

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 20 March 2013

(Extract from book 4)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry	The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC
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Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Disability Services and Reform	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr N. Wakeling, MP

Legislative Council committees

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

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

Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participating member

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr Viney. (*Assembly*): Ms Hennessy, Mr Newton-Brown and Mr Weller.

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

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

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

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

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

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella, Dr Sykes and Mr Watt.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

President: The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

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

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Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

Leader of the Opposition:

Mr J. LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

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

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Wednesday, 20 March 2013

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

The PRESIDENT — Order! I advise the house that I have received advice that the Environment and Planning Legislation Committee will be meeting this day, following the conclusion of the sitting of the Council.

PETITIONS

Following petition presented to house:

Nadrasca community farm: future

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

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

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

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria urge the government to facilitate an affordable arrangement that will guarantee Nadrasca community farm will remain in its current location so it can continue to provide great service to the community and grow.

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

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Report on Management of Freshwater Fisheries, March 2013.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Brimbank Planning Scheme — Amendment C155.

Maribyrnong Planning Scheme — Amendment C121.

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendment C213.

Melton Planning Scheme — Amendment C139.

Victoria Planning Provisions — Amendment VC85.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 30.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS**Frankston Hospital: funding**

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise today is about health services in South Eastern Metropolitan Region, specifically the performance of Frankston Hospital according to the data for the quarter from October to December 2012. After promising to govern with honesty and transparency, the government has finally released the quarterly health performance data that it has been sitting on while it played politics with the community's health services. After reading the data I can say that it is no wonder the government fell back on its well-worn strategy of blaming others and doing nothing. The data makes it clear that our hospitals are being crippled under the financial pressure being imposed by this government, a fact which no amount of feuding with the federal government or change of leader will change.

The statistics for Frankston Hospital are shameful. Of the 1408 people who waited for over 24 hours in emergency departments across Victoria, 655 — just under half — waited at the Frankston Hospital's emergency department. Over the same period the elective surgery waiting list in Frankston blew out to 1707, while ambulance transfer times fell well short of the 90 per cent target at just 59.8 per cent. Meanwhile category 2 patients are waiting longer and longer for surgery as the hospital struggles with the government's \$616 million in health cuts. Let us make no mistake: these figures are the result of this government's choices and are only getting worse, as revealed in the *Age* today.

The local members for Frankston and Carrum in the Assembly, Geoff Shaw and Donna Bauer, need to stand up for their communities and demand that Premier Napthine and the Minister for Health deliver their promises to expand Frankston Hospital and act now to restore the health funding that they have savagely cut. It is about time they understood that a media release or spin cannot actually treat patients.

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, in November 2012 I raised a matter during the adjournment debate and this morning I have received a response. The matter I raised was in relation to a particular street in Morwell, and it was raised with the then Premier, Mr Baillieu. The point of order that I am raising is that the response I have received is, in my

view, verging on contempt, and it is an extremely serious matter.

As a member of Parliament I raised an adjournment matter for the then Premier, and the response says that the then Premier will provide the information to the member for Morwell in the Assembly, Mr Russell Northe. I am happy to say that I am a fairly political activist in the chamber, but I treat the Parliament with some respect. Having just received this reply, which is why I have immediately raised it with you, President — and I know it might be a little bit unusual to raise an adjournment matter at this time — I find it an absolutely appalling practice that a government would respond to a member of this place who has raised an adjournment matter by saying that it would inform another member of the answer.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Viney is raising a point of order, but he is now starting to debate that point of order. I ask him to complete the issue of the point of order, which I understand from what he has said, but I do not want him to debate the point of order.

Mr Viney — President, in line with your advice — and I concur with it — I did not mean to transgress, but you might appreciate that it is a matter of quite serious concern to me. I raised a matter in the adjournment debate expecting a response, and the then Premier has advised me in writing that he intends to provide the information to Mr Northe and has asked him to write to the residents of this particular street.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, President, and on a point distinct from the member's point of order, I make the following comments. Firstly, clearly matters relating to the adjournment should be raised at the time of the adjournment. Secondly, it is clear that a response to an adjournment matter disposes of that adjournment matter, and it has been a longstanding practice that ministers are entitled to respond to adjournment matters in the way they believe to be appropriate. I do not know the substance of the specific matter, but that is not the point I am trying to make at this moment. I am trying to say that a minister's response to an adjournment matter is to be relevant but that beyond that the minister's response disposes of the matter.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On the two respective points of order, in the first instance any member is entitled to raise a point of order. It is probably unfortunate that it was raised after I had commenced a different part of the Council's proceedings today, that being members statements, and it may well have been best to wait until a more appropriate time in the

proceedings. In my view it is not necessary for a member to raise a matter about the adjournment as a point of order at any particular time during the day, although it is probably more apposite to raise it at that time and as part of those proceedings. In that sense what Mr Davis said is correct.

I also concur with Mr Davis's view that once an adjournment item has been dealt with by a minister, it is then completed. Ms Hartland has raised previously an issue with an adjournment item to which she had received, in her view, an unsatisfactory response, and I indicated on that occasion that I did not have any power under our standing orders to require a minister to provide an alternative response or a more comprehensive response.

I must say, though, on the point of order raised by Mr Viney — and Mr Davis has indicated that he is not aware of the substance of the matter Mr Viney raised in November — that I am concerned about the response Mr Viney has received, which I think is an extraordinary discourtesy to Mr Viney and by extension a discourtesy to this house. What Mr Viney says is correct: the response he has received is that information on the matter he raised in the adjournment will be provided to a member in another place but, by implication, will not be provided to Mr Viney, and that is an extraordinary discourtesy to this house.

The one action I will take is to write to the Premier's office and indicate that I am displeased with the response because I do not think it is an appropriate response, but that is as far as I can go to express my concern about it. I cannot persuade a minister to provide some alternative answer. As Mr Davis correctly said, the matter has been dealt with under the terms of our standing orders, but I do share Mr Viney's concern.

Mooroopna and Gowrie Street primary schools: student leaders

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — One of the most rewarding things you can do as a local member is to see the future leaders of your community being recognised. I did just that at two schools recently when I presented students at Mooroopna Primary School and Gowrie Street Primary School with their leadership badges.

These students are leaders in their schools and are great examples to younger students through their dedication to their studies. Both the Mooroopna and Gowrie Street communities should be proud to have so many outstanding leaders among their senior students.

Housing: West Heidelberg community meal program

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Last week I also visited the Bell Bardia public housing estate at West Heidelberg to see the wonderful work being done at the meals shelter. I was joined by community liaison committee chair Michelle Penson and Banyule City Council councillor Craig Langdon to meet those involved in the program.

This shelter is funded by the Victorian government and is the hub for a service that provides not only meals but also groceries for those in need in the greater West Heidelberg area. I would like to congratulate all involved in this service, which provides not only a much-appreciated meal but also a sense of community.

Max Lear

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — On a sad note, my home town of Shepparton said a fond farewell to veteran fireman Max Lear on Saturday. I was honoured to be amongst the hundreds of friends, family members and colleagues to attend the funeral of 73-year-old Max, who gave so much to our community.

Max devoted 56 years to the Shepparton Fire Brigade after joining as a volunteer in 1957, and he served as secretary of the brigade for 54 of those years. He was a well-known public figure who will be sadly missed, and my deepest sympathies go to Max's family.

Michael Henry

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Michael Henry led a very interesting life. He served in seminaries in the USA and Queensland for eight years and later as a Divine Word Missionaries priest for more than 20 years before marrying his wife, Maureen, with whom he had one son, Eugene.

Michael was involved with Defenders of Native Title (DONT) right from the start, as was I. The Higgins branch of DONT was formed and largely instigated by Michael. Michael was also involved in the formation of the Higgins Greens branch in 1999, which became the Stonnington branch in 2002. He worked tirelessly to garner and guide the enthusiasm of members and volunteers.

Michael was a key organiser in the 2006 and 2010 state election campaigns and provided advice, support and encouragement to me and other Southern Metropolitan Region candidates. He was overjoyed and proud when Erin Davie and Sam Hibbins were elected to Stonnington City Council last year.

About a year ago Michael had a melanoma removed from his leg, and just a few months ago he was diagnosed with systemic cancer. He died peacefully at his home on 22 February. Michael was a gentle force for good who had a profound influence over so many lives. He will be deeply missed. My thoughts and sympathy are with Maureen and Eugene.

Michael always signed off with the word 'Peace'. Peace, Michael.

Bushfires: Western Victoria Region

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to speak on the recent fires in my electorate, including a large fire in the Victoria Valley complex in the Grampians region and a grassfire west of Portland that threatened properties last week.

The fire in the Grampians region has now been put out after it burnt for more than two weeks covering an area of approximately 36 000 hectares. I have read numerous articles in the media regarding the extent of community support for the Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment, as well as support for all land and property owners affected, which has been very moving.

In fact it has been extraordinary to see in the public notices in a range of local newspapers, that community members have taken out classified advertising space to thank all of those who have assisted with protecting their homes from the various fires that have broken out across the region. Members of the community in various news articles have told telling stories about how various members of the community have gone out of their way to help save their property.

Firefighting resources deployed to fight the Grampians fire included over 300 personnel with over 100 firefighting vehicles and 12 aircraft working in the area, and there was also a major grassfire where residents at Cashmore were evacuated while water-bombing aircraft helped get control over a 127-hectare fire.

I sincerely thank everyone for their dedication and all the work involved over the fire season.

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

Schools: Doreen and Mernda

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak this morning about a need for another secondary school in the Doreen, Laurimar and Mernda

area in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region, an area in which I live and play sport and in which my children have been educated. As locals say to me, we are 10 years behind where we need to be in infrastructure and education facilities.

The Bracks-Brumby-Lenders government watched houses and suburbs grow. They watched the hardship of parents and ignored the needs of locals. Here we are in 2013, and local opposition members, such as the member for Yan Yean in the other place and Ms Mikakos in this place, are now feigning concern — politically driven concern — for the needs of our locals. Where have they been, and why have they been silent for the last 11 years regarding the needs of locals out there? We are 10 years behind on education facilities.

My neighbours, friends and our locals have needed another secondary school for a long time. I will continue to advocate for another secondary school, just as I did before I joined this place. I welcome the support of people like Lisa Muldoon and her team from the Doreen and Mernda Secondary School Alliance, which continues to advocate for a new secondary school. I was delighted to host them in a meeting with the minister's office so we could sell our case for another secondary school.

This government has already committed to a new primary school in Doreen South and a new kindergarten through the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Ms Lovell. We need another secondary school, and I will continue to advocate for our needs.

Domestic violence: prevention

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — Unfortunately the latest statistics have confirmed that the issue of domestic violence is still prevalent in our communities and in my electorate. It is truly frightening to consider that domestic violence, despite the increase in awareness and support to stamp it out of society, still occurs in homes across this state. I was alarmed to read that in the Moreland area the number of assault offences rose by 23.4 per cent in 2012 in comparison to the previous year.

Communities in my electorate — and I am sure in others across the state — have begun initiatives to raise public awareness of this concerning problem, and I commend them for doing so. Those communities and their leading members must continue to create an environment that supports those who find the willpower to speak out against their attackers and escape the abuse. Domestic violence is criminal and is an

extremely significant human rights issue in this state, and this country for that matter.

There is no room in my community for anyone to feel unsafe, especially in their own home, which should be an area of sanctuary. Nobody has the right to harm another person, especially a member of their family. It is important that people in this state continue to work hard to combat this frightening and very serious issue.

Employment: government initiatives

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The coalition government has a number of exciting job creation and economic growth-generating projects under way, perhaps one of the most significant of which is the expansion of the port of Melbourne. In my electorate Mr Guy, the Minister for Planning, recently announced a rezoning to facilitate the expansion of O'Connor's abattoirs in Pakenham, which will generate hundreds of jobs and see hundreds of millions of dollars invested in the outer south-east.

We are starting to see the benefits of the coalition government's economic strategy as its fiscal discipline bears fruit. The February job figures, about which we have heard nothing from the opposition, indicate the number of jobs in Victoria rose by 37 900 in February — a fantastic result for Victoria. Victoria created 53 per cent of the new jobs created in Australia in February. In that month Victoria was the jobs growth engine of Australia. This is very good news, because we know that despite the high Australian dollar and all the challenges that have come about as result of policy uncertainty from Canberra, the fiscal discipline and economic strategy of the coalition government is delivering jobs to Victorians. I wish the opposition would join us in getting on board.

Single parents: government support

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — Recent changes to the parenting payment are forcing families in Northern Victoria Region to live below the poverty line. Single mums in rural and regional areas in my electorate are bearing the brunt of these changes. Not only are they being forced onto the Newstart allowance once their youngest child turns eight, leaving them about \$100 a week worse off, but the opportunities for them to find jobs offering flexible hours, access to after-school care and public transport to and from work are minimal. Most of these services do not exist in many country towns.

The United Nations says changes to the parenting payment are contrary to some of Australia's

international human rights obligations and may violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. I have written to the federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Bill Shorten, calling on the federal government to reverse the recent changes.

The Napthine government must also urgently address the coalition's failure to support the employment of single parents, particularly by reversing the devastating cuts to TAFE. The federal government is right to argue that employment is the key to breaking the poverty cycle. Under the current state government, regional unemployment has risen from 5.8 per cent to 6.3 per cent, after two years in office, and a jobs policy is long overdue. But while we are waiting for jobs, single parents and children must be protected.

Warrnambool: fire brigade championships

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I was pleased to represent Deputy Premier Peter Ryan to launch the 130th state urban senior fire brigade championships in Warrnambool on 9 March, as I was two weeks prior, on 22 February, to open the state urban junior fire brigade championships, where 63 teams from 53 Country Fire Authority brigades across Victoria competed in Warrnambool. On both occasions I also represented the now Premier and member for South-West Coast in the Assembly, Denis Napthine, in whose electorate both championships were held. Denis Napthine is known as a hardworking, astute and passionate local member, who has always been a strong advocate for his community but also for regional Victoria. It was only a trade mission overseas that kept him away, as normally nothing happens in South-West Coast without Denis's fingers all over it. This does give me the opportunity to congratulate Denis Napthine on his elevation to Premier of Victoria. I am very excited that we have as a Premier a man from the land, from western Victoria, with a passion and vision for Victoria and the region — not unlike his country predecessor, Sir Henry Bolte, who was revered for his grassroots approach and vision as Premier.

The Warrnambool fire brigade celebrated its 150-year anniversary by playing host to the championships, as it did in 2004 for the juniors and in 2009 for the seniors. The championships provided an opportunity for firefighters to upskill and compete, as both individuals and as a team, with 53 other brigades in Victoria and 2 from Western Australia. This important culture of comradeship and upskilling is seen at its best on the fire ground, where we have seen these brigades at work fighting fires.

Regional and rural Victoria: government performance

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I read in the paper this morning that the Victorian government has a new-found interest in regional Victoria, but here is the thing. The new Premier, Denis Napthine, was a minister in the Kennett government. That government's approach was to sell schools, sell hospitals and, in terms of creating jobs, hope Melbourne's beating heart would push enough blood to the toenails to sustain them. That is how the former Liberal-Nationals government in Victoria described parts of Victoria beyond Melbourne. Ted Baillieu, while Premier, ignored regional Victoria, and Peter Ryan, the Deputy Premier, has been about as successful a minister in regional and rural development as he was in police and emergency services.

By contrast, the Bracks and Brumby governments always governed for the whole of the state. They invested in our schools and hospitals, rebuilt local economies, restored pride and confidence, re-opened rail lines that had been closed, put back infrastructure that had been flogged off and created tens of thousands of jobs. This cynical ploy by the Liberals and The Nationals will not work in regional Victoria, because people in regional Victoria know that it is only state Labor governments that govern for the whole of the state. They will not be fooled by this ploy, based on some new-found interest in the pendulum that we read about for the first time in the *Australian* newspaper this morning.

Regional rail link: construction

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — Last week I accompanied the CEO of the Regional Rail Link Authority, Corey Hannett, on a tour of the regional rail link project to gain an appreciation of the work currently under way. This is a landmark infrastructure project designed to remove major bottlenecks affecting V/Line passengers from Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. When completed, passengers on these lines will have a streamlined journey through the metropolitan system. Dedicated regional tracks are being constructed from the new West Werribee junction to Deer Park, and then along the existing rail corridor from Sunshine to Southern Cross station.

The project involves laying 90 kilometres of new track; removing two level crossings at Anderson Road in Sunshine; installing 13 road and rail grade separations through Wyndham Vale and Tarneit; and constructing a new rail bridge over the Maribyrnong River. Two new stations will be built at Wyndham Vale and Tarneit, and

the West Footscray railway station will be rebuilt. In addition the Sunshine and Footscray stations will be upgraded, with improvements also at the Tottenham station and two new platforms at the Southern Cross station.

Due to its massive size and complexity, six separate teams are working on the project. Over 5500 direct and indirect jobs have been created during construction, which is ahead of budget and is likely to be completed ahead of schedule. My thanks go to Mr Hannett for the opportunity to see firsthand the immense size of the project and the many people involved in building the regional rail link.

Media: federal government legislation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Our national capital is always an intriguing place, but no more so than today. As the glint of the caucus guillotine gleams in the autumn sun of Canberra, bookies take money on exactly who will be Prime Minister by 4.00 p.m. today. Will Julia Gillard survive? Will Kevin Rudd return? Will Simon Crean make the biggest comeback for 2000 years? My rank outsider is Dick Adams. We have not had a Prime Minister from Tasmania for years, and nobody can deny that Dick is a man of considerable substance.

While the Labor leadership circus is in full swing, what is left of the Gillard government is attempting the greatest attack on freedom in Australia since the bombs fell on Darwin. Australia is a land of freedom. Not only do we love our own freedom but we have always jumped to the defence of freedom whenever it has been under siege. For Senator Stephen Conroy and his government comrades to attempt to stifle a free media flies in the face of everything this nation stands for. Either legislation to regulate content of the media or this federal Labor government should go. Come to think of it, the best interests of Australians would be well served if they were both turfed out. Thousands have fought and died for our freedom. It must not be torn from us by the insanity of a desperate government on the mat for the final time. Our freedom as Australians is too important.

St Patrick's Day: school church service

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — It was with great pleasure that I joined with Catholic schools from across Victoria to attend a mass at St Patrick's Cathedral on 13 March to celebrate St Patrick's Day. It was a little early, but we wanted to make sure we got it right. We also celebrated the election of a new Pope. We devoted ourselves to following the teachings of His

Holiness, Pope Francis, which he will be presenting to us as leader of the Catholic Church for many years to come.

Media: federal government legislation

Mr ELSBURY — On 17 March I also had great pleasure in joining my colleague Bernie Finn, and federal senators Fifield and Ryan at a rally against the federal government's changes to the media laws which would see content being vetted by a government-sponsored office. It is something that has me very upset and worried in terms of the future of this country if we have a government office telling us what we can and cannot think. It is almost Orwellian — as some opposite continue to throw across the chamber at us.

City of Hume: tennis centre

Mr ELSBURY — I also had great pleasure in joining with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hugh Delahunty, to announce a new tennis centre in the city of Hume. A total of \$1.15 million is being contributed by the state government to this fantastic tennis centre, which will serve the north-western region of Melbourne. It is showing that the Liberal-Nationals coalition has its eye on the ball when it comes to the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Riverside Recreation Reserve: equestrian facilities

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — On Friday, 8 March, I had the pleasure of representing the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hugh Delahunty, at the opening of the rebuilt equestrian clubrooms at the Horsham Riverside Recreation Reserve. The new clubrooms replace facilities which were damaged beyond repair in the flooding of January 2011. The clubrooms are the base of four equestrian groups, both local and regional.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment supported the works with \$225 000 from the Flood Recovery Community Infrastructure Fund, with other financial assistance coming from Rural Finance, VicHealth, the Horsham Apex Club, the Commonwealth Bank and other generous donations from club members and the general public. I understand the water was 5 inches above the floorboards and outdoor furniture was deposited in surrounding bushlands, so to come back from this and to rebuild is a testament to the resilience of the community.

I particularly thank Ange Montgomery, secretary of the recreation reserve committee, for managing the project,

and Jan Hutton-Croser from Riding for the Disabled Horsham and Lee Schumann from the Department of Sustainability and Environment for their assistance. The Horsham recreational reserve has a special link to many Horsham residents, including 80-year old Alan Baudinette, who attended the opening and who has generously worked at the reserve for over 50 years, going back to his days as the captain of the premierships team of the now defunct Riverside Cricket Club. Mr Baudinette was joined by another member of that now defunct team, who was the leg spinner in that premierships side. He is my father, and he designed the nearby Riverside bridge, which has stood the test of time.

John Forrest

Mr O'BRIEN — Speaking of standing the test of time, I would also like to pay my respects to the retiring federal member for Mallee, John Forrest, another great west Victorian engineer, whose legacy through the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline will last for many years and be of great benefit to Wimmera-Mallee residents and those beyond for many years to come.

Victorian Honour Roll of Women: inductees

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Last Wednesday evening I was pleased to be in attendance with the Premier, Dr Denis Naphine, and other parliamentary colleagues — fellow Southern Metropolitan Region member Andrea Coote; former Minister for Women's Affairs Mary Wooldridge; current Minister for Women's Affairs Heidi Victoria; the member for South Barwon in the Assembly, Andrew Katos; the member for Mitcham in the Assembly, Dee Ryall; and a member for Northern Metropolitan Region, Jenny Mikakos — at the 2013 Victorian Honour Roll of Women event at Parliament House.

Twenty women who have contributed in various areas of expertise and leadership were recognised on that very significant evening. They came from a range of backgrounds, including health, science, justice, community services, arts, media, aged care, disability and social justice. I would like to mention a number who came from Southern Metropolitan Region. Ms Betty Amsden is an avid volunteer and philanthropist. Professor Edwina Cornish, whom I know extremely well, has provided inspirational leadership first as a pioneer in the biotechnology industry and subsequently as a transformational leader at Monash University, and I would like to personally congratulate her. Dr Catherine Crock has been a pioneer in the development and implementation of

patient-centred care. Professor Helen Herrman is a leader in the fields of psychiatry, public health and community mental health service reform. Dr Yvonne Ho was the first woman of Asian heritage in Australia to be dually qualified as a radiologist and nuclear medicine specialist; and Professor Susan Sawyer is the inaugural chair of adolescent health in the department of paediatrics at the University of Melbourne. These are all extraordinary women who are doing great work in their respective fields, and I would like to congratulate them all.

NADRASCA COMMUNITY FARM: FUTURE

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Naphine government acts to ensure the Nadrasca community farm maintains its operation into the future at its current location at Morack Road, Vermont.

I will briefly give a bit of background on this wonderful community facility in the eastern suburbs. Nadrasca farm provides people with disabilities access to work and recreation activities in what is otherwise an urban area. The community farm is an amazing place. The farm has quite a small entry off Morack Road. When you drive into the car park it is amazing to see the facility there. It is a fantastic facility, and an enormous amount of work has gone into it. As I said, it is a great facility for the whole community, and it has the potential to be even better.

There are long-term plans, which unfortunately have not been able to be progressed because of the uncertainty about that site. There is the potential to put a men's shed on the farm — we all know about men's sheds and what great facilities they are — and also to include even more activities for the local communities. Local schools work with and utilise the facilities provided by the Nadrasca farm, and there is the potential for more schools to get involved. Other Melbourne groups and services, including Yooralla, utilise this facility for activities. At Nadrasca people feel like they are in the middle of the bush. It is a great farm, with animals, in such a fantastic urban setting in the middle of the community.

The farm is located on the Healesville freeway reservation. However, VicRoads has declared the reserve redundant as a potential site for a freeway, so there is the possibility that packets of the land will be sold by VicRoads. That land could possibly be turned into residential zones with houses built on it as well as other facilities that could give a commercial return to the Naphine government.

As we know, VicRoads has had a great deal of funding taken away from its road maintenance programs by the Baillieu and Napthine governments — tens of millions of dollars. I can understand the department looking for sources of revenue wherever its officers think they can get it. I will come later to what the coalition committed to before its members formed government a couple of years ago.

In this instance what should happen is that a way forward should be facilitated, whether it be through another government department or whatever, to have a cheap lease with a peppercorn rent so that the people who use the farm can continue to do the great work that they are doing now and also have the opportunity to improve on the fantastic work that they are doing now.

As I said, the whole area of the Healesville freeway reserve is under question. Some people who are using pockets of that reserve now have been given the comfort of being told that they will be able to continue to use the reserve land into the future. That has not been the case with the Nadrasca community farm. No-one from VicRoads or the government has been able to give the people at the Nadrasca community farm the comfort of being told that they will be okay at the end of the process that is being undertaken at the moment. Suggestions have been made that assistance may be given to relocate in the never-never to an isolated area that is far from being guaranteed. That is far from giving comfort to that group.

It is incumbent on the government, whose members are saying that it has a new direction with a new Premier, to guarantee that the people at the Nadrasca community farm can use the area, continue to do the great work that they are doing and improve on it into the future. This will alleviate the stress on the people who work there and the community around the farm. More than 2000 signatures have been put to a petition to have the place maintained, and more are coming. Every time I engage with someone on this particular issue they are nothing but supportive of the community staying at that particular place.

I know that there have been discussions among certain people who have said that the government needs a return for its investment. How about giving the community a return for its investment? How about the government doing the right thing and showing that it understands that that farm is an important cog in the community, where, as I said, people with a disability can actually gain employment in an open area? Members know that my background is that I used to work outside — and I loved it. Members should not pigeonhole any other group of people and say that they

should all enjoy working inside rather than having the great opportunity to enjoy being outside when earning their dollars.

