

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 20 February 2013

(Extract from book 2)

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

Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

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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
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Wednesday, 20 February 2013

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

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

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES
COMMITTEE**

Membership

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is also my duty to advise that I have received a letter from Philip Davis, MP, a member of this house — —

Mrs Coote — He's a good man.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Indeed he is a good man. In that letter, which he has addressed to me as President, he indicates that he wishes me to accept his resignation as the chairman and as a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee effective immediately. The letter was tendered to me yesterday, 19 February.

Mr Leane — Is there a second page?

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is not a second page, but I certainly commend Mr Davis for the work he did in that position. He undertook his responsibilities and brought to that role the vigour and intellect we know he has, and he did a very fine job. We thank him for the work he did in that role over the period.

**ACCIDENT COMPENSATION
LEGISLATION (FAIR PROTECTION FOR
FIREFIGHTERS) BILL 2011**

Withdrawn

The PRESIDENT — Order! I wish to advise the house of my ruling in respect of the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011, which Ms Hartland sought to prosecute in this place. I indicated to the chamber previously that I would be making a ruling on this and that I would consider the submissions of the clerks in terms of the constitutionality of the bill. In her second-reading speech Ms Hartland indicated that she felt the bill did not offend constitutional provisions, and I invited her to provide me with some advice on her position in that respect. I have not received that to this point, but for the satisfaction of the house in terms of

progressing this matter I have decided to deliver the ruling today based on my views.

I wish to give a ruling on the question of whether the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011, introduced by Ms Hartland, can be initiated in this house. After examination of the bill and Ms Hartland's second-reading speech I am of the opinion that the bill cannot proceed any further in this house because of the financial implications associated with it. The bill itself does not appropriate money from the Consolidated Fund as the scheme under the Accident Compensation Act 1985 is not funded by the budget. The scheme is, however, a fully funded scheme paid for by employers.

The bill proposes to extend the benefits under the Accident Compensation Act by introducing a presumption that certain diseases suffered by a firefighter are due to the nature of employment as a firefighter. An amendment of that kind would have the effect of increasing the benefits under the scheme with the consequential result of an increase in the costs of the scheme. In order to accommodate the increased costs, it may result in an increase in the cost of premiums payable by employers under the compulsory WorkCover insurance policies.

Section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975 in part states:

- (1) A Bill for appropriating any part of the Consolidated Fund or for imposing any duty, rate, tax, rent, return or impost must originate in the Assembly.

While the primary purpose of the bill is to extend the benefits under the scheme, it does appear to me that a consequence would be the imposition of a further tax or impost on employers, and therefore in breach of section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975. Consistent with past practice a bill that causes increasing costs, whether as a tax or other impost, must originate in the Assembly, whether or not that is the primary purpose of the bill. For these reasons it is therefore not in order for this house to initiate this bill, and I order that the bill be withdrawn.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — President, I had intended to speak to you this week; I was not aware that you were going to be making this ruling today. I had hoped that we would be able to discuss it this week, so I have been caught a bit by surprise by this ruling. I would hope the Greens still have an opportunity to discuss this matter with you.

The PRESIDENT — I am not in a position to reverse the ruling. It is unfortunate. I would have thought that maybe in the week between this and the

previous sitting we would have been able to establish the position. We can still talk about what Ms Hartland's options might be going forward.

Ms HARTLAND — I would appreciate that.

Withdrawn.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Implementation of School Infrastructure Programs, February 2013.

Ratings Practices in Local Government, February 2013.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notice of Approval of Victoria Planning Provisions — VC81.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Climate Change Act 2010 — No. 20.

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — No. 19.

Fisheries Act 1995 — No. 18.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — Nos. 16 and 17.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 16 to 19.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Education: funding

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The Baillieu government's poor performance in education and the continuation of its savage cuts are having real impacts on Victorian families and are depriving kids of the education and life opportunities they are entitled to. In just two years it has cut \$555 million from state schools, \$290 million from TAFE colleges and \$50 million from the Victorian certificate of applied learning. It has abolished the School Start bonus, cut the education maintenance allowance, scrapped the successful school modernisation program and failed to honour its promise to make Victorian teachers the best paid in the country.

At schools like Patterson River Secondary College, which collects approximately 70 per cent of its voluntary contribution fees, principals are now faced with the choice of scrapping highly successful programs or cutting staff. Some schools have had to resort to cutting back on successful numeracy and literacy programs that improve students' learning and lifelong outcomes like the Reading Recovery program.

Carrum Primary School squeezed every cent out of its education maintenance allowance funding to pay for swimming lessons, camps, excursions and school uniforms for those families who needed a helping hand. The school can no longer provide this level of assistance. Additional programs have been cut, and the most disadvantaged children are missing out, creating distress for families experiencing hardship. At Kingsley Park Primary School in Frankston \$9000 disappeared — money that paid for books, fees, stationery and other learning aids for kids in need. At Frankston Special Development School the education maintenance allowance funded community access programs that are now facing cuts.

As schools are left with huge funding shortfalls more and more students are being deprived of the fundamental necessities that every child needs in order to get the best opportunity to learn and participate fully in their schooling. This is just a small sample of the lacklustre performance in education after only two years of a Baillieu government.

Multiple sclerosis: Shepparton fundraiser

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I would like to congratulate the Shepparton community on its generosity in raising money at a recent multiple sclerosis (MS) fundraiser. The driving force behind the event — attended by about 400 people — was 28-year-old Adriana Grasso, who was diagnosed with MS just a year ago. Adriana decided a positive attitude was the best approach. It is an approach that saw her raise \$140 600 through a lunch, donations and an auction of donated goods. Those funds will go a long way towards supporting those living with the effects of MS.

Castlemaine hospital: redevelopment

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — I was also pleased last week to attend a groundbreaking event for the \$10 million redevelopment of the accident and emergency department at the Castlemaine hospital. As a local member I was proud to join my colleagues the Minister for Health, David Davis, and Treasurer, Kim Wells, to mark the start of this long-awaited upgrade. The work being done will include a second emergency theatre to be used as a procedure room, a modern day surgery ward and recovery area and an improved front entrance. This redevelopment and the new Bendigo Hospital are signs of the Baillieu government's commitment to health services in regional Victoria.

Bushfires: Ash Wednesday anniversary

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Also in the last week we marked the 30th anniversary of the Ash Wednesday bushfires. On 16 February 1983, fire, fuelled by strong winds, high temperatures and years of drought conditions, claimed the lives of 47 Victorians. As with those who fought the fires on Black Saturday, we should never forget those who battled what were then the worst bushfires in Australian history.

Katie Peters and Steven Kadar

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to express my condolences to the families and friends of the two Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) firefighters who were tragically killed while battling a bushfire near Harrietteville last week after a tree fell and struck their vehicle. Steven Kadar, 34, of Corryong and Katie Peters, 19, of Tallandoon had been battling the 27 000-hectare blaze in remote bushland in the state's north-east which had been burning since 21 January.

Katie Peters had been with the DSE for two seasons as a project firefighter, joining DSE as her first paid job after taking a year off after year 12 to travel overseas. She loved animals and had dreams of becoming a vet. Steven Kadar was a full-time field services officer who had a wicked sense of humour and a great love of the outdoors. His family said his most treasured role was that of uncle to his sister's children and that he loved dressing up for birthday parties and reading bedtime stories.

Our thoughts extend to the families of the deceased and the agencies that have been engaged in these operations, and we thank them for their tireless efforts.

Bushfires: response

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — On Monday of this week I had the opportunity to both participate in and witness amazing Australian community spirit. The bushfires around Epping North, Epping, Wollert and Donnybrook brought out the best in Australians. The Country Fire Authority (CFA), Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), State Emergency Service (SES), St John Ambulance, local council staff, residents, neighbours and friends all came together to help each other out. We discovered that people who live in the suburbs do not necessarily have fire plans. All Victorians should have a fire plan irrespective of where they live.

I saw the Salvation Army's emergency response catering trucks come in and volunteers come from great distances to feed the emergency services personnel. I saw local CFA units and CFA units from places like Montrose, the Basin, Werribee and Healesville all come together to help. A SES unit came from Broadmeadows, and MFB personnel also came from a distance to help. All worked together, all pitching in and displaying remarkable Australian spirit.

This is the great Aussie spirit. As others here choose daily to regurgitate doom and gloom about Victoria, what I saw on Monday was great Aussie spirit, and it typifies what our great state and nation is all about. We should remind ourselves that we are Australians — tough and determined — and that is well worth celebrating.

Live music venues: future

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — This Saturday, 23 February, will be the third anniversary of the Save Live Australian Music rally, when 20 000 people marched from the State Library of Victoria to Parliament House in support of live music and in protest against the blanket security conditions that had been imposed on live music venues.

There are approximately 550 live music venues in Melbourne and 1000 venues statewide. The live music industry is economically significant. It contributes approximately \$1 billion to the state's economy and employs over 30 000 full-time employees. The Victorian government established the Premier's live music industry round table in 2012 as a permanent live music industry round table; however, the government needs to get on with real actions to support live music — for example, strengthening the agent-of-change principle. It can take just one complaint about noise from a live music venue for it to be forced to put in place expensive soundproofing and potentially see its closure, as we have seen in many venues. The agent-of-change principle must be strengthened to help reduce the impact of noise complaints. This principle states that the agent of change is responsible for the cost of noise attenuation — for example, soundproofing. The agent-of-change principle needs to be given stronger legislative weight by elevating the status of the current Live Music Practice Guide to subordinate legislation under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

In relation to reform of the state environment protection policy N-2, in August last year I asked the Minister for environment and Climate Change a question about the review of that standard but still have not received an

answer. The government needs to get on with real action to support live music.

Local government: landfill levy

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I am very keen, on behalf of the municipal councils within my electorate, to learn if the government will consider allocating more funding to local government under the Resource Recovery Infrastructure Fund. Will the government give honest consideration to helping local government with the growing costs related to infrastructure for waste and landfills? Is the government concerned that councils are collecting far more for the Environment Protection Authority landfill levy than they are receiving in return?

I realise that this government is in deep financial trouble under its current leadership, and the Premier is on public record as having congratulated his Labor predecessor for leaving Victoria in a very positive financial position as at the last state election. However, in the past two years things have gone badly astray and now local government is being used to raise money for a government that is too afraid or too incapable of doing so itself. Regardless of all of that, the people who live in each and every municipal area expect greater services than state government funding will permit.

Indochinese Elderly Refugee Association: luncheon

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Indochinese Elderly Refugee Association of Victoria on its 33rd Tet luncheon, which was held in Ascot Vale last Friday. It was a great event at which many members of the Vietnamese community were acknowledged for their long service to the association. Members who celebrated their 80th, 90th and 100th birthdays were also acknowledged for their longevity and were shown the respect they so richly deserve.

Firefighters: recognition

Mr ELSBURY — I give my sincere thanks to the many hundreds of firefighters from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Country Fire Authority, as well as Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria staff, who are fighting fires across Victoria. The recent loss of two firefighters, Katie Peters and Steven Kadar, has brought into sharp relief the risks these people take in defending our properties and our lives. We should be very thankful to them.

Keilor Gift

Mr ELSBURY — I congratulate the organisers of the Keilor Gift, a footrace that is run, strangely enough, in Keilor. As you can tell, I was not a participant, as I was made for comfort not speed, but it was certainly a great day for people to enjoy this fantastic foot race and come together as part of the 150th anniversary of Keilor. I also enjoyed the woodchopping event.

Employment: government performance

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — Under the Baillieu government Victoria remains at the bottom of the jobs table on mainland Australia. Our unemployment rate has jumped to its highest level seen since the global financial crisis, with 30 000 jobs lost in January alone. Victoria once led the nation on the jobs front, but with an unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent — alarmingly, way above the national average of 5.4 per cent — we are now amongst the worst performers in Australia. During Premier Ted Baillieu's watch, thousands of Victorian workers have lost their jobs, businesses have closed up shop and our state is falling behind. Jeff Kennett was right: this government is reacting rather than leading. It certainly is not delivering on jobs, it has no plans for major projects and it is making large cuts to our public sector. There is no good news for Victorians. Youth unemployment is at 20.9 per cent, compared to the 17.8 per cent nationwide figure. That is the highest youth unemployment of all mainland Australian states and territories. Victoria's young people face an uncertain future, with huge cuts to TAFE and education.

Premier Baillieu is overseeing what one of his own ministers described as a dysfunctional government. Liberal MPs are falling over themselves to support Jeff Kennett, to the point where the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, wore her gold Victoria badge yesterday. The Premier needs to stop obsessing about Mr Guy and Mr O'Brien biting at his ankles and get on with delivering a jobs plan for our state. Victoria has gone from being a booming state under Labor to a gloomy one under Ted Baillieu. Only Labor can return Victoria to being an economic powerhouse by creating jobs for Victorian families, investing in skills and training, and providing an infrastructure pipeline.

Breast and ovarian cancer: awareness

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — Breast cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in women around Australia, with one in eight women likely to develop breast cancer in their lifetime. The National Breast Cancer Foundation has predicted that

by 2020, 17 210 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer every year, which is an average of 47 people per day. That is far too high. It is very clear that breast and ovarian cancer is a growing problem within our community, but with careful management it is highly treatable.

Recently I met Tracy Hynes, director of nursing at Kyneton District Health Service, Teresa Warren, a BreastScreen radiographer, and breast cancer survivor Virginia Lester, who is now a BreastScreen ambassador, in Kyneton, a town in the Macedon Ranges. BreastScreen Victoria is running a mobile breast screening service that is jointly funded by the Victorian coalition government and the federal government, which enables women living in remote communities to access breast screening services that may not otherwise be readily available in the region in which they live. Although women over 40 years have a much higher risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer, it is important that women of all ages remain vigilant and get breast checks every couple of years.

It is also worth noting that this month is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Like breast cancer, ovarian cancer is a disease that affects women of all ages and from all walks of life, and if left undiagnosed, it can have disastrous consequences. On average 1300 women die every year as a result of ovarian cancer. I encourage all women within the community to get regular health checks to monitor breast and ovarian health. If you are over 40 years of age, you are entitled to free breast screening every two years. Registration only takes 5 minutes and we should all do it.

Protective services officers: community response

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Last week I, along with the member for Caulfield in the Assembly, David Southwick, the member for Bentleigh in the Assembly, Elizabeth Miller, and a member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region, Inga Peulich, joined the Premier when he announced at the Ormond railway station a further deployment of protective services officers (PSOs) to Ormond, Clayton and Oakleigh stations. Ormond railway station is a busy station that facilitates commuters from the Bentleigh, Caulfield and Oakleigh electorates. The two PSOs, Joe and Jia, who were in attendance at the announcement and whom we met, have undertaken their training within the last 12 months and are a terrific example of men who are obviously dedicated to their role. They said they have already received positive responses from the public.

There is no doubt that the deployment of PSOs across the metropolitan rail network is having a positive impact on commuter safety and is reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. This perception has been backed up by a number of surveys indicating the same. In 2012 the national survey of community satisfaction with policing found that there has been an increase in the number of people who now feel safer travelling at night on trains. Public Transport Victoria's most recent survey, conducted last July to September, saw an increase in personal security rising from 63.6 per cent to 67.2 per cent, and a Department of Justice survey last year found 80 per cent of train commuters thought PSOs were a good idea.

This is a policy that was taken to the Victorian community in 2010. Despite the disparagement of both it and the capacity of PSOs by those opposite, it is working and getting very good results for Victorian commuters. This is another example of the Baillieu government getting on and providing practicable and real outcomes in regard to an issue that was a real concern for Victorians.

Leadership Great South Coast

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — On Friday, 1 February, I was privileged to speak at the launch of the Leadership Great South Coast program in Warrnambool, representing the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Peter Ryan, and the local member, the Minister for Ports and Minister for Regional Cities, Denis Napthine. This program is designed to give future leaders in the Great South Coast region specialised leadership skills training. Having spoken with the participants, I was impressed with their enthusiasm and commitment to the Great South Coast area. Participants in these programs are the future leaders of regional communities in businesses, not-for-profit organisations and local government.

In recent years skilled blue-collar and white-collar workers alike have realised the fantastic work-life balance offered by regional areas such as Warrnambool, Ballarat and Geelong. Participants in the Leadership Great South Coast program will develop skills and knowledge in ethics, lobbying, communication, proactive problem solving and the creation of cross-sector partnerships. The coalition is proud to be supporting regional leadership programs such as this in the Great South Coast region through ongoing funding provided through the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund.

Western Victoria Region: major events

Mr O'BRIEN — On a sporting note, I draw members' attention to the 2013 Victorian Open kicking off this week at Thirteenth Beach Golf Links near Barwon Heads. The event will host winners from every major golf tour, including Richard Green, Peter O'Malley and Craig Parry. Victoria is known as the sporting mecca of Australia, and Geelong attracts its fair share of major events. Event highlights in Geelong have included the 2010 UCI Road World Championships cycling event, the annual Festival of Sails and the 2012 Davis Cup tie. I notice that the Avalon airshow will be on next month. Of course these events bring substantial economic benefits to their host city, and our government works hard to attract and retain these events in major cities and towns in western Victoria.

Firefighters: deaths

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — Today I wish to make some remarks on the current bushfires, on which other members have already reflected. The contribution by both the community at large and volunteers is amazing, and it is sad to think that in protecting our community this year a number of people have already lost their lives. There was the death of a volunteer, Peter Harry, who had a heart attack while fighting a fire in Gisborne. Then, regrettably, Peter Cramer, from Tyers near Traralgon, passed away while on duty in Tasmania. Those unfortunate deaths were related but not necessarily caused directly by firefighting activities, but last week Katie Peters from Tallandoon and Stephen Kadar from Corryong lost their lives together in a tree-fall accident when their firefighting vehicle was involved in a fire task.

These are tragic deaths, no matter what the cause, and they are a reflection of the danger in which people place themselves in caring for their communities. It behoves us as members of Parliament and leaders in our communities to reflect on the contribution made to the point of sacrifice by people who work in the firefighting agencies.

Gwayne Naug

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is my great pleasure to announce that Ms Gwayne Naug of Eltham has recently published the fourth in her series of historical novels. *Seeds of Empire*, *Banners of the Sun*, *Precipice of Power* and *Salute to the Gods* are the four volumes of the Ferenghi Quartet, which the author, Ms Naug, promised us back in 2008, when *Seeds of Empire* was published. Since that time Ms Naug has

dedicated herself to developing our insight into the life of the narrator, Claude Martin, a Frenchman who was born in 1735 and died in 1800. He was an 'architect, engineer, soldier of fortune, cartographer, botanist, astronomer and chivalrous lover' who 'played an important role in the stability and development of the honourable East India Company at the courts of the Moguls'.

Writing the quartet would be a remarkable feat for anybody, but it is even more remarkable considering that Ms Naug entered her ninth decade a little while back. What a stunning achievement! Those of us who know her well are very proud of Gwayne's commitment to such an erudite project. What a legacy and what a great read! Our heartfelt thanks go out to her.

Chinese New Year: Box Hill

Mrs KRONBERG — On another matter, on 9 February I joined members of Melbourne's Chinese community in Box Hill to celebrate and usher in the year of the snake. I particularly wish to thank the Asian Business Association of Whitehorse for the invitation and the chance to experience the cultural displays, warmth and hospitality. As always, it was a great pleasure to meet with members of the Melbourne Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Australia at the celebrations as well.

Australian Workers Union: leadership

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — If we were to thoroughly examine our Funk and Wagnalls, we would undoubtedly find a time in the dim, distant past when trade unions were relevant. Before roting union officials dug their snouts deep into the trough, trade unions may have cared about the interests of their members. Before shonky union bosses used the unions as a springboard into Parliament there may have been a reason for trade unionism. This week's announcement by the Australian Workers Union (AWU) that it is preparing to spend \$5 million to support the decaying Gillard government is a further sign of the irrelevance of this dinosaur of the workplace.

How many members of the AWU were actually consulted before the decision was made to throw away \$5 million of their hard-earned? Is Paul Howe's ego more important than the rights of the rank and file — many of whom are undoubtedly preparing to vote to put federal opposition leader Tony Abbott into the Lodge come September or whenever the election is held? Trade unions will again be respected in this country

when they put their members before the desires of officials to use them as a base for their own self-promotion. For the AWU to support a government that has attacked the jobs of its members is outrageous and a total betrayal of those members. Today, this week, this year, for yet another reason the Australian Workers Union stands in disgrace.

John Coleman

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — It was a privilege on Monday to be present at the memorial service for John Coleman, a leader of the West Gippsland community. He held numerous positions, including that of chairman of the Westernport Memorial Hospital board in Koo Wee Rup, secretary of the Yannathan South Primary School council, elder of the Yannathan Uniting Church and parish council delegate. He was chairman of the Drouin cooperative dairy company board, director of Amalgamated Co-operative Marketers (Australia) Limited, the cooperative dairy marketing board, and a director of Gippsland and Northern stock and station agency. I knew him as a rock-solid, dependable, committed member of the Lang Lang branch of the Liberal Party. He was a fantastic community man. I am sad to say farewell to John, but his was a life well lived.

Bushfires: Ash Wednesday anniversary

Mr O'DONOHUE — On another matter, I was pleased to attend on 16 February the Ash Wednesday commemorative service at Cockatoo with my colleague the member for Gembrook in the other place, Brad Battin. It was a very moving service and an opportunity to reflect on the events of 30 years ago. It is a credit to the Cockatoo community that it has rebounded the way it has. It is a resilient community. I congratulate the Shire of Cardinia and all those associated with putting on the event. There were hundreds of people there to commemorate the events of 30 years ago.

EMPLOYMENT: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes the drastic reduction in job creation and retention in Victoria under the Baillieu government, in that —

- (1) the average number of jobs created per month under the Bracks-Brumby governments was 4930, compared to 620 under the Baillieu government;
- (2) when the Brumby government left office in 2010 the unemployment rate was 5.4 per cent and the current rate

is 6.1 per cent, well above the national average of 5.4 per cent;

- (3) the number of Victorians in work dropped by 30 000 in January 2013;
- (4) the average number of construction jobs created per quarter has fallen from 2115 under the Bracks-Brumby governments to 393 under the Baillieu government;
- (5) under the Baillieu government there have been 11 straight increases in Victorian unemployment;
- (6) nearly 20 000 fewer regional Victorians are employed now compared to when the Baillieu government came to office;
- (7) the youth unemployment rate is now 20.9 per cent, 3.4 per cent higher than in January 2011, which means there are 2700 fewer young Victorians in work and 6600 more unemployed young Victorians;
- (8) the Baillieu government has directly increased the number of unemployed Victorians through its decimation of the public service in spite of the Premier's statement that there would be 'absolutely no reduction in public servants' and that he was 'not going to cop this line from the Labor Party'; and
- (9) in one of its first decisions after the election, the government created two jobs when it increased the size of the cabinet from 20 to 22;

and calls on the Baillieu government to formulate a jobs plan for Victoria before even more Victorians find themselves out of work or unable to find jobs.

Unfortunately scarcely a day goes by under the Baillieu government in Victoria without an iconic Victorian business announcing job cuts or a major review of its Victorian operations. Ford, Toyota, Alcoa, Bosch, ANZ and Heinz are some of those corporations. Jobs are a high priority of the opposition, the Australian Labor Party. We believe a job provides dignity, a sense of purpose, a productive contribution to the economy and the community and, naturally, income to support families.

Despite having relatively few natural resources for export compared to other states, in the last couple of decades Victoria has actually done quite well. It has been at the centre of job creation in Australia. However, since the Baillieu government has assumed office, our manufacturing sector has shrunk dramatically, our exports have contracted and our building and construction sector is on the verge of collapse.

Any job loss is a tragedy for workers and their families. Unfortunately since this government was elected a little over two years ago, Victorians have had to live with the all-too-familiar news that they or their fellow Victorians have lost their jobs. While the Baillieu government is dithering, the New South Wales government is

muscling in on traditional Victorian industries. While the Baillieu government is dithering and causing the state to stagnate, New South Wales is flourishing at Victoria's expense. The Labor opposition has consistently called on the Baillieu government to formulate a jobs plan for Victoria before even more Victorians find themselves out of work or unable to find jobs. But the Baillieu government has point-blank refused to listen to our pleas.

I will now provide some statistics to demonstrate the abysmal record of this lethargic government compared to the record of recent governments. The average number of jobs created per month under the Bracks and Brumby governments was 4930, while only 620 jobs per month have been created by the Baillieu government. I am looking forward to an explanation of those figures by the lead government speaker on this motion.

When the Brumby government left office in 2010, the unemployment rate was 5.4 per cent. The current unemployment rate stands at 6.1 per cent, which is well above the national average of 5.4 per cent. It is one issue to compare things across time; it is another to compare things across jurisdictions. The comparison of 5.4 per cent to 6.1 per cent is very instructive.

In January 2013 the number of Victorians working dropped by 30 000. The average number of created construction jobs per quarter has fallen from 2115 under the Bracks and Brumby governments to a staggering 393 under the Baillieu government. I look forward to an explanation of those figures.

Under the Baillieu government there have been 11 straight increases in Victorian unemployment. Nearly 20 000 fewer regional Victorians are employed now compared to when the Baillieu government took office in November 2011. The youth unemployment rate is now 20.9 per cent — 3.4 per cent higher than in January 2011 — which means that 2700 fewer young Victorians are in work, and 6600 more unemployed young Victorians are living in our community. Those figures have me worrying about not only productivity but the future of our young people.

The Baillieu government has directly increased the number of unemployed Victorians through its decimation of the public service, in spite of the Premier's statement that he would not do such a thing, and I will quote his exact words. He said there would be 'absolutely no reduction in public servants'. He also said he was 'not going to cop this line from the Labor Party'.

Since our pleas for a jobs plan from the government went unheeded, we decided to formulate our own jobs plan, in part in the hope of shaming the government into matching it with its own jobs plan or doing even better, considering the resources it has at its disposal. *Victorian Labor's Plan for Jobs and Growth* shows that the government has a significant role to play in job creation. Labor's plan centres on six key priority areas: investing in the skills of Victorians; investing in infrastructure; creating a competitive environment for business; attracting investment to our state, growing our exports and preparing Victorian businesses for the digital economy; supporting our regional economies; and buying locally, which means government procurement.

Within the key priority areas are government initiatives that will create jobs for Victorians. This government appears not to understand that it has powerful tools at its disposal for creating jobs. One example is using the government as a purchaser. The government purchases approximately \$14 billion of goods and services annually, so it is very important to use its significant spending power to maximise local content and create local jobs. In times of boom it may be okay to do what the Baillieu government is doing — that is, stay out of the way and simply steer the ship, ensuring that government does not crowd out private enterprise — however, when times are tough, as they are now, the government has a role to play in steering the economy and in formulating well-researched and well-thought-out documents such as the opposition's jobs and investment document, which is a powerful tool for governments to use in creating jobs.

While infrastructure projects are coming to an end, public service jobs are being slashed, our training system is under constant attack and our manufacturing and export industries are struggling, the Premier still refuses to acknowledge that there is a jobs crisis. Only when he accepts that will he be in a position to deal with the issue.

In the meantime there are signs that the jobs crisis will deepen as the strong public and private investment in infrastructure — which has been ongoing for a couple of decades and was growing under the previous government too — is now coming to an end. New private capital expenditure, for example, has dropped by 8.7 per cent and has been identified by CommSec and National Australia Bank as the biggest weakness in the Victorian economy. Sharp falls in building approvals and a fall in the value of building works were recorded in 2011–12. Exacerbating the problem being experienced by the construction sector has been the lack of new major projects by the Baillieu government.

That is in contrast to the steady flow of capital projects that Victoria has been experiencing since the Kennett era in the mid-1990s.

I am not being political about that aspect; I am willing to give the Liberal Party its due — but for the 1990s, not right now. That investment helped drive growth in the Victorian construction industry, which in turn created jobs and a skilled workforce. A skilled workforce is very important for improved productivity, and I know the government loves to go on about productivity improvements, but the problem is that it does not have the policy settings in place to do anything about productivity improvements.

I will now talk about the manufacturing sector as an example of how the Baillieu government is dithering and how it lacks energy and has compromised Victorian jobs since it came to office in November 2010. The Victorian manufacturing sector, as I am sure all members in this place have heard me say on previous occasions, is of vital importance to the Victorian economy and society on a number of levels. The most important level is that the sector provides the state's largest number of full-time jobs, with 283 300 Victorians currently being employed in the manufacturing sector on a full-time basis. Sadly, this figure in recent times has taken a big hit, and I will talk to that subject matter at the end of my contribution. There are 25 000 manufacturing businesses providing all those jobs. Yet despite the importance of that sector, the Baillieu government, instead of doing the hard yards in opposition, as we are in fact doing, came into government without a plan, a policy or a clue on how to respond to the crisis in the manufacturing sector, which has been, mostly since the government assumed office, buffeted by the historically high level of our currency.

For 13 months, the government was in complete policy paralysis in the manufacturing portfolio as it awaited recommendations from the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) inquiry into the manufacturing sector, which the government itself set up. My theory is that was done in order to buy the government time, and a lot of time it proved to be. After 13 months and after VCEC passed on its recommendations, the government finally released its plan for the Victorian manufacturing sector on 21 December 2011. Under the cover of Christmas, when journalists had gone on holidays — a traditional time of the year when governments like to take out their trash — the government released its manufacturing policy. I can tell members that the document underwhelmed industry; industry was certainly not impressed. The document did very little to inspire any confidence in this government and in the Victorian

manufacturing sector. The government wasted last year procrastinating over how to implement the commitments contained in its manufacturing statement, which, I might add, took 13 months to formulate. The government was procrastinating rather than getting on with implementing the very modest commitments contained in its manufacturing policy.

For example, on 19 December 2011, at the time of the release of the document, the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade boasted that the government would establish the Victorian Manufacturing Council to give strategic advice about and monitor performance in the manufacturing industry and that the body would be 'a source of strategic advice to the government' and 'an important channel for the government to consult and interact directly with manufacturers'. They are direct quotes of what Mr Dalla-Riva said at the time of the release of the policy. It was also to have a key focus on 'reporting on the performance of the industry'. The minister announced that the council would provide 'a platform for information sharing between government, industry and research institutions'.

A year after the announcement of this body to implement the government's manufacturing policy, the government had still not established the body. How do I know that? I asked the question about a year on, and I sensed that the minister was quite embarrassed that he had not set up this august body. This lengthy and unexplained delay leaves the industry uncertain of where it stands in terms of government priorities and sceptical about the government's commitment to manufacturing in this state. This little saga about the establishment of the manufacturing council is highly symbolic. It encapsulates the government's dithering, its propensity to procrastinate and its general lack of will to govern, and this has had a detrimental impact on Victorian jobs.

I will conclude my contribution with the results of this procrastination and this lack of energy and will to govern. I will go through the outcome of this government's procrastination. The Australian Bureau of Statistics quarterly employment figures for the November quarter reveal that total manufacturing employment in original terms was 972 200 positions nationally, which compares to 962 900 for the August quarter. That was an increase of 9300 positions in manufacturing nationally, and I want the house to remember that. In the November quarter of 2012 there was a rise of 2.2 per cent in total manufacturing employment from the previous corresponding quarter in 2011. Nationally the manufacturing employment rate

went up. I am speaking of national figures, and there was an increase of 2.2 per cent, or 9300 jobs.

Moving on to the state level, in the November quarter of 2012 total manufacturing employment in New South Wales was at 317 400 positions, up from 299 400 positions. Remember that I quoted the absolute numbers of our total full-time employment at 283 000. New South Wales now has 317 400 positions. We are supposed to be the national hub of the Australian manufacturing industry, but New South Wales has taken over in terms of full-time manufacturing jobs. The Baillieu government ought to hang its head in shame, and Minister Dalla-Riva in particular. New South Wales now has 317 400 positions, up from 299 400. That is an increase of 18 000 manufacturing positions. In the November quarter in New South Wales total manufacturing employment increased by 11.2 per cent on the corresponding quarter of 2011.

