supplementary question

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — Sections 16 and 18(1) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 protect the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs and the right to freedom of expression. Has the minister been advised or not as to whether the guidelines breach the Victorian

charter of human rights, or does she not think the charter is relevant?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — The charter also includes privacy rights. I support the department's right to protect tenants and their right to be safe and secure in their apartment buildings. Secure access was introduced for a reason; it was to give these tenants the same safety and security that residents enjoy in private apartment buildings, and it should be upheld.

Ballarat: work and learning centre

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the Honourable Wendy Lovell. Can the minister update the house on the work and learning centre initiative and the recent opening of the new work and learning centre in Ballarat?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing interest in the people of Ballarat, particularly those who are disadvantaged and who need assistance to participate in work and in learning. Last week I was delighted to join the member, together with Tony Nicholson from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Janet Ward, the manager of the Ballarat work and learning centre, and Wendy Draayers, who is the executive officer of the Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network, to officially open the Ballarat work and learning centre, which is located at the Phoenix P-12 Community College. This work and learning centre is delivered through a partnership with the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre, the Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Victorian state government.

So far the Ballarat work and learning centre has had 30 participants register for its services, and 2 have already gained employment, which is a fantastic result for those 2 participants. We met Duop Reath, a Sudanese refugee, who is boosting his skills at the work and learning centre. We also met participants in pre-accredited hospitality training who on the day we were there were busy undertaking their course. The centre has links with key employment agencies and is expected to help 200 people gain employment. This will be a fantastic result for the Ballarat community.

The Ballarat work and learning centre is part of a \$4.6 million election commitment that has delivered five work and learning centres across the state at Geelong, Carlton, Moe, Ballarat and Shepparton. The work and learning centres target public housing tenants

and the disadvantaged in our communities to assist them to participate in education and training and ultimately to enter the workforce. More than 600 clients have registered at the five centres so far, and 200 have already gained employment. This is an outstanding achievement for those 200 individuals who are gaining the confidence to participate in the workforce and also the ability to build a better life for themselves and for their families.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 2268, 8164, 8587, 8602-81, 8734-6, 8752, 8769, 8770, 8772-97, 8800-968, 8970, 8992, 8994-9003, 9013, 9015, 9016, 9018-198, 9200-4, 9206-11, 9213, 9215-19, 9221, 9222, 9225, 9227-33, 9237, 9238, 9240-51, 9254, 9376-90, 9397, 9400, 9404.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I seek an explanation for a non-answered question that was asked some time ago, in February 2012. If possible, I would like to direct the question to our almost-new Department of Justice minister, Mr O'Donohue.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr O'Donohue has not yet been commissioned by the Governor, and it is my view that he is therefore not in a position to take questions in that capacity. I suggest Ms Pulford direct her query to the Leader of the Government.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you for your assistance, President. My difficulty in knowing where to direct this question can perhaps be explained by the fact the question was asked of the former Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations for the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services. It is a little hard to get an answer when everybody keeps shifting jobs. It is question 8215, and it relates to the very important matter of an election promise made by the government, and the promise to —

Hon. D. M. Davis — What is the question number?

Ms PULFORD — It is question 8215 from 7 February 2012, so I have been reasonably patient. I seek an indication from the Leader of the Government, in the absence of any other clear line of responsibility on this, as to when I might expect an answer.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I will certainly follow this up diligently for the member. I am not sure whether it is in the long list of questions

answered today, but if it is not, I will ensure that it is answered.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am not sure if my questions are in the long list of questions answered today, but I have a number of outstanding questions on notice which refer particularly to budget items. Three date back to June 2011 and were directed to the Minister for Roads through the Minister for Planning. I would like to get a response on why these have not been responded to in this period.

Question 1026 refers to an issue my constituents would like to know about concerning a Montrose roundabout where there was an election commitment of \$800 000 for this project. There are a number of questions linked to that particular question on notice which are important to the people who live out there.

Question 1027 was also directed to the Minister for Roads through the Minister for Planning and relates to level crossing grade separations on Rooks Road and Mitcham Road, which was a major election commitment from the government. There are concerns especially around public land and what needs to be used for these two projects.

Question 1029 was directed to the Minister for Roads through the Minister for Public Transport and is around an intersection in Montrose where \$400 000 was committed for traffic lights. We are awaiting a response because there was a commitment for those lights to be built, and I am sure people are keen to see where that is at.

Question 8248 was directed through the former Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations to the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services and concerns an election commitment to have a 24-hour police station at Rowville, which at this stage has not happened. I know people in that area are very keen to see this election commitment fulfilled. They would like to know before the next budget whether that is going to happen.

Question 8712 was directed to the Minister for Education via the Minister for Higher Education and Skills and has been outstanding since late last year. It concerns an empty primary school site at South Croydon. There was an election commitment that the local community would be able to utilise the site and that money would be put towards it through a budgetary process. That is the list I have at the moment.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — Mr Leane has raised a couple of points about unanswered questions on notice. Firstly he asked about

a question for the Minister for Roads through the Minister for Public Transport, and I put it to him that they are the same minister. If he has an issue with questions that are unanswered, I will follow that up.

I would also like to point out to opposition members while I am on my feet that had they bothered to look at the list of Council ministers representing portfolio ministers in the Assembly, they would have seen that as of 19 March I am the minister representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services until there is any noted change. If they had problems with unanswered questions, those questions should have been addressed to me. Indeed in the last sitting week I represented one of the justice ministers in the committee stage of a justice bill. If the members opposite have short memories, they should read the list of ministers representing portfolio ministers in the Assembly before they raise these points.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I will follow up each of those questions that relate to other ministers and ministers in the other chamber. These appear to fall into what I would call pre-budget enthusiasm. Of course not every item will be delivered in the budget; some items are delivered separate from the budget and allocations have already been made, as Mr Leane probably well knows.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I seek some follow-up from the Leader of the Government on five outstanding questions, two of which are just over two months old and date from February this year. These are questions 9255 to the Minister for Corrections and 9252 to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The one that goes back to February 2012 is question 8233 to the Minister for Ports — notwithstanding that even though it is my birthday I thought I was getting a year younger rather than a year older when I was questioning the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. There are questions which date from May 2011, almost two years ago, and they are to the Minister for Education: question 714 — that is how old it is — regarding the school rebuilding budget; and question 711 in relation to special religious instruction, which is the very subject I was questioning the minister on before.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I received a number of responses a moment ago, and from a very quick perusal they are to questions I directed to the then Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations with respect to employment, redundancy and support mechanisms. Twelve of the responses were signed off by the then minister in January and February this year, so some of them have been signed for some three

months and yet I have just received them. I seek an explanation.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — There have been a number of matters raised by Ms Pennicuik, and I will follow those through. Ms Tierney raised a number of matters for the attention of the then Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations. There obviously has been a change there, but I will follow through and find out why the delay has occurred. I do note that responses are generally given much quicker than they were under the previous government.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I also have received a number of answers today but most of them were signed off between four and eight weeks ago, so I am not sure why they took so long to get to the chamber. I have two questions outstanding for a year — 8256 and 8510 — plus 8969, which is overdue by five months, and questions 9287 and 9288 have not been responded to.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I will follow those through. I note that in the last three weeks Parliament has not been sitting so those responses may have come through a little slowly, but we will endeavour to ensure that all of those questions are answered.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — Before question time we were talking about Labor's financial management whilst it was in government and the fact that under Labor growth in spending reached around 7.3 per cent over an 11-year period while growth in revenue pulled up a fair bit shorter at around 6.9 per cent. Anybody could understand that that was totally unsustainable over an 11-year period and that changes had to be made.

In relation to Labor members and their financial mismanagement of major projects, they went to an election and said that we would not have a desalination plant and then they put one in place that was supposed to cost, at first blush, \$3 billion. It quickly went up to \$4 billion, then to \$5 billion and it might have ended up being closer to \$6 billion. We had major projects without feasibility plans and projects like the north-south pipeline without business plans. What sort of government treats major projects in this manner? It is incredible that the water minister was unable to answer basic questions like,

'How much will a unit of water cost when it reaches Sugarloaf Reservoir?', even though the excavation had taken place and the pipes were going in the ground.

But that is the modus operandi of the Labor Party. It put in place reforms and changes to the training sector which Mr Tee is quite proud of, and yet there was no monitoring of the cost blow-outs within that system.

The system was changed to give an unlimited government guarantee and there was no monitoring of the expenses and the cost blow-outs. As I said, in the election year, as part of the forward estimates in the budget, \$850 million was to be spent by Labor on training. The coalition government is now spending over \$1.2 billion on training. Labor members seem to think that we might not be investing in our youth or in training. We are investing in training in this state like we have never invested in training before. We are investing in the courses that are going to drive this state forward. We are investing in the courses that are going to give this state the productivity it needs so that it can go forward.

In relation to major projects like myki, how can a government put in place a project like myki without having the oversight and the technical capacity that is needed to drive that project? For years we simply heard — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DRUM — Very soon we will be able to buy myki cards in Bendigo. I am not sure, but I suppose we would get them at the train station.

Victorians had to sit by while an inept government with no understanding about the major projects going on under its watch was at the wheel.

There is the fact that we dropped \$3 billion as a result of the previous government's lack of understanding of the gaming sector. It did not understand how it was going to transition to the new system and how the allocations for 10-year licences were going to be handled. According to the Auditor-General, this project was very poorly handled. Due to the total mismanagement of the project, Victorians lost an estimated \$3 billion on the day the auction took place, and that is \$3 billion Victorians will never get back. It is \$3 billion that this government, or the former government, now opposition, could have used for a whole raft of services, certainly in the major areas of education, law and order and health. We will never see that money again, thanks again to the inept dealings of

the previous government when it came to financial management.

The fact we can never walk away from is that whilst Labor was in government, the total overspend, when compared to the budgets set down each and every year, was over \$11 billion, so it is a bit rich to have Labor now in opposition trying to tell us that we have some sort of shortfall in our election commitments.

When it comes to regional Victoria the Regional Growth Fund is the vehicle we are using as our flagship vehicle to get the projects that need to be done in regional Victoria on the books, under construction and delivered. The Regional Growth Fund is set at \$1 billion over eight years or \$500 million for this term and the next term of Parliament. We have had to legislate the quantum of money that is to be spent in the regions. When we came to government Labor had pledged it would invest a fraction over \$250 million in the regions. The coalition government's allocation of \$500 million is in effect a fraction under double what Labor had pledged.

There is a stark contrast between the two sides of politics when it comes to which side truly believes in investing in the regions. The coalition government's Regional Growth Fund is delivering on many of its election commitments across the state. Labor is on record as saying that if it wins government, it will scrap the fund and return to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. If Labor happens to win government, it can do whatever it wants; however, let us put it out there that our fund is already delivering.

We are now able to partner with councils across the state, allowing them to in effect plan for better development of services and delivery of infrastructure. Members should not worry, because councils across Victoria cannot be any clearer about the fact that they love the Regional Growth Fund. They love the fact that it delivers them some certainty and gives them an opportunity to plan. Not only do they love the Regional Growth Fund and various aspects of it but they also love the \$1 million they get every year. The 40 smallest councils love the \$1 million they get every year for their roads and bridges programs. That money has been allocated to those councils over a four-year period. They know that they are going to get \$4 million from the coalition government in every parliamentary term. This enables councils to plan their maintenance and road upkeep programs over a longer period. It enables them to put in place bridge maintenance and the contractors and construction crews they need to maintain their road networks.

Not only do those councils love the roads and bridges program but they also love the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, which is part of the Regional Growth Fund. This fund has shelled out \$100 million to the 48 regional councils in Victoria. The Local Government Infrastructure Fund has allocated according to a formula, around \$2 million to each local government area. This funding ensures that councils do not have to keep applying for small grants, as they did under Labor, which ties people up writing grant applications; nor do they have to justify what they did with their respective grants. In only one go, councils are able to let the government know what they are going to do with their money — that is, how it will be spent and the projects that councils have lined up.

Councils love the fact that we trust them to make the decisions on how best they should spend the money rather than them having to come back to government all the time, cap in hand, begging for a \$38.50 grant. We are prepared to give them the money they need to go away and get the work done. Councils also love the fact that they have an opportunity to partner up with the coalition in the Putting Locals First component of the Regional Growth Fund. There are all those other grants out there. Most councils around the state are doing very well out of this arrangement and are providing a fantastic array of projects.

For the first time ever we have given Regional Development Australia committees and the local champions on those committees genuine power, genuine funding and a secretariat, so they can actually make good decisions and prioritise the projects that need to be pushed forward. They had no powers under the previous government; they were simply an advisory group. However, under this government Regional Development Australia committees are able to champion the projects that they see as being important and can push the priority projects that they know their communities need. Again this is something that occurs under the system we have put in place in relation to the Putting Locals First program.

Councils around the state love the autonomy they have and they love the ability to plan in the knowledge that the funding allocations are set for the prescribed period. They also know that under Labor they would go back to a drip-feed arrangement. They would have to go back cap in hand, and they would end up broke like they were over the previous 11 years. There are whole subsets of councils coming together and saying that under the Labor Party they were starved and effectively held to ransom to ensure that they kept quiet and did not cause Labor any problems or else they would not be funded for their next essential project.

As I said, this motion effectively calls on the Napthine government to fund its outstanding election commitments. I am sure there will be many members of the coalition who will take up the wording of this motion. It is very true that the Napthine government does have a whole range of outstanding election commitments — outstanding, brilliant, fantastic. They are worthwhile projects that are totally credible and necessary. I do not know if I quite have the time to keep going — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I assure Mr Drum that he does not have the time at the moment. He will have the call when the house resumes at 2 o'clock.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

Mr DRUM — I have had a couple of goes at contributing to the debate on this motion — I was interrupted by question time and by the lunch break. What I would like to do in the remaining part of my contribution is start talking about some of what Mr Tee described as a range of outstanding election commitments that need to be delivered. It might be the case that the government has some election commitments that are yet to be delivered, but it is methodically working its way through the list, and it is its absolute intention to stare every one of its election commitments down and tick them off in a way that will make us all proud to be part of the government.

As I said earlier, the main vehicle the coalition is using for delivering its regional commitments is the Regional Growth Fund and its more than \$1 billion over eight years, or nearly double what Labor was prepared to invest in regional Victoria. It is important that we go through some of those projects. We have had hospital builds in Kilmore and Echuca, and Charlton and Castlemaine have been announced and the money has been put forward. Schools have been built. In my town of Bendigo the previous government told Golden Square Primary School, 'If you were to merge, we would build you a new school'. After it merged all of a sudden there was no money in the 2010 budget. A wink and a nod from the previous government was not always as good as a contract from this government.

We have had an amazing number of projects come up around the state given the adversity we have faced. We have had a \$6.1 billion write-down, or shrinkage, in our projected GST revenues — an unbelievable challenge for us in doing the work we would like to do — and continued pressure on many of our industries due to the high Australian dollar. This has forced many people to be very conservative with their discretionary spending,

and it is causing a lot of angst. However, there have been a lot of major projects which are operating very well. All the signs regarding the work we are doing with the regional rail link are extremely positive. When you come to work every day you know there are about 2000 people working on that project at six separate sites in Victoria. It will enable the west of Melbourne to continue its high level of growth while maintaining the punctuality and reliability of our rail services not only in western Melbourne but also along the Geelong line, the Ballarat line and also the Bendigo-Swan Hill line. Those lines will be able to maintain their efficiencies and the rates under which they need to operate.

We have had regional art spending in both Bendigo and Ballarat. Through the Bendigo Art Gallery we have seen the benefits of investing in art when it comes to creating livability, improving amenity and always putting regional cities out there as great places to call home. We also have serious investment in the Geelong Performing Arts Centre. We are going to invest heavily in the arts.

We have been able to invest in sport in relation to Kardinia Park in Geelong, the Queen Elizabeth Oval upgrade in Bendigo and other regional developments. In partnership with Sport and Recreation Victoria a raft of promised projects have been delivered. In my home town of Bendigo we have delivered on a commitment to invest \$400 000 in Canterbury Park. Again, all these commitments were made without any attempt by Labor to match them. It was quite staggering how quiet Labor was during the election campaign in 2010 when it came to offering community groups the chance, with the election in the offing, to partake in this opportunity. Again, schools and sporting reserves have been ticked off.

The commitment to provide 1700 more police was the biggest commitment we made leading up to the last election, and we are on track to deliver that — talk about election promises being honoured! A number of the 930 protective services officers (PSOs) are being rolled out nearly every week. PSOs are now stationed at additional stations right up until the last train at night, making public transport safer than it has ever been before in this state. This is an amazing initiative by this government. We keep rolling out our election commitments.

We have carried out our commitment to give Geelong a properly elected mayor; that has happened. We have also secured Cotton On's head office in North Geelong, ensuring 500 additional jobs within five years. Members opposite are very quick in this chamber to jump up any time there is bad news around Alcoa, Shell

or Ford and to say, 'Woe is me!'. This side of the chamber gets a little tired of members opposite jumping up and pushing potential bad news in Geelong. Cotton On, in partnership with the government, has secured its head office in North Geelong. It has projected that the number of additional employees will rise to 500 over five years. Within 12 months that figure is already approaching 250. But we do not hear this from those opposite. They like to leave all the good news aside.

I first met the operators and owners of Cotton On within two months of the coalition coming into government. They approached me for assistance in trying to get a planning matter resolved that had been in front of the Labor government for three years. The resolution of that matter would enable Cotton On to do what it had to do in order to maintain its operation in North Geelong. For three years the matter had been at a standstill. Cotton On was led to believe it was a problem between local government and the state government planning department. It took the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, about two weeks to completely fix that issue, in conjunction with the City of Greater Geelong. It just shows how this government is prepared to meet with and listen to industry and then act to enable businesses to flourish in Victoria.

There is a new secondary college for Torquay. This is an area of the state that we are very serious about investing in. We have been able to get the Ararat prison project back on track. Members of the Labor Party who were involved in putting that consortium together during the previous Parliament should hang their heads in shame. How could they put such a ridiculous program together? One contractor fell over and the whole project stopped and became unviable for over 12 months. It was not until the then Minister for Corrections, Andrew McIntosh, came in that that problem was fixed. Work on Ararat prison is restarting as we speak. It has been a very big investment.

Bendigo Hospital is one of our flagship projects in regional Victoria. This is a \$630 million investment and is \$102 million over and above the sum put forward by Labor. It is not just the money though; it sums up the way in which the two sides of politics operate. The then Premier, John Brumby, and the then Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Jacinta Allan, who is the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly, called Bendigo Health and asked its staff to come to Melbourne the day before the budget so that they could say to them, 'This is how much you're going to get. You're going to get this amount, \$528 million, and you had better like it'. There was no debate entered into; there was no discussion about what health outcomes would be achieved for that amount of money. There

was no discussion or consultation. It was simply, 'This is how much you're going to get. You'd better like it or you won't get anything at all'. That is the way the Labor Party operates.

I compare that with what took place under the coalition. Meeting after meeting was held in order to come up with an amount of money that would integrate the cancer centre back into the main building, give the mother and baby unit an opportunity to prosper and introduce youth mental health programs into Bendigo Health. The coalition government then went through the process of establishing the leading tender. If you listen to the contractors, the government has effectively turned \$630 million of investment into over \$750 million worth of outcomes. That is simply because the private sector has the ability to squeeze, sharpen its pencils and develop a whole range of other benefits that will be enjoyed by the Bendigo community into the future.