It should be very easy for government members to support this motion. One of the reasons for that is that before the government came into office the member for Bayswater in the other place, who is now a member of the cabinet — —

Mrs Coote — Fabulous!

Mr LEANE — I hope she is fabulous. I hope that she goes to the cabinet and says, ‘I gave a commitment to this land’. I will read now the commitment that the member for Bayswater gave and show how easy it would be for this land to be maintained as the site of the Nadrasca community farm. I have here a copy of a document that was sent out by Mrs Victoria to all locals. It is headed ‘My local priorities for Bayswater district’. There are seven dot points. One of them says:

Preserving the proposed Healesville freeway corridor as public parkland for the benefit of all.

Mrs Victoria committed to doing that if a coalition government was elected in November 2010. If that is not enough, a personal letter from Mrs Victoria addressed to a constituent in the east — I will not say her name — in Wantirna, outlines:

... the Liberals’ clear plan for, and commitment to, families ...

It talks about duplicating roads. I will not be nasty about it, it talks about a few things, but there are only three dot points in this letter. The third one says:

Preserve Healesville freeway reserve as open space.

So the job is done. It should be easy for a government member to get up and say, ‘Yes, we have a new minister, and we will honour her call when she goes to cabinet next sitting week and says that she promises to do that. That would be easy for her to do.

Mrs Coote — What did Kirstie Marshall do?

Mr LEANE — If government members cannot see for all the right reasons that this particular facility should stay where it is, should be supported in the future and should be funded to be improved — not moved but improved — then they could at least honour their colleague’s election commitment. They can say whatever they like about me and they can say whatever they like about Kirstie Marshall, the former member for Forest Hill. They can say whatever they want, but anything short of saying that they support this motion

would be an indictment of the future of their new Premier and their new government.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I welcome the opportunity to respond to Mr Leane's motion, which states:

That the Napthine government acts to ensure the Nadrasca community farm maintains its operation into the future at its current location at Morack Road, Vermont.

It is most regrettable that Mr Leane has introduced this motion to the house and is attempting to obtain a quick political point by scaremongering and conducting the debate in the manner in which he is.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a colleague in the other place, the member for Forest Hill, Mr Neil Angus, who has been a fantastic local member. He is a man of high integrity and high capacity, and I pay tribute to the way in which he has been a part of the process that this government has put in place in relation to the redundant Healesville freeway reservation. I had the pleasure of walking the entire route of the redundant Healesville freeway reservation with Mr Angus, and he highlighted to me the many issues with Nadrasca. He told me just what a fine institution and a fine place it is, but there are many issues associated with the now-redundant freeway reservation. Without being too political about this, it is interesting to note the way Mr Angus has gone about dealing with this issue in comparison to the previous local member, Ms Kirstie Marshall. Mr Angus has engaged in a very detailed discussion with the relevant ministers and with his community about the future of this very important piece of land. I am sure you would agree, President, that this is a very important piece of land, and Nadrasca is one of the important places in this broader piece of land. It is not very often that a piece of land such as this is made redundant from a road sense in a location like this one.

The government has put in place a very clear process. It is undertaking a structure planning process in relation to the redundant land that is the Healesville freeway corridor. As part of that process there has been significant community engagement and significant community consultation. Much work has been done in relation to conducting flora and fauna studies and appointing a strategic land use planning consultant to work on a structure plan, as well as interviewing all the major stakeholders to understand the range of interests involved in the process and the project. Significant consultation with the broader community has been conducted by both VicRoads and Mr Angus who, as I say, is an excellent local member. The City of

Whitehorse, as the relevant local municipality, has also been actively engaged in this process.

This is a significant parcel of land. There are many communities with interests in this parcel of land and many views about what should happen to it. My colleague Mrs Coote will speak more fulsomely about this, but I acknowledge that Nadrasca is a wonderful place — a place that has a significant interest in this process.

The government has set a very clear process in place — —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — It is a process the previous government did not have the courage to embark upon.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Mr Leane and Mr Tee love to scaremonger and raise issues. Regrettably, the previous government did not undertake this process. This process has been done with clarity and with community consultation. There have been a range of forums and workshops, and the government is progressing the structure plan process. From that structure plan process community feedback has been and will continue to be received. We anticipate that the structure planning and planning scheme amendment processes will be completed by the end of this year.

The government is undertaking a thorough, clear, transparent process in relation to what is now the redundant Healesville freeway reservation. We are undertaking a process the previous government was too scared to undertake, could not be bothered to undertake or did not get around to undertaking. In contrast with all the talk from Ms Marshall and despite the silence from the two members who purport to represent the eastern suburbs in this place, we are going through a very detailed, transparent process. As I say, all the key stakeholders have had significant opportunity to have input into this process.

Mr Leane — So you're going to sell the land. Is that what you are saying? You're going to sell the land.

Mr O'DONOHUE — If we were doing anything but the process we are undertaking — a clear, transparent process that gives the community the opportunity for input — I am sure there would be howls from the opposition: 'You're not conducting a proper process. You're not doing the job the way you should be. It should be a clear, transparent process'. Here we are conducting a clear, transparent process, and the

Labor opposition is taking a cheap shot. It is very regrettable that the house is debating such a motion today about such an important issue and the Labor Party is seeking to score cheap political points.

I again pay tribute to Mr Angus for his detailed community involvement, his lobbying within government about the Healesville reservation and the future of that reservation, and his engagement with the City of Whitehorse. As I say, the government has set down a very clear and transparent structure planning process. On that basis the government opposes Mr Leane's motion.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I have been listening, quite fascinated, to Mr O'Donohue's contribution to this motion. I am not sure that the staff or the users of Nadrasca are aware of the government process, because when I rang earlier this week to have that conversation and find out for myself what was happening it did not seem to me that it was understood that there was any consultation. I therefore have a series of questions, and I will write to the minister asking for the answers to be put to me in writing. Maybe in her contribution Mrs Coote could also outline the answers to the questions about exactly what the consultation process is, when the meetings occurred, how many people attended and how it was done — all of those things. My experience so far of this government's consultations has been that they usually leave a great deal to be desired.

I think the really important thing is: when will this service know its fate? Is it going to have to move? What is going to happen to it? After reading the information and having spoken to the service earlier this week, I feel it is quite clear that this is one of those unique services that are actually offering really good outcomes to the people who use them and that there is really good community engagement with the service and a lot of community support. Reading from the information that was sent to me, I note that the Lions Club of Blackburn North has organised all the electrical works, the Rotary Club of Forest Hill has installed an irrigation system, the Good Guys of Nunawading have contributed to the renovation of a wheelchair-accessible toilet block and the purchase of a tractor and equipment to enable maintenance and development of the farm, ExxonMobil has planted 1000 trees and Scope, Yooralla and Melba Support Services — a number of services — are using the site.

It is quite clear that this site is well regarded by people who use the service. One of the things I was quite interested in, speaking to the service on the phone, was that it also wants to have that engagement with the

local community, especially around the issue of community garden plots. I understand there is a relevant two-to-three-year waiting period in the city of Whitehorse, so this would be a really good opportunity for the local community to be involved with this site, as well as the people who use the service.

I would also like to point out to the government that there is precedent for dealing with reservations that were formerly for freeways and the like. The precedent is Edgars Creek in Coburg. I was first involved with this issue in 2006. This is a piece of land that had been under the care and maintenance of the Moreland City Council by that stage for some 30 years. It is an amazing piece of land in the middle of Coburg. After a long and protracted campaign, the land was eventually handed over to the council by the previous government, and it is now being used as open space. Clearly there is a good precedent for this to happen. While that was a long and protracted process — the land has only recently, in the last six months, been handed over to council — it can be done if there is good will.

To my mind Nadrasca provides a much-needed service, and it should have goodwill extended to it. It can engage both people who use the service and the general community, and also a lot of local industries. It is a service that should be proud of what it is doing, and it deserves the government's support. The Greens will be supporting this motion.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — It gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity to talk in this chamber about an organisation that does so much good within its community. That organisation is Nadrasca, and I will come to it later in my contribution.

At the outset I would like to refute something that Mr Leane said in his contribution. Just to set the record completely straight, we have in our new Premier, Dr Napthine, one of the greatest advocates for disability services that this state could ever have. When Premier Napthine was the Minister for Youth and Community Services he was highly regarded. The sector still counts him as a champion of disability services, and I take umbrage at the inference from Mr Leane that the Napthine government does not appreciate, understand and support disability services. That is completely and utterly fallacious.

This is a complex issue because, as Mr Leane and Ms Hartland have said, it involves an important local organisation. Ms Hartland and Mr Leane understand that communities are made up of many people, with many interests and many demands, and that is one of the issues here.

Why was this process undertaken by VicRoads? As Mr O'Donohue said in his excellent contribution, if VicRoads had, without public consultation, come out and basically declared what the site would be used for, Ms Hartland and Mr Leane would have been the first members to be screaming. I will come back later to answer Ms Hartland's concerns about what meetings have taken place, when and where. However, Mr Leane is using vulnerable members of the community and misleading them.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs COOTE — Let me tell you, I am a huge supporter —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs COOTE — Through you, Acting President, I defy Mr Leane's comments. I suggest that as I have just co-written the state's disability plan I am absolutely a total and utter advocate for the disability sector. I suggest Mr Leane checks with the disability sector, because I am sure that is exactly what he will hear. Mr Leane should not be abusing people who have not got an opportunity to be here to say what it is that they need to say.

Mr O'Donohue set out in a very rational and well thought-through way what some of the issues are. It is important to get the issues right. I reiterate again what we are talking about. VicRoads has completed a strategic review of the Healesville freeway reservation and determined that the section of the reservation between Springvale Road and Boronia Road is no longer required for future road purposes. A structural plan is being developed to guide the future use of the reservation.

It is important to know what consultation has taken place and how this process has evolved. There has been extensive community stakeholder consultation, including a deliberative forum — and I will come back to that in greater detail later — to determine the broad community view on the recommended principles in the structural plan. Community workshops have been held to seek the local community's input on the current use of the reservation and the priority for future use. The results of stakeholder consultation will be used to develop a vision for the reservation which will feed into the structural plan. In case members did not really get it, it is about a consultation process with the stakeholders who are going to contribute to the structural plan. That includes Nadrasca and all the organisations that support it, and it also includes people within the community. That also implies that it includes

other members of the community. The vision will be presented to the community through the community consultation workshop which is proposed to be held in May. That is just over five weeks away.

It is interesting to also understand that the City of Whitehorse is lobbying the state government for complete open space throughout the reservation and is encouraging the local community to do the same. There have been concerns expressed by some members of the community in relation to possible through roads, particularly at Stanley Road, and the possible relocation of the Nadrasca farm. The structure plan and the associated planning scheme amendments are to be completed by December this year. The Minister for Planning has agreed to be the planning authority to implement the amendments to the Whitehorse planning scheme and the Department of Planning and Community Development is actively involved in the structural planning process.

I would like to address some of Ms Hartland's concerns about the consultation process and what the community of Nadrasca did and did not know. First of all, there was a deliberative forum, and it was conducted to obtain a broad community perspective on what is a reasonable balance of development and open space within the reservation. The forum comprised 30 local representatives and 30 representatives from other parts of the state. As a result of the deliberative forum and the local community consultation, it is clear that there is a very vocal minority who have a vested interest in the reservation being completely open space. That has to be kept in mind when we consider what this discussion is about. I am sure Ms Hartland would be very disturbed to hear — and in fact it would be a conflict for Ms Hartland when she has her Greens political hat on — about public open space vis-a-vis what is happening at Nadrasca, because how would she explain to the Nadrasca community that she would have to negate what it was trying to do because her basic policy is for public open space. It would be an interesting development and argument to have.

Recently a group called Friends of the Healesville freeway reserve has been lobbying for this reservation to be completely open space. Perhaps Ms Hartland knows about this, but she neglected to talk about it in her contribution. The group has delivered a petition of over 4000 signatures to the local member, Neil Angus, the member for Forest Hill in the other place. That is 4000 people who want completely open space, and that is important to understand. There are various groups that have an interest in this particular piece of land.

VicRoads is developing three land use concepts that will be the subject of further consultation prior to the development of the structure plan. Each of those three concepts is intended to provide the same financial return to the state but will identify possible trade-offs that the community can make in terms of infrastructure — for example, shared place, shared path and public open space. The need to obtain reliable estimates of infrastructure costs and land sale values has been delayed until the next round of consultation, which is expected in about five weeks, as I said.

It is important to understand not only those supporting Nadrasca farm but all stakeholders involved in this issue. It is vitally important to give them a voice, to let them have their say and to thrash it out in a public, transparent and open way, which is what this government is all about. It is very important. Nadrasca is not the only stakeholder in this debate. As important as Nadrasca is, it is not the only stakeholder involved in this decision.

Going back to Ms Hartland's contribution, VicRoads recently met with Nadrasca — perhaps it forgot to tell her this on the phone — to discuss the future location of the Nadrasca farm. Nadrasca is now investigating the possibility of alternative locations that may suit its requirements, and VicRoads has arranged for the valuer-general to assess the value of its current site in March 2013.

It is a great pity that Mr Leane, whose motion this is, is not bothering to listen to this debate, because I am sure he would learn things too. It could be of value to him in helping to lobby on Nadrasca's behalf. Mr Leane may bring this up in Parliament, but he is obviously not interested enough in Nadrasca and its future to listen to what is being talked about today.

It is extremely interesting to read from Nadrasca's news sheet. It is a fabulous newsletter, and I will come back to more discussion about it a little later. In the summer 2012–13 issue of *Nadrasca News*, issue 29, which talks about dignity, diversity, community and industry — it is celebrating 45 years, which is a great contribution to the state — the executive director said:

In 1991 Nadrasca established the farm at the back of Catnap (the Nadrasca cattery, opened in 1986) and Shrubs and Things (a plant nursery) on a VicRoads site west of Cadbury on Canterbury Road. The farm provided an environment free from stress and tension for people attending Nadrasca's day services. It empowered them to freely express themselves, without the constraints of bricks and mortar.

This is the key to why it is such a successful organisation, but there is a point I want to bring to Mr Leane that I think he will find particularly

interesting. In July 2004 VicRoads was under the Bracks government, and this is what the executive director of Nadrasca pointed out:

In July 2004 VicRoads gave Nadrasca notice to vacate the site, offering two other sites. Nadrasca chose the Vermont site, close to our other day service, and established another garden-farm.

My point is that Mr Leane forgot to talk about the process and how Nadrasca went through it all.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mrs COOTE — I will pick up that interjection. Mr Leane says there is a precedent, and the precedent here is —

Mr Leane — I didn't say there is a precedent; I said there is a big road there now.

Mrs COOTE — I misunderstood Mr Leane; I thought he said there was a precedent.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! Members should refrain from having discussions across the chamber.

Mrs COOTE — There is still a precedent; it was moved. Nadrasca was moved by the Bracks government in 2004. The reality is that we would all agree that it was a very positive move, but there was a move nevertheless. This is an important element to understand.

There have been a number of public articles about this, and some of them, as only journalists can do, are misleading. However, there are a couple of interesting things I would like to read into *Hansard*. One is an article in the *Weekly Review Eastern* of 13 March this year, which says:

VicRoads has had discussions with Nadrasca to gain an appreciation of their concerns and future aspirations and will offer assistance to help them find an alternative location and achieve a secure future if they are required to relocate ...

It is here in writing in the community. I would also like to talk about the response of the Minister for Roads to an adjournment matter raised by Mr Leane. The minister said:

VicRoads has been consulting with Nadrasca to understand its needs and I can assure you that due consideration is being given to the operation of Nadrasca farm in the development of the structure plan.

Once again, there has been extensive consultation between Nadrasca and VicRoads.

Mr O'Donohue spoke about the fabulous lobbying that Neil Angus, the member for Forest Hill in the other place, has been doing on behalf of Nadrasca. Mr Angus is a champion for Nadrasca and has been very supportive. It is a pity that he was misquoted in an article in today's *Whitehorse Leader* headed 'Freeway reserve hot spot' with the subheading 'Calls to keep it as open space'. The article says that it was an election promise. It is important to understand what parts of this road we are talking about when we are discussing things involving Mr Angus. As Mr Angus has said, before the state election he pledged to fight development that was not suited to the site. I refer to an article in the *Weekly Review Eastern* of 13 March which quotes comments made by Mr Angus. The article says:

But Forest Hill Liberal MP Neil Angus criticised Mr Leane for politicising the issue while VicRoads is in the middle of community consultation about the future of the freeway reserve.

VicRoads completed its first round of community consultation last year and in the coming months it is expected to release a range of proposals that will be open to public comment.

'There's a very clear, transparent process under way, and it has been well documented and available to everyone', Mr Angus said.

'For Mr Leane — in the middle of that process — to try to muddy the water and introduce a petition, I don't think it's helpful'.

Mr Angus said he was 'confident' VicRoads would not overdevelop the freeway reserve site. 'Ultimately it's the government's decision', he said.

As he said, that is the issue. I will take a moment to talk about Victoria under the jurisdiction of the Baillieu and Napthine governments and about its excellent work with the disability sector. As parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Community Services and Minister for Disability Services and Reform, Mary Wooldridge, I can say that some extraordinary work has been done. I am absolutely delighted to work with the disability sector, and I get an enormous amount of joy and pleasure from working with them. By working together we are achieving some great things.

The Disability Employment Advisory Service (DEAS) is an excellent service. It looks at the strengths of people with a disability and at what they can do, not at what they cannot do. It is a huge contributor to the Victorian community. The Disability Employment Advisory Service is an employment program funded through the Victorian government which aims to support people with a disability seeking new employment within the Victorian public service (VPS).

It also assists people with a disability who are already employed by a government department to remain in positions and continue to grow professionally. It assists hiring managers and other staff within the VPS to welcome job seekers with a disability and to support existing staff with a disability.

DEAS was established in 2009 to address the low representation of people with a disability employed in the Victorian public service. It is funded to the tune of \$227 671 per annum through contributions from all Victorian government departments, and it is run by Randstad, an international recruitment and employment agency. The Office for Disability manages the contract on behalf of the Victorian government. An evaluation of DEAS is currently under way to determine the extent to which the program has achieved its objectives in an efficient and effective manner and to inform ongoing policy and program direction in relation to employment pathways for people with a disability.

The state disability plan, which I have just co-authored with the minister, has for the very first time joined together all government departments. People from the department overseen by the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, have been great supporters of this whole plan. The plan encourages cooperation across government departments. Part of that is to have disability action plans whereby each of the departments encourage and work with people with a disability. The sector has been completely supportive of this. For the first time the sector feels that it has a program that goes across all government departments. The ministers have taken on the responsibility for this, as have the departmental secretaries. It is a terrific result, because for the first time we are going to see a plan that actually works across government. It is an important thing to do, and I encourage the people who are in the gallery today to have a look at it.

However, we also have another initiative — that is, the transition to employment (TTE) initiative. The current approach of the department in supporting young Victorians with a disability who are leaving secondary school is through the Futures for Young Adults program. That provides support to young people for up to three years to develop the skills and connections to successfully transition into adult life. I know that Nadrasca is able to do a lot of that, and the farm work is part of it.

The objects of the transition to employment initiative are to support young people to develop work and industry-related skills and qualifications, improve access to employment opportunities for young people with a disability, increase the participation rates of

young people with a disability in the workforce and build the capacity of young people with a disability to independently participate in the community.

Fundamentally, TTE recognises and promotes employment as a valid career goal for young people with a disability and increases a person's social and economic independence, which is exactly and precisely what Nadrasca does.

If we look at some of the Nadrasca brochures, we see the by-line is 'Dignity. Diversity. Community. Industry.'. I refer to some of Nadrasca's industry services, not just at the farm but in other areas as well. The Nadrasca brochure says:

Let us be the solution. When quality, service and price count!

Nadrasca does contract packing and assembly, commercial printing and mailing, and timber assembly of pallets and crates. It also has a bookshop. Nadrasca does some excellent work. I have been there and seen it. For example, in the recycling and refurbishing area they strip and sort, refurbish for reuse and rectify, rework, recover and reclaim things. In testing and tagging they do visual inspection and testing, product tagging and electrical circuitry. In the supported employment area there is training and support to develop work ethics and work skills required in an industry setting. Those are some of Nadrasca's programs.

Nadrasca provides a whole range of community options. It has been providing facilities and support programs for adults with a disability since 1967. Some of the community options it provides are tailor-made programs for personal and communication development and independent skills enhancement; further educational opportunities, such as a community house, computers, human relations and money skills; prevocational skill development, such as car washing, gardening, vocational training and work experience. Then there are leisure and recreational activities, with bike riding, bowling, bushwalking, cricket, golf, music and movement. There are performing arts activities, including arts and craft, drama, jazz ballet, mosaic, music therapy, theatre works and woodwork. The community garden program provides an area where people with a disability in partnership with the community can develop garden and recreation areas.

Nadrasca also works with shared supported accommodation, recreation programs, lead tenancy and independent living, and offer a seniors program and dementia service. Nadrasca is an extraordinary organisation. Its farm is a very important part of what it offers in relation to skills development.

Mr O'Donohue gave a valid outline of why we will not be supporting this motion. The issue is complex and is not just about Nadrasca. In their contributions Mr Leane and Ms Hartland also recognised the fantastic service Nadrasca provides, what a marvellous organisation it is and some of the fantastic people who are involved with it. I am sure there will be a solution to this. I am sure VicRoads will find a solution by working closely with all the stakeholders, including Nadrasca.

It is premature to have this motion debated here. I think it is misleading. It is a great pity that Mr Leane did not take the opportunity to work more constructively with VicRoads and Neil Angus instead of engaging in cheap political point-scoring.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution on this motion. I start by acknowledging that Nadrasca does a great job. It is a farm which provides engagement and opportunities for employment. It is about providing dignity to people. I congratulate the farm, and I know that many from Nadrasca are in the gallery today. I welcome them, congratulate them and thank them for coming out and taking a stand for what really is a way of life.

Having said that, I am concerned about the hypocrisy of those opposite. On the one hand they stand there, hands on hearts, and advocate for disability services, saying they are the champions of the cause. But when it comes to action, making a contribution and actually standing up and helping people, they are nowhere to be seen — they walk away. They stand behind glossy brochures, policies and consultation forms, but when it comes to actually doing something they are nowhere to be seen. People see that hypocrisy for what it is. They see that there is no point having a policy on which, when it comes to people's lives, the government does not deliver. When it actually matters — when the rubber hits the road — those opposite are not there; they are nowhere to be seen. What we have learnt today is that there is no comfort for people at Nadrasca. There is no joy for people in that community or indeed the community more broadly.

This is not a complex issue. Those opposite dress it up as some complex issue, but it is not. The motion is very clear, simple and obvious: the Napthine government must act to ensure that the community farm maintains its operation at its current location into the future. It is a very simple ask. In fact those on the other side of the chamber themselves previously thought it to be a simple issue. When she was campaigning for votes Mrs Heidi Victoria, the member for Bayswater in the

Assembly, said it was a very simple issue. She said the Liberals' clear plan for and commitment to families would preserve the Healesville freeway reserve as open space.

Mrs Coote says there are different views and that Nadrasca is a vocal minority. That is not the case. Nadrasca is lined up with the community, and the community as one wants to keep this as open space. Indeed the local MP, Mrs Heidi Victoria, is now, as Mr Leane eloquently put, a member of cabinet, where she can have some influence in these matters. She said very clearly that this is not a complex issue. She said very clearly that she was committed to preserving the Healesville freeway reserve as open space.

Mr Angus, the member for Forest Hill in the Assembly, when chasing votes made the same promise. He promised to keep the reserve as open space. That was his election commitment and promise to the Victorian people. He sought votes on that basis and was eventually successful in being elected. In March 2011, once he had been elected, he told the local newspaper that resolving the issue surrounding the Healesville freeway reservation was his priority for that year. His commitment for that year was to resolve the issue. That was in 2011. At that stage he thought it was a simple issue and he made a commitment. It was not seen as a complex issue, and that is why he said, 'We are going to resolve it this year'.

Mrs Coote says the member for Forest Hill is a champion for Nadrasca. He is not. How can he be a champion for Nadrasca when he says, 'I have this simple priority for 2011: I am going to resolve this issue', and then does nothing? There has been no outcome or change. The only thing that has happened has been a growth in uncertainty and fear in that community. In his contribution Mr O'Donohue said that we on this side are stirring up the fear. I advise Mr O'Donohue that we are not. That fear comes from members on Mr O'Donohue's side who promised to resolve this simple issue, got elected and then walked away from their commitments. Mr Angus said he was going to resolve it in 2011. That was his priority, and then he walked away from it. Nothing happened in 2011, nothing happened in 2012, and now we are into 2013. There is no reason for this delay.

Mrs Coote talked about the consultation. She talked about the Healesville freeway reservation renewal project and the community consultation report that came out in November 2012. There was consultation with the community. Members of the community do not want housing on that site. They do not want

Nadrasca turned into a housing estate. That is what they say. That is what that report says very clearly. It says:

... participants were asked to discuss the set of housing design principles at their tables ...

And the response from the participants was this:

The ability of participants to enter into a detailed conversation about the content of —

housing —

was ... overshadowed by an inability or reluctance to talk about housing ...