These figures show an increase in manufacturing employment nationally and in New South Wales, but the picture is not so rosy in Victoria. In Victoria total manufacturing employment for the November quarter was 283 800 positions. I repeat the New South Wales figure of 317 400 positions; yet Victoria has traditionally been — and it was when we left government — the manufacturing hub of this country. We were the manufacturing state, but New South Wales has now taken over. In Victoria there were 283 800 positions, a decrease from 308 100 in the August quarter — a fall even though the figures have gone up nationally and significantly in New South Wales. There has been a fall in total manufacturing employment of 24 300 positions. With that, I end my contribution.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — It is with delight that I rise to speak to Mr Somyurek's motion. I thought it was Mr Pakula's, but it is Mr Somyurek's motion 525, which talks about jobs. It is pleasing that the state opposition has finally started to talk about jobs. I congratulate Mr Somyurek on his contribution, because he almost sounded as if he believed what he was saying. He almost sounded credible. As he is the new shadow minister for manufacturing and services for the ALP, it is good to see today his renewed interest in manufacturing.

As Mr Somyurek said in his contribution to the debate, jobs are a high priority for the Labor Party. I note that he nods in agreement. They certainly are; we have seen a high focus on the part of the Labor Party on jobs just this very week: was it going to be the member for Williamstown, was it going to be the member for Niddrie or was it going to be the member for Keilor?

We also know Labor members are focused on other jobs: is it going to be Kevin, or is it going to be Julia? We know they are very focused on those jobs. It is interesting that it took the member for Lyndhurst in the Assembly announcing his resignation for Australian Labor Party members to start getting interested in jobs — and jobs for themselves. Is that not interesting? I wonder who will fill that job — the Lyndhurst vacancy. That will be the subject of Labor Party discussion as it focuses on jobs.

Mr Somyurek interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — But there could be a solution, Mr Somyurek; there could be a solution for you, as you are so focused on jobs: ask Paul Howes. He will have the solution for you. We know he decides the positions in the Australian Labor Party.

Ms Broad interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — You will excuse me, Acting President; I cannot hear Ms Broad's interjections at all. Maybe they are valuable; maybe they are not.

Ms Broad interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! Ms Broad!

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mr Somyurek could always consult Paul Howes. We know the leader of the state opposition cannot decide, because the factions of the Australian Labor Party are working it out for themselves. Labor Unity? Labor disunity, I think it is called!

Ms Broad interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! I ask Ms Broad to desist from her constant stream of interjections so that I can hear. I can basically hear the speaker, but it is not parliamentary to keep interjecting constantly.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Members of the house will note we let Mr Somyurek speak in relative silence, and we would expect the same level of respect. It is interesting that the state opposition decided to talk about job numbers and employment figures today. We and everybody in this place know that job numbers, employment figures and unemployment are a moving feast. They are volatile. Interestingly enough, when the job figures looked good in December there was not a peep. Not a word came from those opposite when there was an increase of 14 000 jobs in Victoria! That is really interesting. We know their real job focus is

internal. I would be interested to hear other speakers from the opposition give us some more information on jobs. Is going to be Kevin, or is going to be Julia?

Ms Broad — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Ondarchie is constantly not addressing the motion but referring to the Labor Party, federal and state. I would ask you to bring him back to the motion, which is clearly about jobs in Victoria. Perhaps he would like to reflect on what, if anything, the government and his party have to say about jobs rather than talking about the Labor Party.

Mr Ramsay — Further on the point of order, Acting President, that is not a point of order. Mr Ondarchie was coming to the point of demonstrating that in fact the carbon tax introduced by the Gillard government is having a significant impact on jobs.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! That is not part of the debate. I believe there was something in the point of order, but as Mr Ondarchie is the lead speaker, I think he has the right to demonstrate what he is thinking; however, I ask him to come back to the subject.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I note the sensitivity when I am talking about Victorian jobs — I was talking about a particular Victorian and her job, actually, when I was talking about Victorian jobs. I note the sensitivity opposite — those who have a renewed interest in Victorian jobs — —

Ms Broad interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! Ms Broad!

Mr ONDARCHIE — I think that is the fourth time the Chair has reminded Ms Broad not to interject.

We have said before that Victorians are facing very challenging times; there are significant challenges. We have a diverse economy, and in many respects that is an advantage we have over the other states, but it does not change the fact that there are significant challenges in this state. The high Australian dollar is obviously a part of that and it affects many of our sectors — agricultural, manufacturing and tourism — and people acknowledge that is the case. There are challenges for this government in terms of the failure of the commonwealth to change the GST distribution system — how it allocates our fair share of funds that it collects. There is the commonwealth's penchant to impose occupational health and safety legislation which would impact on this state dramatically.

There is no doubt, as others have alluded to, that the cost of running a business has increased in association with energy costs. The great big new tax, the carbon tax, is having a significant impact on Victorian employers, but not a word has been spoken by those opposite about the federal government's carbon tax — Prime Minister Julia Gillard's carbon tax — and the impact it is having on Victorian businesses. Those opposite are silent, and I take it that is because they agree with the carbon tax. But here is their chance — —

Ms Broad interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — As Ms Broad interjects she should denounce the carbon tax, but she says not a word; I make my point. Many corporations and businesses across the country and in Victoria have made statements about the carbon tax and the impact it is having on the cost profile of their business and their ability to employ Victorians. Yet we hear not a word from those opposite, who claim in the house today — incredulously — that they care about Victorian jobs. If they genuinely cared about Victorian jobs, they would denounce this big new carbon tax, but they will not because Labor Party politics is more important to them than the needs of Victorians. There is not a word from those opposite about the carbon tax. There is plenty of chance to interject now, but we hear not a word.

The government has a very clear position on fixing the economy that was left to us in 2010 — and what a mess it was. There had been mismanagement of the desalination plant that will cost Victorians \$1.8 million a day for the next 27 years, and there was monumental mismanagement of the Melbourne Markets relocation project in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region. The Auditor-General identified the project as being a complete mess. There were cost blow-outs of millions of dollars that the Australian Labor Party in Victoria handed to the Baillieu government and said, 'We mucked it up. Can you fix it?'. We have had to fix it.

My good friend and colleague Mr O'Donohue often refers in the house to Labor's bungling of the gaming machine licence option, which the Auditor-General identified has cost Victorians \$3 billion in lost revenue. All of these things have significant economic impacts on Victoria and Victorian jobs, but they receive no recognition by those opposite because they are only interested in one job — that is, who gets to lead their party federally. They have not worked it out yet.

We have seen disastrous management of ICT projects like the myki ticketing system — a ticketing system

that was handed to the Baillieu coalition government with a clear message on the bottom, 'We mucked it up, can you fix it, please?'. The ineptitude of the Labor government saw a \$1.1 billion blow-out in the cost of the regional rail link and more than \$360 million in blow-outs to things like the M1 upgrade. But that was not enough on its own. Those opposite commenced projects that they did not fund properly. The Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre is in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region alongside Austin Health. They left black holes in that project; they funded a building but no fit-out. How did they expect patients to be dealt with if they left the building empty?

We remember that they committed Victorian taxpayers to building a new hospital for the children of Victoria but allocated no money for a computer system. Is that not significant? Members of the Labor Party still use chalkboards — or whiteboards; they have not moved forward. We remember the Leader of the Opposition — —

Ms Broad — What are you going to do on the jobs front, Mr Ondarchie?

Mr ONDARCHIE — I will take up the interjection from Ms Broad. As I start to reel off the numerous failings of the previous government all she can say is, 'What are you going to do about it?' She says her party could not do anything about it, but she wants to know what we are going to do about it.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Those opposite are barren of ideas, Mr Finn. They have no idea what to do for Victoria. They have left the mess and said, 'Can you now fix it?'. All opposition members want to do in this house is talk down Victoria and its economy that needs our support because it is not getting any support from the federal government. It is not getting any support from Prime Minister Julia Gillard or federal Treasurer Wayne Swan, and it is definitely not getting any support from federal Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek. All those opposite want to do is talk down the Victorian economy. At a time when we should be standing alongside our fellow Victorians, members of the Australian Labor Party are more interested in jobs for themselves.

Many in the house will recall a project called HealthSMART, which is the personal myki ticketing system of the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews. That project has blown out by \$243 million. It was no

surprise that the Auditor-General found there was no business case for the project. The former government kicked off a project without preparing a business case. 'Let's just take it out there for a test drive and see how we go', they said. That is irresponsible. That is a deficiency in the way they carried out their duties. If anybody should be apologising to Victorians today, it should be the former government.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — This will be no surprise to Mr Finn, I am sure. Members opposite did not put appropriate rigour around the north-south pipeline, which was another project they took out for a test drive and said, 'Let's see how we go'.

Mr Finn — It didn't work out quite so well.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Not so well, indeed.

Ms Broad interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I will take up the interjection from Ms Broad. Clearly they had a jobs plan, or so they thought, because it is about electing the leadership around the state Labor Party. Is it about the member for Keilor in the Assembly or the member for Williamstown in the Assembly? They are not quite sure which one they have decided on. They can run away, hide away and try to work it out again. More than \$1 billion of taxpayers money — \$1 billion of hard-earned, Victorian taxpayers money — was spent on blatant political advertising by the previous Labor government. Does anybody here recall the famous red helicopter?

Those opposite failed Victorian students; they left run-down schools and overcrowded classrooms. But they will stand in this place today and say, 'But we were going to do it. If we had been re-elected, we were going to do it'. They would say that they knew they had done nothing for 11 years, but they were going to do it if they were re-elected. In my first few weeks in this job I visited Kangaroo Ground Primary School. There is rusting in the roof, the floor is a mess and we need to find some funds to fix it up. But members opposite knew about it for 11 years. For 11 years they chose to do nothing about it. Now they come out incredulously and say that they were going to do it and that we need to do it. And yes, we do; we need to fix these things up because of the mess that was left for us. I do not know how opposition members can sit here today, supposedly hand on heart, and say that the Baillieu government needs to fix these things up. Yes we do, but they left a mess and they are in denial today.

The former government failed to plan for the growing population because it used the wrong data. Maybe it is the same data that the federal Minister for Health is using at the moment as she rips \$475 million out of funding to care for Victorian patients. She is saying to our great hospitals in this state, 'Bad luck. You can't do elective surgery, you can't take patients in, you can't help them out, because I need the money more than you do'. It was all about the federal surplus, but suddenly the surplus has gone away.

State sports facilities that were being constructed under the previous government blew out by more than \$25 million. Can these people opposite not manage money? Do these people know how to balance a chequebook? Would they know a balance sheet if they fell over it? Yet, as this government goes about releasing and announcing projects — or, to use its nomenclature, 'cut ribbons' — the first thing it says is, 'You cut a Labor project'. Correct me if I am wrong, but I thought the Victorian taxpayer paid for these projects, not the Victorian Labor Party.

Ms Tierney — They were Labor initiatives, and you know it.

Mr ONDARCHIE — They say they were Labor projects. The Labor Party did not fund these projects; the Victorian taxpayer did. The moment Ms Tierney and others wake up and realise it is the taxpayers money, they will be much better at their jobs.

The ambulance services, under the leadership of the then Minister for Health, Daniel Andrews, was a monumental mess. There were 11 years of mismanagement, with declining operational and financial performance data, as identified by the Auditor-General in his report of October 2010. There was mess after mess, and they sit here today saying, 'Please help us. We couldn't get it right. Could you fix it?'. We will. We have a very clear agenda to do that. Unlike those opposite, government members are focused on responsible budgeting and are responsible for ensuring a productive economy — words foreign to those opposite, I admit. We are focused on a productive economy. We have sought to grow Victorian markets and our capacity, particularly across South-East Asia.

Members will recall that the government released a document entitled *Securing Victoria's Economy*, which outlines a very clear, methodical and logical path for how we are going to project Victoria's future, because Victorians have had 11 years of flying by the wind.

Mr Leane — What are you going to do?

Mr ONDARCHIE — We are very positive about the outcomes, Mr Leane. Others opposite take a contrary view. They just want to talk down the economy. Doom and gloom is the message that comes from the Australian Labor Party. That is not surprising, because that is what is happening internally, let alone externally.

One of the greatest threats to Victoria's economy is the current commonwealth government. The uncertainty that is coming out of Canberra surrounding so many issues makes the business community reticent to make investment because they do not know what the federal government is likely to do. I am not sure the federal government knows what it is going to do. The failure of the federal government to deal with the construction costs inquiry and the intervention of the commonwealth in imposing a new construction code with a view to helping its mates in the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union provide significant threats for construction in Victoria.

Let us talk about the numbers, Mr Somyurek. Seasonally adjusted, there were 2 859 100 Victorians employed in January 2013. That compares to 2 843 000 in December 2010, which is an increase of 16 100 jobs since the Baillieu government came to office. Let me make that point again: there has been an increase of 16 100 jobs since the coalition came to office. This has had a significant impact on Victorian business, but disappointingly Labor members have not even mentioned it today in their contributions.

If those opposite really cared about Victorian jobs, then in their contributions today they would be saying, 'Stop the carbon tax. Stop ruining Victorian business opportunities with this great big new tax'. The commonwealth government has shown its hand and now we know how it manages new taxes. In fact I think it has already spent the revenue it was expecting from the minerals resource rent tax. Surprise, surprise! It has not quite turned out as federal Treasurer Wayne Swan expected it to. The Australian Labor Party cannot manage money because it does not remember that it is the taxpayers money. Members of the Labor Party do not remember that they are spending other people's money.

The Victorian coalition is always concerned about impacts on individuals and job losses, but for every step we take forward the federal Labor government is taking us two steps back. That happens every single time, but interestingly enough we are interested in partnerships. We are interested in working collaboratively with the federal government, and there is no greater demonstration of partnership than just in the last week

when the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) was readmitted. It was re-wed with the Australian Labor Party, and is that not beautiful? Daniel Andrews and his best new mate John Setka are working together for the benefit of the CFMEU.

But it is important that as we on this side of the house talk up the opportunities, benefits and features of this state — because unlike those opposite, we are talking Victoria up — we do not lose sight of the inherent strength and resilience of this state, its economy and its people. We are a tough group here in Victoria. We are persistent and determined, and we will work our way through it. We are not a resources state, and we face substantial pressures from the rising Australian dollar. Consumer confidence is quite subdued nationally. The economy is volatile internationally. Around the world economic conditions are quite volatile. We face challenges in industry from the rigidities of an industrial relations framework under the federal Labor government's Fair Work Act 2009.

I ask Mr Finn: is it not interesting that the players involved under this Fair Work Act 2009 — that is, both employees and employers — to a degree are all saying that it is not working: 'It is not working for me; it is not working for them'? However, we are seeing some growth here in Victoria. It is the growth of Labor's spin around the benefits of the carbon tax. The Labor members are just spinning.

Mr Finn — What benefits? There are no benefits.

Mr ONDARCHIE — They are just spinning. Perhaps it is by omission, Mr Finn. They are spinning that this is good for the Australian economy. But let us look at the Labor headlines. What does the *Geelong Advertiser* say? It is a good paper, and they have a great football team down there. The *Geelong Advertiser* says 'Manufacturing feels the pinch' because of the carbon tax. On 29 January the *Australian* said 'Carbon tax puts squeeze on business'. We all remember the headline in the *Herald Sun* of 'Carbon tax a price shock'.

Mr Guy — What paper?

Mr ONDARCHIE — It was the *Herald Sun*.

Mr Guy — It wasn't the *Preston Leader*, was it?

Mr ONDARCHIE — It could have been the *Preston Leader*. I could ask someone who lives locally if they saw it. Anybody who lives around the Preston area could tell us if they read it in their local paper.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I know Mr Guy read it. Maybe there are others in the chamber who live in Preston and who read it in the *Preston Leader* as well. The reality is that the carbon tax has been a price shock, and those on this side of the house always knew it was going to be.

Mr Finn — I tipped this.

Mr ONDARCHIE — As Mr Finn says, channelling Peter Landy — —

Mr Finn — No, Mike Williamson.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mike Williamson, I should say — we knew this was going to happen, and I think those opposite did too. I think they knew, but Labor Party politics are more important to them than the needs and wants of the Victorian people. That is the shame of it.

The press that I referred to, the *Australian*, the *Geelong Advertiser*, the *Herald Sun* and maybe even the *Preston Leader*, were all reporting on a survey of 485 companies by the Australian Industry Group — the AIG — that finally laid bare the reality of higher energy costs for business under Labor's job-killing carbon tax. If Labor decided as a political party that it was going to stitch up workers in Australia, it has done it, but it will not admit this, and that is the problem. Labor members will not stand up to Victorians and say, 'Yeah, you're right. We shouldn't have supported this carbon tax'. However, there is a chance today. There is a chance that opposition members will stand up today and say, 'We are against the carbon tax'. But let me quote from the findings of that Australian Industry Group survey on what businesses are saying about the effect of the carbon tax on their bottom line — that is, the real number, their capacity to employ people. The survey says:

Struggling manufacturing firms are experiencing a carbon tax squeeze, with the greenhouse scheme adding 14.5 per cent to energy bills ...

... and food suppliers are doing it particularly tough ...

Those are the numbers and the facts. We have before us one of the most comprehensive surveys so far of the impact of the carbon tax on the businesses of this state. It confirms and vindicates the warnings that the Baillieu coalition government gave in this house and in the other place. Mr Finn in particular has talked about the impact of the carbon tax on Victorian businesses. Mr Finn got it right, as did his coalition colleagues, because we knew this carbon tax was going to affect Australian businesses, Victorian businesses and, ultimately, Victorian jobs.

Mr Finn — Tony Abbott got it right.

Mr ONDARCHIE — The federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, knew it right from the start, as we all did. I suspect, picking up Mr Finn's interjection, that those over there did too. I suspect they knew this carbon tax was going to hurt the people they purport to represent — that is, working families.

Mr Finn — It's modern families now. It's not working families anymore; it's modern families. She has discovered American sitcoms.

Mr ONDARCHIE — If you want to have a look at a good sitcom, just look up. Those opposite knew all along that this was going to hurt Victorian workers, and it is gobsmacking that they are still in denial today.

In competitive global markets it borders on ludicrous that those opposite and the Gillard federal government expects companies to simply pass on the costs of this unwanted tax to their customers. It makes them uncompetitive in global markets and it costs Australian jobs. I reckon I could go to a grade 6 classroom today and hear kids work out that it would be that way, but those opposite and their cronies in Canberra do not get it. The carbon tax is making the economic climate especially challenging for trade-exposed industries. I have said it before and I am going to keep saying it in this place — there is no worse time to introduce a carbon tax. As Dr Phil would say, 'What were you thinking?'

We are committed to those industries and their wellbeing. That is why in December 2011 we announced our strategy to help revive manufacturing. That is why we provided \$58 million in the budget to fund a range of new, tightly-targeted initiatives to lift productivity, to build new markets, to generate innovation and to ensure that manufacturers have the skills they need to compete. That is why we have also rolled out a \$50 million international engagement strategy to help companies identify and capture new markets in the growing economies of Asia and the Middle East. In fact, some of our ministerial colleagues are heading off shortly on a trade mission to the Middle East. The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security was this morning talking about exporting grain to the Middle East.

Yet for every step forward we take, federal Labor policies take our manufacturers two steps back. The impact of the carbon tax, the green light given to Labor's militant union mates by the Fair Work Act 2009 and any other method Labor employs to support the labour movement ahead of Victorian jobs are taking

us backwards. We have to do something about the productivity gap. Productivity is one of the key drivers of future growth in this state, and with commitment, with confidence, with vision and with the leadership of the Baillieu coalition government, we can deliver this for Victoria.

Mr Somyurek talked about Labor's jobs plan today — —

Mr Finn — He didn't speak for very long, did he?

Mr ONDARCHIE — He did not speak for very long because he did not have much to say. His alternate policy offerings tell us that if you take out the spin and the rhetoric around the Labor jobs policy — or the show bag, as others have referred to it — —

Mr Finn — Do you think that's a Labor election promise?

Mr ONDARCHIE — You know what they say about show bags, Mr Finn — they are all shiny on the outside, but there is not much content in the middle.

Mr Finn — I think they say something else about them, actually.

Mr ONDARCHIE — It is close to that. What they are talking about with the jobs plan is a larger and more costly public sector. That is the jobs plan — grow the public sector, provide more green subsidies, replace and reinstate the Victorian government business office (VGBO) in Frankfurt. Maybe former member of the Assembly André Haermeyer is looking for a job again.

Mr Drum — Where is he?

Mr ONDARCHIE — I do not know where he is. Maybe if we open the VGBO in Frankfurt, according to the Labor Party's plan, we could give André another job. Those opposite are interested in opening a Victorian government business office in Frankfurt, which is not an ideal location, given the global consumption shift has moved to Asia. We talk about the northern and southern hemispheres, but we should be looking at where consumption is around the globe. That is why this government is opening new offices in Beijing, Mumbai and Jakarta. We are taking Victoria forward. The Australian Labor Party wants to take us backwards.

What else do we find in Labor's jobs plan? An unfunded and unspecified commitment to regional development, some sort of unfunded, funny-money deal to support borrowings by local councils and some sort of unspecified plan to help Geelong through tough

transitional times. But where is Labor's commitment to match the Baillieu coalition government's \$15 million Geelong development fund to bring investment and jobs to the Geelong region? Where is its commitment to persuade the federal Labor government to contribute to the fund in Geelong to help manufacturing down there?

Mr Finn — Just hope they are not governing for long.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Cue the sound of crickets, Mr Finn. There is nothing over there.

Labor, under its show-bag jobs plan, proposes to mandate the purchase of locally manufactured vehicles by Victorian government departments and agencies where fit-for-purpose vehicles are available. I support the view that we should purchase Australian-made vehicles, but the reality is that the Victorian government is already purchasing locally manufactured vehicles for its public service passenger fleet in 98 per cent of cases. That was innovative, was it not?

Ms Tierney — Mr Rich-Phillips doesn't understand that a four-wheel drive is actually a four-wheel drive; it's not a long wheelbase. Ford Territories — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Ms Tierney — It isn't bullshit.

Mr Finn — What? You can't say that.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I take it you will correct the language by interjection across the chamber.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Tierney — Mr Drum said it.

Mr ONDARCHIE — We are not down at the pub in West Melbourne right now, okay?

Labor promises a rolling stock procurement and maintenance plan, whereas this government announced a \$270 million-plus purchase of 40 new train carriages for the regional rail network to be constructed by Bombardier at Dandenong, with local content at 70 per cent. That is the problem though: Labor talks the talk, and the coalition delivers. If you take the spin and rhetoric out of the Australian Labor Party, there ain't much left.

Worst of all, though, the so-called Labor jobs plan, the Daniel Andrews jobs plan, which he rolled out up hill and down dale, does not say anything. The cynical efforts of Australian Labor Party members in Victoria to generate anxiety about job losses are nothing less

than a disgrace. They should stop talking Victoria down. The facts are simple: in the face of a current tough global economic climate and the difficulties of the high Australian dollar, Victorian industry is showing its resilience. Labor continues to feed fear into the Victorian public about job losses right across Victoria — in metropolitan areas and in regional Victoria. Where was the Australian Labor Party when the Premier announced 500 new jobs at Cotton On's global headquarters in Geelong? Where was it? Where was it when Australian Paper announced a new \$90 million investment in the next-generation paper recycling plant at Maryvale in the Latrobe Valley? Where was it?

Ms Tierney interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I caution Ms Tierney in relation to her interjections. I find the chamber is becoming a bit unruly.

Mr ONDARCHIE — What about the 800 new jobs and the \$1.5 billion in investment to flow from the super trade mission to China, including the millions of dollars in new export orders for Ralph's Meat Company in Seymour, which the member for Seymour in the Assembly has been very active in promoting — where was the Labor Party on that? These are tangible, bankable, concrete achievements by the coalition government in Victoria, which is serious about doing the right thing, creating the right conditions and generating investments and jobs for this state. These are not phoney promises like those made by the state opposition, an opposition that in government mortgaged the state to the hilt to build a desalination plant that generations will pay for — —

Ms Broad interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — This is an opposition that supports higher energy costs because of Labor's carbon tax. Interject now, Ms Broad, and say no, you don't.

Ms Broad — Debt has gone up, in case you failed to notice — —

Mr ONDARCHIE — Here's your chance to interject. Say you denounce the carbon tax; have the floor.

Ms Broad interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — But no, there is silence, because Labor Party politics are more important than Victorian jobs. You should be ashamed.

Ms Broad — You have increased — —

Mr ONDARCHIE — As a former energy minister, Ms Broad, you should be denouncing the carbon tax.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! Mr Ondarchie! It has just come to my attention that there was an unparliamentary term used in relation to Ms Tierney's interjection some minutes ago. We will review *Hansard* as to whether that commentary is specified or not. I am flagging to the house that we believe there has been an unparliamentary word used in an interjection, but we will confirm that at a later date. I also caution Ms Broad in relation to her ongoing interjections, and I ask her to allow Mr Ondarchie to finish his contribution.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I alluded earlier to the fact that the Australian Labor Party in Victoria has no plans for jobs and no plans for growth, because the only jobs Labor members really care about are their own and those of their union mates. Here is the greatest irony of all in the puffery coming from the Labor Party: there has been no mention of the role of the trade union movement in making it harder for business in this state — no mention of unlawful pickets, no mention of the violent disruption of building sites, no mention of the excessive claims for pay and conditions that are driving some businesses to the wall and no mention of the crippling industrial action that forced Qantas into a shutdown of its national and global business.

All of these actions have consequences. They all have consequences for Victorian workers. We have seen job losses in the very industries and companies hit hardest by the trade union movement. When is Labor going to accept responsibility? In this Parliament Ms Mikakos stood up and said to us, 'Look in the mirror and take responsibility'. I challenge the Australian Labor Party, the former government, to do exactly the same thing.

When are Labor members going to admit to their failures and what they left Victoria with? There was no mention of any of those things in Labor's document. There was not a word of criticism about union militants, the commonwealth government's carbon tax or the impact of federal laws on Victorian businesses. The only mention of trade unions in Labor's jobs plan was the proposal to appoint union leaders to various industry bodies like the Victorian Manufacturing Council. It is about jobs for their mates. Here is a revelation for ALP members — particularly for those who know nothing about what I am about to say: a senior official of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union is already on the manufacturing council.

The Victorian coalition government has a different view. It has a balanced, common-sense approach to workplace relations, a system where union officials cannot regard themselves as being above the law. The Victorian ALP proposes to sell out and surrender to meet the demands of militant unions like the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union.

Labor talks about jobs and the risks posed to jobs. Is there any greater risk to jobs and investment in this state than a Labor Party which is unwilling or unable to stand up to the interests of Victorian people over and above the self-serving demands of union heavies? When is the Labor Party going to stand up for Victorian workers over its Labor mates?

Over the last few days we have seen the Prime Minister's refreshed and renewed interest in jobs. She released her jobs plan. It is interesting to note that when we are close to an election the federal government has a late surge of interest in Australian workers. Where has it been? I could give my own commentary on the Gillard federal government's plan for Australian jobs, but I will not. I will quote an article from the *Australian Financial Review* of 19 February headed 'Manufacturing plan misses the basic point':

The biggest problem confronting Australian manufacturing is that it has become internationally high cost, largely because of the mining boom's strong dollar but also because Labor's job market reregulation, ever-increasing bureaucratic red tape and rising energy costs.

This means the priority should be to concentrate on serious reforms to the tax system, the industrial relations system and cutting red tape. Rather than reducing regulation, the report —

by the Gillard government —

sets out to create more —

and increase more. Instead of helping, Labor's Fair Work Act 2009 is forcing open the door to allow the militant Australian Manufacturing Workers Union to get what it wants.

The Victorian coalition government is working on a daily basis to increase the opportunities for Victorians, but those opportunities are constantly being impacted by the actions of the commonwealth government, including the cut of \$2.5 billion to Victoria's GST revenue. But we are moving ahead and getting on with the job. We are talking Victoria up and trying to take the state forward, unlike those members opposite who constantly seek to portray a doom and gloom situation to Victorians. It is time for the ALP to get up off the ground and start working with Victorian workers to get things that impact on them out of the way.

The East Werribee employment precinct at the Werribee Research Farm is going to be a wonderful new development. That new suburb will deliver 50 000 high-quality jobs across a range of industries and sectors, crucial transport infrastructure and services and a leading-edge demonstration of a water-sensitive city, and it will provide more than 7000 homes. The Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, the Premier and the Minister for Water, Peter Walsh, announced this late last year. In October last year the Minister for Planning announced an allocation of more than \$3.1 million for local infrastructure projects which will create jobs in a range of metropolitan and regional councils.

Bendigo Hospital has been proudly progressed by this government. It will create 735 construction industry and supply chain jobs, and it will provide a welcome boost to the Bendigo economy. At least 300 of those jobs will exist for a minimum of three years during the peak construction period of the hospital.

Just last week the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade and the Premier were at Kraft foods in Ringwood talking about its research and development centre and Victorian jobs growth. There will be 100 new jobs and 1000 jobs will be secured at Kraft's manufacturing plant in Ringwood.

Mr Somyurek asked the question: what is going on in relation to Victorian jobs? I will provide more examples. As I alluded to earlier, the government has ordered 40 new V/Line carriages, the manufacture of which will create a lot of jobs.

Mr Rich-Phillips, the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, with the Premier and John Holland Aviation Services, announced that there will be a major national air hub in Victoria. That is another example of this coalition government creating opportunities for Victorian workers. The redevelopment of Melbourne Airport will create thousands of new jobs. There are plenty of opportunities for people right across Victoria, including Mr Finn's electorate of Western Metropolitan Region and my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region.

I remember that in October last year that Denis Napthine, the Minister for Racing, announced a \$4.5 million development of the Moe Racecourse. We know the racing industry, particularly in the Gippsland area, is worth more than \$110 million to the economy and about 1700 jobs, so the investment in Moe Racecourse that we have announced is about getting racing back on track and creating opportunities for Victorians. The member for Narracan in the other

place, Gary Blackwood, has been a strong advocate of the redevelopment of the Moe Racecourse.

The Ballarat West precinct structure plan will bring hundreds of new jobs and millions of dollars of investment into the Ballarat regional economy, and I know Mr Ramsay has been a strong advocate of that plan.

In April last year the Premier announced a \$1.2 billion redevelopment of the port of Melbourne, which will create 2600 jobs and enhance the economic future of this state. The project will provide 700 direct jobs and 1900 indirect jobs across Victoria and ensure that we are well placed to cater for the future demands of that industry. Opposition members will recall that in the middle of last year a commitment was made to invest a further \$400 million in the port of Melbourne to consolidate the import and export auto trade at Webb Dock. It will create an additional 420 jobs during the construction phase and help our very important automotive industry in this state.

As a result of the China trade mission last September, Swisse Vitamins will establish its global headquarters in Melbourne, creating 140 new high-value jobs in Victoria.

Mr Somyurek asked us what we are doing about jobs, and here are more examples. We have announced the redevelopment of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. The construction phase will create many new jobs and more opportunities for Victorians. In addition, some coalition members will head off shortly on a Middle East super trade mission, with an expectation of bringing back many opportunities for Victorian companies and Victorian workers. There is no better example of this than the aforementioned super trade mission to China in September last year, which was the largest mission to leave Australia and which is expected to generate more than \$1 billion in exports and more than 1450 jobs.

In July last year my good friend the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, Gordon Rich-Phillips, welcomed the creation of more than 70 new jobs at Tiger Airways in Melbourne. This is another opportunity for Victorians, as is the \$155 million expansion of Ballarat University through the rezoning of the land, which will create many job opportunities.