It has certainly been an amazing process. All the opposition has been able to say is, 'You're not going to get it started on time' and 'You're not going to get it finished on time'. Yet all the time it has been crying out for the Labor Party hospital. It says, 'We want the hospital that we came up with built'. The opposition has taken an incredibly bizarre course of action in relation to the Bendigo Hospital. As the Minister for Health, David Davis, said yesterday, this is the only time that we have ever heard of local members calling for \$102 million to be ripped out of their community and a second-class hospital built instead of the world-class hospital put in place by the coalition government.

Another great project going ahead in Bendigo is the theatre in the jail. This is another project that was put up by the former Labor government in its death throes leading up to the last election. It was kept secret from everybody so that the coalition was not able to put the \$3 million commitment into its costings. We were simply surprised, as was everybody else in Bendigo, when about a week before the election the then Premier and the then Minister for Regional and Rural Development rolled out the concept, saying they were going to build a theatre in the jail and they were going to contribute to it provided the federal government came on board. It was a very risky proposal, based as it was on Labor winning government and thus having the money to contribute to this project. Members opposite did not once think about what was better for the people of Bendigo.

In the end they lost the election. It was only due to the good grace of the Deputy Premier, who was able to find

the money that was not budgeted for, that that project was able to continue. This is totally irresponsible government. It is totally selfish and self-centred. The Labor Party kept projects secret from the community for political gain. It is no wonder that the people of Victoria punished the Labor Party at the last election.

We have put \$7 million on the table for a secondary college in Castlemaine, which is not matched by Labor. There is \$10 million for the Castlemaine hospital, which is not matched by Labor. There is a \$2 million upgrade to the ambulance centre, which is not matched by Labor. There is \$3 million for the exhibition centre in Bendigo, which is not matched by Labor. There is an additional \$300 000 for Queen Elizabeth Oval, which is not matched by Labor. What was Labor doing in the regions?

The government has provided promised additional train services and a train station at Epsom and additional upgrades to the Eaglehawk railway station, promises which were not matched by Labor. When you think about what the coalition has been promising and delivering, we should have a remodelled motion asking, 'What on earth was Labor promising when it went to the last election?' It would be a pretty short debate.

As I said, a whole raft of our commitments have gone through. We are fixing up the Bull Street justice precinct in Bendigo, which is the old police station that is currently being remodelled. The Attorney-General was there last week. We will also build a multidisciplinary centre predominantly for women who have been sexually abused, which will be amazing. We are building one in the Latrobe Valley and another in Bendigo following on from some that have been built in other parts of the state.

We have committed \$45 million to work with the coal industry in the Latrobe Valley to try to work out how we can dewater coal. The second we can do that we will have a commodity we can export around the world, a commodity that will be far cleaner than what is currently being burnt in India, China and Japan. This would create great wealth for this state, and it is something that needs to be viewed positively. This government has shown courage in putting it front and centre. Mr Ryan, in his new role as Minister for State Development, will play a key role in continuing to develop and improve relationships with industries that have the capacity to dewater coal and produce an environmentally improved product to help us assist the Latrobe Valley.

Apart from that, \$30 million will be invested in supporting job creation and industry in the Latrobe

Valley, and an additional \$10 million will be invested in Skilling the Valley, which is an education and training agenda. The road map for the Latrobe Valley has been put in place to drive industry and make sure there is a clear plan for job creation and industry support.

Everywhere you look around the state it is clear that Minister Ryan has his hand firmly on the rudder. He understands how to drive productivity and efficiencies. He understands how to talk to businesses and councils and support both of them in a manner that will drive greater productivity for this state. It is a growth fund because Mr Ryan has had the courage with our budget to lead the pack and say, 'This is how much of the budget that we have to invest in regional Victoria. We will leverage it with federal government, local government and the private sector investment, whether that be not-for-profit community groups or industry'.

The federal government could learn something from this. It does not understand how to truly get behind and support communities, which was illustrated when it was trying to compensate the Latrobe Valley for what it was doing there. It refused to get involved with businesses and try to create jobs through the private sector. It also refused to get involved with business to try to create jobs together when it was trying to compensate communities in the north of the state for sucking all of that water out of the Murray-Darling Basin system. The federal government should enter the real world and try to understand what it is like on the ground. The federal government seems to be miles away, and it has jumped even further away now that Simon Crean is no longer listened to by the Prime Minister. I have not even mentioned what the federal government tried to do and is still doing with the payments to the health system.

I will have to sit down shortly because many of my colleagues are keen to get up and spruik about how many promises and commitments we made prior to the election have been ticked off, funded, built and completed. We are racking up these achievements on a daily basis. All we are saying is, 'Give us the chance to do our work, without fanfare, in the way that Victorians want us to and we will get on with the job of governing for the state'. We should not have to be talking about this motion as if we have something to answer for when we have had to deal with the backdrop of disasters such as floods and fires, a horrendous trade environment and diminishing GST funds. Most unbiased analytical economic advisers and experts would give the Baillieu government, which is now the Napthine government, a huge tick for the work it has been able to do.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to rise in support of Mr Tee's motion before the house this afternoon. I thank him for putting this on the notice paper today because it provides members of the chamber with the opportunity to do a checklist of the election promises made by the current government in 2010 and where those promises sit today. It is particularly pleasing to talk about this motion today, because it is a timely reminder of what needs to occur when we walk back into this house in the next parliamentary sitting week, which is budget week. I would like to go through some of the election promises made to constituents in my electorate that have not been achieved. As a result I hope these promises will be met and money will be allocated for them in next month's state budget.

I will go through a number of other items — general commitments this government gave to the people of Victoria in 2010 — that impact not only on my electorate but across the entire state of Victoria. I will give some reasons for the failure with respect to the election promises that go to the heart of the way the public service is now organised in this state, this government's attitude towards regional development and its lack of an infrastructure plan or jobs plan.

I will start with some of the election promises that have been broken so far in the electorate of Western Victoria Region. I will go alphabetically and start with Apollo Bay. Apollo Bay P-12 College was promised an initial commitment of \$7 million, and then the local member, the now Minister for Public Transport, upped that to \$10 million to match Labor's commitment to build a new Apollo Bay P-12 school. The time line outlined by Minister Mulder at the time was that the school would be completed in the government's first term in office. Not one sod has been turned at that site. A little bit of money has been allocated for planning, but if any school has had planning, that community has planned itself almost to death in respect of that school. It needs that shovel, not all the red tape that seems to be going on in relation to what is a straightforward need for those children and the Apollo Bay community.

With respect to Avalon Airport, there was a \$250 million commitment for a rail link from Lara to Avalon Airport, and again no sod has been turned whatsoever. Whilst there might be talk, that seems to be the only thing that is going on.

The same can be said about the natural gas project, a \$100 million promise that was to be rolled out over the four years from 2010 to 2014. The townships of Avoca, Bannockburn, Terang and Winchelsea have not seen those connections happen. Those communities are

getting quite tired of waiting because they have been waiting for a considerable time. The natural gas project was a specific promise made to those communities leading into the last state election. They honestly believed what they were told by the coalition and that it would be delivered. It has not happened, and with less than 18 months to go before all those towns connected to natural gas, I daresay that is something that is not going to happen.

We also had the promise that the community of Cressy would receive a police station and a full-time police officer. That simply has not happened. The *Geelong Advertiser* front page pushed for and supported then Premier Ted Baillieu's promise for the staging of a Red Bull Air Race at Geelong, and that fell through as well. There has been absolutely no push in relation to that matter, and I understand it will not be going ahead.

In relation to public transport, a new \$25 million train station at Grovedale was promised. That was also supposed to be completed in the first term of this government, but the government has failed to initiate any community consultation in relation to that station. The project was supposed to start in March 2012, but documents obtained under FOI reveal uncertainty around the timing and the commitment to deliver that project at all. With respect to a commitment of \$14.5 million for the duplication of Pioneer Road in Grovedale, anyone who traverses that road will see that it basically finishes at the shopping centre. All that has happened is that the bottleneck that existed in that vicinity has been moved further up into the housing area. The government's commitment that the duplication would be fully delivered within its first term has not occurred.

A promise for the Maryborough ambulance station to be upgraded and to operate with full-time staff has not happened either. We are also concerned that many of the recommendations from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission have in many respects not been fulfilled. As I mentioned in my members statement yesterday, we have seen significant cuts in funding to the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, which has made our communities feel incredibly unsettled. They thought they had some ironclad recommendations, many of which have bipartisan support, and yet in respect of firefighting this government has gone out of its way to cut what are considered to be basic safety measures in our rural and regional communities.

Commitments were also made for 800 new hospital beds, and I understand that the Minister for Health, Mr Davis, claimed that 100 beds had already been

opened in the 2011–12 period. However, the new Premier, Dr Napthine, has refused to endorse these figures. So far he has not committed that even one bed has been opened.

I will also mention the promised \$85 million second hospital for Geelong, which certainly has not been implemented. In fact I have had to undertake an exercise through freedom of information on that issue. Although there have been three compulsory conferences rescheduled, hopefully we will get some answers sometime this month. It is clear that the government will not be going ahead with what it promised — that is, a 32-bed second public hospital for Geelong. It was proposed that the hospital would be well situated near the major growth developments that the Minister for Planning promoted during question time today.

This government also promised \$344 million for 1600 front-line police officers, but it has not fulfilled that election commitment. In terms of my electorate, the government has floundered somewhat. From an answer to a question on notice about police numbers that I received today, it is clear that although the government is close to two-thirds of the way through its term, it has not even met 50 per cent of the election commitment it made to increase the number of police officers in the South Barwon region, and there is a shortage in the Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast areas as well.

This government also committed to a radiotherapy service in Warrnambool. It promised \$10 million verbally, but as yet no money has appeared in any budget. It is disappointing that the government has tried to play politics with the federal government on this issue when government members themselves were the ones who made the explicit commitment to the community of western Victoria that they would do the right thing. Clearly government members have decided that playing politics with this important issue is more important than delivering to families who require immediate help with the dilemmas they face.

I turn to the famous election commitment this government made that teachers in this state would be the highest paid in the country under a Liberal-Nationals coalition. As we know, that has not happened. Whilst it seems to be the case that a conclusion to the teachers' enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations is imminent, the fact remains that those negotiations have been going on for some two and a half years. I believe any negotiation that takes that long is just up-front mismanagement of a set of

negotiations that should not have been complicated as this government has made them out to be.

There have been similar problems with other negotiations, including the nurses dispute and a number of other public sector negotiations. It is hardly surprising that people in the public service are seriously concerned about the way in which basic government programs are being managed. They know that due to massive cuts to the public sector many people in our community are not receiving the basic services they need.

Also under this government offices of the former Department of Primary Industries have closed in many regional centres of Victoria, and some \$300 million has been cut from the TAFE sector. Whilst the new Premier has said that another \$200 million will be made available to the TAFE sector, the fact that that funding is spread over a four-year period and is for project funding does not appear in newspaper reports. Applicants for that funding will have to go through a whole lot of the red tape and rigmarole to put a project together which will then go to a panel for approval. That funding has nothing to do with capital funding or recurrent funding; it is about projects that government members consider to be within the realm of what their interests are in that sector.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am sorry to interrupt Ms Tierney, but with the combination of interjections and three conversations occurring in the chamber, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hear her contribution. I ask members, particularly those having conversations, to at least lower the volume. Of course interjections are disorderly, but I ask members to give Ms Tierney a hearing, which I note the previous speaker was given without interruption.

Ms TIERNEY — When Victorian voters went to the polls in November 2010 they were not told that this government was going to take \$50 million from the Victorian certificate of advanced learning program. They were not told that mothers were going to find it tougher in rural and regional Victoria and that there would be less training for midwives. They were not told that \$450 million was to be scrapped from the education budget, and particularly that the School Start program was to be abolished. The government has also abandoned industry training bodies and, as I understand it, some 80 jobs were abolished as a result of that exercise.

Then there was the issue of the abolition of whooping cough vaccinations, which I know has caused a lot of concern in the electorate. The Take A Break occasional child-care funding also was abolished, and the meanness of the Foodbank Victoria reductions was unbelievable. Under this government the Home Wise hardship grant program has also been axed, and whilst the incidence of family and domestic violence has absolutely gone through the roof, there have been cuts in funding to family violence programs.

There has been a reduction in home and community care programs while waiting lists have continued to grow. A whole range of transport connection bus routes throughout regional Victoria have been absolutely slashed and burnt, which has meant that lots of people who do not have access to cars, such as the elderly and students, do not have the ability to connect with other transport and conduct their affairs.

Then there are the cuts to legal aid and the stripping of powers from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Funding for assistance plans to Neighbourhood Watch groups in our community has also been cut. Members of the coalition government even tried to scrap the eligibility for school bus subsidies. They had to do a backflip on that due to community outrage in the same way they had to perform a backflip on the massive cuts they announced they were going to make in terms of libraries. The Minister for Local Government, Jeanette Powell, had to get on the phone to every single mayor in this state to try to explain why the initial decision had been made and why she needed to perform that backflip.

Under changes introduced by this government, workers have not received penalty rates for working on Easter Sunday, which I think is absolutely appalling, and I said so at the time those changes were made. This government has also failed to support the renewable energy sector, which is of particular importance for south-west Victoria. Indeed I think this failure is part and parcel of the way that government members do not talk to each other in terms of regional development. One would have thought a whole-of-government approach to the issue of community development and regional development would have gone hand in hand if this state was governed properly.

We have also seen this government shut down the 24-hour mental health advice line that was heavily utilised by rural and regional Victorians. It was one of the very few things that people had access to at the end of a telephone line. As we know, there have been increases not only in mental health statistics but also in

relation to farmer health and the number of suicides occurring on farms.

We have also seen an increase in motor vehicle registration fees by more than \$35 and an increase in speeding fines. I do not think this government promised to make those changes at the time of the election. I am sure that Victorian voters had no idea that the government was going to make them. The government has also ripped \$471.5 million in dividends from the Victorian WorkCover Authority, meaning higher premiums for businesses and reduced benefits for workers. The government has done things like abolish support for FReeZA, which has been really important, particularly in regional communities, where kids connect with and are engaged by music projects and workshops, and it has abolished support for a whole range of other youth programs we have in our regions to try to get our youth engaged.

I urge those on the other side, particularly those who represent Western Victoria Region, to lobby their respective ministers to ensure that all the election commitments that were made are fulfilled and allowances are made in the May budget for funding them. I also urge those members to have a very serious talk to those who are involved in regional development in particular, because this government has taken its eye off the ball. The fact that we do not have dedicated people looking at and searching for investors and business opportunities that can be brought to regional Victoria has been an absolute disaster, and that is demonstrated time and again.

It has got to a point where there is a political and community campaign in Portland, which the Glenelg Shire Council has got on board with and endorsed. The council will also be holding a round table of political parties and government agencies to try to work through this to get a strategy, or a series of strategies, to elevate the position of Portland and to have a plan that provides for a sustainable, long-term local economy that is not reliant on one or two industries and that is certainly not reliant on an industry that is seasonal and not necessarily systemic in the community.

In finishing my contribution I urge those opposite to do their very best to ensure that every single commitment that they made to the Victorian community is addressed in the budget next month. I look forward to members opposite proving that they can do so. I really am holding out hope. I do not think that hope will be fulfilled, because in terms of the time lines that they set themselves for delivering certain projects to the community, time has quite frankly already run out.

What concerns me even more is that whilst there is a list of election commitments that have not been fulfilled or have been broken, we still have a public service in disarray because of the decisions taken by this government, we still have no plan for any serious infrastructure projects throughout the entire state and we still have a government that is yet to spell out its plan for jobs and growth or a vision for the state that has a practical application that involves and includes all Victorians.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am delighted to be able to join my colleagues in contributing to debate on this particular motion. I believe there is quite a list, and regrettably I also understand that the debate will be adjourned following my contribution. That does not impress my colleagues, who are perplexed as to why the opposition would continue to move Dorothy Dix motions on opposition business day. That is the reason this topic excited my colleagues. A very long list of speakers has been queuing up. To better appreciate the particular topic of the motion, it says:

That this house calls on the Napthine government to fund its outstanding election commitments when it delivers its 2013–14 state budget.

As a former English teacher, I turned to the dictionary to look up the definition of the word ‘outstanding’. For the edification of the house I have a few synonyms here. Some of them are as follows: superior, ace, celebrated, cool, crack, distinguished, dominant, eminent, exceptional, great, greatest, important, impressive, magnificent, main, major, meritorious, momentous — it is a very long list — brilliant, champion, distinguished, excellent, expert, first-rate, great, master, superb and virtuoso.

I am very pleased to speak about the outstanding election commitments made by the coalition parties, now the coalition government. They were made in the context of a four-year term and the government is progressing steadily to deliver them. The first and foremost commitment was to fix the problems.

I am always a little frustrated when I follow Ms Tierney in debate, because clearly she did not really listen to voters at the last election. Voters expect straight shooting and some honesty rather than spinning lines and plucking examples out of context to misrepresent them in an argument, which typifies Ms Tierney’s contributions. The example I will draw on is her argument on education. She talked about the cuts to TAFE funding and then queried the fact that we have allocated \$1.3 billion to the skills sector, which is greater than the \$850 million proposed by her party. It

is funding for registered training organisations (RTOs) and TAFEs. It was her government which in 2009 under Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly who was then the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, opened the doors to RTOs — one suspects because many RTOs have an affiliation with the union movement and perhaps it is a workable arrangement — so that money would ultimately move from the TAFE sector that then provided 80 per cent of the training to RTO providers.

It goes without saying that this has been the trend since 2009. If Ms Tierney believed it was a bad reform, I did not hear her criticise it at the time. I did not hear any members of the then government criticise it at the time, yet every sitting day members in this chamber dribble out little petitions calling for the reversal of TAFE cuts. Back in 2009 the Labor government had a great opportunity to not adopt the policy.

There is silence when, for example, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the federal Labor government announce billions of dollars of cuts, many of them to the education sector, in order to fund a fraction of the Gonski reforms. We do not all know what the reforms are or what they mean; they certainly have not been spelt out. There has not been adequate consultation with the state education ministers who have primary responsibility for delivering education. This is a way of somehow wedging them into signing up to unknown education reforms in the context of a very difficult federal election campaign. Of course it is forecast that the federal Labor government will be resoundingly defeated at the election. At the moment it is prepared to make all sorts of pledges and commitments in order to save the furniture, because it fully understands that it has already lost the house.

Ms Tierney and members of the Labor Party were silent when Kate Ellis, the federal Minister for Early Childhood and Childcare, and the Gillard federal government withdrew funding for the Take a Break program, of which it was a 70 per cent funder. It is that sort of incompleteness in truth and fact that really grates on voters. It is in stark contrast to someone like a former Labor Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, who admitted it when he stuffed up. He said his mea culpa, learnt a lesson, and as a result I suppose he secured a longer time in office than otherwise would have been the case, so there are certainly lessons to be learnt.