The community does not want it. Members of the community did not want in 2012, they did not want it in 2011, and they do not want it now — and that is what the consultation shows. The hypocrisy of those opposite now seeking to impose housing on this site, housing in this area, having promised not to do so, is appalling. It is appalling that the member for Forest Hill in the Assembly, Mr Angus, who said in 2011 that he would fix it has now produced a paper which talks about putting housing on that site. Today Mrs Coote has let the cat out of the bag, saying, 'They are discussions. There will be discussions about relocating Nadrasca'. I say to Mrs Coote that these people are here and she should talk to them. They do not want to move.

Mrs Coote — And what did you do in 2004?

Mr TEE — They do not want to move.

Mrs Coote — What about the precedent in 2004? Did you ask the members to listen to you? Did you ask the members to tell you? Did you actually talk to them?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! Mr Tee did invite provocation, but I would ask Mrs Coote to resume her seat unless she is taking a point of order.

Mrs Coote — On a point of order, Acting President, that is completely and utterly misleading. As I said in my contribution, there was a precedent set by the former Labor government.

Mr TEE — On the point of order, Acting President, Mrs Coote has made her contribution to the debate and cannot have another opportunity. That is not a point of order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I will formally say that serious allegations are misleading, and I would not say that in the context of debate it is worth progressing to a debate on whether or not there was a specific allegation. I ask Mr Tee to

resume his contribution, and confirm that there was no point of order.

Mr TEE — Just to be clear, Acting President, you are saying there is no point of order?

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

Mr Drum — Just don't tell lies.

Mr TEE — This is an important issue. It is important that VicRoads, out of the blue, is now talking about housing on that site, and Mrs Coote, in her contribution, talked about relocation of that farm. That is not what was promised by Mrs Victoria, where she said in her letter that she wanted to — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! After having had discussions with the clerks, I am advised that when Mr Tee resumed his contribution an interjection from Mr Drum suggested that Mr Tee was telling lies. I have been advised that if that was the interjection, Mr Drum should withdraw.

Mr Drum — I withdraw.

Mr TEE — The issue of relocating, the issue of building on the site, was never raised by Mrs Victoria in her letter to the constituents when she was seeking votes, where she said:

Locally the Liberals' clear plan for, and commitment to, families will:

...

preserve Healesville freeway reserve as open space.

It was not relocating the farm for housing; it was for open space. It is clear. It is not complex in any particular way. It is very clear what the commitment was — it was for open space.

Mrs Coote — I am talking about consulting with the community, the whole community!

Mr TEE — I will take up the interjection from Mrs Coote, who talks about consultation. What VicRoads own document says is that when it consults with the community its members do not want to talk about housing on the site. So we have got what Mrs Victoria said and we have got community members saying they do not want to talk about housing on the site.

A number of participants were insistent that the reservation should remain as open space. So the only people who are now talking about relocation, the only

people who are now talking about housing, are those in the government two years on. Its members are trying to ram down housing on this site, when their clear commitment, their promise, to the Victorian people was for open space. Now, two years later, they have turned.

Both Mr O'Donohue and Mrs Coote talked about consultation with the local council. Let me tell you what has happened with the local council.

Mrs Coote — They were one of the stakeholders.

Mr TEE — The local council has a clear view, and its view is that this ought to be open space. The local council wrote to the Minister for Roads in March 2011 asking for an outline of the state government's plan for the site, and to date — —

Mrs Coote — How much consultation did you do in 2004?

Mr TEE — And to date, more than 12 months later, not a response. Those opposite talk about consultation, and yet when the mayor of the Whitehorse council wrote to the minister in 2011 and said, 'Can we have a discussion around this issue? We want to know what your plans are', the council got nothing. It got no response.

Mr O'Donohue — It's not true.

Mr TEE — Mr O'Donohue says, 'It's not true'. Mr O'Donohue should talk to the local council and talk to the mayor. I met with the councillors and they told me that as of February, when I met with them, there was no response.

Mr O'Donohue — Check your facts.

Mr TEE — Mr O'Donohue, even if the minister has now responded outside of my knowledge, you should not have to wait 12 months. That is not consultation.

This is not a complex or difficult issue. A very simple commitment was made by those opposite. What has been exposed today is that those opposite are walking away from that commitment. As sure as night follows day there is going to be housing on this site and pressure on this community to relocate. One can see that coming through in the contributions of those opposite. The community will see that for what it is. No amount of dressing this issue up as sympathy for people with a disability or as disability policy and no amount of trying to turn this debate into 'Look how good we are' is going to resonate at all. When it comes to taking action — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! The interjections are rising beyond a level that is tolerable to the Chair and becoming more like an incessant barrage. I ask Mr Tee to continue his contribution unassisted.

Mr TEE — I also note that a number of petitions have been tabled in relation to this matter. I want to address the issue of there being different community consultations. Partly what Mrs Coote is saying is, 'Hang on a minute, the community is divided. There are different views. Some want to build on Nadrasca. Some want them to move out'. That is not right. Mr Leane in his contribution has already talked about the number of people who have signed petitions to ensure that this site stays as open space. I also note that Mr Angus, has tabled a petition with some 4300 signatures. The petitioners requested and urged the government to 'maintain the reserve as open space for the use of the community'.

The only people who are advocating for relocating the farm and for development of this space — and it is only a recent invention — are those opposite and VicRoads through its consultation process. I urge Mrs Coote to read the VicRoads consultation report, which shows that no amount of urging and trying to ram through the concept of housing gained support from the community. There is no support out there for the housing. The report is very clear. At the consultation VicRoads could not even get people to talk about the type of housing on the site because they did not want any housing on the site. At page 9 the report says:

The ability of participants to enter into a detailed conversation about the content of the principles was regularly overshadowed by an inability or reluctance to talk about housing ...

They do not want it. No amount of pretending otherwise is going to fool anyone. People know what those opposite are trying to do. They can see through the hypocrisy. They can see what this is about. The most telling point is the failure of those opposite to support the motion. It is a very simple motion. It says, 'Keep the site where it is and keep the farm going'.

Mrs Coote talked about consultation. Every bit of consultation, including the VicRoads consultation report, the petitions tabled by Mr Angus and others and the promises that were made to try to get elected, demonstrates that the only people who are talking about moving the farm and building on this site are those opposite. It is a recent invention, and they stand condemned for not supporting the motion. In not

supporting it those opposite give no comfort whatsoever to that community. They ought to be ashamed.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Briefly, and in summary, I thank and applaud Ms Hartland for supporting this motion. When I spoke to her last week about this motion I was not surprised that she had done her homework and would support what is basically a one-line motion. There was a lot of discussion by government speakers of the whole of the Healesville freeway reserve. I did not want to mention that in this motion because it muddies the waters. This is about one facility.

I appreciate and note that all speakers agreed that this organisation does fantastic work. I would be delighted if Mrs Coote, who was one of the speakers, went to the Nadrasca community farm and spoke to people. If she went there, she would champion it. She would see that there is no need for this process to go to the end of the year and put these people through stress. It is unnecessary stress. To dress it up as consultation on the whole area of the land muddies the waters. Unfortunately what you have done today is insult the intelligence of everyone in the community.

Mrs Coote — On a point of order, Acting President, I take great exception to that comment, and I ask the member to withdraw it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I heard Mr Leane's comment, and I have had some discussions with the Clerk. The advice, which I accept, is that Mr Leane's comment was general in the sense that he said 'you' non-specifically, generally referring to a member of the government. There may well be a point of order if allegations are made against individual members of Parliament, but generally there is greater latitude in criticism directed at a large group of members such as the government, the opposition or whichever group is determined.

Secondly, the comment as I heard it was an allegation that the member had insulted the intelligence of a group in the community, and as far as I understood Mrs Coote's point of order it was that she took offence to that suggestion. Within the standing orders and the practices and procedures as I understand them, unparliamentary comments would relate to allegations made against members of Parliament directly but not against a group of people that may be affected by comments made by members of Parliament, and that is what the standing orders are generally designed to protect. Therefore the allegation, much as Mrs Coote may disagree with its content, is not something that I

am advised would breach the standing orders, and on that advice I rule that there is no point of order.

Mr LEANE — By saying that the government has insulted the community's intelligence I am suggesting that this is all about consultation. It is wrong to say, 'Everyone should relax. Don't listen to that nasty opposition MP, because this is all him. This is all Shaun Leane, who has gone out and said that houses shouldn't be built on the Nadrasca farm, because that's what he wants'. The whole community — not just the people who work at and use the facility, but the whole community around there — has got behind this issue.

Mrs Coote mentioned 4000-odd petitioners signed to keep the whole of the Healesville freeway reserve for open space. That is a no-brainer for the Nadrasca farm, because if the whole of the Healesville freeway reserve is kept for open space, then the Nadrasca farm will exist. If one adds to the 4000 petitioners the over 2000 signatures specifically calling for the Nadrasca farm to occupy the space it is occupying and grow, then there are 6000 people in the local community who agree. Therefore to say this is all the whim of an opposition MP and to assume that I have not spoken to people at the Nadrasca farm or to people in the community is a bizarre allegation that is false, and it is a real concern.

Do not wait for the consultation — it has been done. The community wants Nadrasca to keep operating its farm in this space, and it is done. What the government could do today is vote for the motion and then send one of its ministers down there, along with the cameras, and the government could be the big hero, saying, 'Don't worry about those opposition pests; we were always going to leave it'. The government could vote for the motion, go out there and do that, and it would receive a great reception. But it has chosen not to do so.

If the new Premier's bona fides are in disability — I accept that; I was not around back then and I do not question that fact — then he should go down there as soon as possible and say, 'Don't stress. The job's done. I will be your champion'. If the Premier does that, I reckon the people pushing this issue will no longer be that keen to speak to me because they can speak to the Premier. They do not need to speak to a sparkie like me. So to say that this is all political is a joke, and it is very disappointing that the government has not supported the motion. But in saying that, non-support for the motion is far from meaning that this issue will go away.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 19

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

Noes, 21

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

Motion negatived.

**MINISTER FOR HEALTH:
PERFORMANCE**

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house takes note of the answers given by the Minister for Health to questions without notice asked in this house on —

- (1) 1 March 2011 regarding the commonwealth-state health agreement;
- (2) 21 February 2013 regarding hospital waiting lists; and
- (3) 7 March 2013 regarding hospital bed numbers.

I note that in the formal moving of this motion we have changed chairs, Acting President, but my argument will not change its trajectory. On many occasions in this chamber members have heard me trying to extract fulsome and honest answers from the Minister for Health relating to the current administration of the Victorian health system in order to provide certainty to the Victorian community about the reliability of that system. I have tried to elicit from the minister answers that indicate to the community that it can have confidence there will be sufficient resource allocation and support provided to hospital administrations, doctors, nurses and communities across Victoria to ensure that the system grows in accordance with patient demand and that the Victorian health system will rise up and meet their needs.

However, unfortunately for the last two and a quarter years that has not been the situation in the Parliament. In fact on many occasions I have lamented the paucity of the answers provided by this Minister for Health in terms of their factual reliability and their understanding and appreciation of the budgetary needs of the portfolio, as well as the lack of commitment that has been demonstrated by his government in terms of the growth required within hospital budgets in order for them to meet the challenges of the Victorian health system.

Time and again rather than accepting responsibility for funding, resourcing and administering the scheme the Minister for Health has chosen to try to absolve himself of the responsibility for public hospitals in Victoria and to blame the commonwealth government for all of the problems that exist within the Victorian health system. I think this reflects very badly on his relationship with the chamber and his accountability to the Parliament. It reflects very badly on his administration of the portfolio, and all the indicators are that the health system in Victoria is floundering under his administration.

Mr Drum — Do you mean ‘foundering’? Do you mean the word ‘foundering’ or do you mean the word ‘floundering’?

Mr JENNINGS — I meant the word that I said — even though Mr Drum is not in his place. It may be that Mr Drum’s auditory capacity is enhanced when he is in his place. ‘Floundering’ was the word I used, and ‘foundering’ is the word that Mr Drum has chosen to ask me to use again to indicate the nature of the minister’s administration and the situation within the Victorian health system.

Mr Drum — On a point of order, Acting President, I just do not know if the former minister is talking about a certain fish or whether he means the word ‘foundering’.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I think that could well be described as a frivolous point of order. If necessary, we may have to call on Mr Katos, the member for South Barwon in the other place, to discuss exactly what sort of fish we are talking about, but on this occasion I think that Mr Jennings probably has some idea of what he is talking about — and we might leave him to expand on that.

Mr JENNINGS — Indeed it was ‘floundering’ in the context of a concern that I might have that the minister might have been out of his depth and he might have been having difficulty in keeping his nostrils

above the waterline of his responsibilities. Indeed he shows all the signs of being close to drowning under the responsibility of his portfolio.

In presenting my case to the Parliament this morning I will rely on the minister’s words, because quite often when I remind the minister of his words in this place he indicates that he thinks that I am fitting him up in some shape or form.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — It may or may not be wise for the minister to interject and encourage me to become more enthusiastic in my criticism of him. I am capable of doing that, but at the moment I just want to go to some of his words and remind the people of Victoria of some of what he has said in answers to questions in this place. In the first instance I go as far back as 1 March 2011. For my case I draw on a question about the commonwealth-state health agreement that was asked on that day by Ms Crozier. Ms Crozier’s question, directed to the Minister for Health, was:

Can the minister inform the house of the results of the Premier’s negotiations at the recent meeting of the Council of Australian Governments with respect to the health-care agreement?

I acknowledge that my reporting of the minister’s words in response is not complete, but I can confidently assure the Parliament this morning that in part the minister, in his answer to Ms Crozier, said:

I have to say that the new Baillieu coalition government has done a lot better on this agreement than the former Brumby government, of which Mr Lenders was Treasurer.

There has been a very good outcome for Victoria in terms of the financial position of the state. There has been a great victory for the states, including Victoria, in the retention of the 30 per cent of GST revenue that was at risk under the deal done by former Premier John Brumby. John Brumby and former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd did a deal. I have to say that Premier Baillieu performed magnificently.

Mr Davis went on to say:

There are a number of key things — more funding for Victorian hospitals, a better deal on Medicare Local and protection for single hospital boards — that you never achieved in the last deal. Now under the heads of agreement single hospital boards will be protected. Funding was brought forward for Victorian hospitals and recognition of a 50-50 partnership for growth in the future.

That was an extraordinary contribution by Mr Davis. At that time, on 1 March 2011, Mr Davis was extremely fulsome in his recognition of the good deal that had been achieved with the commonwealth government and he said that that would lead to better funding outcomes

for Victorian hospitals and for Victorian patients. At that time the Victorian Minister for Health was in fact crowing about the remarkable outcome that had been achieved. The extraordinary thing about it is that the facts demonstrate that in many ways that was true, because the commonwealth health payments to Victoria in this financial year alone are in excess of \$3.6 billion. They are part of a continual increase in commonwealth revenue coming to Victoria to support our health system over the past few years.

Over the next three years the health-care funds provided to Victoria by the commonwealth will grow in excess of an additional \$900 million over the forward estimates period. It is very important for the people of Victoria to be crystal clear about that trajectory of a significant increase in funding by the commonwealth government when the rate of increase in the Victorian budget has slowed significantly. In fact over its first two budgets the Victorian government has introduced savings cuts of \$616 million to health. The extraordinary situation for Victoria is that on coming to office the Baillieu government did a good deal on the national health reform. In the first answer that I have referred to, Mr Davis was quite correct in saying that a good deal was done for Victoria. Since that time the track record has been that more money has come from the commonwealth to Victoria, specifically to support our health system.

Why do we have the situation now where the minister says something completely different? Today the minister gives the Victorian community a very different picture about the state of Victorian health funding. He asserts that the commonwealth is responsible for that, yet through the minister's own words there is a pretty clear indication to the Victorian people of why today's problem exists. It is fundamentally because the Victorian government cannot be relied on to increase its own funding in accordance with patient demand and it cannot be relied upon to flow through to Victorian hospitals money that has been allocated by the commonwealth for those purposes.

The next piece of evidence I will refer to is in the nature of a question that was asked of the health minister in this Parliament on 21 February, which is part of the subject of the motion before the house today. My question to the Minister for Health on that day was as follows:

On 11 May 2011 he was asked a question by Ms Hennessy, the member for Altona in the Assembly, at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, which was, in part:

... perhaps you could reassure the committee that all moneys received from the commonwealth for

expenditure on health have been allocated to your department.

To which he answered:

I would certainly advocate for that ...

He went on to say:

... it is a longstanding fact that Treasury and the budget process allocates funding to the departments, and indeed Treasury will do that in its own way.

Today, is the minister still of the view that the Victorian Treasury should pass on commonwealth funds in its own way?

Out of the mouth of the minister in answer to that question came, in part, the following:

Since this government came to power funding for health care has increased by \$1.3 billion. I have to say, though, that the contrast with the commonwealth is remarkable. The cuts of \$475 million that were imposed by the Gillard federal government on Victorian hospitals were nothing short of scandalous, based as they were on flawed population data.

The minister then went on to say to me:

Shame, shame, shame, Mr Jennings! You voted in favour of the cuts and now the rug has been pulled out from under you by Ms Gillard, who has decided that she got it wrong this year and needs to put the \$107 million back. Let me be clear: that lot over there voted in favour of the \$107 million cut this year.

The minister accuses me of putting words in his mouth. The extraordinary accusation there is that at some point in time the Victorian Labor Party was in favour of any reduction in commonwealth revenue coming to Victoria for health. In fact on any number of occasions during the course of the concluding part of 2012 into the beginning of 2013 I indicated on the public record that I supported the retention of health funding to the state of Victoria from both the state and the federal governments. I was critical of any reduction that occurred within the Victorian hospital system through to any readjustment or budget savings that had been imposed upon the Victorian health system. Indeed all of my colleagues in the Victorian opposition were of like mind. We were defenders of the Victorian health system, and we worked assiduously with our commonwealth brothers and sisters to try to see the restoration of that \$107 million to the Victorian health system after it had been adjusted by the commonwealth over that period of time. No collection of people in Victoria was happier about the return of those funds than the Victorian Labor opposition, which had consistently called for that money. The minister was wrong in making that assertion and wrong in his use of language to indicate that the Victorian opposition supported any reduction in funding coming to Victoria.

He was also wrong in relation to his understanding of the budgetary figures. The quote I just read into the public record is a reminder of the minister's indication that funding growth in Victoria was in contrast to a reduction in commonwealth expenditure on health. The budget records very clearly dispute that. The Victorian government's published data in relation to the allocation of hospital funding is not terribly rigorous in that there are inconsistencies in the data relating to acute hospitals. I rely on page 123 of budget paper 3 for the year 2012–13, which indicates that the funding allocation to acute hospitals in Victoria this year is \$7.257 billion. But the extraordinary fact is that when the Victorian government itself published a breakdown of how that money was going to be spent, that number of \$7.257 billion became a different number.

When the Victorian government launched an attack on the commonwealth about the allocation of money to hospitals, it published a table with a cumulative total of \$7.272 billion as the figure allocated to the acute hospital sector in Victoria this year, of which it claimed credit for \$4.009 billion and claimed the commonwealth's contribution was \$2.263 billion. As I say, that cumulative number of \$7.272 billion is different from the number the Victorian government itself published in its budget paper 3 only a few months earlier.

Regardless of that fact, let us assume that the second publication is correct, because the Victorian government spent a lot of time in the public domain arguing about what the breakdown of funding was between the state and federal governments and trying, in publicity terms, to wreak merry havoc across Victoria during the summer, indicating that the commonwealth funding of \$107 million was causing great distress, dislocation and dysfunctionality within the Victorian health system. The Victorian government might for a minute or two recognise that the \$107 million has been restored, so the net impact in relation to commonwealth funding arrangements has been to put the health system back a couple of months but in effect put the same resources back into it.

We can then analyse the questions of who is putting more into health and who has made the biggest or most increased contribution. Let us use those figures to have a look at what the truth is in terms of who is growing the health budget and who is not. If the \$7.272 billion is the correct figure, that means that from the previous budget into this year the Victorian government has increased its contribution to Victorian hospitals by \$149 million. If the Victorian government's own published figure is correct, then the commonwealth has increased its contribution over the same period by

\$165 million. The Victorian government's own published figures indicate that in the year 2012–13 the commonwealth has increased its funds by \$165 million compared to the Victorian government's increase of \$149 million. State government members are damned by their own analysis when they say the commonwealth contribution is going down compared to their contribution, because in fact the commonwealth contribution is growing faster than their own.

In terms of the fundamental basis of the national health-care agreement, being that growth funding will be shared 50-50 by the state and commonwealth — and that outcome was designed to be achieved by the year 2017 — the commonwealth contribution is already outstripping the state contribution. Shortly I will go on to describe why that situation will be further enhanced by further growth in terms of the forward estimates of the commonwealth and how the state contribution is going to be lagging further and further behind.

On 21 February, asking a supplementary question following the question I referred to a few minutes ago, I put the following to the minister:

I remind the house that the premise of the first question was that the minister declared as far back as 2011 that he could not guarantee that all commonwealth health funding was going to be allocated to health. Today in his response he has not given any guarantees to the people of Victoria that that money will be allocated from the commonwealth directly to hospitals. I provide him with the opportunity to give that guarantee.

I went on to speak about whether or not that guarantee would see those moneys being delivered by the minister's government or whether it would be necessary for the commonwealth to continue to make that contribution in the only way it could guarantee the funds would get into hospitals — and that would be by paying it directly to them itself. The minister was highly offended by this question; he was highly offended by what I had put to him. In his answer he said:

One thing I will say about the commonwealth forward estimates is that we now know those estimates are not to be relied upon. What this recent incident makes very clear is that the funding promises made by the commonwealth out into the distance cannot be relied upon.

In terms of my trying to acquit the integrity and the spirit of the minister's words, I think the quotation I have just referred to shows what the minister believes to be the case. What he chooses not to talk about or recognise is the fundamental difference in the forward estimates structure as between his government's forward estimates and the commonwealth's forward estimates. He may raise a question about how much money might be delivered by the commonwealth, but he ignores entirely what the current structure of the

forward estimates, as published up until the present, indicate that growth will be into the future.

What do the forward estimates show for Victorian growth in the acute hospital system according to the Victorian government's own budget paper published in 2012–13? Page 22 of budget paper 3 indicates that in the next financial year Victoria will increase funds to health by \$149 million in 2013–14, that in 2014–15 the government intends to increase the budget by \$152.7 million and that by 2015–16 Victoria intends to increase its contribution to health by \$156.5 million. We can compare that with the most recent commonwealth forward estimates in terms of the increase to health anticipated over the same period. We see that for the 2013–14 financial year the commonwealth has committed to increase funding for the Victorian health system by \$229 million, that in the following year the increase committed to is \$355.1 million and that in 2015–16 the increase by the commonwealth in the forward estimates is \$386.4 million — in that one year alone.

The cumulative contributions as they currently exist within the Victorian forward estimates and the commonwealth forward estimates demonstrate that over the next three years Victoria intends to cumulatively add \$458 million to the acute hospital system in Victoria, and over the same period the commonwealth has committed to increasing those resources by \$970 million. Significantly more than double the contribution is anticipated to come from the commonwealth than from the state of Victoria according to the published budget figures of the Victorian and commonwealth governments.

Mr Davis may doubt the delivery of those forward estimates, but he cannot deny what the published figures say. The published figures say that the commonwealth growth contribution to health over the next three years will be more than double the growth allocated by the Victorian government even though they are supposed to be equal partners, even though they are supposed to be jointly increasing the funds to the Victorian health system on a 50-50 basis. The commonwealth is outstripping the state of Victoria by more than two to one. The Victorian people ultimately will not allow the minister the luxury to keep on cutting his own budget, to blame the federal government —

Hon. D. M. Davis — The budget is going up, you know that; even you can read the budget papers!

Mr JENNINGS — Mr Davis, who has just arrived back in the chamber, takes his seat, interjects and tries to indicate that he knows the forward estimates of the

Victorian budget compared with the commonwealth. Yet at no stage has he either publicly — —

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I am sure that backbench members, who are now carping, are experts in the budget papers. I am sure they are able to tell me which page of budget paper 3 these figures I have been referring to are on. I am sure they can rattle off the increase that has been allocated by the state of Victoria over the next three years, which cumulatively adds up to \$450 million. They should tell me how it is broken down. I will pause for a minute so that Mrs Petrovich can tell me. Perhaps the member can reflect on what the commonwealth forward estimates say and she may be able to do the break-up of the increased amount of \$970 million.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — Rubbery figures! Mr Davis may have expertise in rubbery figures. He is the minister who is administering a growth of more than 16 000 patients within the first two and a half years of his administration in relation to the waiting lists in Victoria. On that basis, taking into account the outcome up until the end of December 2012, the number of people added to the waiting lists has grown to 85 people for each and every week during the administration of the health minister.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

WorkSafe Victoria: dividends

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Assistant Treasurer. I refer the minister to the Victorian WorkCover Authority's finances and his government's policy for WorkCover that the dividend is 50 per cent of the performance from insurance operations. As the minister knows, that has deteriorated in the recent half-year by over \$100 million compared to the same time last year. As a response to this deterioration, the WorkCover CEO stated in today's *Australian Financial Review* that the dividend payable to the government will be 'likely to be substantially lower'. Will the minister guarantee that the government will not take a dividend of more than half of WorkCover's performance from insurance operations?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his question. As Mr Lenders would appreciate, dividends are subject to negotiation between the Treasurer, the Victorian

WorkCover Authority and the minister at the time dividend determinations are made. Those determinations are made having regard to the health of the organisation and the capability of the organisation to pay dividends, and those dividends will be determined in the normal way, in due course.