In May last year the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, Ms Asher, announced there would be more than \$3 million in funding to support the local production of feature films, documentaries and

television shows through Film Victoria. It is estimated that that venture will create 2600 jobs in Victoria. It is interesting that today the Victorian coalition government is talking up the economy, unlike those opposite.

A new Australian innovation centre has been established by Motorola Solutions, showcasing new technology that benefits both local and international services and business, and it will also create new opportunities for Victorian workers. There is a lot of opportunity here in Victoria, and the Victorian coalition government continues to be focused and has its eye on the ball. In football parlance — and I know Mr Finn will like this analogy — we have grabbed the ball, we are going straight up the middle, and we are kicking goals. We should be celebrating the opportunities created for Victorian workers, unlike those opposite who just want to talk Victoria down. And if they think it is just me who says that the opposition does not have a plan, they should check the *Australian Financial Review* and the *Australian*, because commentators in those newspapers are saying that Victorian Labor has let us down and the federal government has let Victoria down, and quite frankly we have had enough.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I thank Mr Ondarchie. I congratulate him on his 55-minute contribution given that he has been on his feet for the last 48 hours, supporting firefighters in his region. Well done.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

MELBOURNE JAZZ CO-OPERATIVE: FUNDING

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes —

- (1) the Baillieu government has denied funding to the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative;
- (2) the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative has supported emerging and established artists for 30 years and has previously received state government funding every year since 1987;
- (3) the decision of the Baillieu government has been widely criticised by many successful musicians including winner of three ARIA awards, pianist and composer, Andrea Keller, who has stated she would not be a musician without the support of the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative;

and calls on the Baillieu government to reconsider its short-sighted decision to remove its support of the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative.

In setting parameters for this debate there are a couple of things we should acknowledge. One is that exponents of jazz are well-known for being cool, and members of Parliament are probably well-known for not being cool. That is the way I think I will proceed on this motion. I was helped in coming to that realisation when I was doing some study on this issue. I came across a quote from a famous jazz exponent, Louis Armstrong, who said, 'If you have to ask what jazz is, you will never know'. That put me straight back in my box and made me think I had better stick to the issues raised in my motion.

The Melbourne Jazz Co-operative (MJC) has been operating since 1983 and has been supporting jazz musicians and improvised music continuously for more than 25 years. Some of its core work has been in providing opportunities for local musicians to present new work in some of the country's best jazz venues. High standards have been set the support it provides these aspiring artists. The Melbourne Jazz Co-operative has supported performances by the finest musicians emerging on the scene such as Marc Hannaford, Sam Anning, Shannon Barnett, Aaron Choulai and Gian Slater. We are at a point where there has been continuous support from the Victorian state government for the cooperative in order for it to support emerging musicians, which has resulted in wider benefits for them than those that have come from the great work undertaken by this institution.

We Melburnians look at ourselves and market ourselves as living in the arts capital of Australia — and the arts capital of Australasia, because we always like to claim New Zealand and the Pacific Islands when we brag about what we are all about. However, this government has not grasped the fact that grants to these types of organisations should not be looked at as grants; they should be looked at as investments. They are investments in the arts capital of Australia, which we trade on in this city and in this state. We only need to fly into Melbourne from New Zealand or another location to find out the things that the airlines promote about Melbourne. They will show a venue, which is usually a jazz venue, where people are looking very happy and enjoying the atmosphere. That is something we need to encourage and in which we continually need to invest.

Melbourne does not have a harbour like Sydney Harbour; Melbourne does not have the Great Barrier Reef on its shoreline like Brisbane and northern Queensland are lucky enough to have. Rather, it trades

on offering arts and entertainment. That has been a great way of marketing Melbourne, because it has made this city one of the most popular destinations for tourists visiting from overseas and interstate. That is very important and it should be easy for Melbourne to do, because we are not talking about a large investment at all.

Premier Ted Baillieu is also the Minister for the Arts, but I am not sure that he is very focused on the arts, because if he were, he would not allow something like this to slip away. People in the arts community are disappointed that they do not have easy access to their minister. I understand that the Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts does her best to get out and about, but most people prefer to have access to the responsible minister when they have an issue. If the Premier is struggling to maintain that role, maybe he should give it to someone else who could concentrate on dealing with those issues.

My concern is that the issue is not just about this particular cooperative, it is an issue the state has encountered since the advent of the Baillieu government. There seems to be a reluctance in government to support and nurture skills — and not only in the arts area; we have seen what has been happening with TAFE institutions. If I could just touch on the subject of TAFE and relate it to the arts, there is real concern at Swinburne University of Technology, Prahran, about its well-known program of training in the performing arts. It has its own theatre set-up, and it provides training in the use of equipment for film and television production and scriptwriting. At the moment, with the Prahran campus in limbo and the survival of that campus having a short-term viability, people who want to be trained and become skilled in the arts are being denied opportunities across the board by this government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — Members on the other side of the chamber can interject as much as they like but that is the reality.

I have mentioned Andrea Keller in my motion; she is a three-times Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) award winner. As MPs, we would all like to be photographed next to her if we had the opportunity and to put those photographs onto our websites because we love successful people; we love to rub shoulders with successful people. I am sure we would note on our websites how great that is. However, we have to show that we are also prepared to invest in and support such

people, otherwise all the posing next to her for photos is just a joke.

The *Age* of 20 February quoted Andrea Keller as saying:

I'm quite certain I wouldn't be the musician I am without the MJC ...

We have to take that into account. Forget the grant; this is a small investment. This person has won three ARIA awards — and we all like to cheer our winners and get photos with them. She said that, without this small investment and without this cooperative's survival, she would not be a musician. It was not just that she would not be an ARIA award winner; she would not be a musician. This is of grave concern, and it should be easily fixed.

I will quote from a media article. The chief executive of the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative, Mr Martin Jackson, calls the cuts to the organisation 'illogical' and 'short-sighted' and says that they mean it will have to axe half its paid performances. The cooperative's performances are all about nurturing new talent, not about blowing its own trumpet and saying it is a big promoter. Its core value and business is to promote emerging talent. Mr Jackson said that the denial of the ongoing investment, which has been in place since 1987, shows no respect for what the cooperative does. Maybe the issue is that the government needs to understand what the cooperative does and has done. It needs to understand what that small annual investment — forget the grant — has meant the cooperative has managed to achieve. Mr Jackson said:

It's not just the jazz coop that's affected, it's the record companies we do launches for and the music students at university who don't know what this will mean for them.

It is emerging that the students do understand what it means to them, but we all need to understand what it means to us and to lovers of Australian music. I am sure that everyone here is a lover of Australian music. We need to take into account that there has been continuous funding since 1987. In 1986 *Living Doll* by Cliff Richard and the Young Ones spent seven weeks at no. 1 in the Australian music charts. Before this funding, in 1986 *Touch Me (I Want Your Body)* by Samantha Fox spent three weeks at no. 1 in the Australian music charts. No-one in this chamber would want to go back to the horror that was for all of us, not just for the musos. Not one person in this chamber would want to go back to that horror.

The Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, who is one of the prominent ministers in the Baillieu government, was recently quoted as saying that the Baillieu government

was suffering from the mid-term blues. If that is the case, that is fine. Admit it, but do not take it out on jazz.

In closing, I say to the Baillieu government: do not take your mid-term blues out on jazz. It is all right to improvise — this funding has been in place for a long time — but, if you are going to improvise, you have to start with a beat, and there is no beat here. There is no rhyme; there is no reason.

I believe all members can easily support this motion, considering what this important investment has delivered and what it will deliver into the future. When the government makes its decision, it should keep in mind the Samantha Fox situation, because that was horrible. In moving this motion, I call on all members to support it and I call on the government to reverse its decision not to support this great Melbourne institution.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — It is sometimes difficult to follow Mr Leane. I just popped out to the front steps of Parliament House and, in listening to the fantastic music that was playing, I was reminded just how fantastic and wonderful jazz is. It was great to see older and younger musicians and people having a really good time. We are not talking about a large amount of money. As I understand it, we are talking about an organisation that for the last 30 years has received funding from all types of governments. I do not understand why it is that this small grant, which keeps the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative going, is being taken away.

I do not understand why it is that we do not want to nurture young musicians. I would have liked to see the Premier and other people out on the steps today listening to what we heard and seeing the joy that was evident. This is one of those things that I just do not get. Given the amount of money we are talking about, I do not get why the government would be so heartless as to take it away. As Mr Leane has said, the issue is about nurturing young musicians. Where do they get that nurturing? It is not something that can happen just in the classroom or in a university; it is about getting those performance skills. It is about having an understanding of how you present yourself, and you get that by being mentored by older musicians.

Ms Pennicuik spoke in front of Parliament House on behalf of the Greens. She is a huge advocate of music. She goes to a lot of live performances and really understands music. As she was saying out there, this week is the third anniversary of that huge rally of people who came up Bourke Street to save live music. Today we have musicians out on the steps reminding us

how important live music and mentoring of young musicians are.

I want to say to the government: change your mind on this! It is just silly. I particularly want to thank the jazz collective for keeping me informed — and especially to Andra Jackson, who has explained to me all along exactly what has been going on, describing the small amount of money that is involved and noting the fact that this group has been funded for 30 years. It is not as if it is a fly-by-night organisation; it has runs on the board.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I want to congratulate Mr Leane on bringing this motion to the chamber and on giving us all an opportunity to talk about music and arts in this state. The contributions to the debate of both Mr Leane and Ms Hartland were obviously heartfelt, and I know many people in this chamber today have strong feelings on the subject. Mrs Peulich is a great music aficionado, as are Mr Drum, Mr Ramsay, Mr Rich-Phillips and probably Ms Broad, Mr Scheffer and Mr Lenders. In the lower house, people such as Martin Foley, the member for Albert Park, are probably particularly keen on music as well. I therefore do not think anyone has the high moral ground on this issue. It is an issue that we all feel very passionate about — as we do about the arts in Victoria.

Mr Leane made quite a good comment about Victoria's very rich and longstanding arts community and the fact that our arts programs and festivals and the ongoing way in which we are supportive of the arts are valued across the nation and internationally. With Melbourne's international arts festival and our film and other arts festivals we have a very rich arts program in Victoria. Indeed we are about to embark upon a really exciting venture called White Night Melbourne, which is coming up shortly. It will be a whole night of activities right across the arts spectrum, many of which will be free. I heard Mr Leane talk about the Premier and the parliamentary secretary for the arts. White Night Melbourne is actually the Premier's initiative. It is a program conducted in other countries around the world, and it is a fabulous initiative.

We can look back and remember some of the blockbuster all-night showings held at the National Gallery of Victoria over the last few years. The Salvador Dali exhibition was one that went all night. There were queues all the way out the door and around the corner, it was so successful. I am certain White Night Melbourne will be exactly the same. I encourage all members here in the chamber today to go out and spread the word about what is going to be a very good night. As I said, most parts of the program will be free.

It is a really important opportunity for everybody to get out and show Melbourne at its best — to take their families and their children and have fun. It really is a terrific initiative on the part of the Minister for the Arts, who also happens to be the Premier of this state.

Mr Leane was saying earlier that the Premier should hand over this portfolio to somebody else, but it is not unusual for the Premier to be such a supporter of the arts. If you go back to the Jeff Kennett era, you will note that even the arts community says how much funding and support he gave to the arts when he was Premier. That is not something you would expect from the arts cohort, but it is what has been said time and again. The current Premier is a complete aficionado of and very much a supporter of the arts, and White Night Melbourne is one very tangible example of that.

Today, however, we are talking about the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative. As Ms Hartland said, today a demonstration was held on the steps of Parliament House today. It is a pity we do not have such a demonstration every day. In many aspects this place could do with some entertainment and fun. Ms Hartland also pointed out that this morning Ms Pennicuk noted in her 90-second statement that this is the 30th anniversary of support for live music. The electorate I represent, which Mr Lenders and Ms Pennicuk also represent, covers a large part of the area that used to be home to the live music sector. Some members will remember Greville Street and a number of the nightclubs there that were all-night venues and how successful they were. I am sure that many in this chamber do not want to share some of their memories about some of the nights they had in those places! It was a pity, however, to see them close down, and we all felt very keenly that some of those places from our youth had closed down.

A very interesting element to understand also is the very good live music program at the Espy — the Esplanade Hotel in Saint Kilda. It is extremely important to understand the power of the community, particularly the community of St Kilda, which is absolutely and utterly coordinated and which really joined together to help and support the Espy, its live music venue and the programs that went on there. That hotel is still continuing to give a lot of pleasure to many people in terms of music in this state, as is the St Kilda Festival, which was on just recently and yet again we had a lot of live music and many programs. I believe the St Kilda Festival attracts more than 100 000 people. It is terrific to see our foreshore being used so well and to see some really innovative, young and imaginative artists having an opportunity to show what they can do so well.

As I said, today we are talking about the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative. Victoria's contemporary jazz community contributes greatly to our live music scene, and government support for jazz artists and events across this state is longstanding. I think it is important to understand just what we are talking about as a funding issue. In the last year government support for jazz totalled almost \$900 000, including operational funding for key jazz festivals in Melbourne, Wangaratta and Mildura through Arts Victoria and Tourism Victoria. A range of other jazz organisations and artists received one-off project grants through competitive Arts Victoria funding programs.

We have heard very passionate and emotive contributions from Mr Leane and Ms Hartland, but it is important to understand the process. These programs are highly competitive, and they are assessed by peer panels with a wide mix of industry and art form expertise. Each application is rigorously evaluated against program criteria and competing proposals. This is important: not all applications can be supported, and being successful one year is not a guarantee of success the next.

While the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative has received this type of funding in the past — since 1987, as Mr Leane pointed out — in the most recent funding round its applications, while meritorious, were simply not as competitive as others. As is the case for all artists and organisations in this situation, Arts Victoria is available to give feedback to the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative on its applications and to discuss opportunities for future support. I understand that these discussions are under way. The Melbourne Jazz Co-operative has since been invited to apply for future funding in the established organisations category of Arts Victoria's new Organisations Investment Program. This presents an opportunity for the cooperative to secure three years of operational funding from 2014 through a competitive application process. This is the first time an opportunity like this has been made available to the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative and many other arts organisations across the state.

I think it is important to reflect upon the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative for a moment and to put into context how successful it has been. It has received funding since 1987. The problem with any funding, whether it be in the arts, health, community services or education, is that complacency sets in. If an organisation has consistently been receiving a grant, the assumption is that it will continue to do so. But, just as Ms Hartland pointed out, the arts is a vibrant, challenging and changing sphere, and it is really important to have freshness and opportunity et cetera. I encourage all arts

organisations to see how they can refresh their programs and address the issues of the day.

As background, the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative applied unsuccessfully for funding through Arts Victoria's annual operations and arts development programs for 2013. These are competitive programs that provide one-off, fixed-term support. The cooperative has been successful in its applications in previous years, but just because it has received funding since 1987 does not mean there should be an automatic assumption that it will continue to receive it.

The cooperative is headed by Martin Jackson, who, along with his brother Adrian Jackson, artistic director of the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues and the Stonnington Jazz Festival, is regarded as a leader in Melbourne's dynamic jazz scene. Martin has instigated a protest letter and email campaign, which we have all seen. The Melbourne Jazz Co-operative celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, and I think that is important to recognise.

There are and always have been very definite competitive selection criteria for Arts Victoria funding. Applications are assessed by a peer panel of industry professionals, and it is those peer professionals who decide which applications are the most suitable. That is the point: the process is at arms length from the Premier and from Arts Victoria. I will repeat: applications are assessed by a peer panel of industry professionals, and it is those peer professionals who decide which applications are the most suitable. As we have said, the jazz cooperative does a great job and we appreciate the quality of its programming, but in this case — in this one year — its application for funding was judged to be not competitive enough to make the final recipient list.

I would like to ask those in the opposition whether they are saying we should override a decision made by a panel of respected professionals. Are they negating the whole concept of a competitive, peer-assessed funding round and opening the floodgates for every organisation that misses out next time to scream loudly in the hope of having decisions changed? Are we looking at the squeaky wheel here? Are we saying that we are not looking at merit or at the whole program but that we are supporting the people who are writing petitions? I would be very keen to know which applicants opposition members consider no longer worthy of funding. Who would they fund instead? Who would they knock out? Who would they say no to in order to put the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative in? Is that body going to be a squeaky wheel too?

We are not talking about the Electrical Trades Union here where you make up your mind and everybody falls into place. We are talking about an open and democratic process which is evaluated by peers. It is an unusual concept for members of the Labor Party because they do not get that — they have a centralised approach. For them it is a very unusual approach to have peers who have substance and expertise judging something. It is a very different program to what the Labor Party is used to.

Twenty-three small arts organisations received operations funding in this round, and I would like to ask Mr Leane which ones he would cut out. Who would he take funding from to put towards the jazz cooperative? Even Mr Leane would have to say that having received funding since 1987, the jazz cooperative has had a very good run.

Interjections from gallery.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! I ask members of the gallery to refrain from any comments or interference with members on their feet.

Mrs COOTE — As I said, 30 years of any one organisation receiving continuous funding has to be looked at, and that is obviously what the peers in this area — well-respected industry people — have done. The program put up this year by the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative did not come up to scratch in comparison to the other 23 applications.

It might be difficult to have to look at and analyse yourself; I am sure it is very hard. I am sure the cooperative expected that after 30 years of continuous funding, it would continue. But this is a good opportunity for the cooperative to go to Arts Victoria's new organisation — as it has been invited to do — to look at its investment program and discuss how it can do it better next year and how it can make changes that will put it back into this category. I think we would all like to see the healthy competition and the freshness that I know this organisation can bring to the music sector in Victoria. The Melbourne Jazz Co-operative will be doing a self-analysis and looking at what it can do to make certain it is in the mix for next year.

My concern here is about a more fundamental issue. I go back to what Mr Leane has proposed. I have to ask him: is the opposition saying that anyone who makes enough noise about missing out should get funding after all? This goes back to the democratic process. There has been a successful approach to allocating funds to our arts organisations. Should this be overridden by the government every time an

organisation that does not receive funding complains? This is fundamental, especially in the music industry. It is important that we have freshness and openness.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs COOTE — But this is a peer group assessment. It is not an assessment by the Premier, it is not an assessment by Arts Victoria; it is an assessment by a peer group. The members of Melbourne Jazz Co-operative have to say to themselves, ‘How can we take this opportunity to make ourselves better? How can we take this opportunity to put ourselves back in the mix? How can we make certain that we are one of the groups that is going to get funding?’. Help has been offered, there have been suggestions and I am certain that the cooperative will avail itself — and I encourage Martin Jackson and his brother Adrian Jackson to avail themselves — of every opportunity to see how it can make a better and more appropriate application next year.

I would like to finish on a couple of issues. As I said before, everybody here is passionate about music. Many more members are coming into the chamber for question time, and I know how many of them are great supporters of music and the arts, particularly jazz. Many people in the lower house, including the member for Albert Park, Martin Foley, have been particularly supportive of the arts. The electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region, which I share with Ms Crozier, is a hub for the arts. Many arts organisations are there, and we are passionate about them. We have festivals, and we welcome people from across the country and across the world.

This government encourages the arts, and both the Premier and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Assisting the Premier with the Arts are to be congratulated on the work they do in encouraging the arts in this state. I remind those members who have just come into the chamber about the White Night Melbourne program. It will be very exciting, and I encourage everyone to come.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Mrs COOTE — I have just heard, and you will be very pleased to hear, President, that none other than our very own Mr O’Brien will be playing at the White Night festival, so there is an added reason to come along — to listen to him. That will certainly be worthwhile.

Once again I commend Mr Leane for his motion. Everybody in the chamber is supportive of jazz in Victoria. I recommend that the Melbourne Jazz

Co-operative takes the opportunity to learn how it can better prepare a grant for next year. If it takes that opportunity, I am sure it will put in a competitive application. I will end by saying it was a competitive process which was assessed by peers of the cooperative. That is my contribution. Thank you to everybody else who has been involved.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Vertigan report: public release

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Has Moody’s Investors Service been provided with details of the independent review of state finances?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his question and for the opportunity to highlight that both Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s have reaffirmed that the Victorian government maintains its AAA credit rating. Victoria is now the only jurisdiction in Australia to have a stable outlook on its AAA credit rating from both ratings agencies.

Mr Lenders — Thank you, John Brumby.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Mr Lenders attributes that to former Premier John Brumby, but I remind the house that it was in fact the previous coalition government in Victoria that restored the AAA credit rating after it was lost by Labor. This government is committed to maintaining that AAA credit rating and ensuring we have a budget position to maintain that AAA credit rating.

Mr Lenders asked what information is given to Moody’s with respect to its assessment of the state’s credit rating. As Mr Lenders would appreciate as a former Treasurer, there is an ongoing dialogue between the ratings agencies and the Treasury around our credit rating.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I note the minister’s answer. I also note that Moody’s, in its statement of 16 February, refers to the independent review of state finances. Has the minister shown this review to Moody’s when he has not shown it to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, the Parliament or the people of Victoria?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I can assure Mr Lenders that I have not shown anything to Moody's; because I have not met with Moody's.

Homelessness: youth foyers

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I direct my question without notice to Wendy Lovell, the Minister for Housing. Can the minister update the house on the progress of the Kangan Institute youth foyer project?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for her question and for her ongoing interest in youth in Victoria, particularly those who are at risk of homelessness but who want to continue to study and finish their education. Last week I was very proud to join Tony Nicholson, the executive director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence; Tony Keenan, the CEO of Hanover Welfare Services; Ray Griffiths, the CEO of Kangan Institute; and Geoff Porter, the mayor of the City of Hume, to break ground on the site that will be a new, 40-bed youth foyer at Kangan Institute in Broadmeadows.

The youth foyer will give those young people who are unable to live at home but who want to continue their education the opportunity of secure accommodation while they do that. The new youth foyers have been welcomed by the sector. They are world best practice in youth homelessness prevention models and are working extremely well in the UK and in the US. In fact Tony Nicholson was saying that the people in the UK, who are the founders of the foyer, are now saying that Victoria has taken over as the leading state — or the leading nation — in youth foyers in the world. I was very proud to hear Tony say that the UK has recognised Victoria as the leader in the world on youth foyers.

The government is focused on providing better services and infrastructure to break the cycle of disadvantage. As I said, we are committed to assisting young people with the critical link between education, training and employment and providing them with a home. The construction at Kangan has begun this month and it will be completed later this year.

Vertigan report: public release

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am tempted to say that my question is to the Minister for Health, but actually it is not; it is for the Assistant Treasurer.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Yes, perhaps he is the Leader of the Government. I note that in his previous answer the Assistant Treasurer would not confirm whether or not the government had given the Vertigan report to Moody's, so I ask him specifically: has the government given the Vertigan report — which it will not give to Parliament, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee or the people — to Moody's Investors Service?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his question. As I indicated in my response to his first question, the government has an ongoing discussion with Moody's and Standard & Poor's around their assessment of the state's credit rating. As Mr Lenders well knows, it is an ongoing process and there is an ongoing exchange of information. As Mr Lenders would also be well aware, the interim report of the Vertigan inquiry is in the public domain.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The Assistant Treasurer mentioned that the interim report is in the public domain, as we all know because it was a centrepiece of the 2011 budget and he mentioned it multiple times in his own budget speech. However, my supplementary question is in relation to the information that Moody's put into its report on the Vertigan report on 16 February. Moody's refers to the Vertigan report, so my question to the minister remains: has Moody's got information that the people and the Parliament have not got from the final Vertigan report?

Mr Drum — He has asked the same question four times.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his question again. As Mr Drum notes, it is essentially the same question, and I will give the same answer. The government has an ongoing dialogue with the ratings agencies. Those ratings agencies have reaffirmed that Victoria has a stable AAA credit rating, which is something that no other state jurisdiction in Australia has. We think that is a good thing, and it is a good outcome for Victoria.

Ordered that answers be considered next day on motion of Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan).

Hospitals: federal funding

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My question today is to the Minister for Health, the Honourable David Davis, and I ask: can the minister

update the house on meetings today at a Victorian hospital — the Northern Hospital, which is part of Northern Health and in my electorate — which is subject to a \$3.98 million cut this financial year by the commonwealth government?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I am pleased to respond to the question from Mr Ondarchie, and in addition I congratulate him on his new appointment. I can inform the house that today the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, attended the Bundoora Extended Care Centre and that I was pleased to join her in opening a new centre, which is attached to the Bundoora Extended Care Centre, for the training of a range of graduates, professions and disciplines. I indicate that whilst there may be a number of points on which we have disagreement with the federal government, there are some points of strong agreement. This training work is one of those points of agreement, and the federal government is the largest funder of that, with a number of universities.

However, I indicate that Northern Health, which is the group that administers Bundoora extended care and the subacute services it provides, is in fact subject to a cut of almost \$4 million by the federal government through the reductions that have been put into the pool. The federal government, through its decisions published in *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook* and its funding arrangements, has cut by \$107 million this year and \$475 million over four years money from the pool that Victoria shares with the commonwealth. The state contributions to the pool have remained the same; the federal contributions to the pool have fallen by \$15.3 million each month, and across the seven months of the financial year where the federal reduction into the pool applies and beyond that, into the new year, there will be further reductions. Northern Health's share of that \$107 million is almost \$4 million. It is a very significant cut by the federal government; it is a very significant cut to the services that are available at Northern Health.

While I was pleased to join with the federal minister today, and I was pleased too that she was prepared to come to a Victorian health service, I think it is important that she meet with a range of other health services to see the impact of the federal government cuts on health services. The almost \$4 million reduction in funding that has been caused by reductions in funding by the federal minister and the federal government will have a very significant impact on Northern Health.

I note that speaker after speaker at this presentation talked about the enormous growth in population in

northern Melbourne — that is, 25 per cent over a very short time. That is a massive growth in population, which is quite contrary to the federal Treasurer's assertions that the Victorian population fell by 11 111 last year. In fact we know the Victorian population increased by around 1.4 per cent, and much of that population growth was centred in the north of the city, as Mr Ondarchie well understands, as well as growth in the western side of the city and growth in some of our regional cities.

All these populations have seen significant growth, and we know the federal Treasurer was also aware of this growth, because he used this indexation of nearly 1.4 per cent on the instruction of the Australian Statistician when it came to the local government indexation. On 29 June he signed an indexation for local government. It defies logic that the Australian population could be growing at 0.03 per cent according to the health agreement and at nearly 1.4 per cent according to the local government agreement. We know it is a farce, we know it is a joke, but it is a terrible joke, and it is impacting on the northern side of the city.

Questions interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT — Order! I take this opportunity to welcome to the public gallery today a former member of the house — indeed, a former Deputy President of the Legislative Council — the Honourable Barry Bishop. Welcome.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions resumed.

Vocational education and training: enrolment data

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. Does the minister stand by his statement made last sitting week that student participation in government-funded TAFE activities has increased since this time last year?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — In the last sitting week I gave members some insight into the outcome of training results and pointed them in the direction of a quarterly report that is published on training activity. I suggested that a quarterly report encompassing the whole of 2012 would be available next month in March. That quarterly report

will be published at that time, but I did give some headline figures, which indicate that vocational education and training activity throughout 2012 showed a 22 per cent increase. In particular I highlighted to the house the fact that there has been a similar increase in fee-for-service activity delivered by our TAFE institutes. That fee-for-service activity now comprises 31 per cent of revenue earned by our TAFE institutes, which I think is a very good outcome.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The minister used a lot of statistics. Is the minister double counting students who have been enrolled in more than one course — like foundation studies, which has increased by 120 per cent in the last year — to prop up his enrolment numbers?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — There is no notion of propping up enrolment numbers. As the Leader of the Opposition would know, students are entitled to enrol in up to two government-subsidised courses in any one year. The way in which enrolments have been counted has always included cases of students enrolling in more than one course in any one year. There were instances, until the government took action, where students were enrolled in up to six, seven or eight courses in any one year, so, yes, it is absolutely true that there are students who would have enrolled in foundation studies and in additional vocational training. There is no difference between the way in which those enrolments were counted under the previous government and the way in which they have been counted under the current government.

Technology sector: industry innovation precincts

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, the Minister for Technology. Can the minister update the house on Victoria's position as a national leader in ICT?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mrs Coote for her question and for the opportunity to talk about the Victorian ICT industry, which is a great and longstanding success story here in Victoria. The ICT sector generates around \$30 billion in annual revenue. It makes a contribution of around \$30 billion to the Victorian economy and around \$2.5 billion in annual exports. The sector is now employing around 145 000 Victorians across the spectrum, from specific ICT companies to ICT roles

within non-ICT firms, and we now have around a third of all ICT students in Victorian universities. In addition to that, around half of the top-30 listed ICT companies are based here in Victoria, so we have a very solid base within the ICT sector of our economy.

We also have world-renowned research and development capabilities at the University of Melbourne's Parkville precinct and at Monash University's Clayton precinct. We have attracted investments such as the IBM global research and development laboratory at Parkville, which is one of only a dozen anywhere in the world, and the National ICT Australia Victoria Research Laboratory. This has not happened by accident; it is not something that has happened in 5 minutes. This is a consequence of continuity of policy back over two decades — back to when Alan Stockdale became the first Minister for Multimedia when Multimedia Victoria was established. It continued under the previous government, and it continues under this government today.

In 2011 I was very pleased to release Victoria's Technology Plan for the Future, which is a \$150 million platform to support the development of ICT, biotechnology and small technologies here in Victoria, building on the successes of the last two decades.

On the weekend the Prime Minister unveiled her new innovation platform, announcing a series of industry innovation precincts. This is a program in which the federal government will pick winners around Australia and designate particular cities as having industry sector expertise. The Prime Minister announced a couple of those on the weekend, but the federal government has been silent on what it is going to do around technology precincts — around precincts for ICT, biotech and small tech.

We see that Victoria is already recognised as having enormous strength in technology, ICT, biotechnology and small technologies, based on 20 years of investment by government and 20 years of private sector investment. At the moment we are not seeing a commitment from the federal government to locate in Victoria those precincts that the Prime Minister referred to on the weekend. We call on the federal government to ensure that those precincts are allocated not on the basis of political expediency but on the basis of the strength of the Victorian economy, recognising the investments we have in ICT, in biotechnology and in small technologies. I call on those opposite to ensure that they act as Victorians first and call on their federal colleagues to ensure that those technology precincts are located in Victoria, as Victoria is recognised as the

Australian leader, and not elsewhere in Australia for the Prime Minister's political expediency.

Vertigan report: public release

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. I refer him to paragraph 5 of the Moody's Investors Service media release of 16 February 2012. Is it the government's commitment to implement all elements of the final Vertigan review, as Moody's suggests is necessary for the retention of a AAA rating?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his question. I can say to Mr Lenders that the government's commitment is very clear — it was articulated in the budget last May — and that is that it would run a sustainable budget position to preserve the state's AAA credit rating. This, I might add, is not the budget position we inherited when we came to government, where we had spending under the previous government growing at 7.3 per cent per annum over 11 years, where we had debt forecast under the previous government increasing by 96 per cent. We inherited a budget where debt was forecast to increase from \$8 billion in 2009–10 to just under \$16 billion in 2013–14, a 96 per cent increase in debt built into the forward estimates by the former government. We are very clear on our commitment around AAA. It was articulated in the budget last year and it was articulated in the government's economic statement of December.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The minister refers to the Vertigan report, the minister refers to the budget, the minister refers to the ratings agency. The ingredient that links all of these, the central premise of the government maintaining AAA, is the Vertigan report. If it is so critical for the budget to be in balance and for AAA to be maintained, will the minister release the report to the Parliament and the people of Victoria?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — It seems that Mr Lenders is the only person who is fixated on the Vertigan report. The government set out in the budget last May its strategy to maintain a sustainable budget position, to build infrastructure and to maintain the AAA credit rating. Those objectives are set out clearly in the budget last May and the government is getting on with delivering them.