What outstanding commitments are there that we made in order to be elected to office? They were a number of big picture commitments under the election slogan of ‘Fix the problems and build the future’. They stemmed

from a concern amongst the public that a vast amount of taxpayers funds was being wasted and mismanaged, in particular on very significant projects such as the desalination plant, for which there is a \$590 million payment to the consortia each year irrespective of whether Victorians draw out a single drop of water. The wasting of \$3 billion on the botched pokies auction is of enormous concern, because it was money lost to Victorians that could have paid for the expansion of services and more infrastructure that is needed not only for replacing what we have but also growing it because the population of our state is growing.

Our commitments were simple. We committed to fixing the problems, which included an infrastructure deficit that continues to be at the forefront of this government's agenda and which formed the basis for its submission to Infrastructure Australia. Obviously infrastructure projects of the magnitude referred to can be funded only by the three levels of government making contributions towards them, and the federal government has certainly not been prepared to play its part. In relation to the infrastructure deficit, we saw crumbling roads and train lines, decrepit trains, schools that were basically falling over, the mismanagement of waterways, tips and landfill, and inferior services.

Community safety was at the top of the community's priority list, along with quality education services, access to good health services, and sport and recreation services to meet the needs of a growing population. These service needs were not being adequately met because so much money was being wasted by Labor, which does not manage money well. We promised to bring a higher level of transparency and accountability to the financial management of the state including its assets, and this continues to be a key objective of this government.

The other priority commitment was to make the government's operations more transparent and accountable and to elevate the levels of integrity. That coincided with the introduction of an independent, broadbased anticorruption commission, which was the first of its kind in this state and something the former government was not prepared to look at. We are certainly getting on with delivering outstanding commitments.

I would like to take a little bit of time to talk about the outstanding commitments that have been delivered to South Eastern Metropolitan Region, where we won four lower house seats. Bentleigh is just outside the region — it is in Southern Metropolitan Region — so that makes it five seats in the area. Part of the reason for that was the level of neglect of the region. The level of

neglect by Labor governments seems to be at its most profound in seats in Labor heartland — —

Mr Finn — The western suburbs.

Mrs PEULICH — In seats like Lyndhurst and in the western suburbs, and I will come back to talk about that. The area that I represent, which covers Frankston, Carrum, Mordialloc, Clayton, Mount Waverley, Dandenong, Mulgrave, Narre Warren North, Narre Warren South, Cranbourne and Lyndhurst, did not benefit from outstanding commitments, nor did it receive the infrastructure the community deserved or the services it needed, let alone many of the other projects that have been on hold for a long time.

At the time of the last budget I took out a wrap for the local newspaper across the city of Casey to point out what outstanding achievements we were delivering already in terms of our election commitments. It is a long list, and I did have to prune it. It could have gone for a few pages but I could not afford it; I was using taxpayers money frugally. I would like to start from the top of the section which is headed 'Big wins for Casey and the south-east'. It is followed by a list that includes:

\$49 million for the duplication of Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road between Pound Road and Thompson Road;

\$24 million to Casey for Stevensons Road landfill ...

That related to a debate I led in this chamber following the methane gas crisis in Cranbourne. It was an undertaking we had given, and we placed pressure on the former government, which forked over \$17 million to assist with the remediation works. We followed through. We have delivered \$24 million already, well before the full term. The list goes on:

\$2 million planning for new Officer secondary college;

\$8.5 for Chisholm TAFE Berwick trade careers centre;

\$38 million Hallam Road duplication — Pound Road to Ormond Road;

Pound Road-South Gippsland Highway-South Gippsland Freeway intersection upgrade;

Clyde Road duplication — High Street to Kangan Drive;

\$765 000 for building Lynbrook Integrated Community Centre;

more car parking at Merinda Park and Narre Warren stations;

\$17 000 makeover for Eumemmerring scout hall;

extra \$10.5 million to support the L2P program;

lights for night racing at Cranbourne Racecourse;

land purchased at Lysterfield Lake Park;

\$235 000 for the Marriot Waters children's centre community room and meeting space;

\$155.7 million for Dingley bypass, linking Moorabbin to the South Gippsland Highway in Dandenong South ...

I am excited about this because this particular reservation has been in the *Melway* for about 45 years. The entire south-east area was badly congested and continues to be because of the lack of investment in roads, although there has been an improvement. The list continues:

43 new inpatient and care beds for mental health patients servicing Greater Dandenong and Casey;

\$120 000 for the Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre;

\$130 600 for Hampton Park community hall daytime activation project and other local projects;

land for Derinya and Cranbourne south west primary schools;

more than \$20 million for local schools including Dandenong High School (\$10 million) and Noble Park Special School ...

This is against the backdrop that we have recently found that a statewide audit showed that the backlog in maintenance is up to \$430 million. When the Labor government was defeated the backlog had been pretty much erased, and we are now back up at \$430 million. The list goes on:

upgrades to 39 housing sites in the southern metro region;

\$15.8 million for Monash Children's hospital;

funding for improvements to the eastern treatment plant;

funding for upgrade works as part of the revitalising central Dandenong transit cities program;

removal of the rail crossing at Springvale Road, Springvale ...

I had the privilege of announcing the signing of contracts by the Minister for Public Transport a little while ago with the mayor of Dandenong, Angela Long, which will see that important grade separation progress. That will be a very significant boon in dealing with the problem of traffic congestion across the south-east. The list continues:

share of the \$883 million for public hospitals;

\$38 million expansion of the Frankston Hospital;

funding for the Australian Synchrotron.

I took the opportunity of putting out a similar newsletter with localised outstanding election achievements, funded and delivered, to the lower house electorate of Lyndhurst, outlining the benefits of just

two years of a Liberal government. Progressively we have been trying to keep a log of the special funding for each seat. My tally for the Lyndhurst electorate since coming to office, with the problem of not being able to fully estimate the costs of providing, say, the protective services officer rollouts and statewide programs, shows that there has been nearly \$130 million in funding for specific programs for the Lyndhurst electorate in just two years of a coalition government. There are millions of reasons the government has been outstanding, certainly in the Lyndhurst electorate as well as for all of the communities across the south-east.

Mention was made earlier — I think it was today or yesterday — by Mr Tarlamis, my upper house colleague and a fellow member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region, of the Greens candidate for Lyndhurst, Nina Springle. Mr Tarlamis castigated her for being absent without leave during the campaign; apparently she went overseas. The problem with the Lyndhurst electorate is that it has had a member who has been AWOL for a very long time. That member — now former member — was of course Tim Holding. He is an affable fellow and no doubt has talents, but one of those talents was not making his presence felt in the electorate, with the exception of maybe a couple of events per year. Otherwise he was very much the absentee landlord, and what people in the Lyndhurst electorate have appreciated, certainly since we have been in office, is that I have been prepared, along with my colleague for South Eastern Metropolitan Region, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, to actually be on the ground, be present and listen to, deliver for and meet with groups that require problems to be fixed. This is what we have been doing.

Of course the benefits of a Liberal government at the state level are shared across all of the south-east area, including federal seats such as Hotham, where the Liberal Party has Fazal Cader as its candidate. In the federal seat of Latrobe we have Jason Wood contesting. In the federal seat of Holt we have an outstanding, fine family man, Ricardo Balancy, who is out working very hard and who comes from a multicultural background in the Mauritian community. Voters in the federal seat of Bruce can be represented by a very competent, young family man, Emanuele Cicchiello, an educator himself. In the federal seat of Isaacs the Liberal candidate is Garry Spencer. Of course in the federal seat of Dunkley the sitting member is Bruce Bilson, who is very highly regarded by his electorate. He was a very good minister and is now a shadow minister; I have no doubt he will be a minister again in the next federal Abbott government. In the federal seat of Chisholm we have John Nguyen, a fine young man from a Vietnamese background who is working very

hard to make sure the voters of Chisholm have the very best opportunity to elect a government that can deliver on those big priorities, particularly the infrastructure needs of the community, and to deliver better, high-quality services, including services addressing issues of law and order, education, health, transportation and other issues across the whole gamut.

The community expects the government to manage its money wisely, not waste it, as has occurred with the federal Gillard government. Every conceivable plan she can come up with she will use as a way of luring people at the ballot box, but I think the Victorian public — I am not sure about other states, although I suspect they feel even more strongly — will not be fooled any longer.

In closing I would like to commend the former Premier, Ted Baillieu, the member for Hawthorn in the Assembly, and the new Premier, Denis Naphine, as well as all of my coalition colleagues for their hard work in staying true to and making sure that we honour the commitments we made as part of the 2010 state election campaign. They are four-year-term commitments, and certainly in the south-east we are delivering in spades. There are millions of reasons a coalition government is looking after the electorate of Lyndhurst well and will continue to do so.

There certainly are many outstanding commitments that the coalition has delivered and will continue to deliver because it manages money better, it manages major projects better and it wastes less money. The government is prepared to listen to the community, to understand their needs and to deliver — whether it be for infrastructure or services — in the most cost efficient and effective way possible. That is what good governance is all about. With those few words, I would like to commend the opposition for bringing another Dorothy Dix motion to the chamber and giving us the opportunity to highlight some of the government's achievements in the south-east region which I have been privileged to be associated with and look forward to continuing to be associated with well into the future.

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

Debate adjourned until later this day.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Reference

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011, as introduced into this house by myself and ruled out of order by the President on 20 February 2013 for infringing section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975, be referred to the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee for consideration and report by 12 June 2013 on measures aimed at addressing any constitutional impediment to the bill's introduction into the Legislative Council.

The Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011, which I introduced into Parliament, would see artificial barriers removed to enable firefighters to access WorkCover compensation when they contract cancer from work-related smoke and toxic exposure. This is a bill with utmost merit. It is the right thing to do. It is the decent thing to do. Unfortunately it is not the merit of the bill that is in question here; it is whether it is constitutionally valid to introduce this bill into the Legislative Council that is in question.

On 20 February 2013 the President ruled this bill out of order. His ruling stated that an amendment of this kind would have the effect of increasing the benefits payable under the scheme with the consequential result of increasing the costs of premiums payable by employers under compulsory WorkCover insurance policies. I would argue that this bill will not increase the premiums payable by employers under compulsory WorkCover insurance policies.

In 2011 a Senate inquiry was held regarding a similar bill to remove artificial barriers to federally employed firefighters accessing compensation if they contracted prescribed cancers. The federal Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee inquired into the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011, introduced in September 2011, and explored the possibility that the bill would bring about significant increases in premiums by improving the ease with which firefighters could access compensation. Looking at overseas experiences as well as at the fact that the legislation would not provide for any new grounds to claim, the committee was of the view that there would be negligible impact on the commonwealth or Australian Capital Territory budget.

The Senate inquiry found that the committee was confident that the cost impact of the proposed

legislation would be as insignificant in Australia as it had been elsewhere. It found no evidence of a flood of new claims where similar legislation was introduced overseas. With respect to the overseas experience, the committee considered the evidence provided by fire chief Ken Block of the Edmonton Fire Rescue Services in Canada. Fire chief Block informed the committee that the cost impact of presumptive legislation in Canada had been minimal if not negligible. He reported that in the province of Alberta, Canada, presumptive legislation was introduced in 2003 and now covers 14 cancers. There are approximately 13 500 firefighters in Alberta —

Mr P. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, I am very conscious of the motion before the house, which is extremely narrow, and while I do not want to appear unsympathetic to the case that Ms Hartland is prosecuting in relation to the substantive issue, she is in fact referring to the substantive issue and arguments which have, in any event, been heard in this place previously. She is recapping, if you like, some of those issues. However, as I understand it, the motion before the house is simply to refer the bill to the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee for its consideration and report on measures aimed at addressing any constitutional impediment to the bill's introduction into the Council. Given that the motion is specifically narrow and deals with the constitutional impediments to the bill, this is essentially a procedural debate of reference of the bill to the committee for the consideration of constitutional matters.

Therefore it does not behove us as a house to contemplate a debate about the matters of substance, which has already occurred in a sense. In that context it would be a matter for the committee to consider the narrow parameters given to it by the reference to deal with a review of any constitutional flaws and make a recommendation to the house on that issue. It is then a matter for the house to determine whether to adopt a report from the committee. In doing so it may have some discussion about the more substantive matters around that, but this is not the moment at which that discussion should occur. The motion is quite narrow. It is to refer the bill to the committee for a particular purpose, and the particular purpose is to address constitutional considerations, so I posit that while Ms Hartland's sentiment is understood, she is digressing from the purpose of what is a procedural motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! Mr Davis's point of order is well made, although Ms Hartland is referring to the constitutional issues as examined by the Senate, and I think it is in

order for her to refer to that. Ms Hartland had only been speaking for — the clock was not stopped — about 4 minutes at the time Mr Davis raised his point of order. I draw Ms Hartland's attention to the narrowness of the debate on the motion to refer the bill to the committee and ask her to proceed from there.

Ms HARTLAND — I thank the Acting President for her direction. I advise Mr Davis that I have made sure my presentation to the chamber will be brief, because I recognise that it will be the committee that will examine all these issues. I am, I suppose, just trying to put forward the kinds of things I think will need to be examined. Possibly the committee will have a different view.

Mr P. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, Ms Hartland in responding made it clear that she is raising issues she thinks the committee should consider. It is entirely inappropriate in this debate to speak to issues that the committee may consider when the purpose of the motion is to refer the bill to the committee for examination of constitutional issues. Ms Hartland is raising for the purposes of debate matters relating to the substantive nature of what the bill seeks to achieve. She is referring to other jurisdictions, including international jurisdictions, and it is clear to me that that is outside the remit of the motion to give effect to a reference to the committee on constitutional issues. I am quite happy for Ms Hartland to talk about constitutional issues; I just think she is broadening the debate beyond the terms of the motion. I do not want to be difficult about it but it is quite an important principle. If you are going to propose a motion dealing with a constitutional matter, that is what you have to talk to, not the debate in general.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! On the point of order, as I mentioned in relation to the previous point of order, I understood Ms Hartland to be talking about the constitutional issue that was raised in the Senate when it looked at a similar bill not that long ago, and I think that is pertinent to the motion she is moving here. I would also say that in moving a motion a member does not just get up and say, 'I move to refer this matter to the committee', and sit down; there is some scope to give reasons that you might do that and to explain them in some detail. Ms Hartland has also said that she is going to give a brief summary of her reasons for moving the motion. I draw Ms Hartland's attention to what has been raised in the points of order and ask her to continue.

Ms HARTLAND — The Senate inquiry found that the committee was confident that the cost impact of the proposed legislation would be as insignificant in

Australia as it had been elsewhere. It found no evidence overseas of a flood of new claims where similar legislation was introduced. For example, in respect of the overseas experience the committee considered evidence provided by fire chief Ken Block of Edmonton Fire Rescue Services in Canada. Fire chief Block informed the committee that the cost of the impact of presumptive legislation had been minimal, if not negligible. He reported that in the Province of Alberta, Canada, presumptive legislation was introduced in 2003 and now covers 14 cancers.

There are approximately 13 500 firefighters in Alberta, of which 3500 are full time and 10 000 are volunteers or part time. The committee heard that the total cost to the workers compensation board of all workplace injury and illness claims, including back injuries, sprains et cetera, for the Edmonton Fire Rescue Services budget was less than 2 per cent of the Canadian \$158 million recurrent operating budget. Figures shown to the committee indicate that over the five-year period between 2006 and 2010 there were 19 occupational cancer claims at the Alberta workers compensation board. That is less than four claims per year on average from a current workforce of 13 500, and presumably there would be an even bigger number of retired and ex-firefighters who would also be eligible.

Ken Block estimated that within the 2 per cent of the recurrent operating budget there would be a very small percentage of work-related illnesses falling within presumptive legislation coverage. He went on to say that any cost associated with the presumptive legislation had been offset —

Mr P. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President — and I repeat — the substantive contribution in this debate by the member moving the motion is inconsistent with the motion itself, which is referring specifically to the constitutional impediments, not to the issue of substance around the purpose of the bill. Ms Hartland is speaking to the purpose of the bill; she is not speaking to the constitutional impediments, which frame the motion before the house. I ask you to draw her back to discussing the constitutional impediments involved in the introduction of the bill in the Legislative Council.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! On the point of order, Mr Davis makes a valid point about the subject of the motion being about constitutional issues, but I also draw the attention of the house to the fact that the constitutional issue is about costs. Having said that, I also ask Ms Hartland to keep her remarks to the reason she wants the bill to be referred to the committee.

Ms HARTLAND — It is very difficult to do this, I have to say, in that I am referring this bill on constitutional grounds, part of which is around cost, and I would have thought that it was appropriate to speak about that. But I will take direction from the Chair and move on. It is unfortunate that the chamber is not going to be able to hear my reasons for this bill being referred to the committee.

I will finish by talking a little bit more about the Senate committee and the evidence that was given there. For the reasons that I have already outlined, the Senate committee found that the legislation would not provide any new grounds for claims and so there was no evidence that the cost increase would occur. There is no evidence that this has occurred overseas. Nobody in the South Australian Parliament has raised this problem, even though the Greens legislation there met with robust debate.

It is quite clear that firefighters get certain cancers at a rate above that of other Victorians, but they still get cancer at very low rates. The evidence from overseas is that the increase in successful claims falls within the ordinary variation built into a compensation scheme. Based on all this information I believe I have a strong case to say that the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 will not increase costs, or the premiums payable by employers under compulsory WorkCover insurance policies and is constitutional.

In the event that the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee comes to a different conclusion, I would like it to make recommendations about other means to process this bill through the Parliament. As I have said previously, I believe this bill goes beyond party politics. This bill is about getting adequate WorkCover compensation for firefighters who contract cancer and follows precedents successfully set in other jurisdictions, including the commonwealth. It is about protecting those who protect us, and I would be more than happy for the government to introduce such a bill; and I would say the sooner the better. I encourage the house to support this referral.

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I acknowledge that Ms Hartland may have been a little frustrated by my intervention. I indicate to her that it was entirely in relation to the substantive wording of the motion. There are two relevant apposite points. One is that this motion clearly sets out that it is seeking to refer the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 to the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee for the purpose of examining it for the second relevant part of the motion,

which relates to measures aimed at addressing any constitutional impediment.

It is clear that there has been substantive discussion on this issue previously. I do not intend to prosecute that discussion further today, because I believe this motion is so narrow that it would be inappropriate, which was the point I was seeking to make by my interventions.

I have indicated in previous debates that the government would not be opposing this reference. That therefore brings me to the substantive issue, which is that the committee, when receiving this bill, will be informed by the resolution of the house that its sole purpose is to examine any constitutional impediment to the bill being introduced to the Council, as referred to by the mover's speech. The President has ruled that this was not an appropriate bill to be introduced to the Council.

It is a fairly narrow remit for the committee to look at the constitutional impediments. It is a matter for the committee to find what it will find, and I am not going to pre-empt the committee's findings. It could find that there is a way that the bill could be amended or that there is no way the bill could be amended, and it will make a report to the house. It may recommend a number of courses of action depending on its findings.

As I said, it is inappropriate for me in this debate to pre-empt the findings of a committee. I simply make the point that my view is that this motion is so narrow that the only task the committee will have is to address the constitutional consideration and report thereon, rather than deal with the merit of the bill, because the merit of the bill ought to be dealt with by the house as a whole. I think that is the aim of the mover. That being the aim, I can assure the mover that government members do not oppose the reference to the committee.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — The opposition is happy to support Ms Hartland's motion, which seeks to refer to the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee the questions that previous speakers have discussed around the constitutional impediments to Ms Hartland's private members bill, the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011. In saying that, I will make a couple of brief remarks. I note that the government has indicated it is not opposing this motion, so I welcome the support of the government for the committee, of which I am a member, to consider legislation. That is how members of this place in a previous Parliament envisaged that upper house committees would work.