Supplementary question

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am intrigued by the minister's answer that he will not guarantee that the dividend will be any more than 50 per cent of performance from insurance operations. My substantive question asked him about finances and about the dividend to government, so as a subset of that will he guarantee, given that the CEO reported that common-law costs were a part of the deterioration, that common-law rights will not be reduced as part of a way of substantiating this dividend?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will allow the minister to answer the question, but this is pretty close — in fact I think I am being quite benevolent — because the supplementary question goes to new matters that were not canvassed in the substantive question. On this occasion I will allow the minister to determine his answer to the question. I indicate that members asking questions with supplementary questions need to be very careful about keeping the supplementary question relevant to the minister's answer and to their substantive question.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer) — I thank Mr Lenders for his supplementary question. As Mr Lenders would well appreciate, common-law entitlements, as in the case of all entitlements under the WorkCover scheme, are enshrined in legislation. It is not open to the government to change entitlements because it wants to change a dividend. Those matters are enshrined in legislation, those entitlements exist under legislation and will be delivered in accordance with the legislation, the Accident Compensation Act 1985. As Mr Lenders also appreciates, dividends collected from the WorkCover authority, as with other statutory authorities, are collected retrospectively, in respect of the previous financial year's outcomes, and that will occur in the normal way. Benefits will not be impacted by dividend policy.

TAFE sector: reform

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Honourable Peter Hall. I refer the minister to the government's response to the TAFE Reform Panel's

report, which he spoke about in Parliament yesterday. Can the minister inform the house of what specific assistance will be provided to enable regional TAFEs to better serve their local communities?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr Ramsay for his question, and I am sure it is a matter of interest for all members of this chamber. Mr Ramsay is correct. I spoke about the TAFE Reform Panel's report yesterday, as well as the government's response, and there are specific provisions within that response recognised by the TAFE Reform Panel that the government was pleased to support.

By way of background, it is important for members to understand that TAFE is an important provider of vocational training, particularly in non-metropolitan areas. I note that an analysis of the quarterly report, which I referred to yesterday, shows that in the Gippsland region, for example, 64 per cent of vocational training is delivered by TAFE institutes. In the Great South Coast region, for example, which is part of Mr Ramsay's electorate, 75 per cent of training is delivered by TAFE. In the Hume region, 68 per cent of training is delivered by TAFE, and I could quote some of the other regional areas as well. Those three figures show the importance of TAFE in delivering vocational training in regional areas. I note also that in the vast majority of regional areas there is an increase in both fee-for-service and government-funded activity from the TAFEs.

As I was saying, the TAFE Reform Panel has acknowledged the fact that, because of economies of scale, there should be some support measures put in place to assist regional TAFE institutes to grow their businesses and help them to meet local needs on a long-term sustainable basis, and there are a couple of provisions in the government's response that will do that. One of them is a \$200 million funding package designed to support projects that add to the business capabilities of our original TAFEs. For the benefit of the house I will give a couple of examples of what is happening already and what this particular funding is designed to promote.

One example involves a metropolitan-based TAFE, the William Angliss Institute, which is currently negotiating with a number of regional TAFEs to deliver in regional areas some of the programs in which it excels. William Angliss has strengths in hospitality and tourism. Where some of the smaller TAFEs may not have the same capability to deliver those programs, on a contractual basis or through an auspice arrangement those programs can be delivered in regional centres.

That is the sort of thing we need to encourage — greater collaboration.

Moving to the Gippsland region, members will have heard me speak before about the use of technology to deliver programs. I had a look last Friday at GippsTAFE and some of the infrastructure it is putting in place, and a comment was made to me that it would be quite possible, feasible and probable in some cases to enable students of that institute who may want to study music programs to tap into a program being delivered by the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, for example, which is a strong provider of that sort of program. Auslan is another study area I have spoken about where you can use technology to deliver good programs into regions.

These are some of the examples of the encouragement we want to give all TAFEs to work together so that they can utilise the collective strengths of the TAFE brand to improve delivery and training opportunities for people in all parts of Victoria. There is also a commitment from the government to put in place facilitators in the regions to assist with that collaborative process. Those are just two examples of measures that demonstrate both the government's commitment to regional TAFE institutes and its commitment particularly to provide further opportunities for students in regional Victoria.

Telstra: Clayton data centre

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Technology, Gordon Rich-Phillips. During the minister's tenure thus far he has consistently taken credit for private investment, even when his government has done nothing to facilitate that investment. This was again the case when he was quick to take credit for a \$100 million investment by Telstra in the new Telstra computer data centre in Clayton by officially launching the site in December last year accompanied by the obligatory photo and press release spruiking his achievements. Unfortunately the project has now hit some serious problems, with 100 builders left out of work, and the future of the project may be under threat. Given that the minister was quick to take credit for the project, will he now take responsibility and help fix the problems, thereby saving the jobs of Victorians?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr Somyurek for his question, but I have to say that I am disappointed that Mr Somyurek seeks to talk down the Victorian economy and talk down the telecommunications industry in this state. Labor members do not like good

news. Mr Somyurek and his colleagues over there do not like any positive news.

Last year I was delighted to visit that Telstra site, which is in my electorate of South Eastern Metropolitan Region. It is the electorate that Mr Somyurek shares, yet he does not seem to like the fact that there is a Telstra data centre project proceeding in his electorate. I can tell Mr Somyurek that Telstra has confirmed that, despite the rumours circulating yesterday and despite the white-anting of the project by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the project is proceeding.

Supplementary question

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — If the project has not been cancelled or suspended, as the minister has just claimed, can he explain why one part of the construction has slowed down?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not sure that the minister is necessarily in a position to make comment on this. Again I am not entirely sure that it fits within the guidelines for a substantive question, but I call Mr Rich-Phillips.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr Somyurek for his supplementary question. I suggest to Mr Somyurek that he talk to Telstra if he wants to know the details of the project. I am not on the board of Telstra; I cannot give Mr Somyurek details of the progress of that project. I can tell Mr Somyurek that the Victorian government is delighted to have projects like the Telstra data centre development in the south-east. It is a good project for Victoria; it creates jobs for Victoria. Our government looks forward to it proceeding, and if Mr Somyurek wants details of the project, I suggest he talk to Telstra.

Home and community care: funding

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing, Mr Davis, and I ask: will the minister inform the house of recent additional funding for the home and community care (HACC) program?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Ageing) — I am pleased to take this question from Mr O'Donohue and note his longstanding commitment to greater home and community care services in this state. I know the house will be very interested to hear about the recent \$33.4 million boost to HACC services announced jointly by Mr Butler, the federal Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, and me. The announcement sees a contribution from the federal government and the state

government to the \$33.4 million package. This will provide additional funding to around 470 agencies across Victoria. The funding will provide significant practical assistance to older Victorians and younger people with disabilities and will enable many Victorians to remain in their home with the support of the home and community care program, which is an important program in Victoria.

It is interesting to note that across the state there will be growth in support going into additional local government areas, like in Ballarat, which will receive a \$521 300 boost that will see an extra 10 700 hours of care delivered to help people remain at home and stay connected with their communities. It will include more than 1800 hours of allied health, including occupational therapy, podiatry and physiotherapy, and 3200 more hours of home services. This is an important addition.

In Geelong there will be a significant boost of \$1.6 million, providing an extra 27 000 hours, including 4900 more hours of allied health services, 9000 more hours of in-home services, such as domestic assistance, and support for local planned activity groups. These are important additional contributions. In Shepparton, as Ms Lovell will be pleased to hear, there will be a \$447 300 boost providing an additional 6000 hours of support. There will also be a home services boost in Latrobe of \$841 000, with more than 13 000 extra hours. People in the chamber will be pleased to hear that in Warrnambool there will be \$213 400 in additional support, providing an extra 2300 hours.

In my own area of Boroondara, for example, \$475 395 in additional growth funds will be provided; in Monash there will be \$568 043; in Whitehorse there will be \$529 916; in Horsham there will be \$183 674 in additional growth funding — that is important; in Mildura there will be \$329 721; Mr Drum will no doubt be very pleased to hear that \$457 097 in additional growth funding is being provided to the City of Greater Bendigo; Bayside has \$276 598 of additional funding; in a key area like Frankston there will be \$659 795; and Port Phillip has an additional \$177 258. These are important additional contributions being made by the federal and state governments to provide greater HACC support.

I mentioned the federal government at the start, and I indicate that the federal government and the state government are cooperating very well in the HACC funding arena. I am always pleased to give genuine credit where genuine credit is due. I have to say that HACC funding is very important, and 470 agencies across Victoria will see additional growth funding.

State and federal money is going into that additional growth funding.

Children: Young Readers program

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. On 3 March the *Age* reported that a Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research report funded by the minister's department had measured the benefits of reading to young children. Given the minister's glowing endorsement of this report in the article, I ask: why did the minister cut the Young Readers program, which distributed free books to parents of young children, in her first year as minister?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I am absolutely delighted to talk about the benefits of reading to young children. That report did find that there are definite benefits to be gained from reading to young children. In fact children who were read to six or seven times a week at the age of four were significantly ahead of their peers in grade 3, and they contributed greatly to improvements in national assessment program — literacy and numeracy testing.

The Victorian government is also supporting reading to young children by including early childhood in the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge this year. For the first time early childhood is being acknowledged in the Premiers' reading challenge, and the challenge is going out to parents. We are challenging parents to read books to their children. There is a list of books on the website that will tell parents the best books to be read to their children and at what age, and we encourage all parents to contribute to reading to their children.

The member referred to the Young Readers program. Unfortunately the data around the Young Readers program showed that there had not been a significant increase in reading to young children through the program. This was very disappointing. It had produced a less than 0.5 per cent increase in people who read to their children on a regular basis. We are using other methods to encourage parents to read to their children, including by promoting it through the Premiers' reading challenge.

Supplementary question

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — The minister was quoted in the article that I referred to from the *Age* as saying that this was 'an exciting step forward' in understanding the importance of reading to

young children. If the minister is so excited about the research in this report that was funded by her department, will she be reinstating funding to the Young Readers program in the upcoming budget? I note that the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge does not relate to children who are not attending kindergarten or who are younger than kindergarten age.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I would have thought that the shadow minister for children and young adults would have learnt from having asked these questions last year. I am not about to speculate about what will be in or out of the budget. That is the Treasurer's announcement, and announcements around the budget will be made on 7 May.

India: trade mission

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Technology, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips. Can the minister inform the house of outcomes arising from the latest India super trade mission?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr Elsbury for his question and for his interest in the Victorian government's latest super trade mission to India. The Victorian government is committed to its international engagement strategy under the auspices of the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business. In the budget last year the government committed \$50 million to international engagement, to creating opportunities for Victorian companies to engage in new markets, and obviously the Indian market and the Chinese market have been significant targets for that international engagement program.

Last week the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business led the latest Victorian government super trade mission to India. This is the fourth mission the government has led to India in the last two years, and these missions have been very successful for Victorian businesses.

The mission last week involved around 140 separate organisations and around 180 individual delegates across a number of industry sectors. Of the sectors I worked with in India last week, the life sciences sector had 15 representatives, the ICT sector had 15 representatives and the aerospace industry had 10 representatives covering India over the course of the week. The results from that mission will be calculated over the coming months and over the coming year as export sales accrue. The February 2012 mission

recorded export sales of more than \$350 million, which was a fantastic outcome from last year's mission. Of course we look for a similarly strong export performance from the mission this year.

In respect of immediate outcomes from the mission last week, I was delighted to announce in India that SAP, the well-known ICT company, would create an additional 120 new jobs here in Victoria with the expansion of its Asia-Pacific mission control centre located in Melbourne. In Mumbai I was delighted to announce that Cipla, the Indian pharmaceuticals company, was opening an office here in Melbourne. I was also delighted to announce that My Heroes, which is a Victorian ICT and social media company, has signed new partnerships with some of the Indian Premier League cricket teams to export its social media intellectual property to India.

Finally, last Friday in Hyderabad I was delighted to open the new office of we-do-IT, which is a Victorian-founded ICT company. It has been in existence for 17 years, and it now has eight offices around the world. Last Friday it formally launched its expansion into India, which is a great outcome for we-do-IT. The creation of the Indian office will lead to additional jobs being created here in Victoria. That really highlights opportunities for Victorian companies in India and highlights the growth opportunities for Victorian companies when they expand into the Indian market.

Children: early intervention services

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. I refer to a letter from Western Health advising kindergartens and other local early childhood services that Sunshine Hospital's Children's Allied Health Service will no longer accept multidisciplinary assessments for preschool children starting school next year. These assessments are necessary so that children with disabilities who live in the western suburbs can access early intervention services that the minister is responsible for. What will the minister do to ensure that children with disabilities and their families in the western suburbs can continue to receive this publicly subsidised assessment in order to be able to access early intervention services?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I have not seen that letter from that service, and I will take that question on notice and get back to the shadow minister.

Supplementary question

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I am very happy to provide the letter to the minister. I believe the letter has also been received by her Liberal colleagues in Western Metropolitan Region. I will do that immediately after question time. My supplementary question is that one of the providers that refers children to this service is the North Sunshine Kindergarten, which has on average 15 children a year who require additional support. It informs me that of these only two or three are already in contact with early intervention support services when they start kindergarten. What will the minister do to ensure that the 12 or so children from North Sunshine Kindergarten and other preschool-aged children in that area do not miss out on early intervention services before they start school next year?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I am delighted to talk about early childhood intervention services, because this government's record on early childhood intervention services is strong. In our first budget we funded 150 additional early childhood intervention service places and 150 additional flexible support packages. Late last year I announced a further 500 early childhood intervention support places for children with disabilities. An announcement is going to be made shortly as to where those places have gone. In our first budget we also invested in an additional 246 kindergarten inclusion support packages to support children with disabilities to participate in kindergarten. We have a very strong record on early childhood intervention services, a record that we are proud of, and we are committed to helping those children who need early childhood intervention services.

Planning: high-density development

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My question this afternoon is to my good friend and colleague the Honourable Matthew Guy, the Minister for Planning. Can the minister inform the house of what action the government is taking to bring forward a much-needed high-density housing supply for Melbourne?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr Ondarchie for the terrific question he has asked in relation to this government bringing forward a greater level of higher density accommodation for Melbourne and indeed ensuring that Melbourne remains the most livable city in the world well into the future. As members will be aware — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Just keep listening Mr Barber; I have something impressive for you. I can inform the chamber that on Monday the Napthine coalition government went forward with what is possibly the most dramatic addition to Melbourne's skyline in 30 years — that is, the approval of the Australia 108 tower. The Australia 108 tower represents the finest in Victorian, and indeed modern day Australian, architecture. What we saw in the 1960s was the Seidler brand with Grosvenor Place, Australia Square and the MLC Centre in Sydney — some of the greatest designs in Australian architecture were put up in Sydney and put forward by the Seidler architecture firm.

Nowadays in Australia what we are seeing is the rise of Fender Katsalidis, from the Republic Tower to the Eureka Tower and now to Australia 108, which I had much pleasure in approving on Monday, with the dramatic addition of 388 metres — 108 storeys — and 600 apartments. Importantly, that is 600 apartments in a defined area that will take pressure off existing neighbourhoods; 600 apartments in a defined area where high rise is well known and accepted. That is a very different policy to that of our predecessors, who had a one-size-fits all approach, supported, I might add, by the Greens. Melbourne 2030 was about implementing sporadic development anywhere across Melbourne — anything goes, across any street, any cul-de-sac, anywhere across the city. This government, the coalition government, has a clear policy of high density in those defined areas.

What we have approved through Australia 108 is exceedingly consistent with growing our central city area as the most exciting central city area of anywhere in Australia. But it also strikes a balance. I have put in place mandatory controls in Ferntree Gully, Boronia, Hawthorn, up the Yarra River and the Maribyrnong River, and of course through the government's soon-to-be implemented neighbourhood residential zone — the strictest level of mandatory controls for any residential zone anywhere in Australia. It is about getting a balance. You cannot have a one-size-fits-all planning zone regime, which the previous government put in place, to simply turn Melbourne into a development zone for anything goes, anywhere, on any street, any time.

This government knows that that was a failure. That is why we have put in place mandatory controls throughout a number of neighbourhood centres. That is why we have brought forward the neighbourhood residential zone. That is why we have put in the controls up the Maribyrnong and Yarra rivers. And,

importantly, that is why we have rejected towers at places such as the Metro, the Windsor Hotel and next to Etihad Stadium. People who were reporting that this government has not rejected towers before are wrong. In fact, we are making sure that the right buildings go in the right location — and that is a far cry from the sporadic, one-size-fits-all policy that the boring apparatchiks of the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, want to reinstate should they ever be re-elected back to government in this state.

Housing: window restrictions

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Wendy Lovell. I have been contacted by an elderly resident from the Gordon Street high-rise public housing block in Footscray. She suffers from asthma and allergies and is very weak and unwell as she is recovering from bowel cancer treatment. In recent weeks the windows have been sealed in the walkways of her building, but are apparently being fitted so they can be opened 125 millimetres. This resident has for years routinely kept the windows in the corridor adjacent to her apartment wide open and her door open in order to allow fresh air to pass through her home. She has found this critical in managing her asthma and allergies. To my mind 125 millimetres is not a significant enough opening to allow the breeze in. The resident about which I speak has obtained two letters from her general practitioner about the fresh breeze. The question I ask of the minister is: why are these windows currently being restricted in the high-rise blocks, and will exemptions be granted on health grounds?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for her question. I have been advised by my department that there has been a program where they have been restricting the ability to open those windows. This is due to safety reasons, and I will not go into the details of the incidents that have happened, but there have been some incidents in high-rise buildings involving windows being opened that have caused the department great distress. The department will review them on an individual basis. I have an apartment here in Melbourne, and even in my apartment block the windows do not open more than 125 millimetres. It is a safety issue. The department will look into the member's request today and get back to her.

Supplementary question

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I am sure that the minister's apartment has an air conditioner,

but these apartments do not have air conditioners, and the only way that these residents can have a breeze moving through their building is from the walkway windows. Also, many of the windows within the building do not open properly. Considering that there is not a very well managed air-conditioner program for these buildings, what does the minister propose to do about the issues of heat, for this resident in particular?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I can assure the member that the apartment block in which I have an apartment does not have air conditioning fitted as a standard. I did not have air conditioning in my apartment for a number of years. It was only when my mother was very ill a couple of years ago that I installed an air conditioner, which I very rarely turn on. As I said to the member, the department will look into the individual case and get back to her on that.

Children: playgroup funding

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is also directed to Ms Lovell in her capacity as Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. I ask: can the minister inform the house of any current efforts being made to promote and highlight the important role of playgroups in early childhood development?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I am absolutely delighted to take this question from the Parliamentary Secretary for Education because I know she understands the important role that playgroups have in early childhood development. From 17 to 24 March we are celebrating Playgroup Week in Victoria. Communities across the country and throughout Victoria are celebrating the benefits that playgroups bring to young children and families in their communities.

Last week I was delighted to attend the launch of Playgroup Week. I was accompanied by my colleagues in the Assembly, the member for Seymour, Cindy McLeish, the member for Carrum, Donna Bauer, and the member for Forest Hill, Neil Angus. The launch was held in the children's area at the Melbourne Museum, where children were being read to because one of the important parts of Playgroup Week this year is to promote the benefits of reading to children. This government has given strong support to playgroups. We are clear advocates for the playgroup program. We have committed \$16.5 million in the 2012–13 budget for early learning programs, including supported

playgroups, to enable them to be delivered across Victoria.

We have not only committed that money but secured it on an ongoing basis, so the future of supported playgroups is secure in Victoria, unlike the situation under the former government when supported playgroups were funded on a budget-by-budget basis. I am absolutely delighted that the importance of reading to children has been included in Playgroup Week this year. As I said in my previous answer, we have researched the benefits of reading to children and we know that reading to children at the age of four, six to seven times a week, will improve their outcomes by the time they reach grade 3.

I encourage all members in this chamber to seek out a playgroup in their area, attend a session and see the benefits that can be gained and the great work they do with families, particularly vulnerable families, to encourage them to interact with their children and to teach them how to obtain the best benefits for their children. The Napthine government is dedicated to children in Victoria. We want all children in Victoria to have the opportunity of the very best start in life.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH: PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Thank you, President, for providing me with the space, time, opportunity and atmosphere in which I can continue my critique of not only the performance of the Minister for Health in administering the health portfolio but also the quality of his answers, which indicate that he is a minister who is not on top of detail.

The minister is unburdened by facts, and he does not see it as his responsibility to fully share information with either the chamber or the Victorian community. On a number of occasions he has been dragged kicking and screaming to acknowledge some facts. Through my contribution today I am putting on the public record a few more facts that he may have difficulty addressing in the future. One of the things I was referring to before question time was some discrepancies between what the minister indicated was the contribution of Victoria to budget growth in hospitals compared to the commonwealth's contribution. I detailed to the chamber that the growth in commonwealth expenditure had already outstripped that in Victoria and that in the forward estimates period the commonwealth is intending to increase its contribution by, cumulatively,

\$970 million during the life of the forward estimates compared to \$458 million by the state of Victoria.

This means that the commonwealth contribution to funding growth will more than double and will significantly outstrip the contribution of the Victorian government. That does not stop the Victorian Minister for Health indicating that commonwealth money to the hospital system is being strangled. Indeed on many occasions during the past few months he has given Victorian hospitals the impression that the continuity of their funding is at risk due to a reduction in commonwealth expenditure rather than the increase that is currently being committed through the forward estimates.

The minister also does not miss an opportunity to mislead people about the impact of budget savings that his government has introduced — the \$616 million that appeared in the first two budgets of the incoming Baillieu, now Napthine, government. As recently as 21 February this year the Minister for Health denied the impact of those budget cuts to the Victorian health system by trying to indicate in his answer on 21 February that the premise of budget cuts was incorrect and that the Victorian government does have savings programs rather than budget cuts, that money is reinvested into our health system and that many of those savings are achieved through things like Health Purchasing Victoria and reduced consultancies and advertising.

He indicated that there are fewer staff employed in the Department of Health and that many of the other savings applying to the Department of Health mean there are less consultancies and there is fewer waste and less advertising.

What the minister asserts is all good and well, but it contradicts what has actually occurred in our hospitals over the last two years. It is contrary to what the former Premier, Mr Baillieu, used to assert in the Victorian Parliament. When he was in office in May 2011 the former Premier was asked whether there were going to be more elective surgeries in Victoria under his administration than there had been previously. As I indicated last sitting week, he blithely, dismissively, said, 'Of course there will be more elective surgery under my administration than ever before'. That was not what the truth turned out to be. The truth was that in the first year of the Baillieu government, under the administration of the former Premier and Minister David Davis, there were less elective surgeries recorded than previously. The figure fell from 157 572 elective surgeries being performed in 2010–11 to 154 079 in 2011–12. So in the first full year of the Liberal

government's administration in Victoria the number of elective surgeries fell by more than 3500.

That was not the only fact the Minister for Health had a bit of difficulty coming to terms with. The other fact was the delivery of the 800 hospital beds that were promised for Victoria by the incoming Baillieu government and the Minister for Health, who continues in that role. There was a promise of delivering 800 new beds, additional to the beds that had already been committed to by the Labor government when it left office. The sorry fact is that those beds have not been forthcoming. Despite the Minister for Health indicating that those beds are identifiable and that hundreds of those beds have been delivered, he cannot identify the location of one bed in Victoria. He may actually in his back room, perhaps in his man safe in his office, have some of these beds. Perhaps they are miniature beds. Perhaps they are beds in homes. I am not sure where these beds are. There is no published data that indicates where these beds are.

The former Premier, hand on heart, stood in the Parliament and said that the new beds were going to be reported in the annual reports of Victorian hospitals. Let us have a look at those reports. Last year in October 81 hospital reports were tabled in the Parliament of Victoria. Where are the beds? Where are the beds reported in the annual reports, as promised by the previous Premier? Nowhere. There is not one. It is quite extraordinary that there is not one new bed in one hospital in 81 reports. We were promised there were going to be beds and we were promised they were going to be reported. In fact we did not get the report, let alone the beds. That is a tragedy for Victoria.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — In the scheme of things the bed is the most important thing. Being able to track where the bed is in order to demonstrate transparency and accountability to the Victorian people who elected you, who expected the beds to be there, would be good, but we have not seen that. It is very disappointing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — Have no doubt, Acting President, although it may look spontaneous, this is a routine that has actually been some time in the making! But the sorry situation for Victorian patients is that those beds do not exist. The other sorry situation is that even if it flies in the face of what the former Premier said in terms of where those beds would be accounted for, the Minister for Health indicates that those beds will be accounted for in the published data by the

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. He knows the nature of that reporting is not primarily focused on the number of absolute beds. The reliability of that data relates to bed days not the existence of beds or the resourcing of beds, but the Minister for Health relies on that data.

In relation to data from the institute, the most recent figures were for the financial year 2010–11, which is in fact the financial year that the incoming Baillieu government inherited a budget. The Baillieu government did not invest any new money during the course of its first six months in office — no new money. Any beds that were actually delivered during 2010–11 had nothing to do with this government. They were delivered because funds had been provided by the previous Labor government in Victoria in partnership with the federal Labor government. But the Minister for Health in Victoria has taken credit for the beds that were delivered during the course of that financial year. There has not been any institute-published data since that time that indicates there has been any net increase in the number of beds funded by the Liberal government during its term in office. We will await the publication of that data and we hope for the sake of Victorian patients that we may see some of those beds. But at this point in time the Minister for Health cannot identify where those beds have been located.