Building industry: leadership training

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Honourable Peter Hall, and I ask: can the minister advise the house of any exciting training opportunities for students seeking leadership roles in the construction industry?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr Koch for his very important question. Given the importance of the construction industry to the Victorian economy, I am sure that members would be pleased to know that in 2012 we had more than 53 000 government-subsidised training positions in professions related to the construction industry. That has been a growth of some 67 per cent since 2008. The growth of training in the construction industry sector is one which is important for the Victorian economy and indeed one that should be welcomed by all sides of the house. Moreover, of those 53 000 training positions, about half are in the area of apprenticeships. Everybody will know, of course, that the Refocusing Vocational Training policy of the current government saw subsidy increases for every apprenticeship area in this state, so the government's support for those undertaking apprenticeships in the construction industry is without doubt.

Beyond those government-subsidised positions, last Friday I had the opportunity to visit the Master Builders Association of Victoria's new Building Leadership Simulation Centre in South Melbourne and participate in what was called a taster session for that particular type of training. It is not unique by any means, but it is something that is world leading practice in terms of training opportunities. Indeed, there are only three centres like that in the world: one of them in England, the other one in the Netherlands and now one in Australia. When we talk about a Building Leadership Simulation Centre, members would probably know what a flight simulation centre is, where pilots are trained.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Gordon does. Gordon knows all about it.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Yes, he does. Mr Rich-Phillips is a very keen participant in that.

What this does is immerse participants in this particular training in a three-dimensional environment and places them on site at a construction work site. It then puts the participants in this training into a real-life situation where they are exposed to a number of different pressures and problems to resolve as a site manager

within those construction sites. The experience of doing that is one which would challenge any of us. Certainly my participation there gave me a real taste of what it would be like.

This is very important because not only do we provide the basic subsidised training but this further value-added training ensures that people are being given experience in leadership and in problem solving within the construction industry in a simulated environment before they get out onto construction sites. I know that the cost of this is very significant. The Master Builders Association and its members are adding great value to their industry and training opportunities in their industry by their investment. It is a great example of where industry is leading from the front and looking towards its own training needs. The Victorian government is really pleased to be working with the Master Builders Association and others in the construction industry to ensure that training opportunities meet industry needs.

Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee: reference

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Leader of the Government, Mr Davis, and it relates to notice of motion 448 that he placed on the notice paper quite some time ago. This is a proposed reference to my committee, the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee — —

An honourable member — Your committee, is it?

Mr BARBER — A committee of which I am a member, which is meeting tonight with absolutely nothing to do. This reference may encompass an inquiry into national partnerships agreements into aged care; Caring for our Country; early childhood education, including Indigenous education; the home and community care program; homelessness; teacher quality; literacy and numeracy; low socioeconomic status school funding; the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel; the regional rail link; students with disabilities; disaster resilience; solar schools; Victoria Legal Aid; and various water projects. Can the Leader of the Government tell me when he is likely to bring this motion to a vote?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I am pleased to respond to Mr Barber's very legitimate question. This is an important reference. It is a reference that I think provides an opportunity for the Legislative Council's relevant committees to look closely at the national partnership agreement arrangements. I can indicate that the government in

Victoria, along with governments in other states around Australia, has legitimate concerns about the national partnership arrangements with the commonwealth government. Mr Barber has correctly just provided to the chamber a long list. I might add it is not the full list, but it is a very good start to the list of national partnership agreements which are currently under debate or in dispute or under investigation in one way or another.

Yesterday we heard in the chamber the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, talk about one particular national partnership agreement, on homelessness, that the Victorian government believes ought to be renewed for four years but which the commonwealth government is seeking to renew for only one year. I can indicate in my own portfolio area we have a number of concerns about the fall-off in funding under the elective surgery arrangements under national partnerships, quite separate from the more recent commonwealth cuts to our hospitals that have been administered by the federal government.

We also have concerns with national partnership agreements in, for example, Indigenous health. On 30 June the Aboriginal health national partnership agreement falls to nothing. That is of great concern to state governments around Australia.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — When are you going to bring on the vote?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The point here is that these have been discussed at health ministers conferences, at housing ministers conferences, at the Council of Australian Governments and so forth. It is our intention to bring forward that reference. There may be some further tweaking of the reference, with specific items to be added where there are some specific outstanding matters that need to be dealt with, but I can assure the member that it is the government's intention to bring it forward. We may modify the motion to specifically point to — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — To make it more political?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — No, the intention is not to be highly party political or anything of that nature; it is to say that around the country state governments are very concerned about the way the national partnerships are being handled by the commonwealth government. I indicate that it will come forward. We may make some modifications to point specifically to a number of national partnership arrangements where there are specific concerns about the length of the extension or certain requirements put on us by the commonwealth

government. There are, for example, arrangements on dental care, in my portfolio area, on which we are currently working with the commonwealth government, but this reference is broader than just health. We are seeking a better outcome for Victoria and seeking better results. This is an important reference and Mr Barber will hear further on it.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — It would be most helpful then if in advance of the debate on this motion, the minister could make available to all members copies of every one of those national partnership agreements to inform us when we come to vote on the motion.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I can indicate all the ones that are in operation are available publicly at this time, but it is true that the negotiation of new ones going forward are points of discussion between governments. Notwithstanding, there are some — for example, the Indigenous health national partnership agreement — about which we have not yet been provided information by the commonwealth in relation to what it seeks to do, and to be honest —

Mr Barber — It's a dollar figure in your budget papers.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The federal government has not indicated what it will do on these matters —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — No, but these are, as indicated, national partnerships, so it does matter what both sides of the equation do, and that is a point of negotiation. I can only indicate that this is a serious matter not just for Victoria but for all the other states, and we will have further discussion on it. I can tell Mr Barber that I look forward to it.

Planning: metropolitan strategy

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to Mr Guy, the Minister for Planning, and I ask: can the minister advise the house what action the Baillieu government is taking to seek comment and participation in the creation of Melbourne's new metropolitan planning strategy?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mrs Peulich for a very good question on a very serious topic, and that is the rewrite of the Melbourne metropolitan planning strategy and indeed the Baillieu government's drive to ensure that communities form a

true part of the consultation for the formation of that document.

I can inform the house that I recently launched the formal public consultation process for the draft documentation that was released last year, which involves a conversation toolkit at the 'Plan Melbourne' website. Already hundreds have been downloaded by community groups who want to be a part of the metropolitan planning strategy rewrite. In fact many community groups are now holding their own community consultations into the metropolitan planning strategy, and that is what this government wants to see happen, as Mrs Peulich would know. We want to involve communities and councils in the formation of what will be a principal guiding document for the way this city evolves over the coming decades.

Focus groups are being held with hard-to-reach segments of the community — with younger people, long-term unemployed, homeless people, newly arrived migrants and those with disabilities. Groups for culturally and linguistically diverse participants will also be held, as I said, to ensure that we get everyone's point of view on how our city is going to grow and evolve into the future.

It is important to note that replacing the failed *Melbourne 2030* document is something that this government is committed to doing and indeed doing properly. That is why this government is getting on with the job —

Mr Somyurek interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Mr Somyurek, as they say in Ukraine: 'A crow will never be a falcon', and you, my friend, are a crow.

This government is getting on with the job of reforming the metropolitan planning strategy because it is the right thing to do. It is right for the long-term future of this city, and it is right because we are involving community groups. The crows on the other side can whinge, they can chirp and they can bleat, but at the end of the day they will not be a part of what all communities want to be a part of, and that is the rewrite of the most important integrated document on land use planning, transport and economics, which will bring society together to ensure that the city we are building in Melbourne not only is but remains the world's most livable. It will not be done by chance, and that is why this government is getting on with the job of ensuring that the metropolitan planning strategy is done in a strategic way and reformed in a way that involves all of Victoria's communities.

MELBOURNE JAZZ CO-OPERATIVE: FUNDING

Debate resumed.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I did not particularly want to leave this debate on the sour note of the government's position of questioning the merit of the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative — which is something no-one in government has done for a long time. I take on board Mrs Coote's defence of the Premier as the Minister for the Arts, but I suggest that if she were the Minister for the Arts, this situation would not have arisen. I am not too sure if the cooperative appreciated — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr LEANE — It may have appreciated her feedback, but feedback is not something musicians particularly appreciate. However, they might take it on board. In saying that, I thank Ms Hartland for her support of the motion. I am not sure that the government supports the motion, but I suppose we will find out in a minute.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 17

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

Noes, 20

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

Pairs

Pennicuik, Ms	O'Brien, Mr
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Motion negatived.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Minister for Planning to table in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 5 March 2013, a copy of the Urban Growth Boundary Anomalies Advisory Committee report that, according to the Department of Planning and Community Development website, was submitted on 4 May 2012.

This report has been with the minister since 4 May 2012. I have been asked to make my contribution brief and to be unprovocative, and I will endeavour to be unprovocative.

The document being sought is an important one. It relates to the process the minister has undertaken in relation to the development of green wedge land. This is a contentious issue, but in keeping with the spirit of officially dealing with it, I will not be provocative. This issue and that of local development have been of concern to the local community. It is of particular interest to people who own land in an affected area or who seek to develop land in such an area.

We are asking the minister to release the documents so that there can be clarity and certainty for both the community and those who want to see development in this area. We understand the report has been with the minister for nearly 12 months now and there are submissions from two councils only, so the issues are not particularly complex. We therefore ask the minister to make the documents available in order for there to be an efficient planning process. Any further delay will raise suspicions.

Planning in Victoria should move at a timely rate because of the enormous costs involved for developers who have either purchased land or are holding onto land in anticipation. A smooth running of the planning system in Victoria requires issues such as this to be dealt with sufficiently quickly. I have kept my contribution to the debate on this motion brief and uncontroversial in anticipation that the motion will be dealt with speedily.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The government will not oppose Mr Tee's motion, with the usual caveats, of which members are aware, in relation to cabinet confidentiality and other forms of privilege. Mr Tee is seeking that the documents referred to in his motion be released within two weeks. I make the same point that I have made to members of the Greens in relation to motions they have moved requesting documents, and that is that I am not aware of how many documents there are, the substance of the documents or their significance, so a period of less than two weeks is

a short turnaround time. I will leave that with the house and for the government to respond accordingly.

There have been occasions when very short turnaround times have been placed on production of documents motions when such production has required consultation across government and different departments. At times the requests have been for the production of many hundreds of documents within an unrealistic time frame.

Having said that, the motion acknowledges that this is another limb of the reform process undertaken by the Minister for Planning. As I understand it, each of the submissions made has been supported by a full, minuted, council meeting, which is entirely consistent with our wish for transparency in this area. I also understand the Department of Planning and Community Development has assisted the independent advisory committee process with technical assistance from the Growth Areas Authority, and I understand that this process is being finalised. In keeping with this government's desire to be open and transparent, we will not oppose the motion moved by Mr Tee seeking the release of the document by Tuesday, 5 March.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — The Greens will support this motion and, if we get to it, a subsequent motion in the same format relating to a different advisory report on potentially contaminated land.

As members may know, under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 it is common for the Minister for Planning to appoint panels or advisory committees in relation to planning permits or planning scheme amendments or items that consist of both, and there are a number of different provisions under the act through which that can be done. They all run pretty much the same way. A group of planning experts is appointed, it looks at submissions, it looks at the proposal and it then writes its report. The group gives the report to the minister, the minister sits on it for as long as he or she wants to, and in most cases releases the report on the exact same day that he or she makes the decision that the particular instrument is to be implemented. Everybody involved finds out about it and gets to read the report only after the minister has finalised the decision.

That was always the practice under the 11 years of the Labor government. We never saw the advisory committee reports until they were a done deal, and I think that is bad practice. I use the example of a panel report which is released to the council for decision and then residents will often get the chance, if they made

submissions to the panel, to talk again to the council when the council determines what to do with that panel report and whether to go forward and recommend the amendment.

However, when the minister is involved you get to make a submission to the panel and the advisory committee writes to the minister, but then you never get a second round to provide further commentary on the way the advisory committee has given its advice. It is good to see that Mr Tee is getting a bit adventurous and presenting a documents motion here.

Mr Tee — This is my third one!

Mr BARBER — He says it is his third one; I did look that up. But it would have been better if Mr Tee, who some say might be planning minister in less than two years — —

Mr O'Donohue — Not many.

Mr BARBER — Some, not all, but you must admit there is a bit of a strut going on with opposition members at the moment. They are feeling like they are riding high. If it is the case that Mr Tee is planning minister in less than two years from now, I would have liked to have heard him commit to always releasing planning committee panel advisory reports in advance of his decision so that the community has an opportunity to read them. If the community wants to make further representations to the minister, then the minister can receive those before he makes a decision.

I compliment Mr Tee on the precedent he is establishing here today. It should be consistent and across the board, but I am not confident that he or the planning minister would like to adopt this as a regular practice because that has not been the history of these things for as long as I have been involved in planning issues.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In summary, I will briefly address the issue raised by Mr O'Donohue that on occasions many hundreds of documents may be involved, and hence his concern about a quick turnaround in terms of the dates. I can allay his concerns. There is one document; that document relates to the response to two submissions and deals with six parcels of land. Mr O'Donohue can rest assured that in terms of complexity, difficulty and the need for consultation with other departments, none of these possible issues are barriers to the speedy resolution of this matter. I welcome his support of the motion, and I look forward to the release of the documents.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended 12.55 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Minister for Planning to table in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 5 March 2013, a copy of the Potentially Contaminated Land Advisory Committee report that, according to the Department of Planning and Community Development website, was submitted on 9 March 2012.

This motion seeks from the Minister for Planning the report of the Potentially Contaminated Land Advisory Committee that has been with the minister since 9 March 2012. I have asked for the document to be provided on the 12-month anniversary of the minister having received the report. It is an important report because it deals with the nature of the planning controls we should have around potentially contaminated land, and it looks at what changes should be made to those planning controls. This issue is time critical because there is an increased focus on inner urban renewal on sites that may or may not be contaminated. There is universal recognition that the current controls and framework are not adequate to deal with this deficiency. The report is about recommending updates to the way in which we deal with planning.

The advisory committee that drafted the report released an issues paper in September 2011 that talked about how important it was to get the framework right. The issue raised in that paper is how important it is that an initial decision-maker knows whether or not land is contaminated. Currently there is no detailed mapping or record keeping of potentially contaminated sites across Victoria, so it is virtually impossible for any decision-maker — a planner, council, developer or purchaser — to know whether or not land is contaminated unless there is a pre-existing history for the site.

It is clear that we need to look at the controls that are in place and do it now, because as we speak land is being bought, sold and developed. It is time for a more informed debate so that people who are purchasing know what they are getting. It is an issue that could affect hundreds of Victorians who do not know what they are getting in terms of purchasing contaminated land.

This is a brief contribution simply to outline what is in the report, why it is critical that we get the report in a timely fashion and why it matters to the community. It is an important issue. It is important to give clarity and certainty and to make sure we have the best protections in place to help people making decisions about where to develop and under what conditions. With those brief remarks, I urge the house to support the motion calling

for the release of this document so we can enhance public consultation and dialogue.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I will also be brief. For some 25 years I have been involved with issues around contaminated sites, either as a local community member trying to find out what is on a site or as a local councillor at the City of Maribyrnong, where there were some of the highest rates of contaminated sites in the state. When we did an audit, nearly all the land that council owned was contaminated because of the industrial background of the area. As a member of Parliament, on a number of occasions I have talked in this house about contamination and the fact that governments — either this government or the previous government — need to have a register that is properly maintained to make sure we know exactly where the problems are and how to deal with them.

One memorable case during my time in Parliament was in relation to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade training college in Burnley, which was an incredibly contaminated site that had never been audited by the Environment Protection Authority until an occupational health and safety officer from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union insisted that a contamination audit be carried out. It was found that the site was incredibly contaminated. There are sites like this across the state, and both private buyers of land and governments need to know where they are, how contaminated they are and what will be done with them.

Just yesterday I received a reply to an adjournment matter I raised last year asking the Minister for Planning to comment on the *Managing Contaminated Sites* report and the ministerial advisory committee's report on potentially contaminated land. In his response the minister says:

The government acknowledges that a whole-of-government approach is needed to address the matters raised in the reports, given the breadth and significance of the issues requiring reform.

The government is currently reviewing the way in which we can effectively advance the recommendations of both reports.

Then he thanks me for my interest, but it is a little more than interest. This report was submitted on 9 March 2012, which is almost one year ago. These are incredibly important issues. The government should be able to release the report to the house. The government keeps on telling us how transparent it is; this is a way of proving it. The government should get on with the job and start releasing these incredibly important reports.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on Mr Tee's motion, which states:

That this house requires the Minister for Planning to table in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 5 March 2013, a copy of the Potentially Contaminated Land Advisory Committee report that, according to the Department of Planning and Community Development website, was submitted on 9 March 2012.

I note that that date is within a couple of weeks. As Mr O'Donohue pointed out in responding to Mr Tee's previous motion, that is a relatively short time frame in which to turn around such a report.

In relation to the issue at hand, however, I think we all acknowledge that contaminated land sites are a very important issue to the community — they pose a health risk to not only humans but also flora and fauna. There are real environmental concerns for various communities. Ms Hartland said she has had an interest in this for a number of years; I think most of us are very concerned about ensuring that contaminated waste sites are looked at. It is important that it be recognised that the government takes the issue very seriously, that a number of government departments are involved and that it needs a whole-of-government approach.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, has been very effective in this area. In taking a look at what was done under the previous government, he is looking at the issue with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), developing various risk management tools for contaminated sites and working in conjunction with other government departments. He should be commended for the work he has done.

Getting back to the issue Mr Tee's motion raises, the matters raised in the Potentially Contaminated Land Advisory Committee report are currently being considered as part of the response in relation to the role of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the EPA and where there is that potential for crossover into the planning portfolio. I reiterate that there are a number of departments taking an interest in this, as they should be. As I understand it, the government is actively developing and finalising the EPA contaminated land strategy and it is anticipated that will be released within the coming period. I think members can be reassured that that is in hand. The strategy will focus on reforms within the EPA's operations to improve its management of contaminated land. There are various elements within that strategy that will improve the provision of information in

relation to an audit system, as has been mentioned, and other areas of review within the EPA.

As I said at the outset, I think the community takes these issues seriously, as does the government, and I thank Mr Tee for bringing the motion to the house. The government will not be opposing it.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the support of both the Greens and the government. As with Mr O'Donohue, I am a bit surprised at the defence that has been raised — the suggestion that this motion seeks a speedy release of the document. We are not talking about hundreds of documents; we are talking about one document, which deals with a very important issue concerning the safety of the community. We are talking about a document that has been in the possession of the government not for a day, a week or a month but for 12 months. This notice of motion, also, has been in the government's possession since 6 February. I therefore find it difficult to understand how the argument is put in terms of a suggestion that this document is being sought urgently and that that might be a reason for delay. I would have thought the risk is that any further delay will compromise the document, because events are moving on, and there is a risk the document may become dated and less helpful.

Again I can only reiterate that as we speak, communities, councils, developers and homeowners are making decisions in a vacuum. I therefore think this is incredibly important, and I urge the government to focus its attention on releasing these documents so that we can have a frank and an informed debate. I think we owe the community that much.

Motion agreed to.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee to inquire into, consider and report no later than 20 August 2013 on the impact of freight trucks on Melbourne, including crashes, road damage and costs, air pollution (including health impacts), traffic congestion and alternatives for moving the growing freight task.

More than 21 000 trucks rumble through the inner west neighbourhoods every single day. Francis Street alone has 7000 trucks per day travelling past residents' front doors as well as child-care centres and community centres — and it is a stone's throw away from a

primary school. People live, play, sleep and breathe the air in these neighbourhoods. The streets are clogged and dangerous, noise and vibrations keep people awake at night and residents breathe in diesel pollution that is carcinogenic and causes poor respiratory health.

Diesel exhaust is in the same carcinogenic category as passive smoking. Would we put up with thousands of people smoking cigarettes on the fence of a child-care centre? Why do we have thousands of trucks outside many child-care centres, kindergartens and primary schools filling the air with carcinogenic diesel fumes? This diesel pollution is having the same impact on these children's health as would passive cigarette smoke. The Maribyrnong Truck Action Group, a local residents group concerned about truck impacts on community health and wellbeing, has outlined the key facts and community concerns, I believe quite succinctly.

In the inner west we have the highest levels of diesel pollution ever recorded by the Environment Protection Authority on Melbourne's streets. More than 21 000 trucks use our residential streets each day, most of them to take containers to and from the port. The World Health Organisation last year declared that diesel pollution causes cancer. We have Melbourne's highest level of hospital admissions for respiratory illness, and the Council of Australian Governments recently reported that diesel fumes make our kids sick. The exhaust affects children's respiratory health, and the higher the levels of exposure, the worse the illness.

These points paint a stark picture of the severity of this problem. Yes, it is very bad now, but it is set to get a lot worse unless immediate action is taken. With freight volumes rapidly increasing, truck traffic is projected to double by 2025. The port is due to double freight traffic from 2.5 million containers a year to more than 5 million by 2025. About 4 million containers will go via Swanson Dock, and that feeds trucks into the inner west. Despite this looming truck problem, we have seen no action from the Baillieu government in two-and-a-quarter years. It has failed to come up with a freight strategy or rail freight target, despite the fact that one freight train takes 110 trucks off our streets and that the shovel-ready West Gate ramps truck bypass project remains under review 27 months into the Baillieu government's term. Meanwhile truck numbers increase every day and the community suffers.

We now have more than 21 000 trucks on residential streets in the inner west, and by 2025 we will be choked by 42 000 truck movements every single day. This is clearly not sustainable on many levels, including with regard to air pollution, traffic congestion, safety, amenity, road maintenance cost and carbon emissions.

It will bring our roads to a standstill and make our air toxic. It is my view that it will render the inner west unlivable and property values will be affected.

Is the government aware that truck noise levels on residential streets in the inner west are greater than those that trigger the construction of freeway noise barriers? Excessive noise has significant effects on health; it causes annoyance, interference with concentration and thought processes, sleep disturbances, fatigue, aggression, heart disease and more. Night-time truck traffic on Moore Street in Footscray has increased almost 500 per cent in the last 10 years, and I guarantee members that residents on Moore Street will not be sleeping well tonight or any other night until a night-time curfew is applied. Local residents are currently being forced out of the area, and it will only get a lot worse. The reason I most commonly hear for people leaving is the impact of trucks on their children's health and wellbeing. These detrimental impacts are certainly not limited to the west. There are many truck hot spots across Melbourne, though the majority of truck traffic is through the inner west.

The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics estimates that traffic congestion in Melbourne costs the community around \$2.7 billion per year. How much of this cost can be attributed to the freight trucks on our street? Trucks also cause major damage to our roads, which costs money to fix and maintain. One source has said that the road damage from a 40-tonne truck is equal to the damage wrought by 160 000 cars. The most recent annual report from VicRoads shows its maintenance costs, including for bridge maintenance, totalled \$272 million. How much of this can be attributed to the disproportionate road impact from trucks? We are seeing increasing numbers of truck crashes, ranging from those that cause serious commuter traffic havoc through to fatal crashes.

Professor Bill Russell, deputy director of the University of Melbourne's Australian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport, said Australians would be safer if more freight was moved by rail. His research showed that moving 10 per cent more freight by rail would save 25 lives in Australia every year and prevent 100 serious injuries, such as brain damage and quadriplegia. The fact that 53 per cent of people support banning very large trucks in cities, as reported by Auspoll, reflects that members of the community are feeling the crush on the roads and in their suburbs. If we do not act now, community sentiment will only get worse.

As for residents in the inner west — the area worst hit — truck traffic is driving us up the wall. Today I will be delivering to the government 366 personally signed campaign cards addressed to the Premier from residents in this area. Each reads:

Truck traffic in the western suburbs is set to double by 2020 and double again by 2050.

It's driving me and my neighbours up the wall.

Please invest in rail freight infrastructure such as hubs to transfer freight from a train to trucks for local delivery.

New ramps connecting the West Gate Freeway and the port are shovel ready and will get trucks off our residential streets. Build them now.

One freight train takes 110 trucks off our streets, and that's good for our health, our community and our environment.

Each is signed, and the signatories have provided their postal addresses. I expect that each will receive a response from the government.

Again I note that it is not just the inner west that is affected by freight truck traffic. People right across the state are affected, and we are all paying the costs. Now is the time to investigate the impact of doubling the numbers of trucks on our streets. Let us investigate how to do it better, cleaner, healthier, cheaper and smarter.

The Canadian Victoria Transport Policy Institute has produced a comprehensive study of transportation benefit and costing research and a guidebook for applying this information in planning and policy. It is entitled *Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis — Techniques, Estimates and Implications*. The author points to extensive research on how we can calculate a range of transportation costs, including air pollution costs to human health, which is the greatest community concern in the west.

We can also measure the range of additional costs and damages, such as aesthetic degradation, traffic congestion and carbon emissions. This type of cost-benefit analysis is done across the world, and there are plenty of case studies and models that could apply here in Melbourne. The inquiry would work to identify the impacts of a projected doubling of truck traffic in Melbourne and the related costs to the community. The inquiry will identify how those impacts and costs can be minimised and the best way to do it, including the West Gate ramps truck bypass and rail freight — the two key solutions that we have on the table now, and now is the time that we should be acting to implement them.

The inquiry would consider the effectiveness of these two solutions in reducing impacts on and costs to the community, as well as other immediate options, such as night curfews. It would investigate freight truck impacts on Melbourne, including crashes; road damage and costs; air pollution, including health impacts; and traffic congestion.

All impacts are important and need to be considered. However, one of the main reasons I stand here today calling for this inquiry into the impacts of trucks on the community and looking at better ways to move freight is the impact that truck pollution is having on children. Every day 2000 trucks pass the St Augustine's Primary School fence. Kids at the Yarraville West Primary School are exposed to the exhaust of 7000 trucks that travel within 200 metres of their school every day. Norfolk Street Child Care Centre is within 100 metres of the exhaust of 5600 trucks passing every day. And that is to mention just a few of the many child-care centres, kindergartens and schools where children are exposed to carcinogens and respiratory illnesses caused by diesel pollution.

Remember that each and every truck fills the air with carcinogens and diesel pollution, which kids breathe in. Many streets and intersections throughout the inner west are unsafe for children to either walk or cycle on. Our kids are unable to walk or ride to school. Our children need to have active transport options and not just be forced onto the back seats of cars. I am sure both the opposition and the government are concerned about children's health and that after considering the evidence outlined in the Council of Australian Governments Australian Child Health and Air Pollution Study, which found that traffic pollution is negatively affecting children's health, they will surely support this motion.

With such a massive increase in the number of trucks projected, now is the time to undertake this inquiry to outline our planning, manage the impacts of freight and minimise the impacts on the community wherever possible.

I have outlined what I think are all the technical reasons that we need this inquiry, but I would like to add a few personal words. I live in West Footscray. I have many friends who live in Yarraville, quite a few on Somerville Road and Francis Street. I know the kindergartens and the schools that I have mentioned in my speech. This is not theoretical, and it is not something I am making up; this is happening to children every single day. I have repeatedly asked the minister to inquire into the matter of the effects of pollution on children. So far that has not happened. I think this is a logical reference to go to a committee,

and I understand from Mr Barber that the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee currently does not have a reference. This would be a good opportunity for it to have a reference, which could do a huge good for the community.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion. There is no doubt that trucks are a problem on our roads. There is also no doubt that it is a problem that is getting worse. The use of trucks is increasing by 3 per cent per year, which is double that of other traffic. By 2020 freight use will have increased by 50 per cent from 2010, so in 10 short years we will see a 50 per cent increase in freight movement across Victoria. By 2030 the number of containers from the port of Melbourne, compared to those in 2010, will have increased by 200 per cent. In 20 short years we will be seeing a 200 per cent increase in 20-foot containers coming through the port of Melbourne.

Members on this side understand the problem and have acted to address it. The motion talks about the impacts on health and the impacts in terms of pollution, road damage and crashes — all of which is known; in essence, we do not need a committee to report on it. The evidence is well and truly out there; you need only look at Sir Rod Eddington's report on the east–west link needs assessment, in which he looked at the health impacts and said that this is an issue of social justice. So the evidence is out there; Blind Freddy would tell you that.

The previous government had the truck action plan, had a vision for going forward and had committed funding to that.

Mrs Peulich — In reverse.

Mr TEE — It had a vision for going forward. Mrs Peulich might think it is funny, but let me tell her that there is nothing funny about the impacts on health and the impacts on living in these communities. The previous government had a truck action plan, to which some \$40 million was committed.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr TEE — It got torn up by your government, Mrs Peulich. It tore up the truck action plan, it tore up the plan that was going to address and had started addressing — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr TEE — No, we were moving those trucks out of those inner city areas, but that plan and that funding has

been taken out by your government. The \$40 million has been taken out and redirected elsewhere, and the price of those actions is being paid for by communities that have trucks running up and down their streets. The price that is being paid because of the government's actions is being felt through pollution in the air, through crashes and through ill health. That is the consequence of Mrs Peulich's government tearing up the truck action plan and putting nothing in its place.

Let us look at what was said by Ernst & Young in its *Truck Action Plan Economic Evaluation*. It said that the previous government's plan was:

capturing urban amenity benefits by removing large numbers of vehicles from Melbourne's inner west, including the Footscray central activities district.

Mr Elsbury interjected.

Mr TEE — It is \$40 million which your government, Mr Elsbury, has taken out — \$40 million has gone. Forty million dollars might be chickenfeed for Mr Elsbury, but that money has been taken out and redirected somewhere else. The government has not put one cent in, yet Mr Elsbury sits there and has the audacity to criticise us and say, 'Oh, \$40 million wasn't enough'. I tell you what, it was \$40 million more than his government has put in place. That is \$40 million, Mr Elsbury.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Through the Chair!

Mr TEE — When you have \$40 million on the table and you want to add to that, then let us have a discussion. But you have no right — through you, Chair — to sit there with no funding for truck action, no commitment, no strategy and no plan. You are not doing anything; there is no money in the pipeline; there is nothing on offer for those communities. The hope that was there has been dashed.

As I said, that is not the view of the opposition. In its assessment Ernst & Young was clear about the benefits that this measure would have had on the amenities of those living in the inner west. Members on this side do not need to be convinced about the needs there, and when we were in government we took action. The government's only response is to remove the funding that was put in place to try to address this issue; that is the only thing it has done.

What we welcome about this motion is the suggestion that the committee have a look at alternatives for moving the growing freight task, because in two years those opposite have done nothing. They have done

nothing to address this problem, which has been coming for a long time, which is getting worse and which is not only impacting on kids and their health but on the very livability of Melbourne. Its success as a place where people want to come to live and invest is being dragged down because of the congestion and this government's inability to take this issue seriously and put even one cent in place to fix the problem. The government is happy to take money out, but it will not put money in. It is happy enough to rip up what the previous government did, but it will not do anything in its stead. This is not a unique issue.

Mrs Peulich — All you had were plans, though.

Mr TEE — In government we had money budgeted for this. I remind Mrs Peulich that we had money invested, and her government has taken out that money. It has ripped up the plan and taken out the money. Instead we have a vacuum. We have a do-nothing Premier for the moment, though we might have another Premier soon. There is a void in this policy space. There is a vacuum and there is no funding, no commitment and no vision, and nothing is happening. We think that is a problem, and what we welcome about this motion is the opportunity for us to have a look at a way forward in a bipartisan way.

Mrs Peulich — Mr Tee has never been bipartisan in his life.