This committee has not met for quite a while. In fact the committee last met to consider legislation around cycling accidents with Mr Barber's Road Safety Amendment (Car Doors) Bill 2012. I think we can all agree that appropriate compensation for firefighters is meritorious and that the matter Ms Hartland seeks to address through her bill is an important one that needs our considered attention. However, this bill fell at the first hurdle, and we were not even permitted to participate in a second-reading debate to have that policy discussion about the merits of the question.

We are happy for the upper house committees to work as was envisaged and for this reference to be made. I note that Ms Hartland's motion refers to the committee considering and reporting on the issue by 12 June; this is a fairly tight time line in which committee members will be able to consider a fairly tight set of questions. Perhaps then the Parliament — in this place or the other — might be able to have a more substantive discussion about the policy issues around meeting the health and safety and workers compensation needs of Victorian firefighters. We all depend on the courage and commitment to the community of this group of citizens — both professional and volunteer firefighters. They need to be safe in their work and they need to be supported if they are injured or get sick through the extraordinary work they do.

We support the motion and commend Ms Hartland for bringing this issue to the Parliament and finding a new way to keep the issue alive.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the other speakers. Even though Mr Philip Davis and I might disagree about what I presented, I believe all the matters I raised will be dealt with very well by the committee. I hope this goes beyond party politics, because protection for firefighters — both volunteer and career — is an incredibly important issue.

Motion agreed to.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed from 20 March; motion of Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan):

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 16 April 2013, a copy of:

- (1) 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;

- (2) 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;
- (3) 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
- (4) 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'.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on this motion once again because, as I pointed out to the house the last time I spoke on this matter, the east–west link is an issue that goes to the heart of how people in government regard the western suburbs of Melbourne. Over an extended period of time we in the west have been neglected. Governments — particularly Labor governments, I hasten to add — have regarded the people of the western suburbs as second-class citizens. There are many and varied opportunities to spend vast amounts of money in government. The Labor Party is particularly good at spending money. It is not particularly good at getting results for that money but it knows how to spend it; there are no two ways about that. But this project, once completed, would bring immediate relief to the people of the western suburbs.

As I said the last time I spoke on this matter, the people of the west are suffering as a result of traffic congestion due to the growth in the western suburbs. For example, the cities of Wyndham and Melton are the fastest and second fastest growing municipalities in Australia. I urge members who have not been out that way of late to take a drive — not during peak hour, certainly, but on a weekend — and see what has been happening in the west over the past few years. They will be staggered.

I have often mentioned Point Cook in this house. When I came into this chamber not all that long ago — a bit over six years ago — Point Cook was not much more than a few paddocks with the odd sheep in them. It is now a thriving metropolis. I was at Point Cook just last week — I am sorry, I tell a lie, which does not happen often; it was on Monday — announcing a new transport program which will be of great benefit to elderly and disabled people in Point Cook. Even though the area has grown like Topsy over the last five years or so, it continues to grow. We now have it linked up with Sanctuary Lakes, and we will soon have it linked up

with Wyndham Harbour and Werribee South. These areas are growing at an extraordinary rate. On the other side of Werribee we have places like Tarneit.

The rate at which the growth is occurring is amazing. It is impossible to keep up with the growth. If a new edition of *Melway* were to be published every month, we might have some hope of keeping up, but short of that I will have to learn how to use my TomTom, which I have at home and will one day figure out how to use. The east–west link is an important issue for the western suburbs.

Let me say to Mr Barber, to the other Greens and to Labor members: anybody who opposes the east–west link slaps everybody in the western suburbs in the face. To be opposed to the east–west link is to attack the people of the western suburbs.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Barber finds all this very amusing. We do not have trams in most parts of the western suburbs, not that Mr Barber would be aware of this as he does not get beyond the tram tracks. As far as the Greens are concerned there is nothing beyond the tram tracks because beyond the tram tracks nobody votes for them, and you can understand why. If that is the way the Greens treat people in outer Melbourne, it is little wonder that they get precious few votes from them.

Mr Barber — On a point of order, Acting President, I heard Mr Davis's point of order a few minutes ago in relation to the narrowness of Ms Hartland's motion. This motion seeks the tabling of some documents that would better inform the house about what the east–west tunnel will or will not do. Mr Finn has managed to filibuster on this for three weeks so that we have waited even longer to get the same piece of information. He should not be allowed to do that indefinitely in this place. He should be required to be relevant to the subject matter — that is, whether these documents should or should not be tabled in the house.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, my understanding is — as was the case three weeks ago when we first started debating this matter — that it is a matter on which there has been a bit of leverage. I think I have stayed within the parameters that were set three weeks ago when we began debating this motion. I was referring to the Greens attitude towards the building of this particular project. I do not see how that is out of order at all.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. However, I

do ask that Mr Finn address his contribution to the motion at hand.

Mr FINN — I have no intention of continuing for too much longer because I believe that this matter, from my point of view anyway, has been covered quite comprehensively. But it is important that this house is aware that this matter is of vital importance to the western suburbs of Melbourne. As such I will stand up and support it. I will support it loudly and strongly, and I will oppose those such as Mr Barber and his Greens friends who wish to oppose it. I do not know why they want the documents; I do not know what they are going to do with the documents. It seems to me that they want documents on everything known to man. I do not particularly care what they do with the documents. I just want to see the project finished. I just want to see it built. I just want to see a situation where people in the western suburbs of Melbourne are not stuck in traffic forever while trying to get to work. In the course of this debate we have heard that up to 60 per cent of people who are currently stuck on the Tullamarine or West Gate freeways do not want to go to the city at all; they want to go to the other side of Melbourne — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — No, I am not pulling numbers out of the air at all. That was a number that was delivered to this house three weeks ago. That means there are a lot of people who would use the east–west link. There are a lot of people who will continue to be very angry if Mr Barber and his friends try to hold this project up. If gaining the documents of which Mr Barber speaks today is part of that campaign to hold this project up, then I have some very grave concerns indeed.

In concluding my contribution, I would suggest to Mr Barber, and indeed to the Labor Party — and it is a pity that Mr Barber is actually leaving the chamber as I am just about to make a very strong suggestion to him — —

Mr Barber — On a point of order, Acting President, are the toilet habits of members to be brought into debate in this place?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I am sorry, but I did not hear the reference. The advice to me is that the comment made by Mr Finn was that Mr Barber was about to leave the chamber. I did not hear any reference to toilet breaks. I am happy to stand corrected, but the Clerk has advised me that that is the case.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, I have heard a number of members during

this debate, in both this chamber and in the other one for that matter, refer to members leaving the chamber. I made no reference as to why Mr Barber was leaving the chamber — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr FINN — It should also be pointed out that we are still entirely unsure as to where the Labor Party stands on this. This is something that not only affects the west of Melbourne; it affects the west of Victoria. There are a good number of people in Ballarat and Geelong who are very keen to use this link once it is completed. I am sure they would like the opposition to tell them what would happen to this project if Labor was to come into government at the next election.

I see members opposite furiously trying to ignore me at this point in time. But I think it is only fair, right and reasonable that the people on the western side of the state know what the opposition would do regarding the east–west link. We just do not know. Apparently Labor Party members supported the east–west link for a period of time. Then they opposed it. Then they supported it again. Then they opposed it. Where they are at the moment, I do not know.

I see Ms Tierney on the other side of the house. She might like to tell us. She might like to tell her constituents in Geelong, Ballarat and Colac what her position on this matter is. Where exactly does the Labor Party stand on this issue? I say to you, Acting President, that you do not need documents to know that this is one of the biggest projects upon which we have ever embarked in Victoria's history — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, it will be good, I am sure. We are talking about billions of dollars being spent on this project. Yet we have a major party, a party which claims to be the alternative government of this state, refuse to tell us where it stands on the biggest project this state has ever had.

Ms Tierney — who is usually pretty vocal I have to say, when the mood takes her — is not saying a word at this point in time. She is not committing herself. She is toeing the party line beautifully. She is not saying a word. She is not committing herself one way or the other. But let me tell Ms Tierney and the members of the Labor Party that there are millions of Victorians who want to know where the opposition stands. There are millions of Victorians who have a very keen interest in this project and who want to know what will happen if Labor is voted into government.

As I said before, that is a reasonable question. If we are talking about a multimillion-dollar project which is going to transform the face of transportation in Melbourne and which will go down in the history books as something the likes of which we have never seen before, it is only reasonable that the Labor Party tell us where it stands. Would it continue the project or would it scrap it? Would it flick it? Would it give in to its friends from the Greens and scrap the thing altogether?

The Greens are at least consistent — they want to stop everything. If it is good for society and the community, the Greens want to stop it. We accept and know that. But the Labor Party will not tell us where it stands. From my point of view, that is an insult to the people of the west of Melbourne, whom I represent. On the subject of the documents that we are discussing today, I am sure the Labor Party would have had similar documents when it was in government. It would be aware of what this matter involves, and it would be in a position to make a commitment one way or the other on this matter.

We have a government in Canberra which we know has contempt for the west of Melbourne. We know that because it shows it every day, not just in terms of this project but in so many other situations. How much has the Gillard government promised for this project if it is re-elected at the next election? Not a cent! Not a cracker! That is what it thinks of the people of the west of Melbourne. These are people like the federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Bill Shorten, the federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Brendan O'Connor, and of course Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who are alleged to represent the west of Melbourne. Despite the fact that they have had their names on ballot papers for a number of years, and I have seen the odd how-to-vote card with their photo on it, I have not seen any evidence that they have gone in to bat for the best interests of the west. They are certainly not doing it on this occasion. They are not going in to bat for the west of Melbourne, they are not going in to bat for Ballarat and they are certainly not going in to bat for Geelong.

This is an issue that goes right down the south-western corridor of Victoria — and for that matter probably north-west too. It is shameful that, firstly, we have a situation where at a state level the Labor Party will not tell us what it would do if it ever came to government. God help us! Secondly, we have a federal government which is snubbing its nose at millions of Victorians. This is not the first time it has done so, but on this occasion I find that absolutely intolerable.

It is not as if members opposite do not know what is going on. They have the documents, and they have seen the documents we are talking about here today. They know what this involves, so they have no excuse for hiding behind a tree, as they appear to be doing at the moment. That is deeply regrettable and shows a deep flaw in the Labor Party in Victoria. It shows that it does not have the capacity to make a firm decision and to show the sort of leadership that Premier Denis Napthine is producing now for Victoria. As such, in my view, this disqualifies the members opposite from government. Until such time as they can stand up in this house or elsewhere and tell us exactly what they think, they should be disqualified from ever holding office in this state.

It is important to put on record the gratitude felt by many people whom I represent in the west of Melbourne to Tony Abbott, the federal Leader of the Opposition and the man who has said he will put up \$1 billion of taxpayers money. You have to remember that we are talking about taxpayers money. Tony Abbott has said he will put up \$1 billion to get this thing under way. That is \$1 billion more than we have heard about from the Labor Party.

I would like to put on record my appreciation and my gratitude to Tony Abbott. I have no doubt he will be a Prime Minister who will fight for everybody. He will govern for everybody in Australia. He has already started to show that. He has already started to show that he will represent the people in the western suburbs of Melbourne in a way that the Labor Party never has. He will not neglect the west, he will not take the west for granted and he will not use and abuse the west. Instead he will provide for the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne in a way that Labor never has.

That is something I am very grateful for and something I am very much looking forward to. I look forward to 15 September, when we can actually get on with the job, get this country moving again and get this project, the east-west link, up and running. That will be a great day for hundreds of thousands of my constituents in the west, as indeed it will be for those in Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and right through that western half of the state. I will now conclude my comments. I had not intended to speak quite this long, but it is a very important matter. I hope I have managed in some small way —

Mr Leane — No, you haven't.

Mr FINN — Mr Leane tells me that I have not been up to effectively conveying the importance of this project to the people of the western suburbs. I invite Mr Leane to come with me.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — No, I invite Mr Leane to come with me out to the west. I do not know how long it is since he has been to the western suburbs.

Mr Leane — Have a stubby with me.

Mr FINN — I will have a stubby with him; I will have two. If he would like to join me in the western suburbs, I will show him new estate after new estate absolutely chock-a-block full of families who want to use the east–west link — the one the Labor Party is denying us, the one it will not say whether it will build and the one the Liberal-Nationals Napthine government is committed to building. If Mr Leane would like to come out to the western suburbs, I personally will show him around. He will come away as convinced as I am that this project is most important for the future of not just the western suburbs and the western part of the state but the whole of Melbourne and the whole of Victoria.

As I said before, I very much look forward to this project getting under way and being part of our life. There was a fair bit of controversy about CityLink, but now we could not imagine what life would be like without it, although we got a taste of that one day last year when it was blocked and havoc ensued from one end of Melbourne to the other. I have no doubt that once the east–west link is constructed and completed it will be one of the greatest things that has ever happened to this wonderful city we live in.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to move an amendment to Mr Barber’s motion. I move:

That ‘16 April 2013’ be omitted and ‘7 May 2013’ inserted.

The reason for that change is that this is an amendment to a motion originally moved by Mr Barber in March, and due to the number of speakers on the government side, we ran out of time to debate it. Notwithstanding that situation, we had a negotiated arrangement, as we do with general business every Wednesday, as to how it would proceed through the house — that we would bring this particular motion to a vote, with an understanding that all parties supported the motion to table the documents. However, we did not actually get to that point. The motion remained a live motion until today, when we resumed debate just 20 minutes ago with Mr Finn continuing with the contribution he began in March.

It is worth raising the issue that, when document motions were put forward in 2011, which was early in

this parliamentary session, usually a speaker moved the motion, most commonly a member of the Greens, and then a speaker from the government spoke to the motion. At the time it was usually Mr O’Donohue. There were one or two occasions when the government did not support the tabling of documents in this place, but those occasions are few. Usually the government did not oppose the motion. Then a member of the ALP spoke, usually Mr Leane, who usually was in favour of the tabling of the documents. Then there was a short reply from the member who moved the motion, thanking the speakers, and that would have been the end of the matter.

This motion should be successful because it is not being opposed — —

Mrs Peulich — You can’t count the chickens.

Ms PENNICUIK — It has been indicated that there will be no opposition to the passing of the motion requiring or requesting the Leader of the Government to table the various documents about the east–west link project as moved by Mr Barber almost one month ago. That may lead to another standing motion being put by the Greens or another party about the merits of the east–west link project, but that is not the subject of the motion before us now, which is simply about the tabling of documents.

I therefore have to move this amendment because the original motion had the date 16 April, which of course was yesterday, so we now have to move an amendment to amend that date to 7 May, which is the next sitting Tuesday. The usual practice is to ask for the documents to be tabled on the first day of the sitting week, which in this case is 7 May. It is worth making those comments, and it will be good to see the house return to the practice where motions that call for the tabling of documents are just that.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I say to Ms Pennicuik that motions brought forward either by members of the opposition or the Greens provide us with an opportunity to talk about things that are important and put — —

Mr Leane — Transparency is important.

Mrs PEULICH — It is very important, and the east–west link is a very important infrastructure project. Just a few moments ago I was speaking about our outstanding election commitments and the platform on which the now coalition was elected. One of those commitments was rectifying the infrastructure deficit. In South Eastern Metropolitan Region, there are particular problems with traffic congestion. Only today

the Victorian Auditor-General tabled a report entitled *Managing Traffic Congestion*. I would like to quote from the 'Background' section of the audit summary, which discusses the problem of congestion. It says:

Traffic is a sign of mobility and of a dynamic economy. However, excessive congestion causes a range of undesirable consequences. It imposes costs on the community and businesses through:

- longer, less predictable travel times;
- lost productivity and additional running costs of vehicles;
- increased pollution, noise, loss of amenity, driver stress;
- reduced time people spend with their families.

We all know that, because we have all suffered from undue levels of traffic congestion due to the former Labor government's lack of investment in roads infrastructure in particular, but also in public transport.

The report goes on to say:

In 2006, the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) estimated the economic costs of Melbourne's congestion ranged from \$1.3 billion to \$2.6 billion per year —

and that was in 2006 —

and that this was likely to double by 2020.

The costs of traffic congestion to the economy are inordinate. Page 27 of the report states:

This project involves the construction of a new 18 kilometre cross-city road corridor. It will provide direct connections to the port of Melbourne and an east-west central business district bypass for essential traffic. It is expected to free space on —

and this is the important bit —

existing roads for buses and trams and reduce heavy truck traffic on residential roads in the inner west.

Why would anyone oppose or raise concerns about the important construction of roads infrastructure such as the east-west link? Recently on a trip to Geelong members of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee listened to a range of matters pertaining to economic development, and all the key stakeholders, including the port of Geelong, Avalon Airport, the City of Greater Geelong as well as the various chambers of commerce, came out in very strong support of the east-west link. In fact they were enthusiastic about it, and for good reason.

What is the coalition government doing about it? Some \$15 million was allocated in the 2012-13 Victorian

budget to plan and develop the east-west link. The geotechnical drilling has occurred in the areas of Fitzroy, Carlton, Parkville and within Royal Park. More than 100 financiers and constructors attended an industry briefing in July 2012, with companies from Australia, Japan, Spain, France, Korea, the United Kingdom and Italy. Clearly it is an important project.

Victoria needs an alternative to the M1 arterial — that is, it needs another east-west crossing. The government had to inject an extra \$14 million for maintenance work on West Gate Bridge in the 2012-13 budget. Anyone who travels that route on a regular basis, as does Mr Finn — we have heard Mr Finn talk about congestion on the West Gate — would know how desperately we need another east-west crossing. More than 160 000 vehicles travel across the West Gate Bridge per day and, according to the Eddington report published in 2008, this volume is projected to rise to 235 000 by 2031.

The Eastern Freeway carries more than 140 000 vehicles each day, and around 40 per cent of the traffic from the Eastern Freeway travels beyond the central city area. Clearly there is a significant need for an east-west link, which would help to avoid gridlock from even minor incidents on the M1, and it would remove traffic from inner arterial roads and link industry out north, east and west. Obviously that is crucial to the future of this city.

Who supports the east-west link? Anyone with common sense and who understands the importance of economic development, the creation of jobs and a future for this city and this state supports it. They include some notable supporters, including the RACV for one.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs PEULICH — To be honest, I look upon the RACV's identification of road priorities almost as a bible. I know that the Greens, who hate roads, have a different view, and that is why, for example, the people of Lyndhurst will see through some of the argy-bargy of Labor policies that will not resolve the issues confronted by those particular voters on a daily basis.

The Committee of Melbourne also supports the east-west link, as does the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) supports the east-west link. Former Premiers John Brumby and Steve Bracks support the east-west link. Some current opposition MPs, including the members for Footscray and Williamstown in the Assembly,

support the east–west link. Tony Abbott and the federal Liberal-Nationals coalition support the east–west link.

Who does not support it? There are the usual suspects: the Victorian Leader of the Opposition and the shadow ministry, and other opposition MPs, including the Assembly members for Richmond and Melbourne, do not support it. But of course this is very different from those who have some common sense. I place on record some of the quotes in respect of the east–west link from the RACV:

The east–west link is a major project that will alleviate the massive congestion at the end of the Eastern Freeway and on both east–west and north–south roads.