The next issue I want to deal with is the minister's response to elective surgery waiting lists. On 21 February I asked the minister the following question:

Is it not a fact that the minister signed statements of priorities (SOPs), which are the hospital contracts, for 2012–13 as far back as August or September 2012 that consolidated elective surgery waiting lists increasing beyond 50 000 this year, up from 38 000 patients when he came to office?

The minister, in his scrambling for an answer, made this offering to me, other members of the chamber and the people of Victoria:

The member will understand the process for negotiating statements of priorities with health services. He will understand that in May there is a state budget, and there is also a federal budget. Money comes forward and now, under the new system, comes to the pool, and then money is disbursed to individual health services from there.

Then the minister went on to pretty much exclusively blame the adjustment in federal dollars. There were a number of interjections during the minister's answer. Members of the opposition considered that the minister's answer was not fulsome and that he was not accounting for his responsibility. Then, referring to the statements of priorities (SOPs), the minister responded:

The reason I am explaining this is because the SOPs were being renegotiated on the basis that the commonwealth had withdrawn \$107 million. What I want to indicate is that the withdrawal of money — the disruption that has occurred — has damaged our health services and led to the cancellation of elective surgery, the closure of a number of procedures and reductions in staff numbers in a number of health services.

Again, they were the words that the minister offered, and I have done nothing but read them onto the public record. The great trouble about the minister's answer in that regard is that it ignores the truth. The truth is that the contracts that he signed in September — before the \$107 million was taken by the commonwealth and then, more importantly, put back by the commonwealth, which means that there is a zero net difference in the commonwealth's contribution during the course of the financial year — have seen extraordinary growth in the number of people on the elective surgery lists who are waiting for surgery in Victoria.

In previous sitting weeks I have asked the minister whether it is the truth that until the last reporting period elective surgery waiting lists have grown each and every week — that is, in every single week that he has been minister the list has grown on average by 85 patients. If that was not bad enough, as recently as today an article published in the *Age* indicates that under this minister's watch the waiting lists for elective surgery in Victoria will go up to in excess of 55 000, to 55 227, by the end of the financial year.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — It is the opposite of the promise. The promise made on coming into government, when the waiting lists were 38 000, was that under the Liberal administration in Victoria it would go down. Instead, now, within two and a half years, it is anticipated that the waiting lists will go up to 55 227. That means that the average increase per week during the first two and half years of this minister's administration will have gone up to 225 patients — that is, each and every week 225 patients will have been added to the elective surgery waiting lists. That is, of course, an unacceptable level of disruption, pain and suffering being inflicted upon Victorian patients. It shows a degree of negligence and disregard by the minister and the government for the impact that is having on Victorian patients.

The article in today's *Age*, which is based upon the facts — not conjecture, but facts — contained in the contracts signed off by the Minister for Health, indicates:

Victoria's elective surgery waiting list will climb by 20 per cent to more than 55 000 patients by June, continuing what

doctors and nurses say is an alarming trend that puts patients at risk.

Funding agreements between health minister David Davis and Victorian public hospitals show that more than 9000 patients will join the queue for elective surgery this financial year, despite the reversal of \$107 million in federal cuts.

That is a devastating fact, and a number of key players in the Victorian health system know that that is extremely distressing. The president of the Victorian branch of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Stephen Parnis, is reported in the article as having said that the size of the waiting list was unprecedented and of profound concern to doctors. Those doctors are not alone. The article states:

The Victorian chairman of the college of surgeons, Robert Stunden, said the lengthy list was 'appalling' and would put patient lives at risk.

That is what nurses believe as well. The state secretary of the Victorian branch of the Australian Nursing Federation, Lisa Fitzpatrick, said:

This is a system that is totally underfunded ... it shows the absolutely ridiculous nature of the government's promise of 800 new beds, the lying to the people of Victoria in order to get elected.

The article in the *Age* reinforces the public information now available on the Victorian government's Department of Health website that health services will have longer queues for elective surgery, including more than 10 000 patients at Southern Health, 5684 patients at Eastern Health and 4493 patients at Western Health. At the Royal Children's Hospital — often considered to be the repository of the most compassionate care in Victoria's health-care system, as the jewel in the crown in terms of providing health care to our children and supporting families — the waiting list will grow to 3750 patients by the end of this year. It is totally unacceptable that those children are being made to wait. Members of the Victorian government have shown a degree of heartlessness by not finding within themselves the determination to provide the wherewithal needed to reduce that waiting list and the pain and suffering for those children and their parents.

It is an appalling situation. We would have expected better from members of this government. There are members on the government benches who have humanity and regard for their fellow citizens. They share a concern for the suffering of children. They would be profoundly distressed, and I am sure they would join other members of the community and of the opposition in being appalled by this situation. I urge those compassionate and concerned members on the

Victorian government benches not only to take some comfort from changes that have occurred in their administration but also to stay vigilant and to maintain ongoing determination to get from this administration a better deal for Victorian patients and a better deal for the hospital system.

The continual theme is the floundering of the Minister for Health, who has clearly demonstrated time and again that he is not up to this challenge. He has not been responsive to the needs of patients. He has not got on top of the portfolio and provided comfort and support to doctors, nurses and hospital administrators to rise up to meet these challenges. He has not been concerned about allowing his election promises to just fall by the wayside and not be delivered. At this rate that will have a devastating effect on Victorians. It is pretty clear that is not of concern to him.

The Leader of the Opposition in the other chamber, Daniel Andrews, who is well versed in health matters because he is a former Minister for Health, has quite correctly identified Mr Davis as more appropriately an opposition spokesman for health who now has a department whose officers provide him with advice. That is about as good it gets from the current Minister for Health. He does not show leadership within the portfolio. He shows a determination to be an advocate against the commonwealth government, despite the fact that the commonwealth government's contributions to health are clearly outstripping the financial support provided by his own government.

I call upon the Minister for Health to show respect for Victorian patients and to restore the funding which has been cut from the Victorian health system.

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

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak this afternoon on Mr Jennings's motion. He outlines three particular areas in his motion, which states:

That this house takes note of the answers given by the Minister for Health to questions without notice asked in this house on —

- (1) 1 March 2011 regarding the commonwealth-state health agreement;
- (2) 21 February 2013 regarding hospital waiting lists; and
- (3) 7 March 2013 regarding hospital bed numbers.

I am pleased Mr Jennings has brought these areas to the attention of the house because it gives me an opportunity to speak on what the government has done and to outline to the chamber exactly what the coalition

faced when it came into government in 2010. I remind those in the chamber that significant black holes were found in hospital budgets at that time. I have spoken about those black holes before in this place. They included a \$44 million unfunded completion cost for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and a failure to provide \$25 million to fit out the new Royal Children's Hospital with essential ICT capacity. I thought that was quite extraordinary. A billion-dollar hospital, which we all knew was a fabulous facility, was lacking the provision of \$25 million for ICT — something imperative in a modern-day hospital. It showed the lack of planning under the direction of the then Minister for Health, Daniel Andrews, who is now the Leader of the Opposition. He did not manage that process at all well.

The other issue I find quite astounding is that over \$55 million worth of Christmas salaries for doctors and nurses was underfunded. As somebody who has worked in the health system I can attest that for those doctors and nurses to be unaware at the time we came to power — November 2010 — that in a few weeks time, over that critical period, their salaries and penalty rates would not be funded is extraordinary. I have worked in hospitals on Christmas Day, and it is a very significant day for many people because they are in hospital and not at home with their families celebrating like everyone else. The doctors, nurses and everybody else working in hospitals at that time do a great job. It is often to assist their co-workers that people sacrifice that time. It is astounding that \$55.2 million worth of Christmas salaries could be unfunded, and I think anyone who has worked in the health system would feel the same way.

That is what we faced when we came to government. I am pleased that since coming to office the coalition government has increased health funding by \$1.3 billion to a record \$13.7 billion in total. Victorian health service budgets increased by an average of 5.1 per cent in 2012–13. The state budget funding for hospitals has increased since the coalition was elected, including \$9.3 billion allocated to acute health in 2012–13, which was \$376 million more for that very important area than was provided in the 2011–12 budget.

The Victorian coalition government is committed to ensuring that we have appropriate and significant funding, and we have addressed that by increasing that funding, despite the challenges we faced in coming to office when we needed to find the additional money in the areas I have already outlined. They were significant figures — \$44 million for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, \$25 million for the Royal

Children's Hospital IT infrastructure and \$55 million for health workers' Christmas salaries. Those three very significant areas were all unfunded, and the minister and the government had to find funding to ensure that they had the appropriate funding and could continue.

Getting back to Mr Jennings's motion in relation to some of these specific areas, he made a number of claims in the course of his contribution. He accused the minister of absolving himself of responsibility for public hospitals and continually blaming the commonwealth in various areas. I will return to the commonwealth issue in a moment. When former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was in office — I am not sure where he is situated at the moment or whether he is going to return to that position; one does not know in the current state of flux up in Canberra — he had another of his grand plans to reform the health system. He used Victoria as a model, based on the reforms undertaken during the Kennett government years back in the 1990s. That was a process that I understood quite well, because at the time I was working at the Royal Women's Hospital.

The significant reforms that were occurring at every acute and major health service at the time obviously impacted on an institution such as that. We had to work with those reforms and put them in place, so I do have some understanding of the challenges at the time. It was incredibly difficult — but of course that was off the back of the previous administration that the state had gotten used to, back in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There were enormous challenges and reforms during those early Kennett years that that government needed to undertake. They were significant reforms, and as I said, I think that former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd wanted to acknowledge those significant reforms and how they held Victoria in good stead over a period of time where other states have wanted to follow.

The health agreement that the current coalition signed with the federal government when coming to office to provide certainty and consistency in the allocation of federal funding has been undertaken. We have seen a number of areas that have impacted on the federal funding allocation to the health budget through various mechanisms, one of those being funding through a pool system. In recent times that has been totally ignored, after the backflip that the commonwealth has undertaken in reversing its decision and reinstating that \$107 million to the Victorian health services. In Mr Jennings's contribution he commented on an answer Mr Davis gave to a question without notice about his representations to the commonwealth in asking for the restoration of money that was taken out midway through a financial year, when hospitals had

had their moneys allocated to them, had set their budgets and had planned on the basis of those budgets.

When hospitals are planning their budgets they look at the number of services they can undertake, whether they are outpatient services, day surgery cases or surgery in general. Those are just some of the very important services that the health services undertake. To have money taken out midway through a financial year, when planning and services have been put in place, is quite extraordinary. I will get to the Senate inquiry, which looked at this matter in detail. I would urge anyone who has any interest in this area to read that Senate health report, because it outlines significantly the flawed argument that the federal government undertook.

Mr Jennings said in his contribution that he was a defender of the Victorian health system and that he worked 'assiduously' with his federal 'brothers and sisters' to restore that money. We on this side of the chamber would dispute that. On a number of occasions we actually asked opposition members to speak with their federal counterparts to argue for the \$107 million to be restored to Victorian health services. If Mr Jennings did have a word in the Prime Minister's ear and with his federal counterparts, including the Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, then I thank him. That was the first part of it, but that was only for the \$107 million that needed to be reinstated for this financial year. Victorian health services are going to have a further \$368 million ripped out of them over the next three years. The government is arguing that it would like an acknowledgement from the federal government of that \$368 million that is also to come back to Victorian hospitals and health services.

As I was saying, I want to refer to the Senate report that looked at the whole issue of the federal health cuts. I think it is absolutely certain that there are a number of areas in the report that vindicate Minister Davis's position in arguing for Victoria's fair share to be returned to our health services. As has been well reported, the Treasurer was basing the cuts at the time on population, and he was saying there had been a decrease in population in Victoria of in excess of 11 000 people.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Ms CROZIER — Quite extraordinary. Anyone would know — any Victorian, anyone who is out and about in our city, including the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, who is just walking through the chamber — would know exactly what we are talking about when we talk about future planning and population growth.

There has been significant population growth in Victoria, and to say that the population had dropped by 11 000 was quite extraordinary.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I inform Mr Davis that interjecting while one of his own members is speaking does not seem sensible, and certainly not when Mr Davis is walking through the chamber.

Ms CROZIER — To return to what I was saying in relation to the federal Treasurer's flawed population data, the federal Senate inquiry report states that:

The government however, attempts to claim these cuts to the states for health were not savings measures. During his MYEFO announcement press conference Treasurer Wayne Swan explained the cuts as follows:

There's been no cut at all and in fact states are continuing to receive very generous increases in terms of funding in health and education but the calculation of the latest indexation method done on an agreed formula, signed and sealed in the agreements, has produced in this year a lesser flow of money in some areas and nothing whatsoever to do with government decision making.

That shows the federal Treasurer has one point of view; however, his argument about population data was flawed. The argument that Victoria had had a decrease of in excess of 11 000 people — having had that formula — is quite extraordinary. The Senate report goes on to say that from a federal perspective the federal Treasurer has been actually found out, if you like, in relation to his miscalculation of this very important area.

The report says, in the section headed 'Changes to parameter values used in Treasurer's determination':

As noted above, the growth factor for hospital funding is calculated using three factors. The technology factor is fixed at 1.2 per cent. However, the other two factors — the health-specific cost index and the growth in population estimates weighted for hospital utilisation — vary over time.

Of course they vary over time in those three areas. The report continues:

It is the variation in these two factors for the Treasurer's 2012 determination which has resulted in the revision of payments to the states and territories.

Mr Davis, the Minister for Health, and the coalition government argued assiduously that at the heart of the matter was Australia's population growth rate between 31 December 2010 and 31 December 2011. The report states the committee concurred with that view. That

highlights just how flawed Treasurer Wayne Swan's calculations were. To have imposed that onto our health services did not do him any favours; nor did it do the Prime Minister or the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, any favours as they tried to argue that case on Mr Swan's behalf.

The conclusion of the Senate report goes on to state:

The committee considers that the basis on which the calculation of the funding cuts has been made is flawed.

...

The committee agrees that the best possible estimate of Australia's population should be used in coming to a population growth figure. However, the committee does not consider that the commonwealth's calculation of the population growth between December 2010 and December 2011 is defensible ...

This report contains damning indictments about what happened in Victoria's health services. The report acknowledges that the commonwealth's cuts were imposed on states and territories midway through the 2012–13 financial year and that that was following the Treasurer's determination of October 2012, which I have mentioned. In terms of any organisation being able to have an appropriate budget position, it is quite extraordinary for it to have money ripped out that way. I am therefore very pleased that the federal government has acknowledged that and is returning the \$107 million to Victorian health services.

I would have to say that it needs to. In terms of those hospitals, I know a number of statements of priorities (SOPs) have been signed and agreed to. They were done on the basis of the original figures calculated under the first agreement. After the announcement by the commonwealth last October, new SOPs were signed. Now that the \$107 million has been reinstated a third series of SOPs have had to be signed. This is very confusing for health services, and they deserve some certainty in this whole area.

That brings me to the point that no health service has yet received that \$107 million — and those health services are waiting. They cannot plan for future services, whether they be surgery, such as day surgery, or outpatient services or the running of a health service in any other manner. That money needs to be reinstated, and the Victorian coalition government would call on the federal government to do that. We would ask that Mr Jennings — and he said he was working assiduously with his brothers and sisters at a federal level — go and ask for that money to be paid back immediately, forthwith, because those health services are waiting.

A comment from Mr Jennings has been quoted in today's *Age* — and it is quoted in relation to this whole issue of waiting lists. I know Mr Jennings is not here, but he may be listening, and this is his motion. The article in today's *Age* says:

Opposition health spokesman Gavin Jennings said the state government had tried to confuse Victorians about the impact of the \$107 million federal funding reduction, while making its own cuts of about \$123 million a year.

And I will come to that point in a minute.

There is no confusion about what the Victorian government has done. The confusion has come from the commonwealth government. It has taken away \$107 million from health services midway through a financial year. That is incredibly confusing for any organisation, and hospitals are certainly complex. They need to have certainty in their budgets. The article goes on to quote Mr Jennings as saying:

The truth these [documents] show is that waiting list numbers are a disaster, even after the money has been put back by the commonwealth ...

That simply is not the case; it is not correct. Perhaps Mr Jennings knows something that I do not know. Perhaps the cheque from his federal counterparts is in the mail. But if Mr Jennings asked the dozens of health services across the state that are waiting for the money to be returned to them, they would say they have not seen one cent of it. I ask whether he knows something in making that statement as reported in the *Age* today, and whether he can call on his federal counterparts to get that money returned to Victorian health services.

In his motion Mr Jennings talks about the health agreement, which I referred to earlier in my contribution. Again I refer to the Senate inquiry that found that in the implementation of the agreement:

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

That was an extraordinary finding by the Senate inquiry. It shows that political motivation is at the heart of the commonwealth's arguing in this very emotive policy area. Everybody knows that health is a difficult and complex portfolio area, and the Senate report, with those findings, is quite damning of the federal government. The federal Minister for Health, Ms Plibersek, should be astounded by that finding. I hope she takes notice of it and does not use politically motivated messaging or language, which she has, as I have heard and seen in those advertisements in the paper which try to explain the commonwealth's

position. It is highly politically motivated and wrong for Mr Jennings to say that Minister Davis has been, I think his words were, 'wreaking merry havoc across summer' about this whole issue when in fact the minister has been arguing on behalf of Victorian patients and Victorian health services for the federal government to return the money that has been stripped away from them.

It is not a question of being politically motivated in relation to this issue; it is about returning that money after it had been allocated in a budget process. I believe the commonwealth realised, as did the Victorian Labor opposition, that health services were quite bemused and astounded by the actions of the commonwealth government because of the impact it would have on them on a day-to-day basis. Quite rightly, Minister Davis and the coalition government have stood up for Victorian patients and health services in calling for the commonwealth government to return that money.

In today's *Age* article Mr Jennings referred to elective surgery waiting lists. I remind members that the former Labor government let \$30 million in elective surgery funding lapse. We came to government at the end of 2010 and discovered that lapse in funding in 2011. There was a reduction of \$50 million in national partnership agreement funding in July 2012 for elective surgery in emergency departments, which certainly had an impact on those two particular areas. At the time that partnership agreement was being discussed and signed the Victorian coalition government warned that the \$50 million cut would create a shortfall for elective surgeries in Victoria alone. We are now feeling the impact of that in this very important area of health service delivery, and certainly those elective surgery waiting lists are something that the Victorian coalition government is addressing.

There is no question that the \$107 million cut is having a further impact on the elective surgery waiting lists. As I said, money cannot be stripped out of budget's if a certain number of procedures and surgeries are planned to be undertaken. If that happens, it causes uncertainty and there will be cancellation of surgeries, postponement of surgeries and surgeries pushed out into other areas, which means that other figures have to be adjusted negatively. The people who are being affected by this are Victorian patients.

Funding cuts at any time, as we have witnessed with the commonwealth's cuts, will have an impact. The hole cannot be plugged by simply writing a cheque — which we are waiting to receive. That will not enable all the surgeries to be attended to overnight. It takes planning and it takes time. Resourcing issues with clinicians and

a whole range of areas need to be addressed. We cannot just have a cheque in the mail and pretend that surgeries are going to happen overnight. That will not happen. There will be a flow-on effect from these federal health cuts, and it will take some time for health services to be able to catch up and to plan and bring their services in line with what the expectation was at 1 July 2012 when that money was allocated in the 2012–13 budget.

I acknowledge that those waiting lists have been impacted. Many of the health services that have had these cuts thrust upon them have worked hard to address the issues and have tried to inconvenience as few patients as possible, but a lot of it has been taken out of their control. I commend the hospital clinicians, staff and boards for their decision making in looking at this issue and trying to address it in the best possible way.

Mr Jennings's motion also goes to the question of hospital bed numbers. There is no doubt that the \$1.3 billion increase in funding since we came to office will improve the situation, but there is also an absolute commitment to increasing the capacity of our health and hospital systems. Through that health funding increase the coalition government has been able to contribute to that. We can see it with some of the new hospitals being planned and built for a future Victoria; we are building beds for the future. There was \$522 million in the 2011–12 budget to build new beds and other system capacities and to renew existing assets.

A terrific new hospital is being planned for and will be built in Mrs Petrovich's area of Bendigo. It will be a significant facility for that area and will service many people from northern Victoria in a significant way. I am sure the people of that area are watching that project closely and welcoming it, as has been indicated by members who represent the area. No doubt there will be some challenges along the way; there always are with these things. They are difficult but important projects. The government is committed to improving health services in that region as well as other regions right across the state.

We know that with these sorts of initiatives and projects we have to meet challenges along the way, and we are trying to do that. Mr Jennings referred to money that was stripped out of the Victorian budget, but it is well known that it has not been stripped out by the Victorian coalition government but rather is being redirected to front-line services, because that is where capacity is needed, rather than our having a bloated bureaucracy.

We have made some cuts and trims to redirect money from the bureaucracy to front-line services, and that can only be good thing. Likewise with hospital advertising, this government has not put on a red hat and gone around in helicopters, talking about this and that with the Premier doing this and that. You have not seen any of that. We have taken money out of advertising and put it into front-line services. The money has been redirected to make the health system more efficient and to ensure that the increasingly complex needs of the population can be met.

There are many challenges with our population that we will meet. We have an ageing population that will have an increase in chronic disease, will live longer, will have more acute health admissions and will require more health services. We acknowledge, as governments at all levels acknowledge, the challenging change in demographics. It is imperative that governments plan for a change in population and demographics to cater for our growing population, and we have looked at that. The previous government did not do an enormous amount of planning to meet those challenges in a whole lot of areas, and on coming to government we found significant areas of concern. We are addressing those issues and we are addressing them in a methodical and responsible way. It is about getting the budget back into a sound fiscal position so that we can cater for a growth in services as demand in Victoria continues to grow.

I have to dispute Mr Jennings's assertions and comments in relation to hospital bed numbers. He said that there was pain, suffering and negligence and that it is a sorry situation; they are all terms he used throughout his contribution to the debate. I reiterate that we came into government in 2010 with significant fiscal challenges in a range of areas. Health was only one; there were significant others. I do not need to remind the chamber of those challenges — we have been through them on a number of occasions — but they take some management and need to be brought into line.

In addition to that we had \$6.1 billion of GST revenue ripped out by the federal government. In the latest example — and these are big figures — \$107 million was ripped directly out of health in one financial year. These are issues that we are addressing and will continue to address. I am pleased that the commonwealth has backtracked on its decision to cut \$107 million from health funding, but, as I said at the outset, I call on those opposite to speak to their federal counterparts and ask for the \$368 million to be reinstated to our health services. Otherwise, it will be a sorry situation; Mr Jennings is absolutely right. To avoid the pain, suffering and negligence that he

described as being inflicted on Victorian patients by the Minister for Health and this government — which is over the top and emotive language — Mr Jennings's side should be arguing strongly for that money to be reinstated to ensure that Victorian patients have access to those health services.

These are difficult financial times. Whether we are looking at issues affecting us on a national or international level, governments need to be fiscally responsible and spend money wisely. That is why we have redirected money from bureaucracies to front-line services and from advertising campaigns back to areas where health services can be addressed and improved, but it takes planning to look at this entire area of health.

In my contribution I have addressed Mr Jennings's motion to take note of those three specific areas, and I look forward to hearing the contributions of others. The coalition government is standing up for Victorian patients. I commend the Minister for Health for the strong stance he has taken on this issue. He has spoken to in excess of 80 hospital boards — nearly all the hospital boards across the state — to explain the situation. They know what the federal government has done and are very concerned about it. They are waiting for the \$107 million to be returned to their health services. As I said in relation to the article in today's *Age*, if Mr Jennings knows something we do not know and the cheque is in the mail, that would be terrific. However, hospital services and patients are waiting on that money, and all in the house would agree that Victoria would very much welcome the \$107 million and the further \$368 million over the next three years.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — Yet again we have a health debate. The federal government's cutting of \$107 million from the Victorian budget was an act of bad faith. That has been recognised, and it has been said that the money will be returned. If it has not been returned already, it should be returned urgently. The state government's cut of \$600 million is a disaster. I am really interested in this redirection. I would love to see the document that shows us how \$600 million has been redirected rather than cut from the health budget, so I urge the minister to produce that document so we can all understand how that money has been redirected. In my mind it is a cut.

Ms Crozier also talked about the Senate process, and let us be quite clear here: that was the work of Senator Richard Di Natale, one of the Greens senators, and he brought on that inquiry because he was very concerned about the way health was being made into a political football and the fact that each year state and federal governments were arguing and money was being cut

and then reinstated into health budgets, which made it almost impossible for health services to operate properly. So let us be quite clear about that: it was a Greens senator who brought on that process. One of the reasons Senator Di Natale did that was that the Greens no longer want health to be a political football. We want the funding from both the state and federal governments to be clear — that is, when hospitals are to receive it and how they are to receive it — so that hospitals know each year what their operating budget is.

I can understand Mr Jennings's frustration and why he has brought on this take-note motion, because I share with him the frustration of never being able to get a straight answer out of the minister. I am going to give a few examples of the kinds of questions that I have asked over the last 12 months which I have simply never been able to get the minister to answer without spin and waffle.

The Werribee hospital and maternal health services in the outer west are at breaking point. When that issue was raised last year I wrote to the minister straight afterwards asking him to attend a public meeting. Interestingly it took him four months to respond to me, and he said there was not one date in his diary for the next year to be able to attend a community meeting in Werribee to explain what the problem was. In that letter he then blamed the federal government, except that this had happened before the cuts. So Mr Davis has to figure out exactly what is going on.