Mr TEE — We are standing here, reaching out and saying, 'Come on. This is a serious issue'. We on this side are saying, 'We recognise that this is an important issue. This is an issue that goes to the health of our children'. We are saying we will support the Greens motion to set up a committee to look at this in a full and frank way and to find a way forward, because I remind those opposite that in two years there has been nothing done in this space, while the congestion means we get more and more clogged roads. All the evidence shows the issue is getting worse day by day. The number of trucks on our roads is increasing at double the rate of any other traffic. We are going to get a 200 per cent increase in freight coming out of the port of Melbourne — 200 per cent — and those opposite have their heads in the sand. They are saying: 'There's nothing to see here. Look away'.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr TEE — Members opposite are defying reality, and the community out there appreciates that. It appreciates the lack of vision and it appreciates the lack of a plan. We welcome this motion because it is a constructive attempt to engage and to say, 'Let's find a

way forward. Let's have a look at the alternatives'. I am shocked that Mrs Peulich would be of a mind to oppose a genuine attempt to find a solution to a real problem. We understand that new governments come in and they tear up the plans of the previous government. We understand that is the nature of the government's policy, but what surprises us is this government's inability to come up with a plan of its own — its inability to find a way forward. Members opposite might not agree with what the previous government did, but at least we were engaged with this issue. At least we took it seriously.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr TEE — I urge Mrs Peulich to consider this as a genuine way forward to find alternatives and to address what is a serious issue. The motion is not political; it is not inflammatory; it does not suggest anything that is critical, but it seeks a space to sit down in a bipartisan way to work with the department and with the experts to find a way forward. I find it very difficult to imagine why members opposite could with hand on heart —

Mrs Peulich — No-one would take Mr Tee seriously. He is not a man of his word. No-one takes Mr Tee seriously.

Mr TEE — I remind Mrs Peulich that I am only supporting the motion moved by the Greens. In criticising me Mrs Peulich is criticising the Greens — and I suspect they are up for a fair bit too — and she is criticising everybody on this side of the house and everybody out there in the community.

Ms Hartland — On a point of order, Acting President, I ask for some assistance. This is a motion that I have put forward, and I am trying to listen to the contribution so that when it comes to the time when I have my right of reply I will know what people have said. I ask you, Acting President, to bring the house to order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Perhaps Mr Tee and Mrs Peulich could have their conversation at another time.

Mr TEE — Thank you for your assistance, Acting President. As I said, this is an important motion. It is a desperate attempt to fill the vacuum that has occurred in the absence of any action by the government. We think it is lamentable that it has reached this stage and that the government with all the riches of the bureaucracy — with all the assistance it has, including a majority in both houses —

Mr Elsbury interjected.

Mr TEE — I say to Mr Elsbury that the government has been unable to come up with anything. It is a surprise and it is a tragedy, and it is having consequences out there today. Despite what Mrs Peulich says, this is a genuine attempt to try to address what is a serious issue, and I urge all those — —

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr TEE — That is not right. We had a truck action plan and we had funding allocated, but those opposite have redirected that funding.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr TEE — Those opposite can turn this into a political exercise, but let me tell them, they will be judged accordingly.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I welcome the opportunity to respond as the lead speaker for the government in relation to Ms Hartland's motion:

That this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee to inquire into, consider and report no later than 20 August 2013 on the impact of freight trucks on Melbourne, including crashes, road damage and costs, air pollution (including health impacts), traffic congestion and alternatives for moving the growing freight task.

I welcome this opportunity because I think one issue we can all agree upon is that there is a growing freight task across Melbourne.

I listened with interest to Ms Hartland's contribution. She identified and articulated some of the issues with freight movements, but she forgot to mention her party's opposition to the port of Hastings, to the east–west link and to a number of the other infrastructure projects that are required to facilitate the freight task. There are only two conclusions I can draw from Ms Hartland's perspective: one, that Ms Hartland and the Greens do not support the further development and growth of trade in Victoria; and two, that they do not support the port of Melbourne and its pivotal role in the economy of Victoria and Melbourne.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Like you did when you opposed channel deepening.

Mr O'DONOHUE — It is terrific to have the former Minister for Public Transport in the chamber today, and I hope he contributes to the debate. We all remember the advertising campaign he ran with taxpayer funds, 'It's all part of the plan'.

I invite Ms Hartland to clarify the position of the Greens on those major infrastructure projects that this government is developing and pushing for the future of Melbourne. I invite her to clarify the position of the Greens on the east–west link, the port of Hastings and the expansion and development of the port of Melbourne.

Turning to Mr Tee's contribution, and taking away the glib generalisations that he made on a number of points, he forgot to mention that the truck action plan was largely an unfunded project. The funding that was provided would have seen no diminution of trucks on local streets. Interestingly, Mr Tee referenced the Eddington report. What Mr Tee did not mention was the Labor Party's position on the east–west link.

Mr Tee — We don't support it.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note the interjection from Mr Tee that the Labor Party does not support the east–west link. Mr Tee talked about equity for the western suburbs, he talked about — —

Mr Tee — The east–west link won't do anything for equity.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Again, I am happy to pick up the interjection so it is recorded in *Hansard*. Mr Tee said that the east–west link will not do anything for equity. I am sure Mr Elsbury, who represents the western suburbs — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — We support one from the west, like Mr Elsbury.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Let me just say this, Acting President, in response to the interjection from Mr Pakula: I am very proud that the coalition government's members for Western Metropolitan Region actually live in the western suburbs and can talk with some authority about the impact of these issues on their constituents. I do not mean to take a cheap shot at Mr Pakula, but it is a bit hard to take his interjections seriously when he looks at his electorate from across the bay. When Mr Pakula actually lives in his electorate with his constituents, perhaps he will have more authority to speak on those issues. I note that Mr Pakula, who is advancing his case to move to the lower house, went to school in the Legislative Assembly electorate of Lyndhurst, which in Labor Party terminology is a great qualification for election to a local seat. The people of Lyndhurst will be going from having a member of Parliament who resides in East Melbourne to, potentially, a member who resides in the Bayside council area. But I digress, and I will get back to the motion before us.

Mr Tee asserted that the coalition is doing nothing in relation to this growing freight task. As I have mentioned in the house before, together with my colleague Mr Drum I was very pleased to be part of the opening of the Dimboola to Rainbow railway line. This is an important grain line that will take 100 000 to 120 000 tonnes of grain off the road and onto rail. It has been facilitated through a fantastic partnership between GrainCorp and the Victorian government, both through the Department of Transport and the Regional Growth Fund — another example of the benefits of the Regional Growth Fund.

Of course, Mr Tee forgot to mention that the port of Melbourne is undergoing a \$1.6 billion expansion. That is a project that the now shadow Treasurer, the then Minister for Ports, sat on and thought about, but he ultimately did nothing about it. It is a project that Dr Napthine, the Minister for Ports, together with the Premier and the government, is delivering with the Port of Melbourne Corporation. It is a project that will actually take trucks off the road.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! I am sure Mr Pakula will get the chance to make a contribution should he wish to.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Acting President, I thank you for your intervention, and I look forward to the former Minister for Public Transport's contribution to this debate on a matter that he obviously feels quite passionate about. Again, at the risk of being indulgent, we all remember the 'It's part of the plan' advertisement and all those projects for which there were glossy brochures developed and advertisements run courtesy of the taxpayer. In fact there were letters signed by the minister himself, who, if my recollection is correct, the Auditor-General criticised. Correct me, if I am wrong, Mr Pakula, by way of interjection. I recall that the Auditor-General criticised the politicisation of communications by the former Minister for Public Transport, Mr Pakula.

The pre-delivery inspection (PDI) work that will take place now within the port of Melbourne precinct will mean that cars coming into the port will not have to be transported off to the western suburbs to have their PDI processes and works completed and then brought back to the port. It will save those trips. The increased infrastructure associated with the development of the port will make it more efficient and will save trips on the West Gate Bridge and around the western suburbs. The government completely rejects the flawed, vague and generalised assertions put by Mr Tee.

Mr Pakula responded to my reference to the port of Hastings. The port of Hastings is a project advocated for by the now shadow Treasurer and then Minister for Ports when in government, a project that the Labor Party used to see as the second container port for Melbourne to handle — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — We changed our position, which is what you should do when circumstances change.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note another shrill interjection from the former Minister for Public Transport.

Mrs Peulich — Very shrill and getting shriller.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Indeed he is. As I say, I look forward to the contribution from Mr Pakula in this debate.

The former Minister for Ports and now shadow Treasurer has done a backflip on his position, and the Labor Party has done a backflip on its position in relation to support for the port of Hastings. The Labor Party is really yet to clarify why it has done this backflip, why it has had this change of position from the one it had when it was in government to the perhaps more populist position it has now in opposition. However, the coalition government is committed to the port of Hastings. As you would know, Acting President, and as the house is aware, the coalition has legislated to re-create the Port of Hastings Development Authority and is undertaking the proper planning processes and preliminary works to better understand and facilitate the project, which is an exciting project for the Mornington Peninsula and the Western Port precinct.

I note perhaps two of the most significant infrastructure projects for the future of the Mornington Peninsula are the Peninsula Link project, which is now open, and the port of Hastings — two legacy projects from the great Bolte government. That government had the vision to set aside the land and create the reservation for the Peninsula Link project and set aside the land for the port of Hastings — visionary work that is again being replicated by this government with its metropolitan planning study, a project which the Minister for Planning talked about when he responded to a question without notice in question time today.

The government has a multipronged approach to managing the growing freight task. We are committed to the east-west link. The government notes the opposition from the Labor Party. I invite Ms Hartland in her summing up, to respond by

outlining her party's position on that project, but the coalition alone, subject to what Ms Hartland says, is committed to the east–west link and welcomes the financial support of the federal opposition, if it was in government, for that project. The coming federal election is an opportunity for the people of the western suburbs and indeed for the people of the eastern suburbs to let their feelings be known about not only the Gillard government but also the east–west link project, which we think is a transformational project for Melbourne and Victoria which will do much to assist the growing freight task. Clearly the Labor opposition believes the M1 corridor should be the only option for Melbourne. It does not believe in having an alternative for moving freight from east to west.

The government is doing much in this space. We understand there are many challenges associated with the sort of rhetoric we heard from Mr Tee. What we are getting is a lot of talk, a lot of plans, a lot of promises, a lot of taxpayer-funded advertising but very little of substance. There is an unfunded truck action plan, lots of advertising from Mr Pakula and lots of talk but very little action. The government is responding with some transformational projects that will help to manage the freight task across Melbourne.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Acting President, I resist the temptation to respond to the shrill interjections from the former failed Minister for Public Transport. The question that is yet to be resolved is the question from Mr Somyurek's letter to the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly: is Mr Pakula a rising star or a failed former Brumby government minister? That is the question that was left unanswered in Mr Somyurek's letter.

Ms Hartland — On a point of order, Acting President, I need to be able to respond after members speak — it is similar to the point of order I made earlier. I cannot hear what is being said because of the interjections. I ask that Mr O'Donohue come back to speaking on the actual motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! I thank Ms Hartland for her point of order. I ask Mr O'Donohue to continue without support or assistance from those members to my left.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I will attempt to resist the temptation to respond to the interjections made by Mr Pakula. In summary the government opposes the

motion moved by Ms Hartland. The government has a very clear agenda in this space.

I want to make one other point of which my colleague Mr Elsbury has a very deep understanding. From listening to Ms Hartland's contribution members might think that every supermarket, grocery store and milk bar would somehow be connected to the freight rail network. The reality of our infrastructure and city is that that is not feasible. Yes, we want to put as much freight on rail as possible. I referred to this earlier: the government has taken a number of steps to increase and facilitate that. I cited the Dimboola to Rainbow grain train line — Mr Drum, with others, was at the opening — as an example, where 100 000 to 120 000 tonnes of grain per year will be taken off roads and put onto rail and freighted to the port. The grain will not put onto trucks. Regrettably the infrastructure we have in our state, including the infrastructure in our city, means that that cannot be done in every situation, so moving freight by trucks will continue to be a necessity. If the Greens or the Labor Party were in power, that would be a reality. The coalition is in power and that is the reality.

We understand the freight task presents many challenges, not least of which is, regrettably, the inability to put freight into a system such as the one outlined in one of Mr Pakula's glossy brochures detailing a transport plan. That would not move much freight. He advertised that this was all a part of the plan. There was much talk about dealing with these things, but there was very little action. We have inherited that legacy; we have clear plans to address that legacy; we have clear plans — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note Mr Tee's interjection, but he clearly articulated that he is opposed to the east–west link. Besides the glib generalisations and vague assertions in his contribution, he offered no solutions and no alternatives save what was, at best, a half-hearted defence of the Brumby and Bracks governments' failure to address this task.

People forget that Peter Batchelor, a former Minister for Transport, claimed 20 per cent of freight would be transported by rail by 2020 — I think that was the policy. That was never going to happen under a Labor government. It was a policy commitment that was never properly developed and was never going to be achieved. The coalition government has some city shaping, transformational projects that it wishes to advance, but advancing these projects is always best

done in a bipartisan fashion. I say to the Labor Party: rather than carping, complaining, moaning and trying to defend a failed legacy, get on board with these transformational projects that will help the state, including this city, retain its economic advantages and assist it to meet the growing and challenging freight movement task.

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — It is with great pleasure that I rise this afternoon to make a contribution to this motion. I make it clear I will not be voting in favour of Ms Hartland's motion as I question the need for us to investigate, as Mr Tee has already pointed out, readily available information about the number of incidents we have on our roads which involve vehicles with heavy axles or freight trucks.

I was a little confused by Mr Tee's contribution, because on the one hand he said the information is available on road traffic incidents involving trucks but on the other hand he said we still need to have the relevant committee look into the exact same thing we already have. But in any case there is a lot of work that I know is going on in relation to reducing the impact of trucks on the inner suburbs, and not just on the western suburbs — this is an issue very close to my heart — but on the inner suburbs throughout Melbourne as well. Part of that plan is to develop the port of Hastings, which would be a second major port for Victoria. It would enable Victorians to get their produce and manufacturing goods into the broader marketplace, which may be in other parts of Australia or overseas.

It would be lovely to have the proposed port of Hastings facility constructed in Western Metropolitan Region, but unfortunately if we were to build yet another port in or close to Western Metropolitan Region, we would end up with the same calamity of trucks coming in and out of the area that we currently have to deal with. A second port would take the pressure off the port of Melbourne and enable the movement of an exceptional amount of freight out of the state; it would allow us to get our products into the broader marketplace.

The port expansion at Webb Dock is welcomed because it will allow containers to be stored on site at the port. That will mean the empty containers currently being stored in the western suburbs of Melbourne will not have to be carted back and forth from ports to storage yards located in the western area of Melbourne, including in Laverton, Yarraville, Tottenham or any other of the myriad places where we seem to store stacks of empty containers.

Container storage facilities on site will reduce the movement of trucks in and out of that port area. It will also be possible for cars coming into the port to have their post-production fit-outs done at the port facility — getting those power windows or the extra leather seats or the 'fully sick' hub caps put on. That will mean fewer trucks crossing the West Gate Bridge. Simply put, the majority of trucks currently crossing the West Gate Bridge with a load of cars have their fit-outs done in the west, then they are put back on those trucks and sent to the east to be sold.

There will be jobs in the west because of the relative approximation of the port facility to the western suburbs, so people will still be able to access jobs in that new port facility. They may even choose to use the Westgate Punt — another initiative that the Baillieu government has supported — to get across and ride their bicycles over. This is good news for the people of the western suburbs. Being smart about how we use our port facilities will reduce the number of truck movements in the west.

I have also been an advocate, from the day I heard that it was happening, of the east–west link, possibly the greatest road project this state has ever seen. The importance of this project cannot be overstated. Mr Barber asked what it will do. It will provide us with the ability to move trucks from the outer suburbs of Melbourne into the port without them using the residential streets they currently use as rat runs. There will be an access point in and out of the tunnel at the port of Melbourne. It is a strange concept, I know — something that the Greens are struggling with — because it will move freight from the outer western suburbs into the port facilities without the trucks they are transported on having to use the roads in and around Footscray.

The east–west link will also allow the trucks that currently come over the West Gate Bridge and flick back in around Yarraville to have direct access to the port facility from the eastern end. That is one reason that we as a party support the east–west link. We want something that goes from the eastern suburbs to the western suburbs. If you are going to build a tunnel, it is a great idea for it to have an opening at one end and an opening at the other so things can move through. However, the opposition has said it wants half a tunnel. That could get a bit congested because once in the tunnel, there would be nowhere to go. It is called a hole, generally. In any case, what you want is a tunnel that will allow for traffic to come in at both ends and be able to exit at the port of Melbourne facilities without using residential or minor roads.

We have a need for trucks. Trucks are a necessity of life. As Mr O'Donohue said in his contribution, you cannot build a spur line to every Coles, Woolworths or IGA and it is just not possible for an N-class locomotive to back up into the car park at Werribee Plaza or Highpoint shopping centre. It is not going to happen. The simple fact is that trucks are still a necessity and we need to think smarter about how we use our truck transport. The previous government — and I give it credit for this — did allow for high productivity vehicles (HPVs) to be used, the ones that are able to get much larger containers on board so that you have fewer truck movements occurring at any given moment. For every one of these HPV trucks, you take two other prime movers off the road, so they have proven to be quite effective.

Then there is the need for better use. We have a plan in place to work on what has been variously called the Truganina inland port, the Truganina intermodal hub and now, in its latest incarnation, the Truganina western interstate freight terminal, a project that has \$5 million allocated to it for planning purposes. Of that amount, \$1.5 million has come from the Victorian government and \$3.5 million from the federal government, so there are some things that the federal government can fund without removing money at the same time. With this money in the system we can make this western interstate freight terminal work.

On 27 January the Minister for Roads issued a press release headed 'Western interstate freight terminal receives planning money'. The minister said:

The western interstate freight terminal would reduce freight traffic through the inner west, potentially removing up to 2000 truck movements from the precinct every day.

If that is not a plan for reducing trucks in the western suburbs, I do not know what is. It beggars belief that those opposite keep carping on about the government not having a plan when, clearly, it does have a plan. It is sitting right here. We are getting the thing designed. It is an idea that has taken far too long to reach fruition, but to be brutally honest, this will do some great things for the western suburbs of Melbourne by moving the freight out of the port precinct.

Currently people bring all their gear into the port precinct because it is a major logistics hub. They drive it in on trucks, unload it, put it back on trucks and off it zips. What the western interstate freight terminal will do is allow for those trucks that come in to gather at one point and dissipate from that point, as well as having rail connection. We will have a beautiful mix of road transport, which is so very vital for the everyday delivery of produce to various parts of our community

that do not have ready rail access; and then we have the ability to be able to move freight great distances in bulk by rail. This is a great idea and one I fully support, not only because it means yet again more jobs for the western suburbs of Melbourne — that is certainly something for which I am always advocating — but also because it will improve the amenity of the inner western suburbs by reducing truck movements.

To recap, we will reduce the number of truck movements by using our port facilities much better than we are already. We will provide a road network which connects our port facilities directly to a freeway — an amazing idea. We are going to build the western interstate freight terminal in Truganina, which will reduce the load that is put into the port facility, taking the additional traffic that that generates out of the inner western suburbs of Melbourne.

We talk about rail as being the be-all and end-all, but some members of this house have chosen to publicly make statements that suggest they are against rail in its entirety, and in fact against the regional rail link. I know of members of Parliament in this place who are actively whipping up unnecessary anxiety about the regional rail link, which means that people are getting upset and afraid, when in reality it will provide for people to have much improved public transport access, with additional trains and rolling stock coming in to cater for the increased number of people who will be moved by this new network. While some may argue it should all be electric — and that would be nice — where does the electricity come from? We are not Tasmania; we do not have big hydro-electric plants. Tasmania should have more hydro-electricity; however, that was stopped by a person who is no longer involved in politics.

In any case, we do not have huge hydro-electric plants, so where does the electricity come from? The last time I checked it was from burning brown coal in the Latrobe Valley. To have baseload power of any significance we need to burn coal in Victoria. Simply put, we will move the pollution that is spread out over Victoria and clump it in the Latrobe Valley — and will that not be great for the health of the people in Latrobe Valley? But once again: who gives a stuff about working people? Who cares if you are out past the tramlines? That is certainly what the Greens have shown in the past. Once you are out past the tramlines who cares?

I have made it fairly clear that I do not support the motion, because as Mr Tee said, we already have the information we need on which to base our logistics policy; that information is readily available. The government is already working on various projects to

fix the problem. We do not need a truck action plan that is underfunded. We need the infrastructure that is being built or that is being planned to go ahead. If it wins government the federal coalition has committed \$1.5 billion, and amen to that. It needs to happen as soon as possible; we cannot wait until the federal election in September. Let us just get it over and done with so that we can get this project going.

It is important to reflect on the very large number of projects the government is undertaking and not just on the little bits and pieces everywhere — not \$40 million here, not piddling amounts. As I said earlier in one of my interjections, I would love \$40 million in my bank account, but that will not do much for an infrastructure project. With that, I take my place once more and, again, I will not be voting in favour of the motion.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I take pleasure in rising to contribute to the motion moved by Ms Hartland, and I acknowledge that we will not support the motion. We take that view primarily because we have enormous confidence in the Minister for Roads who is also the Minister for Public Transport, as well as in the Minister for Ports, and in the work we are doing to try to eradicate some of the problems that have been dogging the people of the east, the west and also regional Victoria for many years.

Every time something goes wrong with trains on the Geelong line I am reminded by way of some crude messages on my phone from a few of my friends about what they think of our train system when they are forced onto the roads. About an hour or so later I get another message about the state of the West Gate Bridge. Anybody who opposes what the Baillieu-Ryan government is doing in relation to an east–west link obviously does not spend much time on the Monash Freeway, because the Monash is a bit of a raffle. Commuters take their chances when they drive on it — when a trip to Pakenham or into Gippsland might take 30 or 40 minutes or up to an hour just to traverse the beginning of the freeway. I am not quite sure how the people of regional Victoria and even those from the eastern and south-eastern suburbs are supposed to plan their day and their business activities when they are not sure how long they will be stuck on the Monash.

Mr Barber — That is why freeways do not work.

Mr DRUM — But igloos do! Sometimes we need to look at the uncertainty that is currently dogging this state, and we need to look at ways to eradicate that uncertainty. It is going to take investment — and I am talking about commuter traffic. I have not spoken about freight issues yet, and Ms Hartland's motion goes predominantly to freight. I will get to that in a minute.

The government has taken steps to invest \$15 million in the planning, testing and drilling and to work out the costs associated with a project of this size. Before we commit Victorian taxpayers money, we will need federal assistance. Before we go into the design model, the route, the take-off points and every other aspect of such an important project — —

Mr Barber — Mr Elsbury told us where they are.

Mr DRUM — Mr Barber will have his opportunity, and generally speaking he is afforded the respect of the Parliament to make his contributions in peace.

Mr Barber — I am helping you.

Mr DRUM — You are not helping much at all, even though you might be trying.

It is important to look at the motion in the light of the way the government is well and truly on its way to eradicating some of the issues that have been holding this state back. When it comes to freight transport it would be lovely if this were utopia, and we put all our primary produce onto rail and into the ports. But the movement of much of our produce relies on road transport — and the introduction of B-doubles has made a positive difference to the movement of produce around the state. The curfew on trucks places restrictions on truck movements. For instance, 85 per cent of Murray Goulburn Co-operative's truck movements into its port headquarters take place in the middle of the night when it is most able to fit in with the transport movements of Melbourne's residents around the west and the port areas.

A range of actions have already been put in place. The Victorian freight and logistics plan was put in place by this government with a \$5 million commitment to ensure that it is fully developed. Hopefully it will be evidence based to support the growth and development of Victoria's economy through the effective management of the growing freight task that we have. The plan will examine the long-term freight forecast for the state, not just for the next 5 or 10 years but right up until 2050. Victorians can look at the government and say that it has its eye on the ball for a long-term future. The government is making sure the plan to get produce to port for the new and ever-increasing markets around the world is based on the very best data that is available.

This government is also investing in the port of Melbourne and assisting with the work it is doing, and that is incredibly important for our productivity. The government is also doing work with the port of Hastings to make sure that it is fully operational as a second container port for Melbourne and Victoria. This

work will be critical as we try to maintain our productivity and competitiveness around the world when it comes to exporting and importing, in the case of the port of Hastings, as we trade on a daily basis.

I would like to acknowledge that the east–west link will have an enormous freight component to it for delivery into the port of Melbourne. All the connections the port currently has with CityLink will enable the traffic to find its way from the corners of this state to the port without having to use the residential road network, which it currently does.

I suggest that this motion be handled in the context of this government currently being on top of these issues and doing the work needed to make sound and productive decisions for Victoria into the long term. This will be possibly the biggest road asset network project ever undertaken in this state. It will make possibly the most pronounced difference to some of our most congested road networks. This is being taken care of. It will have probably a greater impact than Tullamarine or CityLink. We will make sure that the preliminary works are undertaken in a manner that will give us the best opportunity to make sure that our investment is completely targeted at where it needs to go.

I congratulate the Minister for Ports, Denis Napthine, for the work he is doing in relation to Webb Dock. This facility will generate over 1100 jobs and will act as an amazing opportunity for the terminal to be at the forefront of the automotive industry in Australia. That is not the case at the moment. Vehicles and components are clumsily manoeuvred across Melbourne, and the work Denis Napthine is doing with this expansion will lead to a far more fluid process for the export of Toyota Camrys and the like to markets around the world.

When you put together the whole package — traffic, freight, industry, export, import — you can see this is an area where the government is on the ball, looking to the long-term future and putting into place the best planning it possibly can. Rather than picking holes in what we are doing — and the Greens are having a crack at picking holes — we must acknowledge that we need to jump on board some of our major infrastructure projects, unlike Labor.

With the exception of Mr Tarlamis and Mr Leane, nearly all Labor members have been absent from this debate. It is important to realise that, unlike Labor, the coalition knows where it stands on major infrastructure projects. Labor supports an east–west tunnel one minute, then jumps out in opposition and then comes back with support for a supposed east–west link. Now it is effectively abandoning its support for this project. I

am not quite sure where it stands on some of these larger projects. It is a shame for the people who support Labor, because, if you happen to be of that persuasion, you would like to think your party has some idea about the future of this state and the future of these major infrastructure projects, which all need to take place. All Victorians need confidence that the government they are electing has an understanding about these projects and a vision for how this state will operate with its road and rail transport into the future.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I am disappointed by the government's attitude, but I am not surprised. Scrutiny is clearly not something it wants to be involved in. It is interesting that the contributions from the government side have raised more questions than they have answered, and I would like to put some of those questions on the public record. It was said several times that the expansion of the port and Webb Dock will take trucks off the road. That is not what the port of Melbourne has said in a number of public forums, so I would like information from the government about how that will happen.

What route will the east–west link take? I hear that there will be no involvement of residential streets. I presume Mr Elsbury has a map he is prepared to share with me, and I would like to see that.

Mr Elsbury — Have a look in *Melway*.

Ms HARTLAND — Is Mr Elsbury saying that the map for the east–west link is in *Melway*?

Mr Elsbury — There is a corridor.

Ms HARTLAND — Mr Elsbury is clearly saying that the government's plan for exactly where the east–west link will be in *Melway*. I will have a look at *Melway*. I did not realise that the government shared such intricate information with a publication like *Melway*. I would like to see from the government exactly what is on the map, because not telling people where the road and the tunnel will be was a major problem under the previous government.

Another question for Mr Elsbury is whether the road will be tolled. That has not been said yet. We all know that trucks will not, as a rule, take tollways, because of the expense. We should remember that a tollway in Queensland collapsed just this week. How many placarded trucks will need to take this route? These are trucks loaded with chemicals that are not allowed to use tunnels, so I would like to know what the percentage is.

Mr Elsbury talked about regional rail, but regional rail is not mentioned in this motion. I would like to clarify

for him my position on regional rail. The Greens support regional rail in principle. We are extremely concerned about the haphazard way the project was managed under the previous government and has been managed under this government, especially with the treatment of residents, the lack of consultation, issues around noise, the refusal — —

Mr Elsbury — Scaremongering again.

Ms HARTLAND — I seriously suggest that Mr Elsbury visit some of those residents and speak to them about their concerns. I was also fascinated by Mr Elsbury talking about the Latrobe Valley. I remind him that I lived there for 17 years. My father worked in the briquette factory. If anybody in this chamber knows about the Latrobe Valley and the effects of pollution from coal, it is me. I have some personal understanding of that.

I was really interested that Mr Elsbury raised the issue of Truganina. The information we have gathered about that is that while 700 000 trucks a year off our streets sounds like quite a lot, it is actually only 10 per cent of the trucks in the inner suburbs. Mr Elsbury talked about there being fewer — in fact 2000 fewer — truck movements per day, but what does the government intend to do about the 19 000 other movements per day in the inner west? I suggest we need more than just the Truganina solution.

If this is the government's solution — and I am going on government figures — by 2025 we will still be faced with having 38 000 trucks on our streets every day. Clearly the Truganina interstate freight proposal is inadequate. It is taking 2000 trucks per day off the streets but leaving 19 000 on them, whereas, on the other hand, if the West Gate Bridge ramps truck bypass were built, it would take up to 10 000 trucks off our streets every day — that is, 8000 more trucks would be taken off the streets every single day.

Mr O'Donohue did not actually speak to the motion; I am not sure what motion he had read. Mr Drum made some really interesting statements about how fantastic B-doubles are. I suggest he go and stand on Francis Street anytime, day or night, or maybe that he go and knock on the door of someone who lives on Francis Street. I suggest that Mr Drum go and visit a family in Francis Street to see what the effect is of B-doubles going up and down their residential street day after day and night after night. Maybe then he would not think they were so fantastic.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Ms HARTLAND — Interestingly, wind farms have a 2-kilometre buffer zone, whereas trucks have a

5-metre buffer zone. Regional rail has roughly a 5-metre buffer zone in a number of areas. Therefore I really do not think we should get into the issue of buffer zones — —

Mr O'Brien interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Mr O'Brien!

Ms HARTLAND — No; I want to know from you — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Ms Hartland should speak through the Chair.

Ms HARTLAND — I would like to know whether government members believe 2-kilometre buffer zones for wind farms are great, while regional rail buffer zones are roughly 5 to 10 metres and the buffer zone on Francis Street is about 4 to 5 metres. There is a little bit of inconsistency there. When you have 21 000 truck movements through your community per day, noise is clearly an issue. This government clearly is not concerned about people in the western suburbs; it does not have any concern about the health of children in the western suburbs. I have asked the Minister for Health on two previous occasions to look at the fact that diesel fumes are now classified as a carcinogen, but he has refused to do so. Through its inaction this government clearly shows it has absolutely no concern for children in the western suburbs.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 18

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

Noes, 20

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

Pairs

Pennicuik, Ms	Atkinson, Mr
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Motion negatived.

EMPLOYMENT: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

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

That this house notes the drastic reduction in job creation and retention in Victoria under the Baillieu government, in that —

- (1) the average number of jobs created per month under the Bracks-Brumby governments was 4930, compared to 620 under the Baillieu government;
- (2) when the Brumby government left office in 2010 the unemployment rate was 5.4 per cent and the current rate is 6.1 per cent, well above the national average of 5.4 per cent;
- (3) the number of Victorians in work dropped by 30 000 in January 2013;
- (4) the average number of construction jobs created per quarter has fallen from 2115 under the Bracks-Brumby governments to 393 under the Baillieu government;
- (5) under the Baillieu government there have been 11 straight increases in Victorian unemployment;
- (6) nearly 20 000 fewer regional Victorians are employed now compared to when the Baillieu government came to office;
- (7) the youth unemployment rate is now 20.9 per cent, 3.4 per cent higher than in January 2011, which means there are 2700 fewer young Victorians in work and 6600 more unemployed young Victorians;
- (8) the Baillieu government has directly increased the number of unemployed Victorians through its decimation of the public service in spite of the Premier's statement that there would be 'Absolutely no reduction in public servants' and that he was 'not going to cop this line from the Labor Party'; and
- (9) in one of its first decisions after the election, the government created two jobs when it increased the size of the cabinet from 20 to 22;

and calls on the Baillieu government to formulate a jobs plan for Victoria before even more Victorians find themselves out of work or unable to find jobs.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I listened to the contributions from the lead speakers for the other parties, and I also took the time to read the economic vision and jobs statements put out by the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and the Premier, Ted Baillieu, a little while ago. They were very similar in a lot of ways and different in a few key ways. Both started off with a fairly long exposition of the current economic situation we find ourselves in, and

unfortunately they did not go much further on from there.