The Committee of Melbourne said:

The government’s green light in planning for east–west link will help build confidence in our freight and logistics industry and will also ensure it remains productive and efficient.

Former Premier John Brumby said:

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

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

The 2006 Bracks government document *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* states:

The government will also take steps to fully explore and access options for the development of another east–west link.

Cesar Melhem, the state secretary of the Australian Workers Union, accepts the need for the east–west link. The AWU submission to the east–west link needs assessment study in 2008 asserts:

The EastLink project could not be considered fully completed until the east–west tunnel had been built. Without the east–west tunnel, the Eastern Freeway will turn into a congested car park and will defeat the purpose of EastLink.

In the *Age* of 30 July 2012 Mr Melhem is quoted as having said:

It is just crazy not to go ahead with the [east–west] project...

The article also states:

Mr Melhem said one electorate could not determine the best interests of the whole state.

In 2013 Mr Melhem said that the east–west link should be a priority for Dr Napthine, and of course it is a priority for this government.

The Assembly members for Williamstown, Melton, Altona, Kororoit, Keilor and Footscray rank a second

river crossing as their no. 1 infrastructure priority and state:

... Melbourne’s west must be better connected with the rest of Melbourne, thus reducing overreliance on the West Gate Bridge.

The members for Footscray and Williamstown supported Sir Rod Eddington’s recommendations in the east–west link needs assessment report:

The road tunnel has the opportunity of linking the growth in the west to the growth in the east. That will have an important multiplier effect in terms of options and choices for residents on both sides of the city. With greater access and connectivity will come more local jobs and investment.

I ask: who would actually be against more local jobs and more investment? Regrettably, it is the Greens.

I would like to finish on a final quotation, from a former member for Western Metropolitan Region, Mr Pakula, a current ALP candidate for the Assembly seat of Lyndhurst. In his statement on the 2008 east–west link needs assessment study he says:

... the Greens have told motorists in the middle and outer west to ‘stick it’ — no new river crossings and no new roads for them. Car drivers in the west are to be punished, sacrificed on the altar of green ideology.

The east–west link is a critical piece of infrastructure for our capital city as well as our state and for anyone who values jobs and investment in the future of this state. I am not surprised that the Greens, who are so strongly against roads infrastructure, are trying to find documents that somehow will undermine this important piece of infrastructure, the east–west link. Clearly this motion will go through. I hope that sooner or later common sense will also prevail amongst the Greens.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak briefly in the debate on the east–west link documents motion that has been brought before the house this afternoon. In doing so I pick up Mrs Peulich’s point about the infrastructure deficit left by the former government when the coalition government came to power in 2010. It was evident that during the time the previous government was in power Melbourne had increased significantly in size in terms of population numbers and the expansion of various growth corridors and that there was a real lack of planning that went into servicing those communities. Consequently we were left with an enormous backlog of road projects and traffic congestion on a daily basis.

Anyone who travels within those major corridors on a regular basis will understand that they are highly utilised and that there is a real need for this project to

get up and running. It is an important project. I note that Mr Albanese, the federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, made his announcement in the last few weeks about the fast rail project from Melbourne to Brisbane via a number of places. That is an enormous project, which will cost well in excess of \$100 billion in today's terms. It is going to be delivered somewhere in the vicinity of 2050. We are talking about infrastructure projects here and now that can make a real difference to Victoria's economy, will improve productivity and will assist with improving livability in this state.

I go back to the coalition government's announcement in 2011 of its priority infrastructure projects for Victoria. The then Premier, Ted Baillieu, flagged this project as a priority for the government. It was going to be a once-in-a-generation project that would make an enormous difference to the way that people were able to get around Melbourne and improve their livability standards. If you go back in history, you see it was Liberal governments that undertook CityLink and the city rail loop and finished those very large projects. We saw very few of those major infrastructure projects under the former government. It is up to a coalition government to get things moving again.

No doubt members like Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury, who represent the western suburbs, see this on a daily basis. Anyone who travels across the West Gate Bridge on a daily basis would see the need for this project. The members for Western Victoria Region, Mr Ramsay, Mr O'Brien, Mr Koch — —

Mr Barber — Thought of taking the train?

Ms CROZIER — They take a train as well, Mr Barber. People do not always have to drive. I know Mr O'Brien catches the train to Melbourne on a regular basis. He regularly travels by train to hearings of the committees of which he is a member. I am not saying that he does not travel by car, but there are many people and many industries in our city and in our state that rely on good reliable transport corridors.

The east–west link project will be a very important project for the city of Melbourne and for our state, and for the Greens to be talking about pedal power and every other jolly power that they seem to talk about shows a lack of understanding of what the majority of people want and need. I do not know how Mr Barber gets to work on a daily basis. I suppose by bicycle, train, car or tram — maybe it is all of those modes of transport. Nevertheless, many people rely on driving to get from where they live to central Melbourne.

Just recently we heard Mr Guy talking about real projects in local areas like Frankston — he mentioned this yesterday — so that people do not have to travel to and fro and can work in their local areas. There are very significant projects in other areas of our city. The east–west project will link our regional areas and our suburbs to various parts of Melbourne. It is a worthy project that needs support.

I am pleased that the federal opposition leader, Tony Abbott, has come out in support of the project, with a realistic figure and a realistic project that can be delivered, unlike Mr Albanese who flings around great big figures and great big fanciful ideas. This project is a priority under the coalition government, and I am pleased that Infrastructure Australia has also backed the east–west link.

Preliminary work has already been undertaken to look at this project. It is not something that is a thought bubble or a notion. Mr Andrews has called it a 'grand hoax', which is just a silly statement. We are uncertain if Mr Andrews knows what direction east or west is or what the project is called, and there is serious division between his party and the Greens about the idea. I am sure members of his own party who represent people in the western suburbs will be very grateful for the project when it is realised.

As I said at the outset, Mrs Peulich highlighted the infrastructure deficit left by the previous government. This government has put aside significant amounts of money — record levels of money — to fund infrastructure projects, and this is just one of them. The Minister for Roads, Mr Mulder, and others who have been working on the different aspects of the project should be congratulated. With those words, I note that we will not be opposing the documents motion, but again I say that this is an important infrastructure project that we should all be supporting.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to speak in the debate on this motion of Mr Barber's. I do so on the basis that I am a regular user of both the train network and the road network from deep western Victoria to both the CBD and beyond to the eastern side of the state. As Ms Crozier said, we are coming to crunch time in relation to getting road traffic from the western side of the state through the CBD to the eastern side with only one access point, that being the West Gate Bridge. Mr Barber has indicated a number of times through interjections and by other means that we can all take the train. As Mr Barber well knows, that it is not possible. Logistically we cannot float the entire road population of the Princes Highway onto the trains.

In fact technically it is somewhat difficult, particularly for road freight.

If we are to be serious about this, we need to look at a short-term solution for carrying road traffic whether it is from the east to the west or, as is my preference, from the west to the east, because it is imperative for people from the western side of the state to gain access to the CBD and over to the eastern side of the state. It is curious that the Labor opposition does not seem to have a position about how in the future we are to carry road traffic from the east to the west. It seems to be more than happy to facilitate \$22 million to provide fairy lights on the West Gate Bridge rather than putting in an extra lane or somehow trying to strengthen the road to accommodate more traffic by providing more lanes.

I congratulate the Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder, for his persistence in making sure that we do not waste money like the suggested \$22 million for fairy lights but in fact put that money into strengthening the bridge and providing additional incoming and outgoing lanes. I also congratulate — and I was going to say the federal Abbott government, but that would be a bit presumptuous — the federal coalition for announcing not \$1 billion as Mr Finn said but \$1.5 billion towards the project costs for the east–west link.

I also congratulate the G21 group on being proactive in having the link as one of its top priorities. It is a natural link to the already significant investment in the upgrade of Princes Highway west, the Waurn Ponds-Winchelsea leg, which has been committed to now by both state and federal governments, and also the commitment of \$500-odd million for the duplication of the Winchelsea-Colac leg of the highway. We will see a significant increase in traffic, and we will see an upgraded and duplicated road that will convey traffic a lot quicker and more safely. But once again there will be a problem when that traffic hits the Werribee to West Gate Bridge precincts where it will have to be funnelled onto the bridge.

My reason for supporting the significant investment in the Princes Highway west is we are going to have some significant problems in managing the increased road traffic because of the upgrades to these highways onto the West Gate Bridge and off on to the eastern freeways without a second crossing. There is some urgency about this, and I look forward to parties taking a bipartisan approach in dealing with the critical investment that is required not in 20 years but in the next 5 years to accommodate the increase in road traffic flow through the east–west or west–east link.

The Napthine government is investing in new trains and new carriages and in the upgrading of the railway network, including the regional rail link, and in providing more access, flexibility and safety in relation to public conveyance on trains. I commend the government on that, and I look forward to the ongoing investment.

The government committed \$15 million in the 2012–13 budget to plan and develop the east–west link. Drilling work is being done in Fitzroy, Carlton and Parkville, so we are committed to the planning process. A prospective federal coalition government has already committed \$1.5 billion, and obviously considerably more funds will need to be raised over time to complete this urgent project. Mrs Peulich suggested that there has been significant stakeholder support for the project from the RACV, the Committee for Melbourne, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Workers Union and even former Premier John Brumby and some opposition MPs, including those for Footscray and Williamstown in the Assembly, and, as I said, the proposed federal coalition government.

In closing, I am always a little cynical of the Greens requesting the tabling of documents in relation to large projects. I hope this does not suggest that they do not believe this project has merit. I am disappointed that the opposition cannot seem to find a policy position in relation to the east–west or west–east link, and I hope that with the federal coalition’s significant commitment, which is the only commitment because the Gillard federal government has not committed 1 cent, and with Western Victoria Region being strongly supportive of both the planning process and the ongoing construction of an east–west link to create a growing economy and deal with a growing population in the west, we will be able to create an access for road transport to move from the west to the east and also from the east to the west, which is imperative for regional areas. While we do not oppose the motion, I hope Mr Barber’s request for documents is being made on the basis that he keeps an open mind on this project.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank those members who came in to make contributions on the motion. In early versions of the notice paper there were a large number of notices of motion from government MPs all lauding the benefits of the east–west road tunnel, but not one of those motions was ever brought on for debate in government business time. The government waited until my motion came up and then rolled out an extraordinarily large number of speakers with

extraordinarily little information about the project they all want to champion.

Basically what they know is that it is a road, it goes from east to west and that Melbourne's roads are congested. They do not know what it is going to cost, they do not know the route, they do not know where the off-ramps are, they do not know what the toll will be, they do not know how many people will drive on it, and they do not know what the revenue will be. They know that the federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, has committed \$1.5 billion to it, and that is it. They are attempting to convince the Victorian public of what is good for them, and so far all they have recruited to their cause is the RACV, the posh end of town and the union that covers the guys who will get to build it. That is it.

The vast majority of the public are crying out for public transport and, for that matter, investment in schools and hospitals. What we can be sure of is that if the government ever builds this project, there will be a massive taxpayer subsidy underwriting it, a subsidy so massive that the budget will be drained dry and the government will not be able to afford any of the other infrastructure gaps in any other electorate, the result of which will be that the government will lose government. Alternatively, we will start to get a drip-feed of information, the government will get to read the business case, private investors will get to find out a little bit more about it, Infrastructure Australia will have a close look at it and the government will realise that this is a project that is not economically viable. In other words, the cost of the project will vastly exceed the economic benefits delivered by the project.

In my office upstairs I have got a dirty great folder containing some FOI information about the traffic modelling that was done for this project. Almost every useful piece of information and every assumption that went into the modelling for this project has been blacked out. This government is terrified of any information about this project being exposed. It is terrified of a debate on the merits of this project. There were many government speakers in here during the last sitting week to talk about this motion in order to delay for another three weeks the inevitable genuine debate about the merits of this project compared with other transport projects and, for that matter, its merits compared with other infrastructure and capital projects. However, you can run but you cannot hide, as they say in the classics. Soon enough we will see some information on this project and then members will have to come in here and we will have a genuine debate about the pros and cons of this project.

Amendment agreed to; amended motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house calls on the Napthine government to fund its outstanding election commitments when it delivers its 2013–14 state budget.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the Acting President for giving me the call to contribute to this particular motion which was moved by Mr Tee. I would have thought it was quite a simple motion and quite a simple premise that the house calls on the Napthine government to fund its outstanding election commitments in its 2013–14 state budget. It is a simple premise because this would be the second last budget that the Baillieu and Napthine governments will deliver before the end of this political term, and if these election commitments are not funded in this period of the term they will never come to fruition due to the time it takes to deliver projects from the point when they are funded to the time that they are built.

I was perplexed as to why government members found Mr Tee's motion quite so provocative. They gave some strange and aggressive contributions towards a motion which basically calls on the government to fund the promises it made as part of its 2010 election platform. The reality is that people voted for the election promises that the coalition presented. Therefore you would think it would not be an unreasonable premise for the government to build the projects and pay for the services that it promised the electorate and took to the election in 2010.

I would like to cover some of the outstanding election commitments that the new Treasurer, Michael O'Brien, needs to ink in when he delivers the budget next sitting week. Some of them might be a bit hard to put a quantum on, but those commitments were displayed in election campaign materials and were stated by a number of members of the coalition at the time and therefore should be rightfully fulfilled. Broadbased commitments were made to the electorate, including one that a coalition government would ease congestion on our roads. The congestion on the roads has not eased, but there has been a lot of talk by government members about big projects that they believe will deliver that. There were commitments to do grade separations at a number of railway level crossings. My understanding is that to date not one of those particular projects has started, and they would be one way to ease congestion. The reality is that there has been no funding towards easing congestion. Coalition members have not fulfilled any form of commitment to the electorate that

they would ease congestion. Treasurer O'Brien needs to take this into account when he delivers his budget in the next sitting week.

Another election commitment that was found in coalition members' literature and stated by coalition leaders at the time was that they would make the streets safe. That is probably an unrealistic promise to make to any particular electorate, but that was the promise that coalition MPs and candidates made in their literature. They said that if they were elected to government they would make the streets safe. It would be hard for anyone to say that the streets are safe when crime rates have actually risen. Whether that is because we have more police is a matter of semantics, but the reality is that there needs to be more money put into this area if the coalition is to fulfil its commitment to the electorate that if it was elected to government, it would make the streets safe.

In the literature released and election commitments made by coalition candidates and MPs at the time there was also a promise that if a coalition government was elected it would ease the cost of living, but as we have found so far that has not been the case. The cost of living has not eased at all; it has actually risen. We are in a situation where the government needs to look at how it delivers on that commitment as far as it can. I understand that a number of fines have been raised, licence and registration fees have been raised and there has been no facility to ease the cost of gas and electricity bills and other types of bills that people have been receiving. This was part of a campaign the coalition conducted. It said that if it was elected and there was a change of government, this would happen. However, it has not happened, so there is an onus on the new Treasurer, Mr O'Brien, to deliver a budget that will find a way to help ease the cost of living for the constituents across the state to whom that promise was made.

There was a definite commitment by this government to implement every one of the recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, and that was unequivocal. At the time there was a question about whether that could be done. It is a good thing to commit to if it is possible; there is no point in having a royal commission if there is no endeavour to try to fulfil most of its recommendations. The coalition went to the election saying that if it was elected, it would fulfil the bushfires royal commission's recommendations 'lock, stock and barrel'. I think they were the Deputy Premier's words regarding the recommendations of the bushfires royal commission.

One of the recommendations the previous government did not commit to related to the undergrounding of all the single-wire earth return (SWER) powerlines in regional areas, and that was because of the cost. But at the time the coalition said that because it had committed to implementing all the bushfires royal commission's recommendations lock, stock and barrel that was one of the things it would do. The new Treasurer, who was previously the Minister for Energy and Resources and should understand this issue completely, should know that not 1 kilometre of SWER lines has been laid underground since the coalition came to government and made that commitment. There is a real imperative about this because now is the only time the government will be able to do this in this budget period, considering that there is only so long left in this parliamentary term. If the government is serious about fulfilling its commitment to underground the SWER powerlines, it is very important that we see that funding when the budget is delivered in the next sitting week.

I would like to touch on a few local Eastern Metropolitan Region commitments, rather than generic, across-the-board commitments, that the coalition made to the electorate and said it would fulfil if it was successful at the election. One of the local commitments was to fund the construction of a bike track — a rail trail — along the Belgrave train line between Box Hill and Ringwood stations, which is known as the eastern rail trail. There was a commitment to \$5 million in funding to build that rail trail. I think that is a very worthwhile project, and I congratulate the coalition on taking that position to the electorate because it is a project that I was also lobbying for at the time.

It is a great project, and it makes a lot of sense to have a bike track next to the rail line. As well as linking the Ringwood and Box Hill stations, it would also link up with the existing EastLink bike track, which runs the whole length of EastLink. This would mean that someone could probably ride their bike along a controlled bike track from Box Hill and then get onto the EastLink bike track and ride all the way to Frankston if they were fit enough and wanted to do that. The point is that that particular stretch of track could accommodate people who want to use bikes as a means of transport to get to work. There are also a lot of schoolchildren at a number of high schools along that track who could use that bike track.

Unfortunately that project has not been started; it is awaiting more funding. If the coalition is going to deliver that bike track — and it promised in 2010 that it would do so by 2014 — that funding needs to be in the

budget when Mr O'Brien delivers it in the next sitting week.

As I said, these were commitments made by the coalition. Coalition members should not be offended by this particular motion, and they should not be offended at being reminded about the commitments they made to the electorate in the event that they were elected to government, which they obviously were.

A commitment was made by the coalition — and it was one of my favourites because of the way it came about — that if it was elected to government it would build a heavy rail line to Doncaster. I clearly remember the former Premier going out to Doncaster when he was in opposition, late in the election campaign period, and saying that it was a great day for Doncaster. I remember the words pretty clearly. He said, 'If we are elected to government, we will build a rail line to Doncaster. We will do a study on where it should go. We will get the funds and we will build it'.

I have kept all that election material, which was issued by Mary Wooldridge, who is now the Minister for Mental Health and member for Doncaster in the Assembly; she was a party to the commitment. I am keeping it to hand because the government has now come out and said that it is not in a position to do that. If the government were fair dinkum and wanted to show that it was not saying things just for the sake of it, and if the new Treasurer had a substantial amount of money in the budget that he will deliver in the next sitting week, some of those funds would go towards fulfilling the commitment to build a rail line to Doncaster.

Another commitment made to Eastern Metropolitan Region was \$12 million to go towards the construction and staffing of a 24-hour police station in Forest Hill. Since the election a site had been identified and a sign has been put up. The sign has been there for quite a while. The sign sits on the land where the old Wobbies World used to be. I am glad I have parliamentary privilege because Wobbies World was probably the worst amusement park you could ever imagine in your lifetime. Sorry, Mr Wobbie, but it was pretty ordinary. However, the bottom line is that on part of the Wobbies World site at the moment is an invisible police station that the coalition committed to build if it were elected to government. If the funding for that police station is not in the next budget, then it will not be built in this term as promised by coalition MPs.

No doubt the new Treasurer will be announcing that \$12 million has been allocated and construction will start straight away so that this project can be delivered.