We still do not know whether the dental service in Footscray is going to be rebuilt. If that is closed, that is 400 children a month and 10 000 adults a year who will not receive treatment. It requires roughly between \$9 million and \$11 million to be rebuilt. We still do not know if that is going to occur.

Also, is there any planning for a new hospital in the outer west in those areas that are growing at a rapid rate, so that we can actually manage health services? I do not see any kind of planning going into that from the minister.

Then a question I have repeatedly asked the minister — and he just gives me waffle and says, 'Someone else is looking into it' — is about the issue around exposure of children to diesel in the inner west. I agree with Mr Jennings on the waffle and the fact that we never get a straight answer out of this minister, and I am pleased that he has brought on this take-note motion because it has given me an opportunity to repeat yet again the kinds of questions that I cannot ever get the minister to answer.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am unclear as to who to call next, because I am not quite sure which position the Greens took, but I will call Ms Darveniza, given that there have been several speakers since the last opposition speaker.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise to make a contribution to this debate and to speak in support of the motion that Mr Jennings has before the house. It was very interesting listening to the contribution of the new Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Ms Crozier. I guess what we have learnt from Ms Crozier is that things are difficult, things are hard, health is not easy and that reducing elective surgery numbers is complex and difficult. Determining where those 800 beds are going to be and where the new service is going to be is, again, a very complex issue. The government is looking at it; it is working on it. The government is committed to it, but there were not a lot of answers from Ms Crozier.

Ms Crozier talked about the state of the finances when the Liberal-Nationals coalition came into government. She did not mention that when it came into government it in fact came into government with a budget that was in surplus and which had a AAA rating. Ms Crozier spent most of her contribution talking about the federal government and cuts that she says the federal government has made to the health system, but she failed to really mention the cuts that her government has made. Perhaps now that she is the Parliamentary Secretary for Health she will be able to look more closely at the cuts that have been made.

She talked about the \$616 million cuts — which everybody sees as being money that has been ripped out of the health budget in the last budget — as being some sort of redistribution or reallocation. I would echo Ms Hartland's contribution and say that we would love to see how that has been redistributed and where that money has gone, because I fail to see it in any of the health services in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. I cannot say that I have heard any of the health networks in metropolitan Melbourne talking about how wonderful — or even how good or pleasing — it has been, or even acknowledging that there has been some redistribution or reallocation of that funding. I think everybody knows that they are quite clearly and simply cuts that have been made to the health budget.

I am not sure where to start with Ms Crozier. I do not know whether I should start at the end, with the ageing population and the sorts of services that that growing section of our population is going to require. Ms Crozier acknowledged that it was an issue that needed to be looked at and that it was a challenge

because of the growth in that particular sector and the high service needs of that section of the population, but she failed to mention her government's very significant cuts to the home and community care (HACC) program.

The Liberal-Nationals government cut home and community care funding by 2 per cent, which affected some of the most vulnerable aged people in our community. There was a 2 per cent cut to all home care hours, despite the fact that there is a spiralling and an ever-increasing demand for these services, which has been acknowledged by the new Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

The fallout from the reduced funding to home and community care services across Victoria has been absolutely devastating. I know that in Shepparton, where my office is, it resulted in a \$64 000 cut to the City of Greater Shepparton HACC program. Local governments have found that they have had to either cut back on domestic assistance, on personal care or on respite, or put more people on waiting lists for these very important services that keep people in their homes and support them in the community so that they do not have to go into nursing homes or hospital beds. Putting someone on a waiting list goes right against the grain of what the HACC program is all about — that is, providing people with services as early as possible and really meeting their needs so they can remain at home and in the community.

Councils also receive less money from the state government to administer the HACC program. They had an unenviable choice of having to decide whether to cut the services to those people who are most in need — our aged community members — or pass on the cost to the ratepayers.

This is something the Liberal-Nationals coalition government did. It ripped out this money from our aged-care services, even though it knows and acknowledges that this is a growth area of great and increasing demand. Mr Davis, the Minister for Health, has been crowing about the recently announced increase in funding to aged-care services. It was a federal government initiative as well as a state government initiative. The federal government has come to the party and put in \$20 million to help compensate for the 2 per cent cut that was made to the HACC services back in the middle of 2012.

The federal government is reinvesting. In Ms Crozier's contribution to the debate today we heard her criticise the federal government, but we did not hear one mention of the \$20 million investment in health

services that the federal government has just announced. It is not only putting in that money but it has announced a \$3.7 billion commitment for the Living Longer Living Better aged-care reform package, which includes an almost doubling of the number of home care places over the next five years. That is a significant contribution it is making to a growing area of need in the health-care sector, an area which the state government cut in the last budget. That money will assist in compensating for the cut that was made by the state government, with additional funding to support this growing sector in aged care.

I also refer to the waiting lists. In her contribution Ms Crozier failed to mention that cutting the hospital waiting list was an election promise made by the Liberal-Nationals coalition back in 2010. It gave a commitment to the community, to Victorians, that it would cut the waiting list. But that is not what has happened at all. It has not cut the waiting list. We have seen the waiting list grow and grow. In the January–March quarter for 2011 there were 40 071 people on the elective surgery waiting list. In February 2011 then Premier Baillieu welcomed the new health reform package which was agreed on with the Gillard federal government — and again, Ms Crozier had not one positive thing to say about the federal government — and which would see a pool of combined commonwealth-state money used to fund local hospital networks. The Premier said that Victorian patients would start to see the elective surgery waiting list time drop by July 2011. Ms Crozier might want to go back and look at the promises that were made by her government and at what has actually been delivered — or, rather, what has not been delivered.

In August 2011 the Baillieu government renegotiated and secured a better deal with an extra \$4 billion by 2020 by signing an improved national health reform agenda with the Gillard government. It supported it and signed up. I refer to November 2011, and this is particularly interesting given some of the comments that Ms Crozier made about penalty rates for nurses. If we go back to 2011, we will remember that the Baillieu government's cabinet-in-confidence document that was signed by Minister David Davis in May 2011 revealed that the government would try to cut \$473 million from the health budget between 2011 and 2016 by removing the mandated nurse/midwife-patient ratios, replacing nurses with health assistants and allowing for unlimited split shifts and 4-hour shifts in the public sector nurses and midwives enterprise agreement.

We recall that this document fell off the back of a truck, yet Ms Crozier stands here and sheds crocodile

tears about penalty rates for nurses. That is what they are, coming from her — crocodile tears. At every opportunity it has had, this government has tried to cut pay and conditions for our nurses.

Not only has it tried to make those cuts to the pay and conditions for nurses but it has tried to cut the health budget. By the January–March 2012 quarter 45 912 people were on the elective surgery waiting lists, even though we had been promised that the elective surgery waiting lists would decrease. In January 2012 the government released its funding agreements with the Victorian public hospitals; those agreements are called statements of priorities. It was revealed that the state government would fund 9500 fewer elective surgeries in 2011–12 compared to in the previous year.

It is disappointing that we did not hear from too many chief executive officers of our networks. They were silent. I do not know what sort of gag this government is putting on our hospital administrators, but I am not at all surprised given the way previous coalition governments have operated.

By the April–June 2012 quarter we had 46 131 people on the elective surgery waiting lists. In December 2012 the government and the public sector hospital senior executives started announcing significant and immediate budget cuts of \$106.7 million, with a total of \$475 million over four years, saying these cuts will negatively impact on elective surgery, on beds and on staff. I can understand why the government delays and delays making the announcements and releasing the data that shows what sort of shape our hospitals are in. However, after months of delay the former Premier, Ted Baillieu, released the data detailing the health of the state's hospital system, with the number of people on the elective surgery waiting lists blowing out to 47 760 people. The delay is because the system is struggling to keep up, and both the Premier and the Minister for Health know this.

These reports show very clearly that the system is in crisis and was in crisis well before the former Premier and Mr David Davis started their fight with the federal government. The facts are that the system is faltering and has been since the Liberal-Nationals coalition government came to power two years ago. The health system has been in decline since 2010, with the number of people on the waiting lists at the highest level ever. It has absolutely skyrocketed even though the coalition came to government with a promise to reduce the waiting lists. Two years ago the coalition promised that the lists would be slashed and that it would inject 800 new beds into the system.

Ms Crozier had nothing to say about this except that the government was looking at it, the increase in beds is complex and the government is trying to do something about it. Apart from it being complex and the government is trying to do something about it, we have not heard when these new beds are coming or where they are going to be placed. After two years of the coalition being in the job all we have seen slashed is health funding, with \$616 million having been cut out of the health system. The government cannot show us a single extra bed to be added to the system or tell us where that bed might go.

There have been significant cuts to our health system, including devastating cuts to very important programs in rural and regional Victoria. They are often seen as being quite small programs, but they are vital in rural and regional areas like those I represent in Northern Victoria Region. Parents and carers of newborns will no longer have access to free whooping cough vaccinations. As of 6 May 2012 there were 1655 notifications of whooping cough. The rural midwifery support program was cut. That very important program supported midwives in rural and regional areas and meant women were able to have their babies closer to home.

There have been huge cuts to health programs and initiatives, including abandoning the \$150 million cancer action plan, which was another important initiative for rural and regional Victoria. The HIV and sexually transmissible infections initiatives have also been cut. The closure of the mental health line, which the government undertook prior to the last budget, has had a significant impact on rural and regional Victoria. We know from data that was collected that people in rural and regional areas made up the majority of contacts with that helpline. It was a very important mental health service, and it is no longer there.

The government has done nothing to support our health system — quite the reverse — yet government members do not even have the courage of their convictions to come in here and admit that they have ripped \$616 million from the system and closed down programs and initiatives that are important to not only rural and regional Victoria but people right across the state. I am very pleased to support this motion moved by Mr Jennings.

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — The motion today furthers the confusion and muddying of the waters created by Labor, both federal and state. It continues the blame game that has a very unhappy ending for the state of Victoria. Labor cannot be trusted

in general, and it cannot be trusted in matters of health in Victoria.

Since coming to office the Victorian coalition government has increased health funding by \$1.3 billion to a record \$13.7 billion in total. State budget funding for hospitals has increased since the coalition was elected. Victorian health service budgets increased by an average of 5.1 per cent in 2012–13, a fact that was ignored by the previous speaker. The muddying of the waters around what is occurring to health budgets and waiting lists in Victoria continues. Since the coalition government was elected state budget funding for hospitals has increased, including \$9.3 billion on acute health in 2012–13, which was \$376 million more funding for acute health than in the 2011–12 budget.

We have a number of black holes that we are attempting to deal with, including unfunded completion costs of \$44 million for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and a failure to provide \$25 million to fit out the new Royal Children's Hospital with essential ICT equipment. That has placed immediate and extreme pressure on the health budget that could otherwise have seen those funds directed to elective surgery had the previous Labor government not been so incompetent and irresponsible.

Ms Crozier, a woman who has worked in the health field and experienced its complexities, unlike the simplistic approach of other members to health management in Victoria, articulated very clearly the situation where \$55.2 million was left unfunded for Christmas salaries in hospitals, with no source of funding available in 2010–11. History stands on its record. Looking back to when I was parliamentary secretary for health in opposition, those terrible, fake waiting lists were created under the guise of the then Minister for Health, now the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and were based on his understanding of what was going on, but the then government still ignored that problem. There were waiting lists behind waiting lists.

The HealthSMART IT disaster cost hospitals in their budgets and also in their capability and capacity to improve their IT position. Some members have memories of what occurred over the previous 11 years, and it is not a pretty picture. What concerns me today is that this motion continues that perpetuation of the rubbish peddled by the federal Labor government and that it continues to be rattled off in this chamber by state Labor members.

The motion displays such a level of incompetence and incredible arrogance when what actually occurred was that in 2011 the Leader of the Opposition, who was then the Minister for Health, let \$30 million in elective funding lapse. Had state and federal Labor really been committed to the welfare of Victorians and not primarily interested in a pre-election manipulation of waiting lists for their own political outcomes, elective surgery funding would have been in the bottom line, and the waiting list would now be equal to or lower than under Labor.

Ms Darveniza can talk about Ms Crozier's portrayal of what has occurred, but that is the reality. We were left with a health basket case. The federal government's health funding cuts at the start of the financial year have had a huge impact on the people of the Northern Victoria Region and on elective surgery patients in Victoria overall. I recently attended a meeting with the Minister for Health in Bendigo. Ms Darveniza can say that she knows nothing about any of this, but it was a meeting of all the boards and many CEOs of hospitals across that region who talked about the first lot of cuts that federal Labor had perpetrated on those communities.

The difficulty for these hospitals is that they did have a good management system. Most were in a fairly strong position, but that would last only about two years under the current funding arrangement. One would not expect any budget in any business to be allocated in this way. Suddenly we will have extra money put back in. Hospitals that have cut staff, that have redesigned their schedules and that have told patients they will have to wait longer for their surgery will receive additional money for now, but it will probably be cut again in July this year.

There is no logic to what has been perpetrated on Victorians by the federal government in cahoots with state Labor. The commonwealth reduction of \$50 million in funding under the national partnership agreement of July 2012 for elective surgery and emergency departments has had a huge impact. At the time the government warned that the \$50 million cut from the national partnership agreement would create a shortfall of 7200 elective surgery cases in Victoria. That is the reality, and this is now about to come to bear.

Without secure and predictable funding it is impossible to run any organisation, let alone organisations across the state which rely on that funding stream to ensure the health of Victorians. One would not expect any organisation to deal with this type of financial uncertainty. Rural hospitals have laid off staff, as I said, and now they are expected to upskill because of this

funding backflip by the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, with the expectation that this money will once again be ripped out of their system.

The commonwealth's \$107 million cuts to Victorian health services has impacted not only on elective surgery but also on beds. Federal Labor's \$107 million cuts and then the \$107 million promised return has taken its toll. It is a political reaction to what was an irresponsible, punitive political measure taken against Victoria. There will be damage to hospital performances that will not be immediately repaired, but hospitals are doing their best. Some \$368 million is due to be cut from the forward estimates from 1 July 2013. What sort of reality is that? The commonwealth government, led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, aided and abetted by the Labor opposition, will cut around \$368 million of promised funds from Victoria's health services over the next three years. Roll on 14 September.

The Victorian government is continuing its work under the guidance of the Minister for Health, David Davis, in honouring its budget commitments, but the commonwealth is not honouring its commitment. The commonwealth funds grab comes on top of a \$6.1 billion loss in GST revenue suffered by Victoria since the coalition government came to office. Ms Darveniza might say, 'It is complex', and it is complex. To have that sort of funding ripped out of your budget makes things very difficult. Despite that, we are delivering for Victoria. More has happened in Victoria in the last 2 years than happened in 11 years under Labor, in spite of reduced funding opportunities and in spite of having \$6.1 billion ripped out of the economy.

The reduction in funding of \$50.2 million for elective and emergency activity under the national partnership agreement on improving public hospital services since 2012-13 has not been easy, nor has the \$368 million reduction in what was promised from 1 July 2012 through the following three years. The coalition government signed up to a health agreement in good faith, and the Victorian government got a better deal for Victoria than former Labor Premier John Brumby did from former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. The health agreement resulted in a deal for the commonwealth to pay 50 per cent of growth funding for public hospitals and, according to the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, Canberra's share of hospital expenditure has dropped from 44 per cent in 2008-09 to 39.1 per cent in 2010-11. The figures are undisputable; they are before us today. I do not understand why Mr Jennings, whom I view as an

intelligent man, would bring this motion to the chamber today.

This agreement was supposed to provide funding certainty and predictability. The state government is honouring its commitment, but plainly and simply the commonwealth government under Prime Minister Julia Gillard is not honouring its commitment. You just cannot trust Labor on anything. In particular you cannot trust Labor in relation to health in Victoria.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to join the debate on Mr Jennings's motion, to add my voice to those of Mr Jennings and Ms Darveniza and to express my concern about this government's dereliction of duty to Victoria on the issue of public health funding and health care. Mr Jennings's motion notes the extraordinary answers given on a number of occasions in question time in this place by the Minister for Health, Mr Davis. Mr Davis really has made an art form of this government's tactic of blaming everyone else for things that are clearly the government's responsibility.

The campaign of misinformation that Mr Davis has led has been extraordinary. The facts are clear: the government has ripped \$616 million from Victoria's health budget. The government came to office promising 800 new beds, yet now it could not identify on a map the location of a single one of those. Indeed I was watching a little bit of question time in another place earlier today, and the Premier was unable to identify the location of a single new hospital bed that had been delivered by this government. What we have seen are the consequences of the lack of attention to and care for those who rely on our public health system to meet their health needs by members of the Napthine and Baillieu governments.

Elective surgery waiting lists have now blown out to 47 760 people. I note that there was a gentleman in the public gallery in question time today who was, I think, hoping to hear from the government an answer to his plight, which is simply that he has been waiting for elective surgery now for some six months. The condition he seeks to have treated is one that prevents him from being able to perform his job fully, and his employment prospects and the security of his employment are threatened by his ongoing health situation. I am told that this man's condition can be remedied with a reasonably routine 20 to 30-minute procedure, but of course with the lists this long, this individual has experienced a wait of months and months, not to mention the pain and discomfort that I imagine everybody on the public hospitals waiting lists experiences, and the additional pressure of not being

confident about being able to return to earning after the condition has been dealt with.

On the government's shabby record in health care, there are some other facts that tell a different story from the spin and misinformation that Mr Davis comes into this place with time and again in response to questions from Mr Jennings and other members around important issues of health care. This is a government that said there would be no spin, but we are constantly fed a line by members of the government about what they are doing in health care.

There are some significant projects in regional Victoria that are just not being manifested in the way in which they were promised to be before the election. Of course very close to the election the then Premier, John Brumby, was in Geelong to announce the construction of a second public hospital for Geelong.

Hon. D. M. Davis — You had 11 years, and you never did it.

Ms PULFORD — Mr Davis said we had 11 years and never did it. During those 11 years the Royal Children's Hospital was rebuilt and the Royal Women's Hospital was rebuilt. I had cause to visit the Women's hospital just recently, and I have had cause to visit the children's hospital in the last 12 months or so. Those are extraordinary services to the Victorian people that I think we can all agree are fine legacies of the former Labor government.

In relation to the public debate about what the next big public hospital projects would be following the completion of those big projects, what I would love to hear a straight answer from Mr Davis on is the second public hospital in Geelong. The Liberal Party was very quick to add a 'Me too' to our promise for a second public hospital of 23 beds at Waurin Ponds, but there has not been a peep from the government on that since it won the election. I think that is a particularly good example of the carry-on of the Liberal and National parties before the election, when all over Victoria their approach was to tell people what they thought people wanted to hear.

The second public hospital in Geelong was not in the Liberal-Nationals election costings. The Minister for Health, Mr Davis, who usually is not short of things to say, has been conspicuously silent on the commencement of the construction of that second public hospital in Geelong. The promise was that construction of that hospital would commence in this term of government, during the life of this Parliament. The government has moved pretty slowly on a whole

bunch of things. To think that a Premier could come and go in a shorter time than the government could outline its plans for the second public hospital that was promised for Geelong is extraordinary.

There are numerous other areas of public health where this government is failing people. One example is ambulance services. In Colac, in my electorate, the community is frequently left without the coverage of an ambulance service. The National Centre for Farmer Health —

Hon. D. M. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, I am always happy to debate ambulance services — and there is a long history, going back to the Auditor-General's report in 2010 — but the motion is specifically not about ambulance services. It is about a series of questions which were all about hospitals, not ambulance services.

Ms PULFORD — I could talk about the emergency department at the Colac hospital, if the minister would prefer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! I uphold the point of order and direct Ms Pulford to resume her contribution on the matters she wishes to put.

Ms PULFORD — I was provoked. Perhaps the minister was attending to other duties and missed earlier parts of the debate when previous speakers made very wide-ranging contributions.

I will briefly indicate some of the other areas of concern that I have about the government's failings in the health portfolio. I wish to mention briefly the situation around emergency care in Colac and the defunding of the rural midwives service program and the National Centre for Farmer Health, which provided preventive health programs, critically important to reducing the demand on our public hospitals. I would think any self-respecting health minister would pay a fair bit of attention to preventive health, given the demands on the state budget and the health budget of our ageing population and the ever-increasing costs of health care.

I am thrilled that the minister is in the chamber. Perhaps he will be the next speaker on this motion. He might like to explain to those in the chamber and for the record of this debate where on a map he can point to any health services that have any of the 800 new beds that were promised by the government. Mr Davis might be able to explain also what he will do about the blow-out in public hospital elective surgery waiting lists that has occurred under his stewardship of the health system. Perhaps he will, finally, concede that taking

\$616 million out of the Victorian health system is having catastrophic consequences for the health care of Victorians. I commend Mr Jennings's motion to the house.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — In my contribution to the debate on Mr Jennings's motion, I wish to make a couple of points as well as reinforcing some of the comments that have been made by Ms Crozier, who made a very good contribution in relation to both the cuts by the federal government and also the budgetary constraints of the state.

I wish to briefly paint a picture of the finances of the health system. The Victorian coalition government has increased health funding by \$1.3 billion since coming to office.

Hon. D. M. Davis — A record!

Mr RAMSAY — A record at \$13.7 billion, Mr Davis. The state budget funding for hospitals has increased since the coalition was elected. In fact the Victorian health service budget increased by an average of 5.1 per cent in 2012–13. State budget funding for hospitals has increased since the coalition was elected, including \$9.3 billion for acute health in 2012–13, which was \$376 million more funding for acute health than in the 2011–12 budget, so it was a significant increase. Along with that have come significant challenges from the federal government. One is the \$6.1 billion GST hit, or withdrawal, by the federal government. There were significant black holes in the health budget. I will not go through them, because they were well identified by Ms Crozier.

I would like to raise a couple of issues in the Western Victoria Region. When the Gillard federal government suddenly decided mid-budget to pull out \$107 million from Victorian hospitals, it had an impact in the way of cuts for local health services in Western Victoria Region. In Ballarat it was \$2.8 million; for Bendigo Health it was \$2.9 million; for the East Grampians Health Service at Ararat it was \$178 000; for the Maryborough District Health Service it was \$171 000; for Stawell Regional Health it was \$166 000; for the Beaufort and Skipton Health Service it was \$56 000; for the Hepburn Health Service it was \$107 000; and for the Kyneton District Health Service it was \$116 000. So there was a significant impact on both large and small health services across Western Victoria Region.

Perhaps the biggest impact was on my own local town of Colac, where I attended a meeting with the Minister for Roads and local member for Polwarth in the

Assembly, Terry Mulder, along with the federal member for Corangamite, Darren Cheeseman, and Senator Richard Di Natale. More than 1000 community residents gathered at the Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre to hear from board members of the Colac Area Health service as to why they saw fit to consider an option of closing the night service for emergency care, or urgent care, as it is now called. I have never seen such a crowd assembled at one point in the town: 10 per cent of its total population crammed into the centre to raise concerns about why the board, having considered the matter, decided to close its urgent care service from 10 o'clock at night until 6 o'clock in the morning. At that meeting we heard that the decision was made purely on the basis that the Gillard government had decided to withdraw from Victoria's health services \$107 million in total for this financial year and over the full term a total amount of \$366 000 from the Colac Area Health service.

I note also that since then, even before the Gillard government did the extraordinary backflip and put the \$107 million back in — in a minute I will come back to that, in relation to the advertising standards — a group of doctors decided that they would help to cover the funding gap to allow the Colac Area Health service to continue the operation of the urgent care night service. That aside — that is only a temporary measure — I am hopeful the Gillard government will see sense and fully reinstate the funding post-June that has been indicated under the previous Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreements for Victorian health services.

What really got my goat, if I can use that expression, were the advertisements that the federal government put in our Victorian papers — mainly in the *Age* and the *Herald Sun*. There were full-page advertisements saying that the Gillard government was injecting \$107 million into Victorian hospitals. The ads went on to say that this funding would reverse cuts made by the Victorian government. That was an out-and-out lie. I believe a Senate inquiry should have been called to look at these significant breaches of the advertising standards code. I now see that the Senate has called for a commonwealth Auditor-General's inquiry into that particularly blatant advertising, which was malicious and untrue. The Gillard government tried to make out that this \$107 million was new money going into Victoria's health services. It was not; it was money that had actually been withdrawn. As I said, it had a significant impact on hospitals in Western Victoria Region, which I represent, as well as on hospitals right across Victoria.

I would like to respond to a couple of other issues that have been raised in the contributions on this motion this

afternoon. In my own region — and I am going to focus on that — we have seen significant commitments regarding both Ballarat and Warrnambool. I am pleased to say we made the pre-election commitment that we would provide a new cancer centre, an increase in beds, a new ambulatory centre and a helipad, and those commitments have been honoured. In fact the Ballarat hospital is now undergoing significant transformation with the establishment of the cancer centre, and plans are well under way for a multipurpose car park, a helipad and an increase in beds.

I toured the Warrnambool hospital about a month ago and was pleased to see significant development there along with a lot of new technology that has not been used in Victoria before. I was very pleased to see that representatives of South West Healthcare took the opportunity to visit other hospitals around the world and install the latest innovations in technology for the health-care service in the south-west region.

I would like to mention a couple of issues around elective surgery and perhaps remind this chamber of what the Labor government left us as a legacy and a starting point as we came into government. In 2011 the former Labor government let \$30 million in elective surgery funding lapse. Had the state and federal Labor governments been truly committed to the welfare of Victorian patients and not primarily interested in pre-election manipulation of waiting lists for their own political benefit, the elective surgery funding would have been at the bottom line and the length of the waiting lists would now be equal to or lower than it was under Labor.