The Labor Party's document seems to have been largely cribbed from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and just describes the current economy of Victoria. The Liberal Party document starts off with a fairly standard and recognisable department of treasury-style discussion of the worldwide national and local economic position. Both documents bask in the comfortable certainty of the present with little or no vision for the changes that are coming to us. The result is that by way of an actual strategy both documents offer a long list of tweaks and tinkering that the parties think they might make to the machinery of government or certain areas of regulation.

The Liberals' version is just as unambitious as Labor's, but it is a much longer list. The benefits of being in government are that you have people working for you to do that. It just shows us that the Lib-Lab party is a party of middle managers. Its members are not leaders, missionaries or transformers. The pace of change that is bearing down on us will simply run both major parties down. That is the difference between their level of ambition and the tweaking of the limited levers of policy and the true benefits that are available to our society that are yet to be realised through allocated efficiencies and what used to be known as microeconomic reform before, according to some people, that project was finished.

In fact there are massive benefits available, and I am talking here about benefits to our everyday lives and to the environment that supports us, not merely the economic benefits the Lib-Labs like to squabble over regarding which segment of society is going to get the greater share. I am talking about benefits that are truly society wide and that are sitting there waiting for a party with vigour to want to reach out and gather them.

In defence of his government Mr Ondarchie, who is certainly moving up in the world, made a number of comments. He said, and I need to refer back to these things, that it was the Labor Party that was going around talking down the economy and talking down confidence. It is interesting that the Westpac-Melbourne consumer sentiment index, which comes out from time to time, actually breaks down consumer sentiment by voting intention. It does not go so far as measuring Greens voters, but it does measure Labor and Liberal voters. What is notable is that throughout the last six years — take out the period of the GST itself, which had a dramatic impact — it is not actually Labor voters whose consumer sentiment has been taking a beating. It is in fact ever since federal

opposition leader Tony Abbott took over that Liberal voters' consumer sentiment has been plummeting.

An honourable member — Federally.

Mr BARBER — Yes. It is a survey of federal voting intention, I imagine. Even the prospect of Mr Abbott as Prime Minister was not enough to improve the consumer sentiments of Liberal voters. What has caused that to improve in the first half of this year is the realisation that most of the scare campaign that Mr Abbott was running was just not true, so they have weaned themselves off listening to him. I have noticed that there has also been some recovery with the Labor vote over that period, as a moving trend at least. It seems that Liberal voters have wised up and that their consumer sentiment is recovering, in spite of the best efforts of Mr Abbott, who continues daily to try to tell them that the end of the world is nigh.

A lot of this, Mr Ondarchie — soon to be scrutineer-in-chief of the state government's own finances — said, was to do with the carbon tax, which he described as a tax on jobs. He will soon get to look in detail at the annual accounts and budgets of the state of Victoria. What he would see in them, and it is generally at note 2 of a finance statement, is that he can actually find a tax on jobs. There is a tax on jobs here in Victoria — it is called payroll tax. It is listed there.

Mr Ramsay — It's the carbon tax.

Mr BARBER — It is listed there. That is Mr Ramsay's view of — —

Mr Ramsay — Why don't you just wander down to Warrnambool and ask Mr McKenna, who employs about 600 people, what it is doing to his business?

Mr BARBER — In response, Mr Ramsay, why do you not wander down a bit further from Warrnambool to a part of your electorate called Portland, have a look at Keppel Prince and see what it is your wind farm policies are doing to jobs there?

Mr Ramsay — They are importing them from Korea, not making them in Australia. So much for your Australian jobs.

An honourable member — The wind is Australian!

Mr BARBER — I think that is my point. I cannot resist a debate on wind farms with Mr Ramsay.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BARBER — Because in fact we have about 400 megawatts of wind farms operating here in

Victoria. The two wind farms that are currently being commissioned together add up to about 2000 megawatts and they have already been approved in the state of Victoria. The Liberal Party, depending on whether you are talking to Mr Tee or Mr Ramsay or the Minister for Ports, Dr Naphine, or the Minister for Public Transport, Mr Mulder, either supports or does not support them. I have not heard from your good self yet, Acting President, so I am not targeting you in any way. The Liberals are either for or against the further development. Now there is a significant pipeline of jobs for a company, Keppel Prince, which has managed to quickly transform itself into an organisation that can now basically take flat steel in one end and spit out wind turbine towers at the other end.

But the increasing uncertainty that the policies of the Liberal Party — and I will say state and federal — are placing on the wind industry is causing many wind companies, even those who have approved projects, to back off and just wait. That is having a direct and immediate effect on Keppel Prince. But Keppel Prince is just one more obvious part of the wind industry here in Victoria. There are all the electricity — —

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr BARBER — We actually do have a wind turbine in Brunswick, Mr Koch; you should come and visit it. It is at CERES; it has been there for quite a while.

It is not just the towers and the construction phase; it is the many, many jobs for mechanical and electrical engineers in running them, it is the various consultants and advisers who come in to help build them — an ongoing pipeline of jobs are needed to keep that industry healthy. This is supposedly a debate about construction industry jobs, and that is exactly what I am referring to here.

There in the budget papers I find Mr Ondarchie's tax on jobs — it is called payroll tax. The Baillieu government's plan is to collect about an extra billion dollars in payroll tax over this period on top of the \$4.8 billion that was being collected when this government was elected. By contrast, the carbon tax — and my estimate is that about \$2.5 billion, maybe, has been collected from Victoria — is probably going to fall when we move out of the fixed price period and carbon trading settles down to more like what it is estimated to be around \$15 a tonne. If there is a job tax here in Victoria, it is definitely payroll tax, and the Libs are not shy about raking in as much of it as they can because they want the money.

As I said, the document that sets out Ted Baillieu's vision for the economy — which was released not quite on Christmas Eve, because I think that was on a weekend, but on the Friday before Christmas Eve — talks about challenges. The no. 1 challenge is what the government calls the high and rising construction costs — also known as the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union bogeyman that it just cannot wean itself off. If we have a problem with major project construction costs here in Victoria, particularly in relation to government projects, it is because the people who are designing and running them on behalf of the government are incompetent. You only need to read the Auditor-General's report on the inquiry into Major Projects Victoria, which shows situations symptomatic of all other government departments — notably the Department of Transport — that have major capital programs, for confirmation. There is no in-house ability to manage, much less design or understand, major projects.

The first thing they do is hire a project manager who they then supervise. That person is outsourced — but is actually insourced because they want to keep an eye on them so they give them a departmental email address and sit them in a little corral over there. That person tenders out a project — it could be a railway line; it could be anything — and the winning tenderer, as part of their tender, then sits down and designs the project. That is why along the whole length of the regional rail link at the moment there are people asking questions and not getting any answers — 'Why is that pedestrian bridge being taken away? Why aren't we getting an overpass here? How close will it come to my house?'. The answer time and again from the tenderer is, 'We don't know because we haven't designed that bit'.

They won a tender to build a railway line from point A to point B, and the first thing they do is turn around and tell the government how to do it. Of course it is a recipe for all sorts of padding and price escalation and, for that matter, mission creep, when the government then starts to find out the implications of its own project and says, 'Hang on; we are not quite sure we want you to do that. Can you do a contract variation, and we'll now move that railway line from that side of the easement to the other side of the easement?'

It is an absolute joke. We are getting ripped off blind by these consortia of merchant bankers and civil engineering firms. Until we get some major project expertise working for us in-house, in the interests of the public taxpayer, we are going to keep getting these incredible construction costs. Since there is very little money to go around in the budget for all the capital projects we need, the government is going to have very

little to show the public at the end of a four-year election cycle.

Mr Baillieu's document also talks about how relatively dense, in terms of land use, Victoria's population is and that this is an advantage. Yet it is very unclear from the government's policy settings whether it wants to keep bringing more people into Melbourne and adding to the sprawl of the city or whether it wants to get urban density in the centre or whether it wants to decentralise to the regions. If it wants to do the latter — or, for that matter, either of the other two options — it will have to spend an absolute fortune on transport, and there is no sign of that happening in the priorities of this government.

The document also refers to Victoria having the strongest finances in terms of the budget situation, and apparently this is one of our competitive advantages — the much vaunted AAA rating, which is a touchstone that basically anyone simply needs to refer to and indicate that that is the end of debate. I wonder how many members in this chamber have actually read Standard & Poor's and Moody's credit ratings for the state of Victoria? How many have actually read what those agencies say about Victoria's current financial position versus just simply waving around the letters 'AAA'. What they say is that our debt levels are moderate and manageable.

Mr Drum — At the moment; not with upward trending.

Mr BARBER — Again I suggest that Mr Drum have a read and see what they really say, because what they say is that our debt levels are manageable and moderate in the context of our current taxing and revenue abilities. In other words, to put it simply, if you want to borrow more, you are going to have to tax more. There is nothing in there saying you cannot borrow more or that borrowing more threatens your AAA rating. They are saying that if you want to borrow more, you need some revenue to pay back the principal and the interest. That is logic. If we are going to borrow more — —

Mr Drum — We need to increase the tax rate.

Mr BARBER — We will come to that. However, I would suggest to Mr Drum the point is that if you can make a public investment that has benefits greater than its cost, then you grow the Victorian economy. You grow the base on which you get your revenue, and it is as simple as that. That is why you cannot talk down the economy. That is why you cannot come in here, stop investing and stop thinking about the future. If I can

give Labor Party members some gratuitous political advice, that is why every time they bag the Baillieu government for having increased debt, they straitjacket themselves. They will not be able to go to the next election promising anything new in this area either, because they are in the 'Debt is bad; AAA is good' mantra.

The next source of competitive advantage that Baillieu government members claim is our pre-eminent knowledge state, and they say Victoria has a good quality school education system by national and international standards. In fact it is more true to say that we are falling down both national and international rankings when it comes to educational standards. It might have something to do with the fact that we are the lowest spending state in Australia on education per student, while other countries — similar to the Baillieu government, apparently — which see knowledge, skills and an educated population as part of their competitive advantage are actually doing something about it. They are investing in it, while the Baillieu government is trying to walk away from it; but I do agree that we would want to be and need to be the pre-eminent knowledge state.

That is why I was glad to see the federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, me-tooing the member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt, the other day when Mr Bandt said it is certainly a bad economy in which to be cutting research and development funding. That is what the federal government is currently proposing to do to help it pay for some other tax groups that it wants to benefit. Mr Bandt went so far as to suggest that we should set a benchmark of 3 per cent of gross domestic product to be spent every year on research and development for both public and private funding. In the area of agricultural production in Victoria, which I will come to in a bit, you would not say that we are overcooking it when it comes to funding research and development.

The Baillieu government's paper then goes on to lay out five priority infrastructure projects — that is, east-west link, Melbourne Metro tunnel, the port of Hastings, Dandenong rail capacity and the western interstate freight terminal. Three out of five is not bad. The government has three rail-based projects in there to which I can certainly sign on, but they will be absolutely buried by the demands of the east-west road tunnel, which is designed to get commuter cars from Collingwood to Kensington a bit faster — not that that is where 80 per cent of commuters want to go; they are actually trying to come out in the city. I think Melbourne was the only state capital in the last census that saw an increased number of cars

travelling into its CBD, and that is due mostly to the growth of Southbank and Docklands, where public transport provision has not kept up. Most of it goes to the CBD grid itself, so even if you live in the eastern suburbs and simply want to commute to the other side of the CBD — to Docklands or Southbank — public transport is still too slow; cars are still quicker.

That is a major challenge that the east-west road tunnel simply will not address. We hear various sexed-up ideas about what it is supposed to do. Mr Drum says it is for freight. Mr Elsbury says it is to get trucks off local streets, and he has already told us where the on and off ramps are going to be. I have been all over the website, and I have not seen anything like that. I have just seen a map showing a line going from east to west. I have made FOI requests for the traffic modelling, the various proposed routes, the government's own communications strategy and of course all the various meetings and pitches it has been making to various construction firms and financiers, none of which any of us have been made privy to.

Since October I still have not been able to get that information. It has taken months and months under FOI, and I still have not got the information in my hand. If it were the great project, if it were the no. 1 on your list or if it were the most magnificent project, or whatever it was that Mr Elsbury called it, then you would be shouting it from the rooftops. The government would want to show us the map of where it is going to go. It would want to say to everybody, 'Hey, here's where you'll be able to get on, and here is where you had better get off'. It would tell us how many cars and trucks would use it, and what the toll would be. But the government has not got any of that stuff.

Mr Elsbury is back, hopefully with some answers to my questions. It just has a thought bubble from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry that says, 'Look, that freeway stops there and that one ends there, so maybe we had better connect them up'. It has zero business case — and we saw what happened to all the other people who tried to build one of these things. Just last week BrisConnections went into receivership. Traffic numbers through its tunnel continued to decline over its first few months of operation, and the whole thing went belly up.

Mr Finn — CityLink was a complete failure, then, was it?

Mr BARBER — The only solution Mr Finn has to get himself out of that mess is to throw even more taxpayer money at a dud project when, as we found out

in Brisbane, people will not pay \$2.50 to go 6 kilometres from the inner north of Brisbane to the airport.

Mr Finn — Forget about Brisbane. What about CityLink?

Mr BARBER — Okay, this could be useful. Are you telling me, Mr Finn, that the toll on the east–west road tunnel will be the same as the toll on CityLink?

Mr Finn — That’s yet to be decided.

Mr BARBER — It is yet to be decided. I wonder who will decide it, Mr Finn. Will it be the cabinet, or will this be one of those secrets that pops out sometime after the government has awarded the tender to the winning bidder? We know truck drivers do not pay tolls; they do everything they can to avoid them. In fact members can go off and have a look at some of the research that was done by people at the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics. For crying out loud — they are not a pack of greenies! But they summarised the situation pretty well, saying that the modelling of traffic numbers for a series of road tunnels around the world has been completely dodgy. It is always overinflated. Australia was the worst offender, and it did an even worse job on the numbers when it came to freight versus passenger traffic.

You cannot sit there and tell me, as Mr Elsbury did, that a road tunnel from east to west will reduce the number of trucks on the West Gate Freeway and on residential streets. Quite the opposite will occur. We will have a tunnel proponent desperately trying to force truck drivers into the tunnel, but they will be doing everything they can to avoid paying those tolls. I am really looking forward to reading about how the government is going to get people to use a tolled tunnel under the Maribyrnong when the West Gate Bridge is there for free. So much for the government’s priority infrastructure projects. It has no money and no business case for them.

There is an interesting section in the Baillieu government’s investment plan for energy and water where it basically waxes lyrical about fossil fuels and how it is going to keep subsidising them. So much for that. There is nothing in there about the serious challenge of climate change. In fact the government disses the renewable energy target while promising more subsidies for the illusory clean coal, which is always just over the horizon. It is always coming one of these days; it is about to arrive. It is a pity it will never compete with renewables. It is a pity we would probably need a \$100-a-tonne carbon price to enable

clean coal to even enter the market, which will be decades away and too risky anyway.

There was one part of the Baillieu government’s economic strategy that I wholly approved of. It noted that the multicultural nature of Victoria’s business community is a strength, and I agree with that. It cites a statistic that says that around 30 per cent of all small to medium-sized business operators in Victoria were born overseas. It also says that entrepreneurship is a major driver for Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I have noticed that; I have married into a family of immigrants. I am an immigrant.

Mr Drum — Like Mr Eideh.

Mr BARBER — Absolutely, exactly like the gentleman sitting in the chair. He is certainly an example of entrepreneurship. We should encourage that, and we should encourage multicultural harmony in Victoria.

Mr Finn — He was born and bred in Toorak!

Mr BARBER — Is that where his accent comes from? I could not pick it! You cannot respond, Acting President, being in the chair; that is unfortunate.

There you have it: that is what the government, with all the resources of government, has come up with by way of a future strategy. It seems to have missed the big trends. It seems to have missed the big opportunities, as I said, for allocative efficiencies — the microeconomic reform that moves resources from one sector of the economy where they are being used inefficiently into a new sector where they can be deployed, whether they be skills, labour, capital or technology, in a way that will actually boost our economy. Why does neither Labor nor the Liberal Party want to take on microeconomic reform? Because they would have to have a fight. The people in the old economic regime fight like wild cats to hang on to their privileged position. The new branch of the economy has not yet developed the critical mass, political and economic, to be able to demand that that change be made. It comes down to public political movements and the like to advocate for these sorts of reforms.

Here is my checklist. My no. 1 priority has to be transport — city and country, rail and bus, and, for that matter, linking the city with the country. You simply cannot move the number of people and the amount of goods that we want to move using the personal motor vehicle, usually single occupant, and trucks, which, no matter how big they get, always seem to be half empty. That is to say they are full in one direction and empty going back the other way, which I am sure the Acting

President would be able to attest to. Rail is the way to do it. Anyone who believes this pathetic straw-man argument that milk bars would have to have their goods delivered by rail should get out and around the place and have a look at a few of the bulk commodities that are being moved around the state and at the pathetic performance of the rail system including, notably, into the port of Melbourne. The government should look at grain on rail, which is going from a limited number of collection points to a very small number of export terminals and a rather large number of grain users. If that is not the no. 1 category for major improvement in rail freight, I do not know what is; but the government does not seem to be able to get it together.

Dr Napthine, the Minister for Ports, who is also the Minister for Major Projects, was good enough to admit some years ago that it was probably a mistake for former Premier Jeff Kennett to have sold off the rail system, but what has been done since then? We had the Tim Fischer report, which did a kind of triage on our rail freight lines that are about to fall apart and identified which ones we had better invest in first. Much more importantly, he said something that does not seem to ever have been reported; it has certainly never been picked up by the Labor and Liberal parties. He said we need a rail freight planning body; he said that someone has to make a plan and pull it together. It is not happening. The government has been in power for the last two grain seasons. It has pulled together a group of freight companies, road and rail, and asked, 'How do we do it, guys?', and they have pulled up a wish list of projects, in many cases pitting rail against road, instead of the kind of integrated strategy we need. That is what Ms Hartland was saying when she was speaking on her motion about freight trucks: whether you are seeing your roads out the back of Dimboola getting hammered or your streets in Yarraville full of trucks, you have a common interest — to have more of that material, more of our freight task, on rail. That builds the kind of economic strength that assures our future and sees us not lagging behind other states, which is what we are doing currently — and hence the poor jobs numbers.

Then there is the seemingly huge opportunity to reach out and grab some of the energy that Victoria and Australia are served with so abundantly. We are potentially an energy powerhouse when it comes to wind, wave, biomass, geothermal and last but not least sunshine. It is all there, ready to be grasped, but this government will not have a bar of it. The government does not want to know about the energy system. Every time you ask its members about it, they point to the Council of Australian Governments and the national grid, but these things are all decided here in Victoria

under the Electricity Industry Act 2000. There is absolutely no doubt that we need to reconfigure our grid from the big, dumb and centralised model we have now — with a big pile of coal with power stations and wires streaming out of it — to almost the opposite. We could have the sources of energy dispersed right across the landscape, in many cases right next to where it is being used and a simpler, smarter grid that connects them all.

Last week I was in Portland, where I learnt, as apparently many locals are aware, that for 21 years Portland ran off geothermal power. It had 56 degrees Celsius geothermal water being brought up from 1.4 kilometres down, piped to the local swimming pools, through a whole series of civic buildings and up to the other end of town to the hospital, with the temperature of the water coming back down the other side having been reduced by only about 10 degrees.

Mr Drum — It could be Europe!

Mr BARBER — Absolutely, Mr Drum. That kind of system is completely mature technology in Europe or North America; Portland's example was almost unique in Australia. It stopped working for two main reasons: there were some questions about the state of the hot-water bore and because both the council and the water board were going through some sort of institutional changes and no-one really wanted to say who was going to put up their hand to run the thing when it needed some capital investment.

I hope this government is putting up some capital investment. The local council has put up \$30 000, I think, to do a desktop study. It needs a good half a million dollars or so, and I hope it is forthcoming from the Minister for Energy and Resources, to prove this thing up to a point where they could get zero emissions energy not just for those places that used to get it originally — those civic buildings — but possibly through other parts of the town as well. Who knows? Maybe a major processor such as a food processor that uses a lot of hot water could come along and take advantage of that opportunity. It would certainly save council hundreds of thousands of dollars, given that it is currently using gas for the same purpose. If the original Sinclair Knight Merz report still stands, about 450 tonnes a year of carbon dioxide would be saved as a result of bringing that project back to life. The infrastructure is still there. The remains of the original facility are sitting on the side of the canal but they are not being used at the moment.

Mr O'Brien — It would be a great project for the Putting Locals First program fund.

Mr BARBER — It would be a great project for the \$10 billion fund that the federal Greens and the Labor Party set up with the revenue from the carbon tax. It is just a pity that Tony Abbott, the federal Leader of the Opposition, has sworn on a stack of Bibles — and I am sure he has a stack of them lying around — that he will abolish that fund. In fact federal shadow ministers Andrew Robb and Greg Hunt wrote to the directors of the fund, saying, ‘Don’t issue any grants to any state, least of all Victoria, because we are going to come in and shut you down’. Tony Abbott has basically declared a caretaker period on a \$10 billion fund that could be used to invest in those more novel projects such as Portland’s geothermal facility.

That is not to mention biomass. The amount of biomass material sitting on the docks and then being shipped off to the papermakers and ultimately to the rubbish tips of the Northern Hemisphere could certainly power zero emissions electricity for the south-west of Victoria, if it were to be used to its highest and best.

There is the energy powerhouse transformation that only the Greens so far are even talking about. While I am on that subject, there is an enormous capacity to store carbon in the Victorian landscape through biodiverse plantings and no doubt down the line from carbon farming. Again, so far only the Greens and the Labor Party through the clean energy package have delivered \$1 for that. I note that Australia’s first carbon farmer registered under the carbon farming initiative was given his certificate just a few months ago. That was up at Ararat on a farm that I had been to just a little while earlier.

That brings me to the long-term sustainable advantage for Victoria’s food producers, which is the clean and green image. If you want to sell your produce overseas with that clean and green tag, it is not enough to simply have your own brand; you actually have to have a regional brand. People must be able to recognise that produce from a certain area, whether it be Warrnambool or somewhere else, comes with a clean and green image so that every product from that area has the same image. It does not go well with the Liberal Party’s plans to roll out more coalmines and gas fracking and other sorts of things throughout some of our prime agricultural areas, not only in East Gippsland but also in Western Victoria, so let us do a bit more work on that.

While we are at it, let us do something for the sustainability of dairy producers in Victoria. We have not heard a lot from the Liberals in this place on that one. They are trying not to draw any fire on themselves,

I suppose. They turn up to meetings and rabbit on about the carbon tax.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr BARBER — I am glad Mr Drum asked. Mr Drum invites me to talk about what I think we should be doing for the dairy farmers in Victoria. First of all, I would say that it seems to be a crisis that has hit Victoria and south-western Victoria harder than most other regions, so you would be waiting a long time for a national government or a national body to come riding to the rescue. In fact those national bodies such as the dairy association and the National Farmers Federation have been caught napping by this. If they knew we were about to get clobbered by a price war between two duopolistic supermarket chains that was going to wipe tens of cents off the farmgate price, do you think they might have had an action plan for it? They did not.

Mr Drum — Are you saying that happened?

Mr BARBER — Mr Drum is living in a happy reality. All I can put together, Mr Drum, is, firstly, what dairy processors are telling me, and secondly, the dirty great billboards on my street telling me that the cost of 2 litres of milk has gone down from \$3.40 to \$2.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — I was not at the Farmer Power launch, Mr Ramsay, but federal Greens senator Richard Di Natale was.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — I think I might rock up to the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria annual general meeting — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — He is letting the supermarkets off the hook, Acting President.

At least the federal Greens leader, Christine Milne, and a few rebel Libs and Senator Barnaby Joyce and Senator Heffernan could sign onto a minority report from the last inquiry into dairy prices that said we had better do something serious about the supermarket duopoly.

I do not want to stray too much into federal levers of policy because it is not my job and I have plenty to work on down here. But it seems to me that in Australia under trade practices legislation we have a law that prohibits anticompetitive behaviour but does not actually worry too much about whether the effects of a

certain market arrangement are anticompetitive. If two guys are sitting in a room fixing prices, that is anticompetitive behaviour, but if the effect of, for example, the supermarket duopoly is that suppliers can be signed up on unconscionable terms or that they can have cents ripped off their prices — their entire profit margins ripped away from them in pretty short order — coincidentally at the same time there is a milk price war going on and the banks will not finance them because the underlying asset is not the farm but the price they can get from the milk that comes off the farm, so they are literally about to start destocking or fail on the basis of their inability to get an extension to their overdraft, then we might have a bit of a problem.

The federal coalition cannot work out which side of the street it is walking on. The Greens are pretty clear when it comes to that, and you will be hearing a bit more from Senator Milne on that subject.

Mr Ramsay — You just take a populist view, as you've always done — a simplistic, populist view.

Mr BARBER — I do not think I've ever been accused of being populist.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr BARBER — Very complex. There have been two inquiries at the federal level into it, Mr Drum. I hope you have read them; I have. I have got across the federal jurisdiction. What I would say here in Victoria is that the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) people do not seem to invest a lot in dairy; they leave it to those other bodies with a national focus. But we have a very important issue in Victoria. Export dairy is worth a billion dollars. It is right up there next to metal exports and cars. I hear a lot about metal exports and cars from politicians, and in the papers that I read there is very little about sustainability of dairy farmers. There would be something there for DPI to have a look at.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — I know these kinds of movements scare you, Mr Ramsay; you are from the mainstream end, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) end. We have three former VFF presidents sitting in this Parliament, but I think 750 farmers rallying out the back of Camperdown late one night means something. When I see 750 farmers rallying at the other end of Camperdown on a Tuesday night I think there is something behind it.

Mr Ramsay — You weren't there.

Mr BARBER — No, but my compadre, Senator Di Natale, was there and he could not even get inside. There were so many of them he could not even get inside. He was outside listening to it on the loudspeaker.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — I understand it well. You have to look around, Mr Ramsay. You have to do your homework. If you want to hear about free trade agreements from the Greens, there is plenty more.

Mr Drum interjected.

Mr BARBER — I am with you, Mr Drum; let's bring it back to the state levers of policy. Another one I am waiting to hear from this government on is climate change adaptation. It is required by law to have delivered a climate change adaptation plan, I think, by the end of this week. Hopefully it will be tabled tomorrow morning.

Mr Finn — That can be scrapped, that law.

Mr BARBER — Mr Finn over there is going to read it and weep, because his government is going to be putting forward something that at some level addresses the reality of what we are facing with climate change.

Mr Finn — And what might that be? Here we go. Even Al Gore's given it away. It's a con!

Mr BARBER — When it comes to managing that kind of risk I rely on the ultimate risk managers. There is the reinsurance industry, there is the World Bank, there is the UN Security Council, and they all see climate change as the no. 1 threat. For this government the plan is a box to be ticked. We will get this slightly shamefacedly, embarrassedly tabled plan later this week or maybe next week if the Greens kick up a stink about it, but that will be the end of it. They will not be engaging the community over it.

We are not heading for a climate crisis; we are right in the middle of one, and from time to time we are going to feel the costs of that. We can see the costs of the climate crisis hitting the state budget, the output of the Victorian economy and jobs in nearly every year since I have been in this Parliament. It started with the extended drought, the fires, the floods —

Mr Finn — That has never happened before, has it? That is all climate change, is it? That has never happened before? That didn't happen in 1939?

Mr BARBER — I will comfort you. That is an interesting question, Mr Finn. If Mr Finn equates 1939 and 2009 as fire events that occur once every 100 years, he can roll over and go back to sleep. There will be another one coming in about a century. But if 95 per cent of the world's scientists are right, and if Mr Finn knew these guys — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BARBER — As I said, Mr Finn can relax because when the report is tabled I will move that we take note of it, and then we can debate the government's climate change adaptation strategy in opposition to the climate change adaptation strategy that I think we need. But it will be big; it will change the economy. It will introduce costs and create opportunities. If we sit and do nothing, we will be run over, so we have to do something. Doing that something is going to change sectors of the economy. It will move resources from certain areas to other areas. That is the kind of microeconomic reform I keep harking back to. It is all going to require a fierce amount of innovation. I agree with Mr Baillieu on that section of the report that states that innovation is critical.

Innovation requires a number of things. It requires an educated population. I have said why I think we are lagging in that. It also requires us to encourage ideas and support people who have the ideas that are researched, developed and commercialised. We learn about new technology at all of those three stages. We learn a hell of a lot during the commercialisation stage. That is why we supported, for a time, the solar energy industry. In the short period during which it received significant government support, the price of solar panels has gone from \$4 a watt down to \$1.30 a watt. That is what learning by doing did for the solar energy industry.

It is now at grid parity with any new fossil fuel fired project, which is what the government is desperately trying to get up. The government is failing at doing it because it cannot compete. Making small additions to the grid through solar and wind energy has a low risk at every level. Building a big, new coal-fired power plant, which the government is desperate to do and which is in the government's economic and jobs strategy, and which is why I am paying attention to it, Mr Finn — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BARBER — Building the plant is simply not going to happen, and it is not going to work. It will fail. The market will not take it. The dog will not eat it, as

my old man used to say. If someone has got what they say is scientifically proven to be world best dog food, there may be just one problem — that is, dogs may not eat it. The government should go back to the drawing board and look at what solar energy, wind energy, geothermal energy, biomass energy and tidal energy can do for the state and at what opportunities there are, because I am the only one who is talking about them. Opposition members are not talking about them. The member for South-West Coast in the Assembly and all of his upper house colleagues are not even trying. They are scattering in all directions.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr BARBER — You have no position on wind.

Mr O'Brien — I support small-scale wind turbines.

Mr BARBER — Mr O'Brien should go down to Pakenham where a local butcher tried to put up a small-scale wind turbine and the council knocked him off.

Mr O'Brien — We have changed the planning policy.

Mr BARBER — No, you haven't.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! I ask Mr O'Brien not to interject across the chamber and Mr Barber to return to speaking on the motion.

Mr Finn — On a point of order, Acting President, I rise reluctantly to take this point of order because it may give Mr Barber an opportunity to take a breath. I have been listening very carefully — obviously for my sins — to Mr Barber for around 50 minutes. In the past 45 of those minutes, he has mentioned jobs once. It might be appropriate if he were to make some passing reference to the motion before the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! Just before Mr Finn stood to make his point of order, I asked Mr Barber to return to speaking on the motion. I ask Mr Barber to do that.

Mr BARBER — Absolutely. I ask for research and development not to be cut, whether it be in the state budget or through federal tax incentives. Much of this is in the life sciences, as the Minister for Health would understand.

Hon. D. M. Davis — It is.

Mr BARBER — It is where innovation is. Adam Bandt, the federal member for Melbourne, is constantly

in Canberra advocating for investment in the life sciences, but there are many other sectors that need a solid, continuous commitment of funding if we are to reap economic benefits. Those are the trends that are going to drive our future economy; those are the trends that the Labor and Liberal parties barely even want to speak about let alone introduce programs for. If that goes on much longer, we are really going to lag and we are going to have trouble catching up. It is critical that political consensus is formed to address these issues because the current level of partisanship in Australia is not what the public is looking for, particularly those people who want to make their own personal investments in their education, their businesses and their lives.

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

Debate adjourned until later this day.

AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX CORPORATION: ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house calls on the government to require the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to undertake a full and accurate count of attendance at the Formula One grand prix to be held in Melbourne on 14 to 17 March 2013 inclusive, including a full and accurate breakdown of attendance by —

- (a) paid general admission;
- (b) grandstand and corporate suites;
- (c) complimentary or free admission including all classes of accredited attendees including media, officials, race teams and all other event staff; and
- (d) the number of free passes issued but not used;

and to publicly release this information by 18 March 2013.

Many times in Parliament I have raised the issue of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation getting away with estimating — and in fact overestimating — the attendances at the Melbourne event. I raised this matter during debate on the Major Sporting Events Bill 2009 in the last Parliament, and during various motions calling for documents pertaining to the Australian Formula One Grand Prix. I have expressed the frustration felt by many in the community that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation has been allowed to get away with this for 17 years.

Recent media reports have picked up on this fact. On 26 January Greg Baum wrote an article in the *Age*

headed ‘Grand prix counts for nothing’. He starts out by saying:

During the week, it came to the ears of this column that one of the excuses the Melbourne formula one grand prix organisers use for not conducting an accurate crowd count each year is that they cannot afford the scanners.

This is despite the fact that they claim the event delivers an annual economic impact of \$1.4 billion. Lots of figures have been bandied about over the years on how much economic benefit the race brings to the state of Victoria, as well as the attendance figures, but they are grossly inflated and overestimated as well. The fact is that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation has never provided the public of Victoria with an accurate account of how many people actually attend the event over the three or four days that it is staged in Melbourne in March every year.

For the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to say that it cannot afford to do an accurate count is just ludicrous. Every other major sporting event such as the Australian Open, any football match, the grand final and the cricket is able to do an accurate count. I attend the cricket very often, and halfway through the match, up on the screen it will say something like, ‘Today we have 40 567 people here’. Halfway through the game you will know exactly how many people are at the event. But somehow the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is not able to accurately count the number of people who go through the turnstile on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and certainly it is not able to announce it halfway through the day. It could broadcast a message over the public address system saying how many people are there for the day like every other major sporting event; but the grand prix corporation cannot do that?

They say it is too expensive, but the Australian Grand Prix Corporation hives off Albert Park, puts a big fence around it and has numbered gates. I have certainly been at those gates with my clicker, counting people as they go in. Funnily enough the accurate account that the Save Albert Park volunteers have done over the years is a much more accurate count than the grand prix corporation is able to do. It seems it cannot afford to have counters on the turnstiles at the small number of gates it installs each year among its temporary fencing to keep out people who should not be in there because they do not have a ticket.

I have been advised that a turnstile can be rented for around \$200 a day, and that it would cost around \$195 a day to rent a hand-held scanner for a four-day period. A scanner would be even better than a turnstile because it would be able to tell us how many of those

tickets have actually been paid for by real, human beings and how many are free tickets.

I went onto the grand prix corporation's website today, and it is flogging off free tickets. It is running out of people who want to pay to go to the event, so it has to start saying, 'Buy one, get one free'. That is an offer that is on the website this very day. The attendance has been wildly overestimated. We have even had the grand prix saying there are more than 300 000 attendees from all over the world. At face value that is ludicrous, but even according to the Ernst & Young report entitled *The Economic Impact of the 2011 Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix*, 70 per cent of the spectators came from Victoria, 22 per cent from interstate and 8 per cent from overseas to specifically attend the grand prix in Melbourne.

When using the grand prix's theoretical attendance figures it is important to also subtract approximately 15 000, which is the number of accredited attendees. They include event staff, officials, media and race participants, most of whom attend for each of the four days, so their cumulative attendance is 60 000, which is four times 15 000. In other words, they get counted every time they attend, and even though they are only staff, officials, media and race participants, that figure somehow winds its way into the estimation of actual patronage. Even taking that figure of 15 000 into account, Ernst & Young estimated the event patronage to be around 109 000, so saying that 300 000 attendees come from all over the world is just a ridiculous statement.

Evidence indicates that the patronage figures used by Ernst & Young were also overstated. The ticket sales revenue for the 2011 event, for example, was \$26.42 million, and calculations indicate that this level of revenue could only be obtained from a patronage of about 60 000, assuming both grandstand and corporate facility seats were full. When the ticket sales revenue over the past years is put on a graph with the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's attendance estimates, there is some correlation up to 2008, but there is an accompanying sharp fall in revenue from 2009 to 2012, and that is when we start to see the popularity of the race diminish, sponsors dry up, and the discrepancy between the ticket revenue and the claimed attendances at the event get wider and wider each year.

Investigations in 2011 and 2012 by the Australian Press Council show that grand prix attendance figures are not to be trusted. In 2012 the newspaper, which quoted the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's estimated figures, was well aware of the questionable accuracy of the attendance figures and the public significance of this

issue, and the newspaper used words which, whatever its intention, added to the perceived credibility of the figures and made detailed and favourable comparisons with figures from earlier times which were of similarly doubtful accuracy.

At a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearing in 2007, in talking about the cost of counting attendees and installing turnstiles, the Australian Grand Prix Corporation stated, 'Yes. Its cost is prohibitive. We've investigated it and its cost is prohibitive for us'. Apparently \$200 for a turnstile at each gate or \$195 for renting a scanner is too much for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to afford. It is just ridiculous.

There is also the issue of the capacity of Albert Park. In 1996 there were 45 000 grandstand seats and over 20 000 corporate seats. In 2012 there were just 25 000 grandstand seats and 7510 corporate seats. It is widely acknowledged that 80 000 is the maximum capacity for the Albert Park venue, but this information is kept quiet by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. To get the 70 000 for 2012, the grand prix needed every grandstand and corporate seat had to be fully occupied; the five grassy knolls at capacity of 12 000 and 5000 could not be in view; every available general admission area around the track was required to have spectators lined at least four deep; and there were more requirements. Anyone who watches the footage, which I sometimes do only because I have an interest in this event, would understand that that is not the case if one looks at the crowds — or supposed crowds — at the event.

My reason for raising the matters mentioned in this motion, which I have raised many times in Parliament is that we have just had it confirmed by the *Herald Sun* in January that instead of Bernie Ecclestone paying us to have his race here, we actually have to pay him a fee of \$30 million to stage the race. That amount is mooted to grow from \$31 million in 2011 to \$37.7 million in 2015. Given that last year the race cost the Victorian taxpayers nearly \$60 million, because of sponsorship problems from the falling attendances it is not possible for the grand prix to be held in Melbourne without costing taxpayers at least that much and probably more every single year from now on. That is not sustainable. The contract should not be renewed after it runs its race. We should wave it goodbye, give it the chequered flag and send it off to one of the mythical cities that apparently are bidding for it. That is why we cannot release any information about the grand prix. If we did, our competitors who want to steal the race from us would have an advantage.

By the time the contract ends in 2015 we will have had the race for 20 years. That is a good run; it is much longer than I would have liked to see, and everyone knows that I was there for the first race — not inside the circuit but marching around the outside with a yellow ribbon. By the time it gets to 20 years, this race will have cost Victorian taxpayers more than \$1 billion. It is not sustainable for the contract to be renewed and for that sort of money to be spent on this event any longer, particularly as that Victorian taxpayer money is going into the pockets of an overseas businessman of dubious merit.

Earlier today we debated a motion about funding for the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative, which nurtures budding jazz musicians. It mentors and helps them learn how to perform using their instruments, and it gives them confidence in live performances around Melbourne. However, it has had its funding cut after 27 years. We are only looking at tens of thousands of dollars, yet we keep pouring millions — by 2015 more than \$1 billion — into the grand prix even though its economic benefit to Melbourne is highly questionable.

This is a very simple motion. The organisers of other major sporting events such as tennis, football or cricket matches can calculate their attendees on the day to the person — the precise number of people. But apparently after 17 years the Australian Grand Prix Corporation has not got its act together enough to enable it to know how to count the number of people at the track. That is unacceptable and I think the government should require the corporation to put in turnstiles, get some scanners and tell the people of Victoria how many people attend. I suspect the Australian Grand Prix Corporation does not want to do that because it does not want people to know that there is hardly anyone at the event.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The government will not be supporting the motion moved by Ms Pennicuik. To take up the comments made by Ms Pennicuik, I agree she has been consistent in raising this issue, and I acknowledge that. At the end of her contribution Ms Pennicuik alleged that the cost of the grand prix subsidies paid by taxpayers would be approximately \$1 billion. She drew a parallel with the debate earlier this day about funding for the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative, on which Mr Leane and Mrs Coote spoke, as did Ms Hartland for the Greens.

If Ms Pennicuik wants to talk about comparative priorities for funding, I again make the point that I have made many times, which is that Mr Lenders, when he was Treasurer of Victoria, squandered \$3 billion on the auction of electronic gaming machine licences, according to the Auditor-General.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am responding directly to the point made by Ms Pennicuik that somehow staging the grand prix means that we cannot fund jazz. I make the point to Ms Pennicuik that there is much that goes into and out of the budget. If Mr Lenders when he was Treasurer of Victoria had had any financial capacity, any financial management ability, he would have secured for Victorian taxpayers, according to the Auditor-General, an additional \$3 billion from the auction of electronic gaming machine licences. Three billion dollars could fund a lot of arts programs; it could build three Royal Children's Hospitals; it could fund the construction of many schools and police stations; it could employ nurses and teachers, but Mr Lenders, with a supposedly safe pair of hands like those of federal Treasurer Mr Swan, like Labor treasurers over time immemorial, cannot manage money. I was responding directly to the comparative point made by Ms Pennicuik.

To return to Ms Pennicuik's motion, the government opposes the motion. I want to make a couple of points about how the coalition, since returning to government, has been more open and transparent in relation to information around the grand prix. There will always be a debate about commercial sensitivities and what information should and should not be released — and I am sure Ms Pennicuik will continue to prosecute that debate — but I make the point that this government has been much more open and transparent than the Labor Party ever was in relation to the grand prix.

At the risk of repetition and revisiting previous debates, and without being critical, I point out that Ms Pennicuik prosecuted issues she has raised before. It is appropriate to note that after a previous motion requesting the release of documents, the government released the following: the agreement between the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, Bayside Health in respect of the Alfred and the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport Ltd in respect of the provision of medical services to the Australian grand prix between 2002 and 2006; the transport service agreement between the director of public transport and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation; the on-track service agreement between the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and Ambulance Victoria dated March 2009 and a letter dated 11 March 2010 extending the agreement until 31 December 2010; the 2009 off-track service agreement between the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and Ambulance Victoria dated March 2009 and the letter dated 11 March 2010 extending the agreement until 31 December 2010; letters from the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to Bayside Health in respect of the

Alfred dated 22 December 2006 and 12 December 2007 extending and varying the agreement between the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, Bayside Health in respect of the Alfred and the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport Ltd in respect of the provision of medical services to the Australian Formula One Grand Prix; the funding agreement between the state of Victoria and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation in relation to the funding for the staging of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix between 2008 and 2010 and the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix between 2007 and 2011; the memorandum of understanding between the general manager of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and the superintendent, region 5, grand prix operations commander, in relation to Victoria Police access to Australian Grand Prix Corporation CCTV; the critical on-track incident response protocol for the 2010 Formula One Qantas Australian Grand Prix; the licence from Parks Victoria to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to use part of Albert Park to carry out kerb modification and various works; the Parks Victoria licence to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to use part of Albert Park to carry out 2010–12 recurrent works; and other documents. Those matters have been debated previously, but they are worth repeating.

At the heart of Ms Pennicuik’s agitation of these motions is her opposition to the event, but next to that is transparency in relation to the event. A press release of 22 July 2011 from Ms Asher, the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, says:

The Victorian coalition government has delivered on its promise to commission a comprehensive study of the economic value of the grand prix for the state, and to make that report publicly available ...

The former Labor government commissioned a similar study in 2008. Labor refused to release the study publicly.

The coalition government is committed to delivering greater transparency of the costs and benefits of events that are supported by taxpayers funds ...

The Ernst & Young study estimates the 2011 grand prix increased Victoria’s real gross state product (GSP) by between \$32.04 million and \$39.34 million and generated between 351 and 411 full-time equivalent jobs.

A separate report by Comperio Research into the branding value of the 2009 grand prix estimated that it provides a media or advertising-equivalent value of over \$35.6 million to Victoria.

...

The coalition government has a strong commitment to major events. Major events contribute to the vibrancy and livability of Victoria, and help drive tourism, investment attraction,

infrastructure use and community pride throughout the year ...

On 26 September last year, Minister Asher issued another release, which provided the details of the subsidy to the grand prix. It says:

The Victorian coalition government subsidised the 2012 Formula One Qantas Australian Grand Prix by \$56.656 million ...

The coalition government is committed to delivering greater transparency of the costs and benefits of events that are supported by taxpayers funds. To meet this commitment we have again released result figures for both events ahead of the tabling of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation’s annual report ...

The Formula One Australian Grand Prix showcases Melbourne on the world stage, raising its profile, encouraging domestic and international tourism and business investment as well as delivering economic and branding benefits to Victoria.

In moving this motion, Ms Pennicuik is calling on the government to require the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to undertake a full and accurate count of attendance at the Australian Formula One Grand Prix to be held in Melbourne from 14 to 17 July. Her contribution to this debate is consistent with matters she has previously brought before the house. On many occasions she has prosecuted her opposition to the grand prix, and she has been consistent in that — and I note that. However, I wish to note for the record and on behalf of the government that, while the government opposes the motion moved by Ms Pennicuik, it has been much more open and transparent than the Labor government about the taxpayer subsidy for the event and other information associated with the grand prix.

With the information in the public domain we can have a debate about the benefit of the grand prix, and various people have different opinions about that. As a result of the increased transparency of the coalition government, there is more information available to have that debate. As Ms Pennicuik stated, the grand prix is contracted to 2015, which will be approximately 20 years since the grand prix was secured for Melbourne and Victoria, having been held previously in South Australia.

I will finish where I started. The job of government is to make wise investment and manage taxpayer funds efficiently and transparently in the interest of and for the betterment of the public. Regrettably, because of the incompetence of Mr Lenders and the previous Labor government, the Victorian taxpayer has been short-changed by \$3 billion. If Ms Pennicuik wants to draw a comparison between the funding of various arts programs, including the motion Mr Leane moved earlier today in relation to the Melbourne Jazz

Co-operative, I make the point that Mr Lenders let \$3 billion slip through his hands by his incompetence and failure to manage the electronic gaming machine option process competently, in the interest of the Victorian taxpayer and in the interest of the Victorian community. That could have paid for the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative and for a range of other arts programs. It could have paid for three new royal children's hospitals and a huge range of public infrastructure.

Regrettably this government had to inherit that legacy of incompetence from Labor, which cannot manage money. That project — the electronic gaming machine auction — is just one example of Labor's financial incompetence. We talk about managing priorities and investing public funds, but we must always remember that the pool of funds available to government has been greatly diminished because of the previous government's financial incompetence and mismanagement.

This is not some purely historical legacy; it impacts on the forward estimates and in fact on this year's budget — as I read from an adjournment response of Minister O'Brien, the Minister for Gaming. It impacts on this year's budget, it will impact on next year's budget, it will impact on the budget after and it will impact right through the forward estimates. It means many schools will not be built, many hospitals will not be upgraded and many police stations will not be rebuilt — because of the financial incompetence of the failed former Treasurer, John Lenders. He should apologise to this house for that gross incompetence. When Ms Pennicuik talks about comparative financial analysis, then she should also talk about the resources this government does not have at its disposal because of the disgraceful and hopeless management of that process.

The government opposes the motion of Ms Pennicuik. We are very proud, however, that we have delivered on our promise to be more open and transparent about the Australian grand prix so that the public and community are more informed about what is a major event for Melbourne and Victoria.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition will support Ms Pennicuik's call for information — something we usually do and something we voted for when we were in government. I am a bit confused about the government's position, that it will not hand over information because of something the government says John Lenders did, especially as we say the complete opposite. We say that as Treasurer John Lenders delivered a healthy economy. It is okay

for the government to put about these lines about what happened — about the disaster that supposedly took place — but people rightly and heartily dispute them. I suppose the questions I would ask government members are, 'How's it going out there for you? How's it going, parroting all that stuff? Is it going all right out there?'. I wonder how it really is going.

I will be brief to ensure that Ms Pennicuik's motion goes to a vote. I am disappointed in the government's actions; this is just a call for information.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr LEANE — It is just a call for information. It basically seeks a breakdown of information. If the government is taking the position that it will not release information because of something it wrongly alleges John Lenders did, then I think its excuses are getting worse and worse every day.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to rise to speak to Ms Pennicuik's motion 521, in which she moves:

That this house calls on the government to require the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to undertake a full and accurate count of attendance at the Formula 1 Grand Prix to be held in Melbourne on 14 to 17 March 2013 inclusive, including a full and accurate breakdown of attendance by —

- (a) paid general admission;
- (b) grandstand and corporate suites;
- (c) complimentary or free admission including all classes of accredited attendees including media, officials, race teams and all other event staff; and
- (d) the number of free passes issued but not used;

and to publicly release this information by 18 March 2013.

I know Ms Pennicuik has risen on a number of occasions to speak about the grand prix. In relation to this particular motion there are a number of points I would like to make. I have to dispute the claim of those opposite who have said we have not undertaken a transparent process. In fact this government has been very transparent in releasing a number of documents, and it has done so over the time I have been in the house. In relation to this particular event, the government has released a number of documents, as I said. They have included agreements between the grand prix corporation and various stakeholders in the area, transport service agreements, documents pertaining to funding agreements, memorandums of understanding and incident-response related documents. That is just a snapshot of a number of documents that have been released in relation to the event we are speaking about today.

There is no doubt that the grand prix is one of the events that showcases Melbourne in a particularly positive light. It exists alongside a number of other major events undertaken in Melbourne, such as the Australian Open, the Melbourne Cup, the international airshow down at Avalon, which is on in a few weeks time, as Mr Elsbury reminded me, and a number of other international events which attract regional, national and international visitors to our capital and our state. That is a tremendous advantage we have over some other major cities in Australia. We do not have certain attractions such as the Barrier Reef or other natural attractions that draw tourism, but these major events provide an enormous boost to Victoria's economy and in turn to Australia's economy. That cannot be left unsaid, because we are renowned for our tourism. It is something that both sides of the political divide absolutely agree on.

Ms Pennicuik referred to a *Herald Sun* article. I also refer to an article in the *Herald Sun* of 24 January which refers to comments from Mr Holding, who was then the shadow Treasurer. Mr Holding resigned last Friday from his position as the member for Lyndhurst in the Assembly and is no longer here. The article states:

... shadow Treasurer, Tim Holding, backed the government pursuing the event for Melbourne after 2015, saying it was a truly 'blockbuster' event that boosted the state.

'The cost borne by taxpayers by far and away is outstripped by the economic benefits to Victoria', he said, insisting the race still represented excellent 'value for money'.

I am a little perplexed by the fact that Mr Lenders supported this. Does Mr Lenders support Mr Holding's position, or has he changed his stance in the last four days? Mr Holding has taken an interesting position. He is obviously not here any longer to defend it, but the point is that the grand prix provides an enormous economic benefit. Many people see the race. I have never been to or seen the race, but I think Ms Pennicuik said she has witnessed it. I am not sure if that was in person or on television. It certainly is an enjoyable event for those who see it.

The whole event provides great opportunities for many people. As I mentioned, there are economic opportunities for young people who might be employed on a casual basis. They get experience in hospitality, customer service, media and marketing. It gives them a great on-the-job experience that they can use to further their careers. The grand prix offers extraordinary benefits to many of those young people who get involved in it.

I return to the crux of what Ms Pennicuik is requesting in relation to this information. The Minister for

Tourism and Major Events, Ms Asher, has made a number of undertakings. In the interests of transparency she commissioned Ernst & Young to undertake an economic impact assessment of the 2011 Australian Formula One Grand Prix. She released the results in conjunction with the 2012 Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, and that shows a truly transparent minister who is prepared to release results. Minister Asher talked about the release of those results in a press release. She said that to meet its commitment the government had:

... again released results figures for both events ahead of the tabling of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's annual report.

That annual report will contain various details relating to particular areas of interest. In 2008 the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) upheld the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's (AGPC) decision not to release documents containing information in relation to total ticket sales. In that particular case the VCAT ruling stated:

It allows all of the entities with which the respondent — the AGPC —

must deal — sponsors, competitors, corporate customers — access to data from which they can strengthen their bargaining position at the expense of the respondent.

It is fairly evident that information was not released. There is no doubt that this, along with those other international events that I have mentioned, is a very popular event. It showcases Melbourne extremely well and goes a long way to promoting it as the most livable city. All members can be proud of the fact that we live in a city that has received such an accolade, and I think we should continue to promote it.

Ms Asher raised another issue when she was talking about ticketing sales in the press release that I referred to earlier, and I want to draw members attention to it. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation chief executive officer, Mr Westacott, said that since 2010 there had been a 14 per cent increase in ticket sale revenue for the Formula One event as well as a 17 per cent increase in total revenue. That demonstrates the event is having the sort of impact that is at the heart of what we are talking about in relation to attracting regional, national and international visitors. It is showcasing Melbourne, and it provides an enormous economic boost. That whole major events calendar generates in the vicinity of \$1.4 billion each year. That is something we need to continue to promote and support. The Australian Formula One Grand Prix is one of those events that assists in attracting and promoting business and attracting people to work in the industry. As Mr O'Donohue said, this is a specific request by

Ms Pennicuik that the government will not be supporting. With those words I indicate I will also be opposing the motion.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I am truly astonished that the government would say it will not support the motion to require the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to come clean to the people of Victoria about how many people are going to attend this event on 14, 15, 16 and 17 March. I have even said in my motion that the corporation has until the following day, 18 March, to furnish that information, despite the fact that, as I said earlier, if you attend the cricket, the footy or the Australian Open, the number of attendees is displayed on the screen halfway through the day. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation is obviously still operating in the 19th century.

Hon. M. J. Guy interjected.

Ms PENNICUIK — It is not able to count how many people are there. That is unacceptable, whatever Mr Guy might be wanting to say over there. It is unacceptable that the government says, ‘This is an international event of international status, an event that showcases Melbourne’, blahdy blah blah, but it cannot use ordinary, everyday technology to count how many people are there. They are a captive audience; they are all locked in with temporary fencing.

The government stands there and Mr O’Donohue says, ‘Oh, the government is open and transparent — more open and transparent than the last government was’, and furnishes me with two telephone books full of documents about information that I could have got on the public record. It was not the information I wanted, which is the information most Victorians want — which is: actually how much does this event cost Victorians every year?

People pretty well know what the fee is. We know that last year it was nearly \$60 million that taxpayers forked out. Ms Crozier and Mr O’Donohue referred to the Ernst & Young study, which was not a cost-benefit analysis. In fact Mr O’Donohue used those words and said the government ‘promised to do a cost-benefit analysis’. It did not do a cost-benefit analysis. That is what the Auditor-General said needed to be done by the government, but no cost-benefit analysis has ever been done. It was an economic impact analysis, which counts, including other things, things like how many pies or drinks were bought contributing to the economic analysis around that time. Even if you accept the government’s figure of \$32-something million or thereabouts, if taxpayers have put in \$67 million, there is still a \$25 million gap that is paid for by taxpayers. So there is no benefit. That is all wiped out.

Then the Comperio report was dragged out again. I was chasing the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Ms Asher, for that for a long time. She finally released it. It was a smoke and mirrors exercise about how valuable the grand prix is in branding Melbourne. That was an argument that in his report the Auditor-General said there was no evidence for whatsoever.

Earlier in my contribution I referred to the number of international visitors to events being about 8 per cent of attendees, and I suspect that a lot of those are the pit crew and the other international attendees who come over with the formula one drivers. Their teams — the people who put the tyres on and off and all of those people — are probably counted in that 8 per cent and the actual number of people who make their way to Australia for those four days is very few. But we do not know because no accurate count is done. It is completely unacceptable in this day and age that we cannot know how many people are there every day — to the person, exactly.

It is so easy to do, and the government in saying today that it will not require that to be done is not being open and accountable. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation is renowned for not being open and accountable, but the government will not even commit to — at least this year — getting it to provide the people of Victoria with an accurate count of how many people attend this event. It is unbelievable. I cannot believe it.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 18

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

Noes, 19

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

Pairs

Scheffer, Mr	Coote, Mrs
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Motion negatived.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS****Auditor-General: *Addressing Homelessness — Partnerships and Plans***

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Auditor-General's report on *Addressing Homelessness — Partnerships and Plans*, dated February 2013. Poverty and homelessness is the scourge of the Third World, but it is even more shocking when we see homelessness on the increase in a wealthy nation such as ours. Unfortunately, for some the poverty cycle is never ending, so I read this report with interest to see how well or otherwise Victorians are doing in tackling or lessening homelessness for the less fortunate in our community.

The 2011 census reported that 22 789 people were classified as homeless, which is an increase of 21 per cent on the 2006 census statistics. In reading the report what becomes very obvious is that no single agency has carriage of, or clearly defined responsibility for, the overall implementation of the national partnership agreement on homelessness. Together with the Victorian homelessness action plan 2011–2015, five government departments — the departments of Human Services, Justice, Premier and Cabinet, Health, and Treasury and Finance — have responsibilities for coordinating multiple strategies and agencies. Acting President, there are too many cooks!

These departments have not developed a single communication strategy or a monitoring process which demonstrates the effectiveness of the plan. No wonder the auditing, transparency and accountability pathway is obscure and muddled. There is no comprehensive reporting mechanism to the commonwealth government. The commonwealth-state agreement netted Victoria \$206.5 million and specifically states that monies should be spent in accordance with the funding agreement. Where the state deviates from that agreement, it must notify the commonwealth. This obviously is not happening, because no department has been designated responsibility for communicating with the commonwealth.

This report contains information on the outcomes of only 3 programs out of 24 funded programs and they appear to be effective, but in real terms it is just the tip of the iceberg. If the Victorian government does not get its act together and to implement the Auditor-General's recommendations — and I encourage all members to read the recommendations — we will see by the next

census further indefensible increases in homelessness in this the lucky country.

Road Safety Committee: motorcycle safety

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me great pleasure to speak to the Road Safety Committee's report on motorcycle safety, about which I have some knowledge considering I am a member of that committee. When the report was tabled I was able to highlight some of its elements, and today I would like to highlight a few others. I have already covered problems with data collection and said that the motorcycle levy should be abolished, as the committee believes it is not working particularly well. It is not providing the outcomes that we believe are necessary for motorcyclists and road safety. Recommendation 37 states:

That VicRoads initiate a consultation process, based on the Swedish OLA (objective facts, list of solutions, addressed action plans) method, for motorcycle safety that involves all road safety agencies, motorcycle clubs, stakeholders and groups, and members of the broader community with a view to developing new safety initiatives.

We spoke to people in Sweden about how they implement the program, and I have to say that the air between different groups, whether they be government or non-government bodies, is actually quite good in Sweden. We came across this process early last year when we were in Western Australia for the Australasian Road Safety Conference. A similar program had been implemented with the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia. The club said that its first meeting had been a little bit tense. It almost had to prepare a mop and bucket to wipe down the walls afterwards — it was almost fisticuffs — but as the day wore on and as people got talking to one another, they understood that they were after the same thing; it was about road safety and about wanting things to be better. We have seen it working in Sweden and we have seen it working in Western Australia, so we ask for it to occur here in Victoria.

Recommendation 52 states:

That a star-rating system for protective motorcycle clothing, which includes boots, gloves, jackets, pants and armour, be established within 24 months, and be fully functioning within 36 months, of the tabling of this report.

This is important, and as someone who has bought motorcycle protective gear, I know that it is very difficult to know what you need to wear. I have got Kevlar jeans, I have got a jacket with a spine protector, I have got the gloves and the helmet, but when it comes down to it there is nothing to tell me that the products I

have got actually get the job done. That is a very big concern for motorcyclists, wherever they may be. It does not depend on price; sometimes price comes down to the brand name on the equipment rather than the equipment actually having a safety effect. It is important for that particular aspect to be considered in developing a star system, so motorcyclists know that what they are buying is going to do the job they expect it to do in the event of an unfortunate accident.

Finally, I move on to recommendation 59:

That the benefits and risks of filtering, as distinct from lane splitting, be reviewed with the aim of introducing filtering in Victoria.

There are no actual definitions of lane splitting or filtering. They are rather difficult to define, as different people have different points of view as to what they actually are. But, in general, lane splitting is when the traffic is moving and a motorcyclist decides to go down the middle of it, whereas filtering is more commonly used in inner city areas when the traffic has stopped, whether at a traffic light or due to a traffic jam, and motorcyclists then move through the stationary traffic. It is felt that it is safer for motorcyclists to filter through stationary traffic, allowing them to get to the head of the queue, because they have faster acceleration. It also improves their safety and their visibility to drivers when they get to the front of the pack.

With those few comments on this report, I can say that I am glad that an 18-month inquiry has contracted into two contributions of 5 minutes! I think the report has highlighted some very interesting topics that the government and various government departments need to seriously consider.

Victorian Institute of Teaching: report 2011–12

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Institute of Teaching's 2011–12 annual report. Firstly, I would like to offer my congratulations to the chairperson, Don Paproth; chief executive officer Melanie Saba; and the other members of the institute council for this report and for the institute's strong financial direction for 2013 and beyond. The Victorian Institute of Teaching is a statutory authority for the regulation of the teaching profession in Victoria. It was established by the Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001.

The institute guarantees that all teachers are registered, ensuring that only qualified people are employed in schools around Victoria. It works with teachers to develop standards of professional practice, it supports

teachers in their first year of teaching with a structured induction program to assist in the adjusting process and it approves and accredits pre-service teacher education courses. In addition to this, it continues to ensure that Victorian teachers are delivering the highest level of education and are acting appropriately by investigating and making findings on instances of serious misconduct, serious incompetence or lack of fitness to teach.

I would be extremely surprised if anyone in this house questioned the importance of teachers in our wonderful state of Victoria. I have always said that it takes a special person to devote their lives to the education of children. A teacher has many responsibilities to nurture our children and help them grow into the Victorians of tomorrow. They may become leaders, doctors, nurses or public servants, just to name a few — in fact, they may become teachers themselves.

Our children form a special bond with their teachers, one built solidly on a foundation of trust. This is why I was pleased to read in the Victorian Institute of Teaching's annual report that one highlight of 2011–12 was the implementation of processes to commence ongoing Victoria Police checks for registered teachers. But this was not the only highlight for the organisation. It also continued the transition of all teachers from five-yearly to annual renewal of registration; it saw an increase in the number of registered teachers to just fewer than 119 000, a total increase of 2917 from last year; and it performed 23 857 national criminal history record checks. A total of 3856 end-of-year graduates were available to teach in February 2012.

Education is extremely important, especially in my electorate of Western Victoria Region, where secondary education levels are lower than anywhere else in the state. We need strong teachers to offer support to the students who need it most and to those who are at serious risk of dropping out of the system. It makes me quite sad when I think of this government's inadequacy when it comes to funding teachers and the education system as they rightfully deserve to be funded. We can all remember the promise that Premier Baillieu made to the Victorian people in 2010 — that Victorian teachers would be the best paid in the country. We are now in 2013, and we are still waiting for this promise, and many others, to be delivered. Teachers deserve this and Victorians deserve this. I suppose this promise will not be delivered, as I do not believe that the Premier values education and investing in the future. If he did, I sincerely do not believe that he would have cut \$290 million from the TAFE sector. I do not want to overshadow the wonderful work that this organisation has done over the past financial year with

talk of the bleak future for education and the teaching profession that the Premier is delivering. I commend the report to the house.

Parks Victoria: report 2011–12

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — Acting President, you appear to be extremely comfortable in the role that you were appointed to not so long ago. You are doing a great job.