Sometimes these sorts of projects take between a year and 18 months to get to a finished state with police actually in attendance. Unless the coalition was just saying it was going to do something but had no intention of delivering it, I am sure that money will be there.

A commitment was made to four primary schools in the Ferntree Gully electorate by the member for Ferntree Gully in the Assembly, Mr Wakeling, when he was both an elected member and a candidate for that electorate in the last election campaign, for funding to get capital works done. The first school was Ferntree Gully North Primary School. In their election literature Mr Wakeling and the leadership of the coalition at the time committed \$4 million to rebuild, extend or upgrade the school buildings. That money has not been forthcoming and there has been no pre-budget announcement around that, so let us not hold our breath. But if the coalition were serious about that commitment to that particular school, \$4 million will be allocated to go towards the building work and those building works will start soon after the budget is delivered.

Wattleview Primary School was also promised \$4 million to rebuild, extend or upgrade the school buildings. We expect the same announcement with the same amount of urgency of action to upgrade or rebuild the school buildings as with the Ferntree Gully North Primary School.

The same commitment was made to Fairhills Primary School with exactly the same amount of money. It is a bit strange that it is exactly the same amount of money, when you think about it, considering that, as we know, all schools are different. But this \$4 million is to upgrade and rebuild the school buildings. That money has not been forthcoming so far and once again I expect that the new Treasurer will be announcing that funding in the next sitting week and there will be workers out there as soon as possible to fulfil the commitment that the works will be completed in this term of the government's tenure.

Mountain Gate Primary School was promised \$4 million to rebuild, extend or upgrade its school buildings. Again, I do not know how that figure actually came about, but the expectation of the school community of Mountain Gate Primary School is the same, that the \$4 million the coalition promised in its election material and that its members and candidates promised in the election campaign will be delivered by the new Treasurer and construction will commence as soon as possible so that that election commitment will be fulfilled in this term.

There was also an election commitment to make the Rowville police station a 24-hour police station. This was a very well-known commitment at the time and people around Rowville were calling for this. The coalition candidate said that would happen and that the operation of this particular police station would increase to 24 hours. Obviously more funding probably needs to go to the Department of Justice for this to occur. It has not happened as yet. When you think about it you know that we are not talking about the amount of money that the coalition is promising for projects like the east-west tunnel and whatnot. I am a bit surprised that commitment has not been fulfilled, but any money that needs to go to the Department of Justice to make sure that this particular election commitment is fulfilled would need to be in the forthcoming budget that the new Treasurer will deliver during the next sitting week.

There was also a commitment for a new Rowville Country Fire Authority fire station with the proposed move from Taylors Lane to Wellington Road. There has been some movement around the purchasing of a new site, but no money has been forthcoming for the actual station to relocate. I would have thought that was the important bit, similar to the invisible police station at Wobbies World. The land is secured, but unless there is something actually built on it and it is operating for the purpose that was promised by the coalition members at the time of the election campaign, then it is still just an empty paddock with a sign on it from the state government.

There was a commitment made in the Warrandyte-Kilsyth area that there would be a new site in Ringwood for a headspace centre. As we know, headspace provides tailored youth mental health services. That has not been forthcoming; in fact it seems to have gone off the radar. It seems that this commitment has been earmarked for the Knox area rather than the Ringwood area. There is real concern that that particular election commitment will not be funded and will not come to fruition. The new Treasurer needs to take this into account when he gets out his calculator and slide rule, has his spreadsheet in front of him and is doing his numbers in the next few weeks. He needs to make sure that these sorts of commitments, which are important, are fulfilled. Whatever funding is needed for these sorts of commitments to be fulfilled, the Treasurer needs to make sure it is delivered.

There was a \$400 000 commitment for a set of traffic lights at the intersection of Cambridge and Swansea roads in Kilsyth. That has not been forthcoming at all. If the lights are to be built in this term of this government, as was promised by the coalition candidate

at the time and also by the coalition party leaders, the Treasurer will have to deliver that funding in the budget next sitting week. There are no ifs or buts about it.

Going back to the commitment of \$4 million each for four different primary schools, the issue is that it is not clear whether a lot of science and maths went into the actual quantum attached to the coalition's election commitments. The quote for the traffic lights at the Kilsyth intersection was \$400 000, but I would be wary of saying that is the correct amount. The coalition committed, I think, \$900 000 for traffic lights at the intersection of Tormore and Boronia roads in Bayswater, but they ended up costing something like \$1.2 million or \$1.4 million. Maybe the Treasurer needs to look at what is a realistic amount of money to fulfil this election commitment regarding the Kilsyth intersection. We do not call on the Treasurer to provide the \$400 000 in funding that was put out in the coalition's propaganda; what we say to the Treasurer is that he needs to make sure the correct amount of money is provided to fulfil the election commitment the coalition made.

The coalition also made a commitment to traffic measures at the intersection of Eastfield Road and Morinda Street in Ringwood East. This was for a much lesser amount of \$200 000, which surprises me, and I doubt very much whether it will cost that little. That was an election commitment the coalition candidate and leaders made when they went to the election in 2010. The Treasurer needs to make sure that when he delivers the budget in the next sitting week it commits an adequate amount of funding to fulfil the commitment that candidate and his party made at that time.

The coalition also committed \$200 000 towards the Croydon South Primary School site, which is no longer being used for educational purposes. At the time the coalition said it would spend the money on repairing the site and retrofitting it to some degree so that community organisations such as the local University of the Third Age (U3A) group could use the facility. I am not sure how the Treasurer will estimate the cost of doing this, as it will now cost a lot more.

The government cannot retrofit and repair the buildings on the school site because since the coalition came to office those buildings have been demolished. For the Treasurer to fulfil the commitment to have a facility on this land suitable for community organisations such as the U3A to use, he will have to commit an amount of money that will build a whole new building for that purpose. If the government particularly wants to fulfil its election commitments — if it did not simply go to

the election having made up a heap of commitments it would not fulfil — one of the things it will have to do is construct a new building on the site where Croydon South Primary School previously existed.

There was a commitment by the coalition candidate for Kilsyth that there would be an upgrade of the Mooroolbark train station and in particular its car park, which has not happened to this point. I do not think the coalition put a money figure on that commitment at the time, but it was an election commitment. It has not happened to this point. I do not know whether it is an oversight by the government, if it has just forgotten it, but this commitment was listed in its literature. It was a commitment to the voters, the voters voted for this particular proposition, and it has not been fulfilled to this point. The Treasurer needs to take this into account when he is delivering the budget next sitting week.

Another worthy election commitment that unfortunately has not been fulfilled — again, I do not know whether it is an oversight — was for a 7.1-kilometre walking track between Carrum and Warburton, which would link Bayswater North to Mount Evelyn. This commitment was for \$5 million. Once again, I am not too sure whether that would be enough to fulfil the commitment, but the money was not forthcoming in previous budgets. If the new Treasurer does not deliver it in the budget to be released next sitting week, there is no way this commitment can be fulfilled and this particular link and track delivered. If the government is serious about fulfilling the commitments it took to the 2010 election, it is important that the Treasurer deliver that \$5 million plus — the commitment was for \$5 million, but we have found that these figures were rubbery at that stage — in the budget next sitting week.

The previous Treasurer, when he was the candidate for Scoresby at the last election, committed \$10 million towards duplicating the east end of High Street Road, or the part that goes between Burwood Highway and ends at Stud Road. The coalition committed \$10 million to duplicate this particular part of High Street Road. I remember the previous Treasurer, Mr Wells, being very passionate about this project for a number of years, even when he was in opposition, which is good for him. Good on him for being passionate about the duplication of High Street Road in that part of his electorate.

The issue is that when he was Treasurer Mr Wells failed to deliver money in the budget to fulfil the commitment to duplicate High Street Road, so it is important that when the shiny new Treasurer delivers his budget in the next sitting week that money is

actually delivered. I am not sure if \$10 million will be enough to deliver the duplication of High Street Road, but if the government is serious about fulfilling the platform it took to the people in the 2010 election, then it is important that the funding for this project is there.

I would be very surprised, even if the funding is there, if the work needed to duplicate this particular part of High Street Road could be done in the time remaining in this term of government. The coalition committed to completing this work during this term of government. However, it is quite a major piece of work to duplicate this part of High Street Road, so I would be very surprised if the government can fulfil its passionate commitment — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — Passionate?

Mr LEANE — Yes, passionate. Mr Wells was passionate about this particular stretch of road for a number of years; I give him credit for that. For his dream to be fulfilled a lot of money will have to be delivered for this project by the new Treasurer in the upcoming budget. I am glad Mr Davis supports that position, because the last thing Mr Davis would want, as the Leader of the Government in this house, is to be seen as having gone to an election making a number of election commitments only for the term to finish and it become obvious that those election commitments were not delivered. In that case the period of time and the documentation would all end up just being rhetoric.

I applaud the government on its announcement of \$66 million for an upgrade of the Ringwood train station and bus exchange. The background to this is that the Brumby government provided \$39 million for the Ringwood bus exchange. At the time QIC, as the owner of Eastland, and the Maroondah City Council were very passionate that the part of the Maroondah Highway where the bus exchange is located be brought up to a good standard. That would encourage QIC to put money, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, into a project it has announced to upgrade Eastland. That is great. It is great that this amount of construction work is available in the outer east.

When the Baillieu-led coalition came into government it decided that it did not like the bus exchange program so it stopped the project and tore up the contracts. It would be interesting to know how much it had to pay to the existing contractor in order to walk away from that project when it reneged on that contract. The Eastland project mooted by QIC could have already started if the government had not stopped the \$39 million worth of work at the bus exchange two and a half years ago. However, in fairness, the coalition went to the election

saying it would do that and that it would do both the train station and the bus exchange at the same time. The coalition made a \$60 million election commitment at that time.

The Ringwood train station is a very old station which has been there for a long time. My understanding is that for the station to be brought up to a good standard, suitable for disability access and including other modern facilities it will cost over \$100 million. The coalition made a commitment to scrap the \$39 million for the bus exchange and do both the bus exchange and Ringwood train station for \$60 million. The new Premier made a pre-budget announcement last week in which he said that \$66 million would go towards the station and the bus exchange. The way I see it is the train station project is underfunded to the tune of approximately \$26 million. If that is \$26 million, it is \$75 million short of what the train station will cost. I would be very keen to find out what part of the train station project the Napthine and David Davis government — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, the member has made assertions on a number of points about calculations and costs of projects. I am wondering if he is quoting from a document that he would be prepared to make available to the chamber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! That is not really a point of order. I am sure government members will have the capacity to debate the matter when they have an opportunity.

Mr LEANE — To assist the minister, I will email him scanned copies of his party's 2010 election commitments, with the quantum next to each of them. I am happy to do that because that is what I am quoting from — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Mr Leane to continue.

Mr LEANE — I am more than happy to do that for Mr Davis. I am nothing if not helpful; I always try to help in these situations. I will send Mr Davis those documents. Maybe Mr Davis has forgotten the election commitments made by his party across a number of areas.

Hon. D. M. Davis — I have been ticking off the outstanding commitments. one by one

Mr LEANE — Let us talk about the election commitments in Mr Davis's portfolio. Let us talk about the promise made both in the coalition's literature and

by Mr Davis himself that 800 new hospital beds would be delivered across the state — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — They are under way.

Mr LEANE — No, they are not. Mr Davis demands to see documents with numbers on them from the opposition, but he has never once reciprocated in this chamber, even though he has been asked a number of times to tell us where his 800 new hospital beds are. Mr Davis made a commitment that there would be 100 new hospital beds in his first year of government, yet he has not been able to identify one of those hospital beds — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! If Mr Davis and Mr Leane want to have this chat, I am sure they will have an opportunity to do so in the front bar of a pub somewhere after the sitting day.

Mr LEANE — I do not know if it would be the front bar, but thank you, Acting President.

This motion states:

That this house calls on the Napthine government to fund its outstanding election commitments when it delivers its 2013–14 state budget.

This is the second-last budget that this government will deliver. However, with a year and a half remaining in its term, money has to be provided now for projects to be delivered before the term ends. Eighteen months is a very short time. Mr Davis should take this motion seriously. He should tell the Treasurer that an enormous amount of money needs to be provided for him to deliver the 800 hospital beds he promised the government would deliver during this term. Mr Davis has not been able to identify the 100 beds he promised he would deliver in the coalition's first year of government. The first year is over, and there are no 100 beds. Not once has he been able to stand up and identify where the 100 beds are. In any case there have been fewer beds over that period. Wards were shut during the government's first year, and there was \$616 million of cuts to funding. How could that support new hospital beds? It does not make any sense.

This motion should be taken seriously, because the coalition parties went to the election saying, 'This is what we will do if you vote for us to form government'. That is the reality, and that is what happened with the Liberal-Nationals coalition. It was elected to government with a majority in both houses, and there is nothing impeding the passage of bills through these two houses. There is nothing stopping this government from

delivering what it said it would deliver. If the opposition health spokesperson at the time, who became the Minister for Health, said to the electorate of Victoria that in the first year there would be 100 new hospital beds and across the four-year term of the government 800 new hospital beds would be delivered, then I think the electorate's expectation would be that this should be fulfilled, and for it to be fulfilled there needs to be funding in the budget.

As I said, the budget will be delivered 18 months out from the end of the government's term, and there needs to be a lot of work and catch-up to deliver its promises. The expectation is that the money will be there when the new Treasurer delivers his budget when next we sit in this place.

I do not think anyone on any side of this chamber should get too antsy about the motion. Its basic premise is what should be reasonable and fair. If election commitments are good enough to be made, they should be good enough to be fulfilled. We will wait in anticipation. As I said at the start of my speech, it is very hard to identify how some of the election commitments in the material released by the previous Premier, Mr Baillieu, when he was the opposition leader — such as making the streets safe, easing the cost of living, easing congestion and other broadbrush statements — can be fulfilled. But in fairness they should be fulfilled, and so far they have not been. This government has 18 months. It will present a budget in the next sitting week, and the money needs to be there. We look forward to a vast improvement in the delivery of the coalition's election commitments. If there is an 18-month flurry of activity from the government and it all gets delivered, I will be the first to congratulate it.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I appreciate the opportunity to talk about some of the outstanding election commitments, particularly those in the Western Victoria Region, which I represent, and more particularly in the Ballarat region, in which I am investing a considerable amount of time at the moment. I read the motion and I thought initially, 'How strange that on opposition business day the opposition would give government members the opportunity in this chamber to talk about the wonderful and outstanding election commitments that the government has already delivered and will continue to deliver through both the 2013–14 budget and the following budget'. Then I thought that perhaps that is not the intent of the motion.

I referred to my trusty dictionary and looked up the word 'outstanding'. There are a number of definitions of that term. They include: prominent, conspicuous, eminent and striking. I thought I had been given a real

opportunity here today to talk about some of the more striking, standout, prominent and eminent election commitments that have been delivered in my region. On that basis, I will quickly and briefly talk about some of those election commitments.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Mr O'Brien provided some research documents to help me with that terminology, and I thank him for that.

In the debate on the previous motion, in relation to the east–west link, I referred to the importance of having infrastructure that will ease traffic congestion on the access point to the West Gate Bridge, particularly from the western area that I live in and represent. There has been significant investment, and I congratulate the state and federal governments and the federal coalition for their work in relation to the duplication of the Princes Highway west. There has been a significant investment of nearly \$800 million in the leg from Waurn Ponds to Winchelsea and in the commitment to the second leg from Winchelsea to Colac.

Another election commitment was a \$1 billion project for the Western Highway. The duplication is well under way through the Beaufort-Burrumbeet area on the way to Ararat. It is pleasing to see the commitment and the significant capital investment in infrastructure represented by the construction and duplication of these highways. The state of Victoria has a nexus between its financial hub in the CBD and the western corridor, which encompasses growth zones that need a quick and efficient transport system. This is not only the case for roads but also, importantly, as Mr Barber has expressed on numerous occasions, the ongoing investment in the upgrade of rail tracks and train sets.

In the spirit of the motion as I understood it, I thought it would be worthwhile highlighting some significant investments in this government's election commitments which have been made in two years — just two budgets. I am happy to report that in the Western Victoria Region, which includes Ballarat and the greater Ballarat area, we have delivered 98.6 per cent of all the election commitments announced pre-election. I have been tracking this list during my tenure to make sure we actually deliver on all those election commitments by 2014.

I am happy to report that we have delivered on election commitments like the commitment of \$1.8 million for the refurbishment and expansion of Ballarat District Nursing and Healthcare. I see the Minister for Health, David Davis, is in the chamber; he was a strong

advocate for this investment and commitment and was there at its opening. Just recently the minister was also at the opening of the Ballan District Health and Care redevelopment — —

Hon. D. M. Davis — What did the lower house local member of Parliament say about that outstanding development? He was opposed to it.

Mr RAMSAY — He was never exactly supportive of it, Minister. I turn to the leadership program implemented by the Committee for Ballarat. The government has delivered some wonderful leadership programs throughout the state and it provided a \$800 000 grant for the delivery of the Ballarat program. We committed \$2 million to the Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility and we have actually embedded \$3.1 million into that facility. We are looking for the federal government through Regional Development Australia to complete that project so it will be ready to host games at the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.

The Minister for Water, Peter Walsh, was in Ballarat the other day to launch the integrated water cycle management project for Central Highlands Water. As was promised, there has been a regional office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Ballarat for two years. It was committed to and has been delivered.

Turning to the Creswick Bowling Club, members may recall this little bowling club suffered three floods in September, January and March. I am pleased to say that not only did we commit \$300 000 to the club but we also committed \$600 000 for its relocation to the Doug Lindsay Recreation Reserve.

I had the pleasure of opening the 150th year celebrations at the Buninyong Botanic Gardens with \$50 000 allocated for the memorial gates and dry stone wall. It is a lovely feature that exemplifies what is good about the Western District and the volcanic plains with their windmills and dry stone walls.

Mr Barber — I love windmills. Let's get some more windmills!

Mr RAMSAY — This is to pump water, not power, Mr Barber; there is a significant difference. I was happy to launch the *Kyneton Food and Wine Directory* which received funding of \$40 000. We have heard about the natural gas connections. Obviously a considerable amount of work has been done in relation to the economic delivery of natural gas to the 12 designated towns. I am happy to say that tenders are now being sought for some of the towns that have more difficult terrains. These towns will be connected to natural gas,

either directly through the mains or through a reticulated system from a tank.

The community called for a helipad at the Ballarat Base Hospital. Again I refer to the Minister for Health, who convened a working group to look at the possible options. The group delivered a recommendation to the minister, and I am pleased to say it is a commitment which will be fulfilled in relation to the extension of the ambulatory care service, increased bed numbers, a new car park and the helipad. They were committed to in 2010 and are being delivered as we speak. During its 11 years in government Labor talked about a helipad but was not able to deliver it.

I have 4 minutes left so I will talk about some other wonderful projects in the region. Labor has been trying to nitpick our election commitments, which typifies the motion it put forward today, because the reality suggests that the state government is well advanced in funding and delivering on its election commitments. A classic example is where the member for Ballarat West in the Assembly, Sharon Knight, runs to the *Ballarat Courier* — and she does this on a regular basis — and says, 'The coalition has not delivered. The Napthine government has not delivered the election commitment for the Sebastopol police station'.