The federal government health funding cuts at the start of the financial year have hit elective surgery patients in Victoria. The commonwealth reduction of \$50 million in national partnership agreement funding in July 2012 for elective surgery and emergency departments has had a significant impact on the waiting lists we see now. The Victorian coalition government warned at the time that the \$50 million in national partnership agreement cuts would create a shortfall of 7200 elective surgeries in Victoria alone. We are now seeing this come to pass.

The federal government health funding cuts half way through this financial year have hit elective surgery patients in all Victorian hospitals. The \$107 million cut that I have indicated has had a significant impact on lots of little hospitals in the western region and has also had a significant impact on elective surgery and beds. I refer to Ms Pulford's commentary on the suggested cuts by the state government of \$600 million. In fact those moneys were not cut as we know it. They were not

fully withdrawn. They have actually been displaced from administration to front-line service where there is greater productivity and better performance and where it will be spent on the patients instead of the back rooms. There is a distinct difference between the way the state government has responded to inefficiencies in the health system and how the Gillard government has blatantly withdrawn the funding, having a significant impact on hospital waiting lists, surgery waiting times, beds and patients looking for health care. What the state government has done is try to get the best value out of the money.

In closing I firstly want to identify the significant impact the Gillard government has had on Victorian health services in withdrawing \$107 million in funding. Boards of hospitals were not able to respond to the cut because they were mid-budget. They had to take many serious decisions in relation to curtailing their health-care services. I have mentioned Colac as a classic example. The board was forced into a position where it would have had to close the urgent care service. I have also indicated that the state government has had significant challenges in dealing with the federal government in relation to the COAG agreements. The lack of funding certainty has made it difficult for boards of health-care services to plan and budget.

I am not saying this is all Labor's fault. I think this is an inherent problem with health services funding. Boards of health services do not have the capacity to provide long-term plans for health budgets. We see water authorities that have five-year plans, but boards of health authorities do not have the capacity to provide that sort of planning. That is something that, collectively, we should be aiming for in the future.

Lastly, I express my dismay and disgust at the way the blame game between the commonwealth and the state has facilitated what is a blatant spreading of mistruth by the Gillard federal government in the way it has advertised these cuts. That is not fair on those Victorians who are seeking care or trying to manage care.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to join the debate this afternoon and to take the opportunity Mr Jennings has provided for members to make a contribution on the vital and critical issue of health and health funding in Victoria. Quite a lot of misinformation has been thrown around, and I am going to try to keep this as simple as I can. We now know that the number of people on the elective surgery waiting lists in Victoria is going to grow to about 55 000. This will be the highest waiting lists figure for elective surgery in Victoria's history, as I understand it.

We know that the Victorian government has cut \$600 million out of the health budget and that the federal government cut \$107 million out of the Victorian health budget and then restored it. We know that elective surgery waiting lists are increasing. We know that demand in the health system is always increasing, particularly with an ageing population, and we know that hospitals cannot meet the level of demand if a state government continuously cuts funding, as this government is doing.

There is a simple solution to this problem. Just as Mr Davis, the Minister for Health, has continuously called for the commonwealth government to restore funding that it cut from its projected increase — and I think it is worth noting that the commonwealth had a projected increase which is still in its forward budget estimates —

Hon. D. M. Davis — No, it's not.

Mr VINEY — It is still increasing, Mr Davis. What we know — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — If you want to go down the path of interjecting, Mr Davis, I am happy to engage with you. You were the person — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! Mr Viney should address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr VINEY — Thank you, Acting President; that was correctly called. Mr Davis was the minister who welcomed the commonwealth agreement. Not only did he welcome the agreement but he said how much better it was than anything that was done by Premier Brumby. That is what he said. Now, of course, he wants to deny the facts because they do not suit him because now the situation is that the commonwealth government has met its agreement and has restored the position it took in the current financial year.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — But you, Mr Davis, have not. You are the one cutting money.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — It is inappropriate for the minister to respond to every single statement that Mr Viney is making in his contribution. It would be appreciated if the minister could desist from interjecting.

Mr VINEY — Mr Davis is the minister who is cutting the health budget. He is the minister who has reduced health funding to Victorian patients, a minister who is about to preside over the largest number of people on the elective surgery waiting lists that Victoria has ever seen, with 55 000 as the projected figure. Mr Davis is the minister presiding over this. In this debate we have heard people say that the \$600 million is not a cut, it is a redirection; that it is not a cut but a saving. We have heard all sorts of nonsense words used in relation to this. A cut is a cut. If \$600 million is taken out of the budget, that is a cut.

Of course, the Liberal-Nationals coalition has form. When we came into office in 1999 we inherited a hospital system that was in a complete and utter financial mess. Hospitals were selling the silver to be able to provide services. We had a situation where we had to buy back the Latrobe hospital for a dollar because it was going broke after the Kennett government privatised that little operation. In the week we came into office we had to completely restructure the hospital system to make it viable.

It was the Bracks and Brumby governments that rebuilt our hospital system, put nurses back into the system and introduced nurse-patient ratios. It was the Bracks and Brumby governments that restored confidence in the ambulance system, put two-officer crews in and introduced advanced life support systems to our ambulances. That is the record of Labor, a record of rebuilding virtually every hospital in the state, buying back the Latrobe hospital, putting 100 beds back into the Frankston Hospital, rebuilding substantial parts of the Frankston Hospital, which is a totally different hospital today than it ever was, and putting money into emergency departments across the state. Unfortunately just last week a member of my family had to attend the Warragul emergency department. We funded the redevelopment of that emergency department — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — We funded that, Mr Davis. We put the funding in prior to the 2010 election, and it is now being built on a Labor government initiative.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — I am sure that you are going to try to take the credit for that, Mr Davis, but I remember the history. I know the history, because I was one of those who advocated for it to be done. It was our government that put the funding in.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! I ask the minister to stop interjecting, and I ask Mr Viney to speak through the Chair and not to Mr Davis.

Mr VINEY — It is tempting to avoid you, Acting President, I am afraid. However, I will go through the Chair. Whatever protestations Mr Davis wants to make, I know, as a local member who operates my electorate office out of Warragul and who has unfortunately had to be at the Warragul hospital on a number of occasions, that it was our government that recognised the need for the extension of the emergency department and that it put the money in. Mr Davis might try to take the credit — I am sure he will — but the only things Mr Davis will be able to open as the Minister for Health will be those created by Labor government investment, projects and initiatives; the only ribbons he will be able to cut will be on those.

You can look at the Austin repatriation hospital or at almost any hospital in this state and you will see substantial investments. You can look at the cancer centre at the Latrobe hospital. There was additional funding all the way down into East Gippsland. You can look at the community health centres that have been built around the state, such as the one in the Latrobe Valley — a \$21 million project, the largest community health centre ever built. I hear people on the other side calling \$600 million cuts savings or redirections, but I know that doing the policy work and taking the initiatives in health is hard slog. Having served as a parliamentary secretary for three years in this area and as the Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation and Industry, having responsibility for medical research, I know the amount of work that takes. I know that also from the work I did doing the Parkville precinct strategy plan that determined the location of the children's hospital — and Mr Davis proudly cut the ribbon on that Labor project.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — That is just not true, Mr Davis. Acting President, Mr Davis cannot tell the truth on health, because the truth involves a \$600 million cut and a failure to deliver on his promised 800 beds across the system. He is not able to account for one of them. Mr Davis is not able to account for any of the commitments he made, such as the commitment to cut waiting lists, which are growing to 55 000, the highest in Victoria's history. There is a simple solution to the problem facing Victoria's health system — that is, for the coalition government to put the \$600 million back into the health system.

Finally, I want to make this comment in terms of the continuous attack on the former government's economic and financial record. Let us just put it in these terms: there were no black holes. The claim that there were is just a nonsense. The facts are that with the current government's review of the budget it was not able to say the finances of the state were in any kind of mess at all, because they were not. In 11 years — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — The simple answer is this: in 11 years there were 11 years of budget surpluses. In 11 years there were 11 years of economic and employment growth in Victoria, and that employment and economic growth included such growth during the global financial crisis. Even at the height of the biggest crisis to hit the world economy since the Depression, Victoria was growing — jobs in Victoria were growing. There were 11 years of budget surplus, 11 years of jobs growth, 11 years of economic growth and 11 years of a AAA credit rating. All this nonsense is just political smear to try to cover up the position this government is taking in relation to its health cuts.

When we last came back into government after a coalition period in office we had to restore the health system. We had to rebuild Victoria's hospital system, we had to fund hospitals' operating costs so they did not run out of money and we had to reconnect with nurses and set up consultations with ambulance officers. When we came into office there had not been a meeting between the ambulance paramedics, the agencies running the ambulance service and the Department of Health for seven years. I set up the first one, and when the attendees came into the room they were stunned that they were actually talking to one another. Do you know what? That consultative process has been stopped again. Under this government it is not happening. No wonder this government cannot create any longstanding relationships between it and employees working for government departments.

That is what we will inherit when we come back into office again, and for the sake of the people of Victoria we hope it is at the next election. That is what Labor will inherit again, because the coalition's position is one of consistently attacking the public health system. It is bewildering — in terms of why coalition governments do it — but this coalition government is doing it again. It is time the government restored that \$600 million, and it is time government members stopped using nonsense words such as 'redirection', 'savings' and other words they want to use to cover up the fact that they have cut \$600 million from the system.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — Mr Davis likes to make false accusations about Labor members, and I will just say this: it is a fact that every single member of this coalition government supported the \$600 million cuts in the two budgets we have had so far. I would suggest that rather than Mr Davis pointing the finger, as he does in his regular attacks on Labor in question time, it may be time that the coalition government reinvested in the health system to create opportunities for elective surgery and improvements in hospital services for the people of Victoria.

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

Debate adjourned until later this day.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

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

- (1) all documents relating to the 'Route alignments peer reviewed and short-listed' and 'Communications and engagement strategy finalised' referred to on page 3 of 'East-west link reform and investment framework — stages 1 to 6' dated August 2012, which formed part of the east-west link submission to Infrastructure Australia;
- (2) the agenda, minutes, any attachments to the minutes and any presentations or materials tabled in relation to each meeting of the Department of Transport's east-west steering committee to date;
- (3) all documents (including invitees list, agenda, minutes where they exist and the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation used) relating to a briefing, held on 17 July 2012 at the Treasury building, on the development of a business case for the east-west link; and
- (4) all minutes and other documentation of meetings held with over 40 entities by the Minister for Roads and/or Department of Transport representatives relating to the proposed east-west tunnel infrastructure project, which are referenced in the media release 'East-west link is declared under major transport projects act'.

I am seeking a number of documents, all of which we know exist, which might provide a bit more information than we have so far had about the government's no. 1 infrastructure priority, the east-west road tunnel from Collingwood to Kensington and on, apparently, to Sunshine.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr BARBER — We can already hear the cheer squad saying, ‘Hear, hear!’ every time I use the words ‘east–west road tunnel’. In fact Mr O’Donohue and a number of other members put notices of motion onto this very same notice paper, calling for support for the east–west road tunnel. Those notices have been dropped off the notice paper without being debated. Here I am to give them their chance.

It is, as I said, the government’s supposed no. 1 infrastructure priority. The federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, has already offered more than \$1.5 billion — but what do we know about this project? What is its rationale? What is its cost? How will it work? We know absolutely nothing. What we do know about the project can be seen by looking at a map of the proposed link, but all we can see is two dots on a map with a dotted line connecting them. On the basis of that Tony Abbott has committed \$1.5 billion to the project and every member of this place, sight unseen, is backing the proposal.

An honourable member — Not the Labor ones, though.

Mr BARBER — Every coalition member, every government member of this place is backing it. Let us just dispose of that. It appears that the Labor Party does not support the east–west tunnel, it supports the west–east tunnel. I am as confused as anyone when it comes to that, but the difference is that this government is apparently assiduously working away on this proposal, and it has been for some time.

Mr O’Donohue was formerly the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, so he could very well have been briefed on it. I do not know. He had a notice of motion on the notice paper saying it should be built. I do not know whether he has got any extra information than any other citizen would have. So far it is about the most secretive tunnelling proposal since *The Great Escape*, and I would like to see a little bit more information, as would the public.

For instance, we can read in the government’s submission to the Infrastructure Australia funding bid, which I had to obtain using the Freedom of Information Act 1982, that there is something called ‘Route alignments peer reviewed and short-listed’. That would be something better than a map with two dots with a dotted line linking them. I would like to see the route alignments. I am interested that there is more than one. I am interested to know where the on and off ramps will be spewing their traffic. If they are still going with the Labor proposal, then it is a tunnel under the posh inner city suburbs; but it is a freeway on stilts as we get out to

the western suburbs. Route alignments — plural — is an interesting proposition. ‘Peer reviewed and short-listed’ is also something we would all like to know about at some stage.

There is also an internal spin strategy. It is referred to as the ‘Communications and engagement strategy’, and it is being run by the Linking Melbourne Authority. We could cut to the chase and simply have it release its spin strategy, in which case we already know everything that we need to know. A steering committee has been appointed by the Department of Transport, along with a range of other agencies, which has been meeting regularly, and I would like to see the minutes of those meetings.

The government ran an exclusive briefing for the big end of town — the financiers, merchant bankers, construction firms — over at Treasury Place. I did not get an invitation. No doubt everybody who is anybody in road tunnelling got one. I would like to see the list of who was there, because they all knew each other, they all know that they were there, so why not let the Victorian public know who it is that the government is pitching its project to? No doubt there would have been some sort of PowerPoint presentation and a nice little speech from the minister, and a briefing for the minister about what he was meant to say to this group. They should share it with the rest of us. It has already been shared with the industry; anybody who is an insider already has this information, so how about giving it to the public.

Some months later, just before Christmas, the Minister for Roads put out a media release headed, ‘East–west link is declared under major transport projects act’. In fact he tells us that he has been very busy, and for him this would be an extraordinary marathon of meetings — he had 40 meetings. I would like to know with whom he met, as would everybody. Is this some sort of big state secret? I have tried to obtain much of this information under the Freedom of Information Act going back to October 2012, but it is not forthcoming. If the government thinks this is such a great project, it should be shouting it from the rooftops.

I am still waiting, by the way, for the traffic modelling that Veitch Lister, the preferred traffic modeller, has been doing for the Linking Melbourne Authority. It is quite crucial. How many people are going to drive on this road? Where is it going, where will you be able to get on and off it and how long will it be?

It is interesting — and I am sure that you, Acting President, and many others saw the front page of the *Herald Sun* today — that one of the toll road companies

came out and filled this massive information vacuum. He said what should be obvious to everybody — that it is not going to work to just have a tolled tunnel at the end of the Eastern Freeway, where people can easily avoid the toll by using the route they are familiar with now. This tolling company made it clear that anybody who was running the tunnel would want to take over the whole road. He understands better than the government is prepared to admit that it is not easy to get people to pay a toll, especially when there is a free road running directly over the top of it, as there will be in this case.

Let us have a look at some of the other projects around Australia, which were summarised in one handy graphic in the *Australian* newspaper, which I know government members read religiously.

Mr O'Donohue — How about you, Greg?

Mr BARBER — I read five newspapers before I get out of bed in the morning, Mr O'Donohue, so do not worry about that.

It was forecast that, within 15 months of opening, Brisbane's AirportlinkM7 would have 160 000 cars a day, but the actual figure is 53 000. It was forecast that, within 18 months of opening, the Clem7 tunnel would have 100 000 cars, but it actually has 26 456, which is about 26 per cent of the original projection. Sydney's Lane Cove Tunnel has 50 per cent of its original forecast figure driving through it. The Go Between Bridge is at 79 per cent of its forecast. EastLink in Melbourne is at 65 per cent of its forecast — all those mums and dads did their dough. Sydney's Cross City Tunnel had a forecast of 90 000 vehicles a day but is actually getting about 34 000 vehicles a day, which is 38 per cent of its forecast.

In world terms, Australia has had a particularly poor record on forecasting the number of people who will pay a few dollars in tolls to go 4 or 5 kilometres. That is why it is important that we know what Veitch Lister has told the government about how many people will actually drive through the tunnel, about how many on and off ramps will be needed and where they will be located, about how many surrounding streets will be blocked and about how many cars it anticipates will flood into surrounding areas, like Kew, Alphington and west of Footscray, to try to avoid the toll. The record on forecasting truck figures is even worse. Mr Elsbury has come in here and said it will be great and get trucks off local streets, but we have an even worse record on that. It seems that trucks will do almost anything to avoid tolls, and the forecasts on how many trucks as opposed to how many vehicles in total have proven disastrous.

What is it about this that the government wants to keep secret? We keep hearing that a business case will be completed; originally it was to be 'early this year' and now it is 'sometime this year'. I have not seen any statement from the government that the business case will be released. I guarantee right now that it will not be. The Labor government could not stand up to the scrutiny of releasing a business case on desalination, on the north-south pipeline or on any of its major projects, and neither can this government in relation to this toll road. I bet right now that we will never know the exact configuration or expected number of vehicles until the project tender has been won and we read the product disclosure statement for the investors in the market. There is a much tougher requirement for disclosure under the ASX listing rules for a private entity than this government will ever submit itself to by releasing the type of information I am calling for.

Now we will get a succession of government speakers saying that the tunnel is wonderful and that we need the tunnel. They will promise everything the tunnel will do, but they will not tell us what it will cost, where the money will come from or who will pay it. They will not tell us the route options, and they will not tell us which communities will be bypassed and which will have off ramps spewing traffic into their suburbs, because they simply do not know. Much of it has not even been decided, but these backbenchers will be the last to know. They are just the shock troops who have to take the first line of gunfire in the hope that somebody gets into the opposition trenches, but they are not even armed with the slightest detail of information.

What an irony. The government's no. 1 infrastructure project is uncostered and unfunded — it is nothing but two dots on a map with a line to connect them — yet every single member of the government is willing to get up and, sight unseen, make a major purchase. If I were buying a car or a house, I reckon I would go and have a look at it first and probably kick the tyres, but not Mr Elsbury. He is champing at the bit, ready to come out and defend the government's \$6 billion road tunnel project, but he knows nothing about it.

Mr Elsbury — I am not speaking on this one, Mr Barber.

Mr BARBER — I am disappointed, but Mr Elsbury has certainly been gung-ho before. The government cannot afford to provide any public information about this, because many of the key decisions about the financial viability — not to mention the design, impacts, costs and benefits of the project — will be determined by the tenderers during the tender process. That information will not be public. The government

will not hand out a project and say, 'Here, build this'; it will hand out a piece of paper with two points on it and a connecting line and say, 'Here, tender for a road tunnel and tell us how you can make the project somehow stack up'. It will only be after the tender has closed and the winner has been announced that we will find out what we are getting and how much we have had to chip in to get them to come and build our toll road for us.

At least the industry has a bit of pragmatism. Around the world now it is mostly not about building new toll roads — and the last six examples I gave from Australia are all financial lemons — but rather tolling existing roads and creating 'pay more money and get a faster ride' lanes on existing freeways. That is the wake-up call received by government members this morning via the front page of the *Herald Sun*. There is nothing mysterious about it — everybody in the business understands it perfectly well — but there is complete cognitive dissonance between what the government is saying to the public and to itself and what the market, the ultimate arbiter, is already well understanding.

This is the sort of thing that should have been out there from the beginning. If the government thought its project was so good, it would be shouting it from the rooftops. It would want everybody to know the details. It would have already committed to publicly releasing the business case so that all details of the project could be properly scrutinised and we could work out whether there was good value for money.

Of course it is not operating completely in isolation. All major roads that focus on the inner city compete, in a way, with public transport. The government had some big ideas about public transport when it was in opposition, and it committed to doing some studies on the Rowville line, on the Doncaster line and even on the Tullamarine airport rail link. We have now seen the results of all those studies, and what we have been shown is that they have been completely sandbagged. They have been drafted in such a way as to make them financially unviable, and in many cases that relates directly back to the government's proposal for the road tunnel.

We saw when we read the Doncaster rail study — and it was very clear — that the consultants had been told there would be a road tunnel built down the middle of Alexandra Parade and there was no room for a rail tunnel in the same spot. The result was that their preferred option was to create two other rail tunnels to avoid the road tunnel, which is effectively supposed to be doing the same job — that is, carrying people off the

Eastern Freeway into the city. Not surprisingly that makes for a pretty expensive rail project. Why would you want to build two competing projects in parallel to each other — one being public transport, hyperefficient at moving large numbers of people, and the other being a road tunnel, very inefficient and moving perhaps 1100 people per lane per hour? So we had former Premier Ted Baillieu's promise on Doncaster rail — and I remember having seen him say this on Channel 7 news on 2 November 2010:

The first step is to plan it and find a route, in detail with the community, then find the funds and then build it ...

We are now told it is at least 10 years away, a small detail he might have mentioned. Of course at this stage there is some doubt as to whether this government will still be in office in 10 years. I would be equally interested in hearing if the former Parliamentary Secretary for Public Transport can tell me how the government sees a road and rail tunnel interacting — that is, if they operate in the exact same corridor and do the same job — and is it not the case that the economics of one destroys the economics of both? Who does it think is going to fund it to provide two expensive projects running right on top of each other that cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars and possibly even in the billions?

I am equally keen to see what, if anything, there is for public transport in the May budget, which is not far away. There has been no increase in rail and bus services, either city or country, in the first set of budgets from this government. I would be amazed if there is any in the May budget. Last year when it came to capital for new public transport projects the only one I could locate was a bit of work at the Warragul station car park. Anything better than that will be an improvement. However, it is clear this government has no appetite, no vision and lacks the necessary project management skills and drive to deliver anything significant by way of transport. All it is really doing is chasing this pipedream of a road tunnel, while backing off from its original commitments for the heavy rail that is so essential to move large numbers of people in and out of and around the city.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to respond to motion 542 moved by Mr Barber today calling for the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council a range of documents that he believes exists in relation to the east-west link. I have been called many things in my period in this place, but I have never been referred to as a 'shock troop', as Mr Barber referred to me and government speakers.

However, I am pleased to respond to many of the things Mr Barber said in his extensive contribution.

Let me say at the outset, in his 20-minute contribution Mr Barber has canvassed a whole range of issues associated with Melbourne's transport needs in relation to not only the east-west link but also other road projects and rail projects. He has touched on bus services, metropolitan rail, Warragul rail station and a range of other projects. I intend as the first speaker for the government to respond to many of those issues. I just wish to lay down that parameter, given Mr Barber's extensive contribution in relation to this documents motion that is before the house at the moment. The government will not be opposing Mr Barber's motion, consistent with the approach the government has taken of being open and transparent in relation to calls for documents by members of the house, but I make the point that this is contingent on the usual caveats around cabinet confidentiality and the like and other associated forms of privilege.

Where do I start with Mr Barber's contribution? Let me start perhaps by summarising. Much of Mr Barber's contribution today in effect appeared to be a criticism of what can only be described as a diligent, thorough and full process that this government is undertaking in relation to the east-west link. Let me add to that by saying this builds on the work that was started by the previous government, because we all know that major infrastructure projects that require significant revenue from the state, and which are multiyear projects that can cause challenges for communities, are best done when they have bipartisan support. Flowing from the east-west link needs assessment report, which was produced in March 2008, the previous government supported an east-west link. With the chaos that can result from an accident on the M1 corridor, we have seen just how important an alternate corridor to the M1 is for not only Melbourne but for all Victoria as a critical artery for transport across the state.

Much of Mr Barber's criticism would appear to be that this government is going through a detailed process involving the preparation of a business case. The funding of that business case has been made, and a full and extensive process has been undertaken by the government in business case preparation. Mr Barber seemed to criticise the fact that external stakeholders have had the opportunity of having input and making contributions to a range of matters associated with the potential options for delivery of this project. I would have thought that was just good, prudent management. Perhaps Mr Barber subscribes to the way the previous government delivered major projects — that is, to

announce the project and do the business case as an afterthought, as an addendum or as a hurried way to justify a decision that has already been made.

The coalition believes in doing thorough, detailed business cases and assessing the various options, and then coming to a conclusion that represents the interests of Victorians. That is opposed to, as it would appear from his contribution, the way Mr Barber would deliver major projects — that is, by announcing them and writing out all the details afterwards. That is not the way this government does business. We want to avoid the financial disasters we have inherited from Labor.

Despite all the talk from members of the opposition — and I listened to Mr Viney during the last debate — and all the protestations, we know that Labor cannot manage money and Labor cannot manage projects. It takes a coalition government to bring business acumen and skills and proper due diligence and processes to the delivery of major infrastructure projects. If that is the allegation Mr Barber is making against us today, we are guilty. We are guilty of going through a detailed process, we are guilty of considering the various options, we are guilty of putting all the options through a rigorous analysis to make sure they represent and achieve full value for the Victorian community. Mr Barber is right when he says that members of the coalition are pleased to support the east-west link. Perhaps Mr Barber has never been on the Monash Freeway or the West Gate Bridge when there has been an accident and traffic has ground to a halt. Melbourne is at gridlock when the M1 corridor has been affected by an accident or some other incident that has stopped traffic. It is clear to the coalition — it used to be clear to the Labor Party — that an alternative to the M1 corridor is required. Regrettably the Labor Party yet again has chosen to play politics with this most important piece of infrastructure that the coalition is developing, planning and intends to deliver.