I wish to make some comments on the Parks Victoria annual report 2011–12. In particular I will go to the section relating to visitors and communities in reference to a report on activities and works undertaken in respect of Parks Victoria's efforts to develop existing iconic walks. The report talks about some work on the Great Ocean Walk, which I have inspected. It talks about work on stage 1 of the Grampians Peaks Trail and also the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing — and, again, I have inspected some parts thereof. It goes on to talk about the Wilderness Coast Walk as well. I particularly focus on two walks — the Snowy River estuary walk, which is within the Marlo Coastal Reserve and which I participated in the opening of last June, and the Mallacoota scenic coastal walk, which I participated in the opening of last week.

I note for the interest of the house, and particularly members who are interested in nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation, that the East Gippsland coastal walks are in fact akin to what is regarded now as Victoria's most iconic walking track, the Great Ocean walk, which is on the coastal edge of the Otways and has been promoted to attract interstate and international visitors on the south-west coast.

That is quite a picturesque and scenic walk, but I want to bring to the attention of the house that although the tyranny of distance will mitigate against the same number of visitors coming to Mallacoota and far East Gippsland, in fact the scenic values of these walks are especially significant. They are genuine icons, and the investment of a total of nearly \$2.2 million in these bookends — at Mallacoota and Marlo — of a great coastal walk is a good and worthy initiative. It may be some extended time before we in fact see significant capital investment in further joining up those bookends, but the coastal walk can be completed now by adventurous souls. I know a number of people who have taken the time and effort to do it.

I would even encourage people who are not what you would describe as typical long-distance adventure walkers to visit Mallacoota and Marlo and take the opportunity to investigate those scenic walks, because

they will find that they are accessible. Robert Barr from Fremantle, a previous resident of Mallacoota who now, because of an accident, is in a wheelchair, has completed the Mallacoota walk in a wheelchair. He has spent some time giving advice on the development of that walk to ensure that it is accessible to all users. While there are some short sections of it which, because they involve steps, are obviously not suitable for a wheelchair, there are many other sections where Robert Barr was able to, if you like, step on and step off. Therefore it is a great investment in terms of all skills and all capacity utilisation. That is one of the wonderful things about this scenic walk, which has a vista which is on a par with that of the Great Ocean walk, in which we have invested a huge amount in terms of marketing and promotion.

While there is certainly a challenge in terms of the tyranny of distance in relation to the walk, I imagine that over time it will develop a reputation of its own which will attract people who are a little bit more adventurous and happy to travel the long distance from Melbourne to access the opportunity.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: report 2011–12

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to make some additional comments to those I made in the last sitting week on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development annual report 2011–12. Once again I acknowledge that the department has a huge set of responsibilities to provide a range of learning and development opportunities for Victorian children, young people and adults.

The report states that during 2011–12 the government introduced further autonomy for schools and principals, based on professional trust, by devolving the management of student support services and school networks. This is not what I am hearing from the Victorian Principals Association or from other principals I have had contact with in my electorate. They are saying that obtaining information from the education department is increasingly difficult due to the staff cutbacks and restructures, that morale within the sector is at an all-time low with schools facing increased uncertainty about the year ahead, that the restructuring that has occurred is not making it easier for people in education but is in fact making it much more difficult, and that there is a great deal of confusion out there due to what has been called greater autonomy, which has resulted in more cutbacks and less support being available for teachers. Meanwhile the Baillieu government continues to passionately defend its broken

election promise to make Victorian teachers the highest paid in the nation.

Another development that has principals concerned — and this has been raised with me right across my electorate of Northern Victoria Region — is the merger of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's regional offices, which has seen nine regions reduced to four. Not only do we have fewer regions but there has also been a drop in the assistance provided to schools and a decrease in resources such as health and safety personnel that can be utilised by schools when they have problems. Schools no longer have someone from their region they are able to contact. They used to have one person with responsibility for each region who they knew they could contact. Now there are only two people who have the responsibility for assisting and supporting our schools right across the state.

The Victorian education regional offices, as they existed previously, had been in place for decades. In the past they employed more than 800 staff to assist schools, including 74 senior advisers who worked closely with principals on school planning and performance issues. Under the Baillieu government the number of these regional offices have been reduced across the state to only 4.

Victorian government school principals, of which there are 1500-plus, say they have been left in the dark as to who they are supposed to report to or seek advice from. As I said, there is a great deal of confusion in our schools. Of great concern is how the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development can provide support and advice with such diminished capacity. The restructure has dislocated relationship building between schools and their support services. This is especially true in rural and regional areas. There simply are not the relationships that were previously built up between individual schools and staff from regional offices. People knew each other and knew who to contact. Staff in regional offices who supported principals, school councils and others at schools had a body of knowledge from many years of experience and were able to offer expert and timely advice and support to schools. Because of the restructuring, that has been significantly diminished, and this is causing a great deal of concern in our schools.

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — This afternoon I rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's report *Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine*

Entitlements. If ever there were a report of which it could be said 'read it and weep', it is this report. A number of its components I could refer to at very great length. Unfortunately I have only 5 minutes on this particular occasion. I could easily speak on this report for 6 or 7 hours, because if ever there were a lesson for us on how not to do something, it would be about how the former Labor government handled the allocation of electronic gaming machine licences. Even by Labor's standards it was one of the great stuff-ups of our time.

We find ourselves in a situation once again where Labor has shown us just how incompetent it is. Labor has shown us its total inability to handle money. It is something we have known for decades. Those of us who lived through the Cain and Kirner years remember only too well how those governments handled money. To call it flawed would be an understatement; it was deeply, deeply flawed. We remember the Bracks and Brumby governments; we remember myki; we remember the north-south pipeline; we can remember the subject of the report before me. There was one financial disaster after another created by those governments. Just at the moment the Gillard government in Canberra is making a very nice mess of Australian finances. That is a tragedy in itself.

In this report we can read about the low reserve figure. On page viii of the report's audit summary it is clearly stated that:

The decision to largely retain the approvals process was made before the reserve was set.

Further on in the report there is a description of the reserve being a lot lower than one would normally expect under the circumstances. Everybody in this house, everybody in this Parliament and everybody in this state knows that having electronic gaming machines is a licence to print money. You would expect that a government overseeing the auction of those licences would be upping the ante and would be keen to get as much money as it possibly could. What did we see from the Labor Party, the former government? The licences came in approximately \$3 billion under the odds. Read it and weep. It is truly one of the greatest financial stuff-ups of our time that the Labor Party should not be allowed to forget. The Victorian people should not be allowed to forget this in this term of government as we head towards the next election.

I weep particularly when I consider what could have been bought with the \$3 billion. It could have gone a very long way to building the east-west link, which we so desperately need in Victoria. I do not know if the opposition is currently supporting or opposing the east-west link. I am not sure if opposition members

are aware of their positions at the moment; they might like to tell us sometime. The amount of \$3 billion would more than cover the federal government's health cuts that have caused so much pain and suffering to so many in Victorian hospitals in recent times. In my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region there are so many things we could have spent that \$3 billion on. It did not happen, because the Labor Party cannot handle money, and it got it wrong again.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: report 2011–12

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to make a statement on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development annual report 2011–12. Unfortunately this government department, like many government departments in the last two years, has had a large amount of its funding cut by the current government, and this has caused it to reduce services in certain parts of the education area which were previously available to students in Victoria.

I will remind the house of a few of the cuts, because some of them seem to have been made a long time ago. In secondary schools the funding was removed for the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) coordinators. At the time a number of us spoke to school communities about their concerns and the effect this would have on the VCAL programs they were running. One school in Croydon is geared around VCAL, and that school community was very depressed about this huge cut to its funding and consequently its staff.

The next cut was to the School Start bonus, which provided a payment of \$300 to families with a child entering either prep or year 7. This lousy government cut the \$300 school bonus, affecting families that were struggling. This amount had helped parents to establish their young son or daughter in their new school, but unfortunately that funding was cut.

The education maintenance allowance, as we all know, was also cut. This is a real concern for school communities. On top of that a number of other cuts were made in areas such as reading recovery. It is endless.

Mrs Peulich — The intervention programs are still there.

Mr LEANE — Mrs Peulich talks about intervention programs, but the government even ripped off the

apples and oranges from schoolkids got on Fridays. This is where the government spin will come in later on. I am expecting that some of these programs will be reinstated by the government. It will say, 'Forget about the last three and a half years in which we ripped this service off you. We are now announcing the same program, but we will rebadge it and change it a bit and it will be called 'Ted's Fruit Friday' or whatever. School communities and members of the public will not be fooled when that happens.

As far as money allocated for new school infrastructure is concerned, it has completely ceased. The Auditor-General's report today makes it clear that this government has dropped the ball on maintenance in schools. Plans having a program around infrastructure and renewing schools are very important, and that is exactly what the previous government had. Some schools in Eastern Metropolitan Region had funds committed before the election, and the then opposition members — now government members — were delighted about those announcements made by the previous government. They aligned themselves with those announcements, got themselves into the local paper and said, 'We have been pushing for this, and it is being delivered', but then when they actually came into government they did not do anything about those schools that they had been pushing for. It was all a bit of a farce.

There was then the glaring commitment that Victorian teachers would be the highest paid in the country. That came straight from the Premier's mouth, and as much as the Premier can say he was verbalising a concept, the footage shows that it was actually said.

It is not all doom and gloom. Let us hope the government can lift its game, but we will wait and see.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: report 2011–12

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also wish to make some remarks on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development annual report 2011–12, and note that significant work has been undertaken by the ministers and also by the new departmental secretary, Richard Bolt. In particular I refer to the new strategic plan and the reorganisation of the department so that it sharpens people's capacity and enables them to deal with the litany of mess left behind by 11 years of a left-wing Labor government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs PEULICH — Communist, socialist — there is a variety of them. It does not matter where you are from; whether you are from Ukraine or Australia, the left can never manage money. They always leave a mess, and then a centre-right government is elected to fix up the mess. Indeed, our young visitor Alina from Ukraine is here to observe that the hues of the socialist party do not change from country to country. There is the legacy of Labor mess, and basically it is encapsulated simply by waste and mismanagement.

Mr Finn spoke about \$3 billion being wasted in the auctioning of the electronic gaming machine licences — money that could have been used six times over to erase the \$420 million backlog in school maintenance which has been reported in today's Auditor-General's report entitled *Implementation of School Infrastructure Programs, February 2013*. I look forward to speaking on the report in greater length at future opportunities.

But I also notice that in the reorganisation of the department one of the groups is the infrastructure and finance services group, and, boy, will they have some work to do. Indeed, despite some lack of clarity of context and history, this report is nonetheless interesting in some of the facts that it exposes.

The Auditor-General outlines that the department needs to address the ongoing underfunding of school maintenance as well as accountability in schools for efficient, effective and economic use of maintenance funds. Interestingly, the benefit of having been a member of Parliament for a while is that I remember when we had a very effective system for the management of school maintenance. It was called the physical resources maintenance system. When we were in government the last time we eliminated the backlog in school maintenance. A number of years later there are no longer any remnants of that system, which allowed for school maintenance to be graded on a scale of zero through to five and, without subjecting it to political manipulation, schools could reasonably expect to gain some funds for important maintenance works.

That is long gone, following the review by the government in 2005 and the rolling up of maintenance money into the student resources index or package, with there being no certainty that money set aside by the government of the day was being used for those purposes. Some schools do it very well, but many schools regrettably have frittered it away and there is no evidence of ongoing maintenance and certainly no accountability, which is confirmed by the Auditor-General's report today.

We have witnessed Labor's legacy in our schools. I have toured some of the schools and have been absolutely gobsmacked to see them in such disrepair. This report talks of 67 per cent of schools being in a fairly good state. The corollary of that, the other side of the coin, is that one-third of our schools are in poor or failed states. That is a huge number of schools and school buildings, accommodating a huge number of our students. The Victorian coalition government is attempting to come to terms with this maintenance concern and is working with schools and regions, and I am pleased to say — and the Auditor-General admits — that this is the first audit of schools' maintenance needs for a very long time. If you do not know what the needs are and have no system for administering it and for making allocations in an impartial and transparent way, then clearly you will create a mess, and this is yet another Labor mess that has been reported on today.

The Victorian Auditor-General also confirms that there are significant capital works and needs. Even though Labor tries to gloss over the issues to do with the Victorian schools plan and the Building the Education Revolution program, there are significant problems and implications as a result of poor implementation of federal funds in Victorian schools. I look forward to making further contributions on this very important theme of the future of education in Victoria.

Auditor-General: Addressing Homelessness — Partnerships and Plans

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make a contribution this evening on the Victorian Auditor-General's report *Addressing Homelessness — Partnerships and Plans* dated February 2013. I note that the report was tabled in Parliament during the last sitting week and that in response the Minister for Housing issued a media release in which she said the report told the tale of two governments. I am also happy to tell that tale. Firstly, I welcome the report because it is about the most vulnerable members of our community. It is about homeless people and people who are sleeping rough, and it is focused around governance and funding issues. It identifies the complexity of the issues that face governments of all persuasions and at all levels in tackling these difficult issues.

Page 11 of the report details initiatives by output area. The report examines a whole range of very difficult issues in terms of a number of initiatives in relation to the national partnership agreement on homelessness, such as elderly support, substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, children's education and other

initiatives with respect to the so-called outputs. I recognise the complexities involved in dealing with these difficulties, and it is important that these recommendations are taken on board. I also note the correspondence at the back of the report from the departmental secretary noting some changes that will be put in place, and I welcome all those things.

However, if the minister wants to play politics and put out a release in which she uses this report to attack the previous government, I point out that the Brumby government had a very impressive record on housing and public housing. It invested more than \$500 million over a two-year period to build new homes and deliver more than 4500 social and public housing dwellings in Victoria. At the time that was the single largest social housing commitment made by any state government and the biggest social housing building program since the 1956 Olympics.

Under Labor, Victoria led the way in tackling homelessness through innovative approaches such as the Common Ground supportive housing facility on Elizabeth Street, which is in my electorate and is just north of Melbourne's CBD. I was so proud when I attended the opening of that facility with the then Minister for Housing, the member for Richmond in the Assembly, Richard Wynne, and then the federal Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek. That was an amazing achievement, and I am so pleased it was accomplished. I also acknowledge the support of Grocon, which was a very big contributor to the project.

That \$500 million contribution came on top of the \$1 billion federal Labor investment which boosted Victorian social housing stock by a further 6500 units, and I am pleased that a number of those were in my electorate. However, that federal money is now coming to an end and the waiting list in Victoria is growing. There are more than 37 000 people on the public housing waiting list. We have had no investment at all from the Baillieu government to build new housing since it came to office. A very alarming discussion paper was released by the minister in which she has flagged possible privatisation, increased rents and limited tenure. The minister keeps refusing to rule out any of those possibilities. We have also had cuts to front-line staff who support the most vulnerable people in our community.

I end by saying that homelessness is a very difficult and important issue. If the minister wants to tell the tale of two governments, I could tell her that our government left a very proud legacy of public housing for this state. She has done nothing in this space to date, and it is time she lifted her game.

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

Auditor-General: *Addressing Homelessness — Partnerships and Plans*

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I too am pleased to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's report *Addressing Homelessness — Partnerships and Plans* dated February 2013. I will also speak on the two initiatives and what was formerly the initiative under the previous government, the national partnership agreement on homelessness (NPAH), as compared to the current government's initiative, the Victorian homelessness action plan 2011–15.

In her contribution Ms Mikakos spoke about the legacy of the previous government. This report reiterates that legacy and is quite damning in relation to a number of aspects under the NPAH, which commenced in 2008. In particular I draw to the attention of the chamber some issues referred to in the report, including meeting reporting requirements. Page xi of the report states:

The accuracy of the Victorian NPAH performance reporting cannot be assured. For 2009–10, DHS used an informal data collection system that relied on verbal reports. For all the years of NPAH-VIP, DHS has not verified any of the data, which is self-reported by funded service providers. For the years 2009–10 and 2010–11, reported figures are largely rounded to a 5 or zero. DHS has not provided an explanation for this.

I would not have thought that was a very comprehensive endorsement of the previous administration in the area of homelessness and various other areas for which the previous government was responsible. It is a complex area. Homelessness has a significant impact on many people within our community, and we could all do much more to address the issue.

The current Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, should be commended for her action. In contrast to the NPAH, the Victorian homelessness action plan concentrates on early intervention. The conclusion on page 30 of the report states:

As international and Australian evidence shows, it is socially responsible and more cost effective to intervene early to prevent people from becoming homeless. There is also a clear need to change approaches to homelessness services.

That is exactly what the minister has done. She has focused on early intervention and implemented that policy, and it is having real results. Page 30 of the report goes on to comprehensively outline various initiatives. I do not have enough time to go into the

overall detail, but it reiterates this government's approach to homelessness.

In her contribution on this report, Ms Mikakos spoke of the minister's media release. That media release talks about the differences between the initiatives of the previous government and this government, but it also reiterates what this report has said. There were a number of recommendations in relation to tackling this issue, and the media release states:

The department has already taken a number of actions to tackle the issues raised in the report, including:

a major restructure of the entire department undertaken in December last year, which will improve provision of services, accountability and responsiveness across the board;

establishing a dedicated performance, regulation and reporting unit to improve the department's reporting processes; and

an independent evaluation of the remaining NPAH initiatives, to be completed by June this year.

There were some issues with reporting in the former program. The department has accepted all three of the recommendations relating to the Department of Human Services in the Auditor-General's report. I would again like to commend Minister Lovell for instigating such a program. It is obviously having real results.

Mr Leane — Acting President, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: report 2011–12

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I rise to make some remarks about the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's annual report of 2011–12. In reference to Mr Finn's earlier contribution, thank goodness for time limits. To return to the annual report of the department, this report covers the period in which the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was required to find budget savings of \$481 million over four years. I acknowledge that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has a very challenging and rough road to travel as a result of these decisions of the current government. The budget savings required have now grown to some \$555 million, so the task confronted by the department is even more challenging.

According to the Minister for Education these savings were all going to be administrative. The minister made

that statement to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee for the relevant budget estimates period. Unfortunately, as many education providers now know only too well, these savings are being extracted from areas that are anything but administrative. One of the few exceptions, if anonymous reports in the media are to be believed, is that ministers believe their ministerial offices are not being adequately staffed and resourced. Perhaps that could come under the heading of administrative savings. However, for the rest there is a long list of cuts that have been made to the provision of education.

It is important both to set out the nature of the cuts to the provision of education opportunities and to acknowledge their impact. As we know, some \$48 million over four years has been cut from the Victorian certificate of applied learning, and across schools in my electorate the savings that are being extracted are regarded as anything but administrative. Anyone who has spent any time in schools talking to students, parents and teachers affected by these cuts knows that the absence of coordinators to line up positions for students with employers, and to ensure that they are able to take up those opportunities, has greatly affected and reduced the opportunities available to young people.

The School Start bonus has been removed from some 100 000 Victorian families. Also removed are 200 teaching and learning coaches, 45 literacy experts and 15 specialists who assisted Koori students. Many schools across Northern Victoria Region have Koori students, and those specialists made a real difference to the opportunities for those students. In addition to that, positions have been removed from regional offices of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. To put one example on the record, in Bendigo — another important regional centre in the region I represent — some 100 jobs have been removed. The people in those positions did important work in supporting schools across the region.

School capital funding has been almost halved this year, and I would like to draw attention to another report that I will speak about on another day. According to the Auditor-General's report on school infrastructure programs tabled today, as a result of the Victorian schools program and the Building the Education Revolution program the value of education assets has increased by 27 per cent from \$10.7 billion to \$13.9 billion. We know that neither of those programs exists any longer, due to the current government.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Snowy Scientific Committee: re-establishment

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The adjournment matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Water, Peter Walsh. Under the commonwealth Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 the Victorian and New South Wales governments must nominate two and four people respectively to the independent Snowy Scientific Committee. The committee has the important role of providing independent science advice on and oversight of the environmental flows from the Snowy River. The minister would be aware that this committee has been inactive for quite some time now. Ms Broad and I have met with a number of members of the committee and the community down in East Gippsland who are quite anxious that the committee is not meeting.

I submitted questions on notice about the re-establishment of the committee on 12 September last year. Five months later I am yet to receive a response as to whether it will be re-established. I flag this now for Mr Hall, who represents the Minister for Water in this place, and indicate that we would appreciate a response to these questions on notice. The responsible New South Wales minister, the Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has also failed to answer questions about when the committee will be re-established. The action I seek is that the minister meet with his Nationals colleague across the border, Katrina Hodgkinson, and that he then advise the house and me as to when the Snowy Scientific Committee will be re-established.

Barwon Water: groundwater licence reporting

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water, Peter Walsh. It is in fact a sequel to an adjournment matter I raised previously for him — that is, the failures in Barwon Water's monitoring of groundwater and surface waters in relation to the water it takes from the Otways. I first raised this matter with the minister on 1 May last year, and he responded rather rapidly on 7 June. After further investigation, however, I have discovered another issue which I wish to raise with the minister. In the minister's written adjournment reply he said the difference between the data reported by Barwon Water and that which is publicly available through government reporting, which is conducted by

Thiess, was really a case of minor differences between the two data sets, and he noted that the discrepancy did not alter the conclusion that Barwon Water was complying with the conditions on the licence, including extraction volumes, trigger levels, monitoring, impact assessment and reporting.

The issue I have with that is that one of the trigger levels in Barwon Water's licence is that when the creeks in that area reach critically low levels, the conditions on Barwon Water's licence require it to add supplementary flows. Now, the difference between the two data sets is the difference between 1 and 2 megalitres per day of flow, and while the minister might call that a minor difference it is actually a major difference when you consider that it relates to a river that is about to run dry. The difference between 2 megalitres and 1 megalitre or quite possibly no megalitres — depending on what is happening out in the real world — is significant, and it has significant impacts on river health.

In a few months Barwon Water will be putting together a new report which will cover the 12-month period subsequent to the period addressed by my original adjournment contribution. We have just come out of a January-February period of record low inflows to catchments, and although I do not have the data for these creeks for January and February, my guess is that they probably did run dry and that the conditions of Barwon Water's licence, given that it is sucking large amounts of groundwater out of the surrounding substrate, would require further investigation, so I ask the minister to do so.

Tourism: eastern Victoria

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, the Honourable Louise Asher. I note with interest her press release of 15 February titled 'Victoria takes honours at Qantas Australian Tourism Awards'. I was particularly pleased to see the Frankston Visitor Information Centre recognised as the country's best visitor information centre and taking top honours in that category. The press release states:

The nod to Mornington Peninsula from the prestigious national awards was backed up by the latest national visitor survey results that showed domestic overnight visitors have grown almost 24 per cent from the previous year, making it the strongest year-on-year growth than any other region in Victoria and ahead of the national average of 4.1 per cent.

That is fantastic. In that context I note Minister Asher and the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr Walsh, are heading off to the Gulf states as part of

the engagement strategy, which has already delivered significant economic dividends for Victoria. Previous trips to China, India and other parts of Asia and elsewhere made by the Premier and other government ministers have been a critical part of the government's economic strategy to grow markets, and I congratulate the government on that.

Noting the increased direct flight services between the Middle East and Melbourne, I ask that Minister Asher, as well as advancing the export markets for Victorian beef, grain, dairy products and other products, also advance the case for increased tourism, increased flight capacity and other initiatives to improve tourism between the Gulf, India and Victoria. The basis of this is that Victorian tourism, particularly in places such as the Mornington Peninsula and elsewhere in eastern Victoria, is world class and something I am sure would be of interest to the Gulf states. I ask that the minister advance the case not only for markets in relation to products but also for the tourism industry in eastern Victoria.

Housing: relocation request

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the adjournment debate. My matter is for the Minister for Housing, and I am pleased that she is in the chamber today. This is a delicate matter and one that was raised with the minister before by the member for Albert Park in the other place in a letter dated 7 February. I do not want to identify the particular people involved because the matter concerns a child who is in a difficult and vulnerable situation and has come to the attention of child protection services. In fact both mother and child are in difficult positions.

Partly as a result of some difficulties and partly as a result of child protection services, the child involved in this matter is attending school a long way from where he or she lives with his or her mother. This has placed a particular strain on the child and mother. There have been a number of attempts to try to resolve the issue through correspondence — and I refer to the letter of 7 February — and also through several approaches to the minister's office and the Office of Housing, but the situation is becoming increasingly difficult.

The issue has arisen because the school is located a long way from where the child lives and the mother cannot get the child to school using public transport. This is placing considerable strain on the child and the mother. I ask the minister to have a look at the correspondence that identifies the circumstances and the particular individuals. I ask that she take whatever

steps she can to review the situation and to ensure that there will be a relocation for the benefit of the child and the mother. I ask that the minister look at this matter quickly and get back to me via the member for Albert Park, who has been dealing with this situation.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal: regional hearings

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Attorney-General, the Honourable Robert Clark. It is a matter that came out of a regional business leaders forum I attended in Ballarat last Tuesday. These forums are conducted by Regional Development Victoria and are normally attended by the Honourable Peter Ryan, who is not only the Deputy Premier but also the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. It was unfortunate that the minister was not able to attend this round table. In his place was the Minister for Regional Cities, the Honourable Denis Naphine. I accompanied Minister Naphine to this leaders forum.

Of particular note at the forum was the number of Ballarat leaders calling for rotating regional Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hearings. Presently, despite the efforts of the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Matthew Guy, to inject more funding into VCAT to speed up the processing of cases and provide a planning advisory committee to help local councils deliberate in relation to cases before them that might well go to VCAT, along with the flying squads and spending a considerable amount of time in Western Victoria Region speaking with councils about how to provide zoning that will facilitate regional growth in those local government areas, the issue that still confronts local councils, developers and businesspeople who want to support and inject investment into regional growth is the planning process through VCAT.

There are planning committees of VCAT that sit in regional areas but not for any length of time and usually on a case-by-case basis. I want to raise this matter with the Attorney-General tonight and ask him to investigate whether there is a case for VCAT to sit in regional areas using rotating commissioners who are familiar with the region they are presiding in and members of VCAT who have some local knowledge and understanding of regional areas and issues that might confront them through the VCAT hearings. This could well be a pilot program in the key regional cities where we can fast-track some of the developments that have been stymied by the lengthy and arduous planning process through VCAT.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: regional offices

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, regarding the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's merging of nine regional offices into four. We already know tensions are escalating between the Baillieu government and the Australian Education Union, that morale is at an all-time low and that schools are facing increased uncertainty about the year ahead due to the drop in assistance provided by regional offices.

When the former regional boundaries were in place, more than 800 staff were employed to assist and advise schools. Under the Baillieu government the number of regions has been reduced across the state to only four. Obtaining information from the education department and from schools is increasingly difficult due to staff cutbacks and restructures. Four hundred jobs were cut from the education department last year. The state's 1500-plus government school principals say they have been left in the dark as to whom they are supposed to report to or seek advice from. Of great concern is how the education department can provide support and advice with such diminished capacity.

In my electorate of Northern Victoria Region what used to be the Hume region now extends down to the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Loddon-Mallee region is now known as the north-west and includes local government areas such as Moreland, Darebin and Yarra. The community interest between a regional city such as Mildura and Darebin and Yarra escapes me.

Principals quoted in an article by Geoff Maslen in the *Age* of 4 February this year have said that they doubt that staff in the regional offices can keep tabs on curriculum or student outcomes in individual schools and will instead go into a reactive mode. He said there is widespread fear among principals that schools are now on their own and will have to rely on their own networks for advice and support. Schools are doing more with less as the government's cost-cutting measures mean major changes to how schools provide for their students.

My specific request to the minister is that he reinstate the nine education regions so that schools receive the same quality of support that they received prior to these cuts and when they had sufficient staff to be able to provide them with support and advice. Principals are coping with not just less support from the education department but also smaller budgets, increased enrolments, mergers of the nine education regions and

the elimination of hundreds of regional and head office jobs. Senior advisers in newly merged regions in the north-west will now have to travel from Melbourne as far as Mildura. Previously advisers would look after 28 to 30 schools; now the number has jumped to 50.

Right Step program: funding

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter tonight is for the Minister for Community Services. It relates to the Right Step program, which is a diversion program aimed at reducing youth offending and recidivism in the Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston regions. The Right Step program is a joint initiative of Youth Connect, Victoria Police and the Moorabbin Justice Centre. It involves the referral of young offenders at risk of further criminal behaviour to this program provided that the police, the victim and the young person and their parents all agree.

The program involves eight weekly counselling sessions to identify reasons behind offending, which can involve things such as drugs and alcohol, family issues, mental health issues and so on. It involves a program of life skills, capacity building, information and referral, mediation and mentoring. The young person may also be asked to do community work or undertake employment or education or training. A report is then prepared by Youth Connect and is given to the magistrate. If the young person has successfully completed this program and the magistrate is satisfied, he or she can then dismiss the charges.

However, as I pointed out, it is not a mandated court-based diversion program because the legislation in this area is fairly limited in scope. As I said, it is one that has effectively been set up in an ad hoc way by all parties and stakeholders involved who are trying to address youth offending. I recently visited the Moorabbin Justice Centre and observed the program for myself. I had the opportunity to sit in on some of the cases to see how it operates and to speak to the local police and other youth workers. They gave very positive feedback about how the program is operating.

A report commissioned by Youth Connect and undertaken by RMIT University was delivered in October 2012. It found that since its establishment, a total of 100 young people have been referred to and have completed the Right Step program, and two-thirds of the program participants have successfully completed the program and have not reoffended and that more than three quarters did not reoffend within the first six months.

I urge the minister to respond soon to her own diversion discussion paper, which she released in August last year. In particular I urge her to consider the value of a program such as the Right Step program and to also consider funding the program. That will be a great way to tackle youth offending.

Responses

The PRESIDENT — Before I call on the minister I wish to advise the house of a letter I have received from the Minister for Mental Health, the Minister for Women's Affairs and the Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge. She wrote to me on 18 February. It is addressed to me and says:

I write regarding an error in my response of 27 November 2012 to an adjournment matter raised by Mr Eideh on 23 October 2012 regarding disability services.

In that response, I stated that I had personally written to the family about their concerns. I am now advised that the letter was not sent, and that the family had not received a letter from me personally on the matter on the date of my response. I have subsequently written to the family.

My department had, prior to the response, and has since, been in regular contact with the family, who have passed on their thanks to my department for addressing the issues raised by Mr Eideh.

I apologise for this error, and seek your advice on correcting the record.

I have read into *Hansard* the minister's comments. I understand the minister intends to provide an update to Mr Eideh with regard to the matter raised in October.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I have written responses to the adjournment debate matters raised by Ms Tierney on 30 August 2012, Mrs Coote on 13 November 2012, Ms Pennicuik on 12 December 2012, Ms Darveniza on 12 December 2012 and Ms Mikakos on 13 December 2012.

There were seven adjournment matters raised tonight. The first was raised by Mr Lenders for the Minister for Water, Minister Walsh, regarding the scientific committee on the Snowy hydro-electric scheme.

Mr Barber raised an issue for the Minister for Water regarding Barwon Water, particularly relating to water from the Otways.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events regarding the Frankston Visitor Information Centre and the award it was given at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. He asked that the minister, during the trade mission she is about to embark on, promote opportunities for increased

tourism from the Gulf, the Middle East and India, particularly highlighting the Eastern Victoria Region.

Mr Tee raised a matter for me, which I cannot comment on because, as he said, he did not identify the person and also because it would be totally inappropriate to comment because the child is under a child protection issue and anything that was said about it could identify that family. I would caution Mr Tee about raising these matters on the adjournment debate in the future because it is very difficult to deal with things that are subject to the child protection orders, and they have to be dealt with under the utmost security.

Mr Ramsay raised a matter for the Attorney-General regarding a matter raised with him at the regional business leaders forum in Ballarat regarding the possibility of regional rotating Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal meetings.

Ms Darveniza raised a matter for the Minister for Education, Mr Dixon, regarding the restructure of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and its regional offices.

Ms Mikakos raised a matter for the Minister for Community Services regarding the Right Step program.

I will pass all those matters on to the appropriate ministers.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.52 p.m.