If the member for Ballarat West had bothered to either ask us or ask the superintendent of police in Ballarat, she would find that in fact we are looking at a request from the Ballarat City Council, Ballarat police and the emergency services to create an emergency hub in the new growth corridor of Lucas. We will not only be providing a police station but there will also be an emergency service hub for the Country Fire Authority, the State Emergency Service and an ambulance. We are improving on the original commitment, but all the member for Ballarat West can do is criticise us for not delivering that project. She did it purely on the basis of getting media attention. She did not ask the stakeholders why it was not being delivered or find out the progress of that commitment.

That typifies Labor's response to some of these election commitments that are yet to be delivered but are being worked on to improve the original commitments. The announcement of the tender for the Bendigo Hospital and the improvements to that original election commitment means it will have by all estimates \$200 million worth of extra facilities. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to add value. Instead of being critical I considered this motion on the basis that it is an opportunity for us to talk about the wonderful election commitments that have been fulfilled by the Napthine government. They are ongoing commitments and will

be fulfilled over the next two budgets. We look forward to the opportunity to present a new round of election commitments in our next term of government.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

**Department of Primary Industries: report
2011–12**

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise and make some comments on the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) annual report 2011–12. Firstly I congratulate DPI staff for their commitment to delivering the programs and policies that promote the sustainable development of Victoria's primary and energy industries. In this report we see that DPI has achieved a number of highlights. For DPI 2011–12 was both challenging and productive. Floods severely impacted large areas of the state, and Victoria had one of its worst outbreaks of Queensland fruit fly.

DPI successfully developed Growing Food and Fibre, a \$61.4 million investment over four years, with \$15.7 million ongoing in subsequent years. The benefits of this program to the dairy, grain, red meat and horticultural industries are significant. They include boosting productivity and profitability, and maintaining market access for Victoria's primary industries.

DPI responded effectively to a variety of biosecurity threats, including Queensland fruit fly, green snail and myrtle rust. In September 2011 the green snail pest was discovered in Cobram in northern Victoria and was quickly quarantined and contained. The biggest biodiversity threat was the outbreak of Queensland fruit fly, and Victoria faced one of the worst seasons ever. My electorate of Northern Victoria Region, a well-known fruit-producing region, was hit particularly hard. New quarantine zones were declared around outbreaks, and DPI undertook an extensive program to effectively manage these outbreaks and protect the fruit industry, including major eradication and control programs, and inspections by DPI officers of properties in outbreak areas.

In late February and early March and in June 2012 flooding caused significant large-scale damage to communities across Victoria, including agricultural areas. Communities in northern Victoria bore the brunt of the March floods, and staff from across DPI were deployed during the emergency response to the floods and should be congratulated for their efforts. DPI contacted around 2500 producers within the

flood-affected areas during March and assessed almost 1400 agricultural properties for damage.

DPI also played a major regional coordination role, working with other government agencies, local government and community groups. The DPI made important contributions to the Department of Sustainability and Environment-led Victorian government submission to the draft Murray-Darling Basin plan. It also led the Victorian government submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the capacity of the farming sector to attract and retain young farmers and respond to an ageing workforce. DPI carried out an exhaustive body of work in the dairy industry as the primary research provider in the Dairy Futures Cooperative Research Centre. DPI's achievements this year include the DNA genotyping phase of the 10 000 Holstein Cows Genome Project — a huge achievement.

Sadly the department has undergone significant changes in northern Victoria. Offices in Cobram, Birchip, Kyneton, Ouyen and St Arnaud have closed, and reception service has been slashed in Kerang, Echuca, Swan Hill and Rutherglen. All up, the Liberal-Nationals coalition has slashed 200 DPI jobs, and the Premier has refused to rule out more job losses as a result of the 2013 state budget announcement. These cuts mean an immeasurable loss of knowledge across many industry sectors.

The recent decision by the Premier to merge the departments of primary industries and sustainability and environment will set environmental policy development, protection of threatened and endangered species, sustainability and action on climate change back decades. The merger completely goes against the coalition's 2010 election promise to restore DPI to its rightful status as the lead government agency responsible for all management issues on private land. It is imperative that we consider the impact this will have on our rural and regional communities, because it will not only be primary producers who suffer but the wider community. This is just another example of how members of the Liberal-Nationals coalition fail to understand what is important to rural and regional Victoria.

This is a very good report. I encourage all my parliamentary colleagues to have a read of it, because it is very comprehensive and deals with the diversity, skill and importance of DPI's work.

Family and Community Development Committee: opportunities for participation of Victorian seniors

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — It gives me a lot of pleasure to speak on the government response to the Family and Community Development Committee's report on its inquiry into opportunities for participation of Victorian seniors. At the outset I must say how encouraging the government response to the report is. The government has looked at the recommendations and answered those recommendations with great thought and insight. Government members have looked at the issues that have been raised with a great deal of responsibility, and they have been very complimentary about the report, which was pleasing to see because the committee members worked extremely hard on this inquiry and we learnt a great deal.

It is particularly salutary to understand how many seniors there are in this state and country. As I have said before, it was disconcerting to hear someone say during this inquiry that a senior Victorian is anyone over 45 years of age. That aside, we received some very productive information, which I will refer to this evening. The report was tabled in August 2012. One of the things that came through quite a lot in the discussions with the people who presented to the committee was the issue of the silo mentality in governments and how complex it is to get through these silos. People felt it was very tiresome to have to explain their stories to so many government departments. They said the silos themselves were inhibitors to getting better delivery of service. We heard that in a number of cases, but this situation occurs not only in the aged-care sector and to senior Victorians.

As I have told members of this chamber before, I was instrumental in the establishment of the state disability plan, so I know that people with a disability across Victoria are saying the same thing. Having a whole range of silos means that to get service delivery smooth and transparent is very difficult. I am very proud to say that the state disability plan engaged with 11 ministries and portfolio areas, with both the ministers and the department heads, to make quite certain we could break down some of those barriers and have a smooth implementation process and a joined-up government response, so I was particularly pleased to see the government's response to the committee's seniors report.

I will go over what it was that we found. I refer to page 90 and the heading 'Partnership across levels of government'. It was pointed out by so many different

people how complex this is. For example, the Retirement Villages Association told the committee:

Current planning systems are driven by the state and implemented at local level. This system is not conducive to accelerated planning to ensure housing is delivered in an appropriate range of formats for older people and in the locations they wish to live (and age in place).

There was also a recognition of the home and community care (HACC) system. Victoria's HACC system is quite different to those in every other state. Here in Victoria there is a great involvement and delivery of service from local councils. In every other state it is quite different; they do not have quite the same level of contact with the local councils. The committee was told by National Seniors Australia that:

Victoria has the highest number of people receiving HACC services of any state or territory, with numbers growing in the order of 5 per cent per year. Local government is the largest public sector provider of HACC services.

... assistance offered through HACC varies considerably across the state.

That is another area that is important.

Committee members travelled to the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and learnt that there is a cabinet committee and a senior executive group in the United Kingdom government charged with the responsibility of furthering policy relating to ageing and older people. They focus on joined-up government. The Family and Community Development Committee's recommendation 3.6 to the government is:

... that the Victorian government establishes a central lead agency in the form of a commissioner for older people, reporting to the lead minister for older people, and with the authority to:

oversee activities across agencies and promote joined-up practices and partnership with other levels of government ...

I was very pleased to see the response. It states:

The ministerial advisory committee, through the commissioner, will report to the Minister for Ageing, who is the lead minister for the health and wellbeing of older people, including their participation. The commissioner and the ministerial advisory committee will be supported by the Department of Health. The achievements of the commissioner will be included in the Department of Health's annual report to the Victorian Parliament.

I am very pleased to see that response.

Ambulance Victoria: report 2011–12

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on Ambulance Victoria's 2011–12 annual report.

It was pleasing to see that this organisation, despite its setbacks in the past year, has continued to deliver high-quality services to all residents across the state. I must congratulate Ambulance Victoria's chair, Just Stoelwinder, and his fellow members of the board for their leadership over this period. I also would like to extend congratulations to its chief executive officer, Greg Sassella. I doubt that anyone in this house would question the importance of ambulance officers or the call support staff who send them on their lifesaving missions. Their round-the-clock hard work is immeasurable, and I thank them. In addition to these important individuals, on behalf of Victoria I also thank those in the community who help and contribute to Ambulance Victoria, such as the auxiliaries, donors and volunteers. Without their hard work Ambulance Victoria would not be able to save millions of Victorians on a yearly basis.

In its last financial year Ambulance Victoria proudly responded to more than 5.5 million Victorians located across an area of over 227 000 square kilometres and attended just under 802 000 incidents, which is an increase of 1.7 per cent over the previous year. This included just under 130 000 emergency road incidents in the five rural regions, 355 507 emergency road incidents in the metropolitan region and 4418 emergency air incidents. These figures are a testament to the hard work that Victorian paramedics do on a daily basis, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Despite this, with the population continuing to grow naturally there has been an increase in the demand for services. The annual report indicates that this has been due to an ageing population, an increased incidence of chronic disease and, unfortunately, a decrease in the availability of health services, which is most prevalent in regional areas. Despite this increase in demand, the government has not committed any further funding to this important organisation. Instead, by decreasing membership fees and increasing outstanding fees, the government has in essence taken money out of this vital system.

Despite the report indicating that a total of 273 new university graduate paramedics are joining the team, the Napthine government has plans to cut the Ambulance Victoria five-day driver induction program in 2014. Did this government forget to consider the financial backlash this would have? New recruits will not have this vital training for their own and their patients' safety. Again Victorians are able to witness this government's lack of understanding of the importance of education. How can we expect Victorians across the state to deliver the best possible care when this

government is failing to provide the resources? What is next?

On 1 July 2008 Labor united all three sectors of the Victorian ambulance services. On 24 August 2011 the Minister for Health, David Davis, appointed a new board, which he in turn hoped would create a new start for the organisation. I ask: will this be a new start for Ambulance Victoria with a decreased budget allocation, decreased resources and fewer recruits? I certainly hope not. It certainly will not be the start of better pay and working conditions. Victorian paramedics are the most skilled in the country, and yet they remain the worst paid in Australia. A recent study which surveyed 600 paramedics found a staggering 55 per cent expected to leave the industry in the next few years due to poor working conditions. This is terrible for them, their families and our state.

However, I do not wish to overshadow the efforts of the hardworking paramedics across the state, which this annual report has recognised. Unquestionably many Victorian lives have been saved thanks to our paramedics. I know that every single member of this Parliament would hope that if their loved ones needed the help of a paramedic, an ambulance would arrive to deliver vital health care in a timely fashion. I hope that this government reflects on this during its budget considerations. Paramedics need the government's support to ensure that they continue to save lives. I commend the report to the house.

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — How timely it is that I rise to speak after Mr Eideh, who talked about issues with delivery. I rise to make a statement on the Auditor-General's report of June 2011 entitled *Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements*. A finding of the report is that 27 300 10-year gaming licences were issued for \$980 million. The Auditor-General estimated the value of those licences to be between \$3.7 billion and \$4.5 billion, a revenue loss to Victorian taxpayers of approximately \$3 billion. That is \$3 billion that this state could have done with, but because of the failings of the Bracks and Brumby and Lenders governments Victorians were short-changed by \$3 billion. The opposition sits here today talking about what should have been delivered. I ask Mr Eideh what could have been delivered with that extra \$3 billion.

At the time Mr Lenders was the Treasurer and Tony Robinson, the former member for Mitcham in the Assembly, was the Minister for Gaming. The Leader of

the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, was also a Minister for Gaming during the term of the previous government. Mr Lenders issued a press release on 20 May 2010 in which he accused the then Baillieu-led opposition of being hypocritical about the revenue associated with the gaming machine licence auction. He said the opposition's claims that the gaming machine entitlement auction raised less money than expected did not stack up against the projected auction figures. He said that claims the government raised less than the government expected from the entitlement auction were also wrong and that the evidence of that was in the budget.

Who got it right: Mr Lenders or the Auditor-General? In fact, when the then Baillieu opposition claimed that the revenue raised from the auction was less than expected, it was right. In his press release of 20 May 2010 Mr Lenders said:

The opposition's complaints that this government raised less than we expected from the auction are untrue ...

In fact they were indeed true. When you add the \$3 billion shortfall — the \$3 billion that Victorians could have used — to the massive failings of the previous government over 11 years, you wonder what could have been delivered for Victoria. In particular the previous government failed the residents of Northern Metropolitan Region, which I represent.

Add to that the mismanagement of the desalination plant, which will cost Victorians \$1.8 million a day for the next 27 years in interest charges, and the monumental mismanagement of the Melbourne Markets relocation project that saw a cost blow-out of millions of dollars as identified by the Auditor-General. But that is okay because the Premier, Dr Napthine, and the Minister for Major Projects, Mr Hodggett, have fixed it. This government has had to fix the disastrous mismanagement of ICT projects such as the myki ticketing system, which saw a \$1.44 billion cost blow-out. We saw the ineptitude of Labor's financial mismanagement with a \$1.1 billion blow-out in regional rail. There were blow-outs of \$360 million in the cost of roads such as the M1 upgrade and funding black holes. The Minister for Health, David Davis, knows about the funding black hole that is associated with hospitals such as the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and the Royal Children's Hospital ICT project that was left for him to fix.

The personal myki ticketing system of the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, known as HealthSMART, has seen blow-outs of \$243 million, and the Auditor-General found there was no business

case for that project. There was no appropriate rigour in relation to the north-south pipeline with more than \$1 billion of taxpayers funds being spent on blatant political advertising by the previous government.

We need services in the north. We need an improvement in health services, and I know Minister Davis is working on that. We need improvements to education services, and I know the Minister for Education, Mr Dixon, is working on that. We need another secondary school for the Mernda and Doreen area; people there have been crying out for it. In my two years in this place people in my electorate have been telling me that we are 10 years behind where we need to be in terms of infrastructure for the northern suburbs of Melbourne. What could we have done with the extra \$3 billion? We could have delivered the services that Victorians are looking for. But the previous Bracks and Brumby governments failed us. Ms Mikakos and Danielle Green, the member for Yan Yean in the Assembly, carp every day about what needs to be done. What could they have done with the \$3 billion?

Budget update: report 2012–13

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — In his contribution, Mr Ondarchie made some comments on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements* and canvassed a wide-ranging number of subjects. I would have to say he was pretty loose with the truth. On this occasion I was planning to say a few words about the budget update for 2012–13, which has been kindly listed on the notice paper by my good friend and colleague Mr Leane. I would like to take the opportunity to respond to Mr Ondarchie's complete disregard of the bit in the Auditor-General's report which talks about the legislative requirements that were placed on the gaming machine auction process by this chamber.

In his contribution Mr Ondarchie omitted to mention that a major factor in the allocation of those entitlements was that a very large number of the machines had been through an earlier pre-auction stage, which was a direct consequence of the negotiations that occurred in this place on the legislation that was being considered here. Indeed the then shadow Minister for Gaming, Michael O'Brien, now the Treasurer, claimed credit for those changes.

The Leader of The Nationals in the other place and members of The Nationals in this place also claimed credit for them. There was a victory lap across regional Victoria and a huge victory lap in this chamber. The

former shadow minister, who has also been known to run the lines that Mr Ondarchie was running today, issued a media release saying how fabulous he was because of his great success in having the legislation amended while it was going through the Parliament. Mr Barber was involved in that as well. Mr Ondarchie omitted to mention that in his comments. When government members talk about a \$3 billion hole in the budget from that process, I think they are being a little loose with the truth.

I will get back to what I was planning to say before I was provoked into responding to Mr Ondarchie. This is the last week before the budget, so Victorians await with interest —

Hon. D. M. Davis — The last sitting week.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, Mr Davis; it is the last sitting week before the budget. I think Victorians are waiting with great interest to see whether some of the cosmetic changes that the government has made recently will change the direction of the state. This financial year, which is coming to an end, has been characterised by debate around health, education and the state of our economy. In health, as members would know, the government has cut \$616 million.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Ms PULFORD — I am glad the Minister for Health is here to join the debate. He is unable to identify the location of a single hospital bed, and we know the waiting lists story.

In education, the big story out of the budget last year was of course the wholesale destruction of TAFE, for which the government has made no apology and seeks to provide no explanation. It is just outrageous —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PULFORD — Clearly government members are a little sensitive about this, as they should be. The government's lack of leadership and lack of vision for the economic future of the state has been a hallmark of this financial year. The budget, which will be handed down in the next sitting week, is an opportunity for the government to get the show back on the road. It is little wonder that the government has failed in health, education and job creation both here in Melbourne in terms of major projects and across regional Victoria, where momentum has been lost as it has lurched from crisis to crisis since budget day last year.

Municipal Association of Victoria: report 2011–12

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — In rising to speak today on the Municipal Association of Victoria annual report 2011–12, it occurs to me that the role of the Municipal Association of Victoria has expanded quite significantly over the years. I recall the days when local council was referred to in terms of roads, rubbish and rates, but these days we see local councils involved in economic development, community harmony — whatever that might be — and environmental works. In terms of the environmental work that a number of councils do, and a lot of them do some great work, unfortunately a significant number of them have fallen for the great green con. That is a tragedy because the money is going to fight something that does not actually exist, namely, global warming, instead of going into providing a proper environment for the ratepayers of those municipalities.

Of course there has been an expanded role in planning for local councils despite the efforts of the previous government which tried desperately hard to squeeze councils out of planning altogether. It occurs to me that some councils might need to go back to basics; perhaps they have gone a little bit too far beyond the reach of where councils should be. When I see councils debating motions on foreign affairs and condemning foreign governments and all that sort of nonsense, I do not think that serves the ratepayers as well as perhaps councils did when they were talking about roads, rubbish and rates as they used to.

Libraries have been an important part of local government for some years, and it is worth pointing out that this government, the Liberal-Nationals government, upped the ante by \$3 million in the last budget. There is a library being built in Sunshine, just at the back of my electorate office, and I anticipate I will be attending the opening of that in the not-too-distant future, just as I attended the announcement of that by the Minister for Local Government, Jeanette Powell. That would have been just last year, so they have really got a wriggle on.

You would have to say that Brimbank has come a fairly long way in a relatively short period of time because —

Hon. D. M. Davis — And I think Natalie Suleyman is coming here.

Mr FINN — I might get to that, Mr Davis, because I am sure the house would recall that Brimbank was giving local government a very bad name. There was

corruption, there were shenanigans, there was shysterism and all manner of things going on at that council that led the government of the day to sack that council and appoint administrators. I am pleased to say that the most recent group of administrators that have taken over in Brimbank are doing an exceptionally good job. Certainly we do not see the sort of carry-on we had associated with the Brimbank City Council over a long time. We do not see party politics being put ahead of the people.

It is of great concern to me that those days, which may be behind us, might come back. It concerns me even more when I hear that, despite all the contempt that was shown to the people of Brimbank by that council, the then mayor of the Brimbank council, Cr Natalie Suleyman, is being touted as a potential member of this house. Can one believe that the Labor Party would nominate somebody like Natalie Suleyman, who held the people of Brimbank in such contempt and treated them so badly, to be a member of this house and represent those same people? How rotten is the Labor Party that it would even contemplate doing such a thing? How deeply does the Labor Party hold the people of the west in contempt when it would consider putting somebody like Natalie Suleyman in this house to represent the people she used to rub under her feet as dirt?

This is quite a good report, and I commend it to the house.

Auditor-General: *Management of Freshwater Fisheries*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Management of Freshwater Fisheries*, which is dated March 2013. Today it is safe to say that people who recreationally or commercially fish are mainly men. It is both a sport and an industry that takes time and patience. It has elements of tranquillity coupled with excitement that once experienced is never forgotten. In Victoria the recreational angler and the fishing industry, which includes hatcheries, contribute about \$825 million to our economy. As many as 40 percent of the estimated 720 000 fishers are private anglers who enjoy their sport in Victorian waters. This is a significant number.

The Auditor-General's report highlights a number of serious problems in the former Department of Primary Industries (DPI). According to the report of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) it would seem that generally DPI failed in its legislative requirement to develop an ecosystem and a sustainable

fishing industry for Victoria's future generations of anglers. Notwithstanding DPI's efforts to restock hatcheries for recreational purposes, the number of freshwater fish continues to decline. This situation is not entirely the fault of DPI, because, as the VAGO report explains, in 2011 an extensive package of reforms to improve the management of freshwater fish hatcheries failed to materialise due to a lack of support from key fishing industry groups. Unfortunately for Victoria and the industry as a whole, the department was unable to convince those splinter factions to get behind the reforms that would have clearly benefited them.

The Auditor-General has made nine recommendations in his report, and while all the recommendations are worthy of implementation, recommendation 4 incorporates a comprehensive and logical framework to arrest the decline and improve the long-term sustainability of the Victorian freshwater fishing industry. It would seem that fisheries and wildlife, as it used to be called, later known as DPI and now known as the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, was living on a day-to-day philosophy with no integrated strategies or long-term plans to ensure the survival of freshwater fishing both as an industry and as a popular Victorian sport. I can only hope the minister will intervene and arrest this decline and somehow pull all the parties together in a proactive and productive way to save a flagging and waning industry from disappearing completely.

Budget update: report 2012–13

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to make a statement on the *2012–13 Victorian Budget Update*. Today there has been a long discussion around election commitments the coalition made in its pitch to the electorate about what it would deliver if it were elected to form government. One of those commitments was that it would ease the cost of living. Unfortunately in this budget update the facts are there: the government has done the opposite by increasing motor vehicle registration fees, which flies — —

Mr Barber — You have to tax something!

Mr LEANE — I understand that there has got to be something to tax, but it sort of flies against the promise to ease cost of living pressures. I am a bit surprised too that in the cost-saving measures of this budget update there was a cut to funding for managed disability accommodation. I appreciate, as Mr Barber said, that funds need to come from somewhere, but I am sure that he would agree with me that this is not an area that needs to be particularly looked at and perhaps there

could be some cost savings in other areas. It is a little bit disappointing that those cuts to managed disability accommodation were brought forward in this budget update.

Also in the forecasted funding there will be a massive cut in relation to aged-care facilities. I understand that \$75 million will be cut from public aged-care facilities in metropolitan areas as predicted in the forward estimates. I am surprised that the government would take that particular position as aged care is something that needs more, not less, funding into the future. It is surprising considering that, as I said before, this government came to office with a number of commitments made to the electorate in the 2010 election campaign, but unfortunately, as we see in this budget update, all it delivers is a cost increase to motorists for their vehicle registration and cuts to services in some pretty important areas. It does not deliver the government's commitment to implement the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations lock, stock and barrel, as was promised by the government. It does not have any money for the new hospital beds that were promised by the Minister for Health, Mr Davis, and it does not deliver any of the commitments that the coalition made on coming to government.

In saying that, this is a budget update and the full budget will be delivered in the next sitting week of Parliament. Perhaps I am being a bit too critical and that those big-ticket commitments will be funded when the new Treasurer hands down his budget in the next sitting week. I look forward to that and I hope it happens. There are some government commitments that I look forward to and I am sure all the community looks forward to them. We are holding our breath in anticipation.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Rail: Lynbrook station

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Kim Wells, regarding the security around Lynbrook railway station. As a resident of Lynbrook I was relieved when the former Labor government funded and built the Lynbrook railway station as, like most Lynbrook residents and residents from surrounding suburbs, I had been waiting

many years for the construction of the station. However, the joy of having a train station conveniently located on the edge of our estate has been tempered in recent times by the alcohol-fuelled violent behaviour of, mainly, youths disembarking at Lynbrook station, particularly on Saturday nights. In view of the above I ask the minister to implement the necessary measures to ensure this violent behaviour does not continue around the Lynbrook train station, which is located in an otherwise idyllic setting with local recreational facilities being enjoyed by young families only a few hundred metres away from the railway station.

Health: federal funding

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, the Honourable David Davis — I am glad that he is here tonight in the chamber — and relates to the long-term impacts on the Victorian health sector following the 2012–13 federal government health cuts.

Mr Leane — They put the money back.

Mrs PETROVICH — We wish! Since January the commonwealth government has backflipped on its decision to cut \$107 million from the Victorian health sector, but the damage has already been done. In my electorate the Kilmore, Seymour, Bendigo, Northern and Mildura hospitals are all examples of hospitals that have been severely disadvantaged by the federal health cuts. Essential health services in the Bendigo community have also been severely disadvantaged: \$100 000 was cut from mental health services, surgery waiting lists hit 1500 and 24 beds were forced to close. Bendigo health services are still recovering from the effects of these cuts, yet, like many other health services across the country, Bendigo will be hit again by more federal health cuts.

As at 1 July the Gillard federal government is committed to cutting a further \$368 million of funding from the health sector over the next three years, and again it is the hospitals, the health services and the people of Victoria who are forced to bear the brunt of the Gillard government's mismanagement. Waiting times are up due to the commonwealth cuts, critically ill patients are being forced to wait for lifesaving surgeries and hospitals are now understaffed.

The recent Senate inquiry into the commonwealth's decision to cut health funding in states across Australia condemns the Gillard government and supports statements made by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Victorian government. The independent Senate inquiry described the commonwealth government's

actions as 'extraordinary and indeed indefensible'. A direct quotation from the inquiry provides — —

Ms Broad interjected.

Mrs PETROVICH — You should be advocating for your community, Ms Broad, as I am now. A direct quotation from the inquiry provides a level of insight into the findings of this report and the extent to which the Gillard government has deceived the Australian people. It says:

... the states signed up in good faith to the funding agreements, but the commonwealth pursued politically motivated funding cuts to improve its financial position at the expense of public hospital users.

The negligence and poor planning of the Gillard Labor government has and continues to put the lives of Victorians at risk. Labor members in this very house voted only last year in support of these irresponsible cuts — neglecting the needs of their own communities. Candy Broad and Kaye Darveniza — and Joanne Duncan, the member for Macedon in the other place — should be ashamed. I am proud to say that I am a member of a party that believes in the rights of the individual and believes in accountability. I ask that the minister provide details of the long-term impacts of the federal government's health funding cuts.

Bayside planning scheme: amendment

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy. The water sensitive urban design policy, clause 22.08 of the Bayside planning scheme, is scheduled to expire on 31 May this year. At its 17 July 2012 meeting council resolved to write to the Minister for Planning requesting that he:

... executes his powers pursuant to section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to prepare and approve an amendment to the Bayside planning scheme to make the water sensitive urban design (stormwater management) local policy at clause 22.08 of the Bayside planning scheme a permanent provision by removing the expiry provision at subclause 22.08-6 of the policy.

The above resolution followed a meeting of councillors with the minister in which he indicated he would take the matter on notice. Council subsequently lodged a formal request, pursuant to section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act, to prepare and approve an amendment removing the expiry subclause from the policy. This request, known as amendment C121, was lodged on 4 September 2012, and council is yet to receive a formal response from the Minister for Planning or his department regarding its request.

Departmental staff have advised the council that the matter is yet to be progressed.

I have previously championed this issue, which in another iteration was called amendment C44. I raised it with the previous government in July 2007 and September 2008, and I again stand here asking a Minister for Planning to make this a permanent feature of the Bayside planning scheme.

This council was a pioneer in preparing water sensitive urban development policy when there was no comparable direction provided in state policy. This policy has subsequently been used by other councils that have either introduced or are preparing policies based on the Bayside policy. Bayside council continues to receive a positive response to the requirements of the policy from applicants, with a positive level of compliance achieved as part of relevant planning permit applications. This was confirmed by research undertaken by the council in 2011.

The need for this amendment to become a permanent provision is urgent as it is due to expire on 31 May. I ask the minister to remove the sunset clause and introduce the policy as a permanent provision of the Bayside planning scheme.

Fire services levy: reform

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Local Government. Due to changes last year to fire and emergency services financial arrangements the fire services levy is due to be collected by local councils across Victoria from 1 July 2013. Over the last few weeks I have been contacted by constituents in my electorate who are fearful of not receiving proportional refunds from insurance companies which have already charged full-year premiums for the fire services levy. Local councils are concerned about what support the government will provide to them as collectors of the new charge and need support from government during the transition. I ask that the minister work with local councils to ensure that ratepayers are not worse off under the new arrangements and will not lose out financially.

Medical research: funding

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Health. It concerns funding implications for medical research institutes after an imposition from the federal government. I know the minister is very supportive of research institutes in Victoria — for example, the

Burnet, the Baker and the Walter and Eliza Hall institutes. He has been a great advocate for all of them and understands the necessity for medical research in Australia, particularly in Victoria.

The institutes not only do amazing work in progressive identification of diseases and disease control but for a significant time Victoria has been known internationally for punching above its weight because of the excellence of our research scientists and all concerned in these areas. A range of people in this area have been international leaders in this field, and we can see today some of the work that Victorian research scientists are doing in a whole range of areas, Alzheimer's being one of them. We are once again leaders in the field.

However, this research cannot be done without a considerable amount of funding, and as everybody in this chamber would well and truly understand — and I am sure the minister does too — the problem with funding is that you have to have certainty. You have to know that you can employ those research scientists and that they will have the materials they need to conduct the research they need to do and that keeps us in the international position we enjoy. It is therefore very concerning to see yet another example of the federal government trying to cost save to fill the huge black hole of its deficit.

I remind the chamber that when the Howard and Costello federal government was in power it delivered a \$96 billion surplus. We are now over \$330 billion in deficit. It is just extraordinary. Now the federal government is trying to scrimp and save on everything it possibly can. In this instance, the people who are being hurt are the research institutes. The federal government has made significant changes to their funding mechanisms and is now going to pay the research institutes on a monthly basis rather than a quarterly basis. In fact there is going to be a \$70 million shortfall across the country. But, most importantly, the federal government is going to pay the institutes in arrears. How can our researchers do the work they need to do?

The action I seek from the minister is that he advocate vigorously to the federal government to ensure fairness at all costs and to fix this funding anomaly.

Mental health: Seymour services

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Mental Health, Ms Wooldridge, and it relates to concerns that are being expressed by residents and health

professionals in Seymour and the surrounding areas about plans to provide them with substandard access to mental health services. Labor's parliamentary secretary to the shadow Minister for Health, Wade Noonan, who is the member for Williamstown in the Assembly, has met with mental health staff in Seymour who expressed their concerns about plans to downgrade mental health services for the southern Hume region, including Seymour.

Their concerns, which relate to these plans by the Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition government — I will refer again to the Victorian government and what might happen in the Victorian budget in a moment — to remove the on-call after-hours service, are that they believe it will result in more mentally ill people being transported to Shepparton and Melbourne for treatment, which is not acceptable. In addition, they have spoken directly — and they are clinicians — about their efforts to have the local member, Ms Cindy McLeish, the member for Seymour in the Assembly, meet with them. They have not had a response, which is obviously totally unacceptable to the Seymour-based clinicians.

As a result the union representing Victoria's psychiatric nurses and mental health professionals, the Health and Community Services Union, is calling on Ms McLeish and the Premier, Dr Napthine, to support mental health services in Seymour and the surrounding region in the forthcoming Victorian budget to ensure that this downgrading of services and the plans which are being talked about to remove the after-hours service do not occur, bearing in mind that families affected by mental illness do not only have this need for services during business hours. There needs to be access to services around the clock, and not having access to after-hours services would, in anyone's terms, be a second-rate, unsafe and unacceptable approach to providing services for Seymour and the surrounding region. I urge the government to provide the necessary budget resources.

Box Hill to Ringwood rail trail: bike track

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer, and it concerns some funding for a bike track, known as the eastern rail trail, that was committed to by his government when in opposition prior to the 2010 election. The bike track would run along the rail trail from Box Hill to Ringwood station. I think the coalition committed \$5 million to build this particular trail if it were to be successfully elected to government, which it obviously was.

This is a fantastic project, and it would be great to see it come to fruition as promised. One of the highlights of

this trail is that it would create a link for students between their homes and a number of high schools along that trail. It is also a trail that would intersect the EastLink bike track which, as members know, runs from Ringwood all the way to the Mornington Peninsula. It is a great facility. I am not sure that people particularly want to ride that far, but it is a good facility for linking bike tracks across the eastern side of town.

Responses

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have no matters from previous nights, but I have six matters tonight. One is from Mr Somyurek, and it is a matter for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services concerning Lynbrook station. Mr Somyurek claims there is violence, particularly alcohol-fuelled violence, on Saturday nights, and that necessary measures need to be invoked to stop the violence. I will pass that matter to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. However, members of the chamber would be interested to note that it was the coalition that committed to put protective services officers (PSOs) on railway stations to ensure that there is greater safety. Labor pooh-poohed the idea and opposed that step. I am not sure whether Lynbrook is one of the stations that is very close to getting its PSOs, but they are being rolled out ahead of schedule across the metropolitan area and in key regional centres.

I can see the need for security on our railway stations, and I can assure Mr Somyurek and his community that the state government is determined to make sure that people are safe. That is why we are putting PSOs on railway stations. The theory is that Labor will remove the PSOs if it were ever elected to government again, because it has always hated the idea of PSOs and has opposed them from day one and continues to viciously oppose them.

A matter was raised for my attention by Mrs Petrovich concerning the long-term impact of cuts by the federal government. The chamber will well know that the federal government cut funding to Victoria; \$107 million was taken — —

Mr Leane interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Leane should know that it has not all been put back. A number of country hospitals do not have the money, and a check very late yesterday and again this morning has revealed that even hospitals like the Royal Women's Hospital have not received their funding from the federal government as promised — almost \$2 million. They are still waiting, week after week. Mr Leane disgracefully voted in

favour of the cuts, and he should hang his head in shame.

Mrs Petrovich has been a very strong advocate for Northern Victoria Region in ensuring that those cuts are reversed. I am pleased to say that the federal government did reverse the \$107 million, but the \$368 million share of the \$475 million cut based on falling population in Victoria has yet to be corrected. We need the federal government to indicate that it will put the money back beginning 1 July. Around \$100 million will be taken out of Victorian hospitals next financial year — money that was promised by the federal government — and that is a significant cut in funding from what it had earlier promised.

I indicate to Mrs Petrovich that I will certainly fight to ensure that this does not occur, that the money is restored to the full, promised level and that the long-term impacts that she points to of the federal government reducing its promised money are reversed by the step of the federal government putting the money back, as it should, whether it be to the Northern Hospital, whether it be to Seymour hospital or whether it be to Mildura Base Hospital, which I can indicate to Mr Leane has not been paid as late as today. Mrs Petrovich can be very assured of that. Key hospitals in Victoria have not received the money — for example, Mildura hospital is owed more than \$1 million by the federal government, and that money has not yet been put back in.

Ms Pennicuik raised a matter for the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, about water sensitive urban design in the Bayside City Council area. I am very familiar with this as I was a shadow environment minister and shadow planning minister; I also represent Southern Metropolitan Region, as do Mrs Coote and Ms Pennicuik. I am aware of the good work that has been done by the Bayside council in terms of water sensitive urban design policy. I know for a fact that the planning minister is also aware of those matters. I will make sure that he is aware of this matter and responds as Ms Pennicuik has sought in terms of an amendment and other steps. I will pass this matter to him.

Mr Elasmara raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, concerning the fire services levy. He talked about its impact on individuals. I indicate that insurance companies that misbehave in this process will encounter the full wrath of Professor Fels, who has been appointed as monitor for this matter.

Mr Elasmara also asked about the cost to councils and about ensuring that ratepayers are not worse off. I will

pass the matter formally to the Treasurer so that he can respond in detail, but I can indicate that this is a major reform the government is making. It is part of our response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, and we are very aware of its recommendations. I can also indicate strongly that the Treasurer has determined that this is a good outcome for the community. Those who have not paid insurance or who have underinsured will have the opportunity to pay their fair share, and those who have paid their fair share will not be penalised. I make the point to Mr Elasmar that the Treasurer is working hard to put a fairer system in place. I know that Professor Fels will act in the interests of consumers to ensure that insurance companies act in a fair way.

Mrs Coote raised a matter with me as Minister for Health concerning our medical research institutes and the funding implications of federal decisions. It is true that the federal government, in its midyear budget update, changed the funding arrangements for medical research institutes. These are important to Victoria as they provide a vital base for health and medical research, and the federal government's decision to change the funding arrangements is unfortunate indeed. It will result in a \$70 million shortfall in funding to key medical research institutes.

The Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes, headed by Professor Brendan Crabb of our very own Burnet Institute, has spoken out strongly about the impact of these cuts. He has been quoted as saying:

We have had flat funding from the NHMRC ... for the past four or five years ...

Due to recent changes in the payment schedule, the sector is facing an immediate \$140 million in cash-flow deficit. This will translate to an ongoing \$70 million reduction in research outlays this year.

As Mrs Coote correctly outlined, the association will receive 11 payments instead of 12 payments a year, and this will have a significant financial impact.

This is a dumb policy from the federal government. I am certainly well aware of it, and have spoken to a number of people at medical research institutes about it. I intend to formally meet with the association to indicate the Victorian government's support. I know Mrs Coote is aware of the importance of medical research, as is Ms Crozier, with the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, the Burnet Institute and other key medical research institutes based in our electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region and in and around Parkville. I do not believe the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, or indeed the federal Treasurer

understand the full implications of what they have done. They do not understand that these medical research institutes are in significant measure funded by philanthropy and other additional sources of money. To hit their cash flow and funding in this way is a silly move that deserves to be reversed. The Victorian government will certainly advocate for our medical research institutes. I hope to meet formally with Professor Crabb and others shortly to make it clear that the Victorian government understands the impact of the federal decision and will seek to have it reversed.

Ms Broad raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, Ms Wooldridge. It concerns commentary by Wade Noonan, the member for Williamstown in the other place, and I am not sure exactly how much store I would place on that particular commentary. I will pass the matter on. I know that Minister Wooldridge is in close contact with clinicians throughout central Victoria and that she is determined to see good outcomes in terms of mental health. There has been a significant increase in the state budget in that area, and the minister is focused on delivering good outcomes, including after-hours services. I will make sure the matter is passed on to Minister Wooldridge so that she can investigate any details that are relevant for response.

Mr Leane raised a matter for the Treasurer concerning a bike track in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. I am familiar with the inner eastern component of that, which has been talked about. If I may be indulgent, I am not sure that it is formally a matter for the Treasurer; I think the responsibility lies with the Minister for Environment and Climate Change or the Minister for Roads. I will seek advice and, with Mr Leane's indulgence, pass it to the relevant minister.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.35 p.m.