During the recent by-election in the Assembly seat of Melbourne, when the Greens thought they were a shoe-in to win their first seat in the Legislative Assembly — only to miss out to Ms Kanis, who was elected the member for Melbourne — we know that the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Mr Andrews, and other inner city Labor members seemed to be doing gymnastics around whether or not they supported an east-west link. We know the Greens put pressure on the constituents of Melbourne. I at least give Mr Barber credit for being consistent. He opposes this link and opposes any major infrastructure project of importance to Victorians. We have seen various positions from Labor on this project.

Mr Brumby, when he was Premier, said:

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

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

Former Premier Bracks, in the 2006 policy document *Meeting our Transport Challenges*, said:

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

Of course it is not just Labor members of Parliament and former Labor premiers who have supported the east-west link. The Australian Workers Union state secretary, Cesar Melhem — —

Mr Leane — A good man.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I take up the interjection by Mr Leane that he is a good man. I hope Mr Leane endorses the comments made by Mr Melhem when he said in 2008:

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

Then in 2012 he was reported in the *Age* as having said:

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

...

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

I note that he is reported to have said just recently:

... the east-west link should be a priority for Dr Napthine.

I am happy to tell Mr Melhem that the east-west link is a priority for the coalition government.

As I have said, regrettably not all Labor members share the views of Mr Melhem or former Premier Brumby or former Premier Bracks. The member for Melbourne in the Assembly, Ms Kanis, said:

It will bring more traffic to Melbourne, it will ruin our parks and neighbourhoods and it won't solve the problem.

The member for Richmond in the other place, Richard Wynne, said:

I do not support an east-west tunnel.

We know, too, that Mr Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition, said prior to the Melbourne by-election:

I do not support a tunnel.

His spokeswoman is reported as saying:

This is a grand hoax that will do nothing to ease Melbourne's congestion ...

A spokeswoman has further said:

Labor does not support ripping up half the inner city to simply move congestion from Hoddle to Nicholson and Lygon streets.

But after the by-election Mr Andrews came up with the great solution to the M1 traffic corridor, the traffic bottleneck created by the end of the Eastern Freeway: 'We are not going to have an east-west link; we are going to have a west-east link'. There we go! There is a solution. We will not have the east-west link, we will have the west-east link. That will make all the difference.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Elsbury — Change its name. It makes all the difference.

Mr O'DONOHUE — That will make all the difference. What we do know, though, is that — —

Mr Barber — How many cars will drive on it?

Mr O'DONOHUE — I will take up the interjection by Mr Barber. In his contribution earlier Mr Barber made much of some of the failed tollway projects in other jurisdictions. Where would Victoria be without the CityLink project? We know the Greens would have opposed the CityLink project.

It is interesting to look back in history, knowing that Labor opposed the CityLink project. I remember a similar debate about the project and the comments made by former Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor. He was talking about how the end of the world was coming with the CityLink project. It was going to destroy Melbourne and unleash untold horrors onto the people of Victoria. But as we know, Victoria and Melbourne would be at a standstill now without the CityLink project. We now know, the best part of 20 years on, that without an alternative to that M1 corridor, congestion would have worsened.

The government makes no apology for conducting a thorough due diligence investigation into this project. It makes no apology for consulting with external stakeholders, and we just wish that the Labor Party, rather than playing cheap politics for the sake of protecting its four inner city seats that it fears losing to Mr Barber's Greens colleagues — —

Mr Finn — I don't think they've much to worry about.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I take up Mr Finn's interjection and I agree with him — I do not think they have much to worry about. Perhaps with the decline of the Greens, Labor members may come to their senses and embrace this project in a bipartisan way, because it was the previous government that commenced the process for the project. It is regrettable that under the current Leader of the Opposition, Mr Andrews, we have seen a flip-flop, depending on the by-election of the time, as to whether or not the Labor Party supports the east–west link.

Speaking of by-elections, it is worth noting the comments of one of the members for Western Metropolitan Region, Mr Pakula, who said, as reported in *Hansard* of 19 August 2008:

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

It is interesting comparing the comments of Mr Pakula to those of some of his colleagues in the Labor Party. It should make for an interesting discussion when Mr Pakula assumes his seat in the other place, perhaps next to the member for Melbourne, Ms Kanis, or the member for Richmond, Mr Wynne, or one of their Labor colleagues representing the inner city. Perhaps they can have some discussions about Mr Pakula's comment that, 'Car drivers in the west are to be punished, sacrificed on the altar of green ideology'.

I would also like to pick up on Mr Barber's remarks in relation to the contribution of the federal coalition opposition. I quote from the joint press release dated 30 June 2012 of the federal Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tony Abbott, and the federal Leader of The Nationals and shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Honourable Warren Truss. The release states:

A coalition government will kick-start funding of the east–west link with a \$1.5 billion commitment.

It also says:

...

Inadequate road infrastructure and traffic congestion are having a negative impact on the productivity of Melbourne.

...

Sir Rod Eddington's east–west link needs report estimated that the link would carry about 100 000 vehicles a day.

The state government is already undertaking necessary planning and assessments for the link.

We recognise that the east–west link is a large project and it will become a reality with a commonwealth contribution.

We welcome that contribution from the federal opposition. It is pleasing that the federal opposition understands some of the infrastructure challenges that Melbourne and Victoria face as a result of the combination of neglect from the previous Labor government, continued population growth — which is a good thing — and decisions made by the Gillard federal Labor government to discontinue funding for infrastructure projects in Victoria.

For many reasons I look forward to the election of the Abbott coalition federal government. One of those reasons is its commitment to the east–west link, which will benefit all of Victoria. Mr Barber made the assertion that the government has done nothing for metropolitan rail services. Since coming to government, efficiencies that this government has driven, through the acumen that the Minister for Public Transport, Mr Mulder, and others have brought to this portfolio, the government has delivered over 1000 additional services to the metropolitan rail network. It is a fantastic addition and, yes, there are challenges facing the metropolitan rail network, but over 1000 additional services is a significant step in the right direction. Therefore I think Mr Barber needs to check his facts.

I would also like to pick up Mr Barber's reference to the Warragul station car park. Warragul is a beautiful town that the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, who is currently in the chamber, and I are lucky to represent in this place. Warragul is going through a period of significant growth, rejuvenation and renewal. I note the media release issued by the Minister for Planning earlier this week in relation to a new retail project proposed for Warragul, which is good news for West Gippsland. The government is working with the private sector, building on those sorts of announcements, to improve not only the civic amenity but the transport — both public and private — infrastructure in and around the beautiful township of Warragul.

The federal government has recognised that the project the Victorian coalition government is delivering is a significant project as well. Several weeks ago I was pleased to meet with the federal Minister for Regional Development, Simon Crean, in relation to funding that the commonwealth government is providing to the Warragul station project which will deliver not only over 200 more car parks but an additional crossing of the railway line, as well as a range of other

improvements to the station precinct to make it part of the hub of Warragul as a township. It is a very exciting project, and I welcome Mr Barber's reference to it in the debate which has given me an opportunity to discuss it.

The government will not oppose Mr Barber's motion, with the usual caveats about cabinet confidentiality and other forms of privilege. The coalition welcomes the debate. It understands that the Greens are clear in their opposition to this project, but this debate provides an opportunity for Labor, now that the Melbourne by-election is behind us and leaving aside Mr Pakula's upcoming by-election for the seat of Lyndhurst. I note that there are two members of the Labor Party in the chamber at the moment — Mr Tee and Mr Leane. Both of them represent the eastern suburbs, or purport to, and it is an opportunity for Mr Leane and Mr Tee to put on the record the Labor Party's position on the east–west link — or they can call it the west–east link if they like. I invite them to put on the record their position in relation to the east–west link.

Mr Tee interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I pick up Mr Tee's interjection — he does not support it. Mr Tee is happy for motorists in his electorate to get to the end of the Eastern Freeway and come to a grinding halt. Mr Tee is clearly not acting in the interests of his electorate and is clearly not acting in the interests of his community, and that is most disappointing. As I said earlier, major infrastructure projects and major pieces of reform are best done when they have bipartisan support. The Hawke-Keating government could not have carried out the economic reform it did without the support of the then opposition — —

Mr Barber — You're kidding me!

Mr Leane — You've drawn a long bow now.

Mr O'DONOHUE — It is a fact. This is a major infrastructure project for Melbourne and for Victoria that has the support of a range of stakeholders, including the two most recent Labor premiers of Victoria. It is a pity Mr Tee is opposed to former Premier Brumby, is opposed to former Premier Bracks and is opposed to the position that I anticipate 95 per cent of his constituents support. It is a great disappointment. I hope Mr Leane has a different position to that of Mr Tee. With the caveats I referred to earlier, the government does not oppose the motion moved by Mr Barber.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition has no problem at all in supporting calls for

documents. We did not have any problem with it when we were in government, and now we are in opposition we take the same position. We understand that there are some caveats that governments need to put on certain areas. We respect that.

I almost enjoyed Mr O'Donohue's contribution.

Mr Tee — No!

Mr LEANE — I did. I have to say I am not surprised that he got a promotion. I actually had my money on him making the big gig. I thought he might make the cabinet because he does put across, he is a good operator and he is a Collingwood supporter. Now that I have given him a wrap and ruined his future career I will move on.

As far as the conversation around the east–west tunnel goes, I have to relate it to the commitment this same government made around the Doncaster rail line. There was a big exercise in chest beating by the government — by the Baillieu and Napthine 'Place name here' governments — about doing a study, and there was a big commitment to funding the Doncaster rail line and building it. Obviously a couple of years have passed since that big announcement and that big commitment, and now the position is, 'We picked the worst route ever for this rail line to go; it's all too hard, and we have to back off from our commitment'.

As far as the east–west tunnel goes, I understand that the previous Premier drilled a hole somewhere. There were a few photos of him drilling the hole. Not many cars are going to fit through the little hole that he drilled; it is a big tunnel and quite an expensive project. As far as the east–west tunnel goes, I think we are in exactly the same position with the Napthine government as we are in relation to the Doncaster rail line. There has been a lot of noise, there has been a lot of chest beating and there has been a lot of, 'We're gonna do this', and, 'We're gonna do that', but it is all just another hoax. It is a project that is \$12 billion-plus — some sort of huge figure. I know that Mr Abbott, the federal opposition leader, has come down to Victoria and committed \$1 billion out of that — —

Mr Finn — One and a half.

Mr LEANE — I stand corrected — \$1.5 billion out of the \$13 or \$14 billion that the project is going to cost.

Mr Finn — Which is \$1.5 billion more than Gillard.

Mr LEANE — It is \$1.5 billion more than Gillard. I accept that. Taking into account Mr O’Donohue’s statement that he believes that Mr Abbott will be the Prime Minister in September, there is \$1.5 billion.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr LEANE — He could be; he could well be. It is a fair contest; it is democracy. If Mr Abbott is successful, he is successful; that is the reality. That is what we all have to face. The reality is that if he is successful, then he is going to put his \$1.5 billion towards the \$13 billion or whatever it is going to cost, and the Victorian government, which says it is going to build this project, with the majority in both houses, will announce that it will fund the extra \$11.5 or \$12 billion that Mr Abbott’s contribution will leave the project short of.

When I take into account that this government, the Baillieu and Napthine governments, has the majority in both houses, I am a bit perplexed about its preoccupation with what the opposition’s position is. It does not matter.

Mr Finn — You don’t even know yourself.

Mr LEANE — It does not matter what the opposition’s position is, because the government should be backing itself. If it believes that Mr Abbott is going to be the Prime Minister, and given the fact that the Napthine and Baillieu governments have had the majority in both houses in Victoria, then it does not matter what the opposition thinks; the government will fund it and it will build it. If it funds it and it builds it, as I have said in this chamber before, I will be happy to use it, just as I am happy to use other infrastructure that previous Liberal-Nationals coalition governments have built. As I said, I am a bit perplexed by the preoccupation with the position of the opposition.

I wish this government well in its infrastructure projects. The state is screaming out for jobs and the state is screaming out for infrastructure to be built to create work and for the use of future generations, so I wish the government well in its endeavours. I understand that the government is supporting this motion calling for paperwork, like we are, so I think we are all pretty much on the same page. It is good to have a debate on a topic on which we all agree and from which we can all move on.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make my contribution today on Mr Barber’s detailed motion. As was said earlier by my esteemed colleague Mr Edward O’Donohue, the position of the Napthine coalition government is that it will not be

opposing this motion. I feel for Mr Barber in this exercise, particularly after listening to his contribution. At the last election we on this side fought hard to be the government of this state, and of course our parliamentary colleagues on the other side of the house exited the role of government. The Greens will never form the government. They will always be outside that proverbial tent and looking in; they will never be inside the tent and looking out. To get attention and appear as though they are pulling their weight and earning their money, the Greens have to put up requests for documents such as those listed in this motion. It appears that they have delved deep. They have had their research people join the dots for them and come up with things that on first reading I suppose look impressive, but it is a kind of tragic vision, really.

As Victorians we look forward to considering how we will marshal the skills of engineering companies, tunnelling experts and all those other people who will contribute to the construction of the east–west link, and we have a lot to be proud of in the expertise in Victoria. I had a little bit to do with this some 20 years ago when I was promoting to the world the tunnelling expertise that Victoria had on offer. When it undertook to do the south-eastern sewerage project, Melbourne Water not only broke through lots of rock and shale but also set new standards for tunnelling expertise in the world. In this state we are very good at digging tunnels. We have not had the opportunity to build as many as are needed, but it is really obvious that the east–west link is needed to meet the needs of people living on the other side of the river and to deal with the burden of the West Gate Freeway and the West Gate Bridge, which are well and truly at capacity. They want some amelioration, of course, from their commuter burden. The proposal suits Melbourne in an all-encompassing way. I cannot wait for the east–west link to be started, and I will be utterly jubilant when it is actually open.

I imagine that I probably have a measure more experience of travelling on the Eastern Freeway, its extension to EastLink and its extension to Peninsula Link than most people in this chamber. I have been living in East Doncaster since 1970, and that was about the time that the Eastern Freeway was first conceived. Without a rail link to Doncaster, that was, of course, absolutely critical for the developing suburbs of Bulleen, Templestowe, Doncaster, Doncaster East, Donvale and beyond, so that people living there had the capacity to commute into the city within a reasonable time. Importantly, at that time it was critical to provide another crossing over the River Yarra. The need for crossings over the Yarra will probably never be

satisfied, but that was a pretty acute issue more than 40 years ago.

Here we are looking to deal with what is one of the greatest points of congestion anywhere on the road system — that is, the intersection of the Eastern Freeway and Hoddle Street. It is certainly character building to travel to the intersection at Hoddle Street at peak hour. For me, the only solution to the hold-up there is to see that traffic flowing beyond that point and on, to reach a crossing and Melbourne's west on the other side of the city. That will benefit the whole of Melbourne. It is absolutely critical for the movement of all kinds of vehicles, not only passenger vehicles but also commercial vehicles that are part of the freight and logistics momentum that provides us with the thriving economy we have today. We all know that any delays in the movement of people and goods have an effect on everything, and that is a cost burden we all have to absorb.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mrs KRONBERG — Doncaster rail is certainly not off. I can point to the fact that it was the Cain Labor government that put the kibosh on the rail link from the Eastern Freeway. In fact, its terminus was going to be at Blackburn Road. To my chagrin, we bought property near the terminus, or what would have been the railhead, and booked our children into schools some distance away. Then we had to deal with the fact that that project was not to go ahead — that commitment to the Victorian people by the Cain and Kirner governments, which surrounded themselves in malfeasance and maladministration. That impacted enormously on the economic and physical wellbeing of the people of the city of Manningham. It became very inconvenient, and of course it held back the price of property values as well.

The provision of infrastructure such as was planned by the Baillieu government in the first instance and with the continuation now of that commitment by the Napthine government is a great joy. People of Victoria have a sense of anticipation. They cannot wait to be relieved of the burden of the congestion at the Hoddle Street terminus.

Just to mollify Mr Barber, with his feelings of being outside the tent and looking in and never inside the tent and looking out, the feasibility study for the Doncaster rail looks promising and I for one will be overjoyed when we see that become a reality. It will serve the people of the city of Manningham and beyond extremely well. What is being looked at as a priority approach is fitting. The land down the middle of the

Eastern Freeway has been reserved for a rail system with a connection to the Epping line at Collingwood. I think that is going to work very well, and I imagine that the actual project will be executed without too much impact on traffic flow. I am hopeful that the tunnel will be well under way so that we can alleviate the traffic flow.

It is interesting that the Kennett government chose to do some traffic flow amelioration works at the end of the Eastern Freeway on the two lanes that flow through to Alexandra Parade. I can remember that the people living along Alexandra Parade in parts of Collingwood, Fitzroy, Carlton proper and parts of Carlton North were enraged. There were lots of public protests and the normal kind of war dances — paint and feathers as well — and all sorts of hoopla was attached to what was deemed to be the criminal act of the Kennett government in widening the road to eat into the median strip that divides Alexandra Parade.

Since those moves were made and a few trees that were dying and unable to be resuscitated by even the most skilled arborists were removed, lavish plantings of lawn and trees have been made — costing a considerable sum — and we have seen that median strip well and truly rehabilitated. There was such a fandango of protest and a welter of negative things said to the Kennett government when it sought to modify and widen Alexandra Parade to alleviate the pressure at the end of the Eastern Freeway that you would have thought we were planning to build a nuclear power station there instead of widening the road.

We are listening to the argument that there would be a considerable impact on that neighbourhood and loss of amenity, so every time I travel along Alexandra Parade I make it my business to note and observe family-based activities — that is, sports, recreation, picnicking, looking at trees, counting butterflies and all the sorts of pursuits one would want to undertake in a public park that was provided for the people of the area. I have not seen one person set foot in that parkland in the 20 years since Alexandra Parade was widened. Perhaps people are indoors worshipping bongos and other things. I do not know. They are certainly not out enjoying the investment that the Kennett government made in converting that median strip to a very handsome parkland strip with easy points of access, lots of shade and a well-nourished lawn.

We need to put into context these storm-in-a-teacup exercises of people who are suffering from relevance deprivation in the extreme, and as far as Mr Tee's contribution is concerned — —

Mr Tee interjected.

Mrs KRONBERG — I suggest to Mr Tee that self-aggrandisement and self-delusion take many forms. As regards Mr Tee being an authority on the Eastern Freeway, I think I was using the Eastern Freeway as an adult when he was still chasing wildebeest in South Africa.

I go now to some of the facts about what the coalition government is doing in terms of the east–west link. Fifteen million dollars was allocated in the 2012–13 Victorian budget to plan and develop this important amelioration of the traffic congestion. The Hoddle Street traffic jam is almost world-famous. Last year we saw — and this was pretty exciting, actually — the Premier and the Minister for Roads presiding over the drilling of around 50 boreholes to survey the geophysical terrain and plan for geotechnical works. We need to understand that one of the things that needed to be considered when the Eastern Freeway was constructed — and of course this applies to similar works — was that the basalt plain that you can see exposed due to drilling as you approach the bridge across the Yarra when you are travelling inbound on the Eastern Freeway is expensive to drill through. That basalt plain extends right through Brunswick. You can see manifestations of it right throughout the western suburbs with those floaters — those bluestone boulders. It is certainly a significant geophysical barrier to be taken into consideration, but I am confident that we have the basalt plane drilling expertise — it has been proven — and that we have the tunnelling expertise on a global scale. That gives me confidence and, frankly, great joy.

In his pursuit of documents and information on this issue Mr Barber was almost trying to make out that the big end of town was getting together in some conspiratorial huddle to mislead environmentally sensitive thinkers and the people of Victoria and to set up some great cabal. That is what happens when you are outside the tent looking in — you will never get inside the tent to look out. There have been meetings of massive numbers of people, professional groups and companies from many parts of the world, who are interested in this project. The reason is that this is an important project and, importantly, it will be a world-class project. While it is going on people will be paying attention to this major infrastructure project in Melbourne.

For Mr Barber’s edification, there are 100 financiers and constructors. I will just draw the house’s attention to the fact that I am explaining some things to Mr Barber that he is seeking to have revealed by the

documents in his document request in this particular motion, but while I am imparting some of the information that he has requested in his very circular fashion he is actually looking into the eyes of Ms Pulford and not really paying attention to the fact that he is missing out. He has missed it.

Mr Finn — He is missing out on the debate altogether.

Mr Barber — My brain switched off when you were talking about boreholes in the median strip.

Mrs KRONBERG — One hundred financiers and constructors attended an industry briefing back in July 2012. I am proud to say it was well represented by companies from Australia, but, to underscore the international interest and the size, scale, importance and prestige of this project, there were also companies from Japan, Spain, France, Korea — I should say South Korea; I do not think there has been too much interest from north of the 37th parallel — the UK and Italy. Interest from the UK is particularly welcome, because at the moment the City of London is building Crossrail, which will operate in addition to the brilliance of the London underground system. That is a mega-project. In fact the Crossrail project in London is the largest infrastructure project in Europe at the moment, so interest from the UK is very welcome. It may well go a long way to augment our local expertise.

Let us have a look at some of the realities of moving people and freight around this state for ongoing economic benefit. This is really important. I just draw the house’s attention to the fact that Mr Barber raised the issue of infrastructure like the Lane Cove tunnel in Sydney being underutilised and not living up to projections for use. The thing is, I think it is always important to build for the future.

Mr Barber — Right — like the desal plant!

Mr Finn — That is because they listened to ‘Sandbags’ Flannery.

Ms Pulford — And the rest of the scientific community.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Mr Finn and Ms Pulford!

Mrs KRONBERG — Thank you very much, Acting President. You are always the gentleman.

Mr Finn — Who?

Mrs KRONBERG — The Acting President.

Mr Finn — Is he?

Mrs KRONBERG — Yes. Mr Ondarchie, who is in the Chair, is vigilant. He is always the gentleman.

In relation to the importance of capacity, have a look at how vehicles move around North America. Freeways in Toronto have eight lanes in each direction. It takes a lot of vision to plan for a 16-lane freeway and have the appropriate land reserves in place so that everything is linking and moving fast in that very industrially based, muscular city where things are happening. They have planned for growth in Toronto, and it is important that we plan for growth here in Melbourne and that we not bemoan providing extra capacity, because capacity building is what it is all about. If you want to have a flourishing economy, you must build capacity. According to projections, the population of Melbourne is to grow to 8 million people by 2060. All of the arguments put forward by the Greens will be steadily eroded and will become completely irrelevant.

At the moment we need an alternative to the M1 arterial road, and the east–west link will provide that. To help the people of the west in the current budget we put \$14 million towards maintenance of the West Gate Bridge. To throw in some statistics, 160 000 vehicles cross the West Gate Bridge every day. The projections for this are actually quite frightening. They come out of the Eddington report of 2008, which says that that number will rise to 235 000 by 2031. This is only a small proportion of the population going forward, looking at the numbers for the outliers to 2060. At the moment the Eastern Freeway itself carries 140 000 vehicles each day, and 40 per cent of that traffic travels beyond the central city area. The east–west link will provide amelioration. It will prevent gridlock from minor incidents on the M1, it will move traffic from the inner arterial roads and it will link industry and our north and east.

It is probably worth putting on the record that there is a powerhouse of people who know what they are talking about in the groups that support the east–west link. Who can challenge the research and authority of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria in terms of movements around this state on our road systems?

The input of the Committee for Melbourne was heavily relied on by the Labor government. The previous Committee for Melbourne had many people in a kind of cross-pollination structure and exercise, and its opinion, if you like, was supported by Labor and by the coalition.

The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry knows something about adding efficiency in terms of business and the movement of goods and passenger vehicles and people getting to their jobs. Interestingly enough — and this is the bit that might well stick in the craw of the nay-sayers — the Labor government is split in terms of support or lack thereof for the east–west link. They are a bit confused, frankly.

The state secretary of the Australian Workers Union — I never thought I would be quoting Cesar Melhem — sees the need for the east–west link. The submission of the AWU’s Victorian branch to the east–west link needs assessment study in 2008 asserts:

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

The Eastern Freeway is already pretty much a car park for a minimum of 3 hours at the beginning of the day and 3 hours at the end of the day.

Furthermore, in 2012 when Labor was getting its knickers in a knot — and I am not sure whether those knickers were like the red knickers Senator Conroy, the federal Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, insists on wearing on his head at the moment — Mr Melhem was reported in a newspaper article as saying something I have to quote, as it is a good quote to insert at this point. The article states:

‘It is just crazy not to go ahead with the [east–west] project’, Mr Melhem said.

...

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

Mr Barber’s views sit in a narrow tunnel funnel of aims and objectives of just the armchair socialists and their acolytes in inner suburban areas who have no idea how you can look at economic wellbeing and the wellbeing of Victorians across the state. Again I quote Mr Melhem, who said just this past weekend that the east–west link should be a priority for Dr Napthine, the Premier of this state. I might leave my contribution at this point. I reiterate that the government will not be opposing the motion.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I thank Mrs Kronberg for her contribution; I appreciate it. I rise in the house this afternoon on behalf of the people of

the western suburbs of Melbourne to say, quite categorically and without hesitation: we support the east–west link. We totally and completely support the east–west link. It is without doubt the most important piece of infrastructure needed in Victoria right now.

If anybody is in any doubt about how desperately we need the east–west link, this morning all they would have needed to do was look at the West Gate Freeway; it was banked back to Duncans Road — to Werribee — from the bridge. You just have to drive down the Tullamarine Freeway any morning and you will see that the freeway is chock-a-block, with red lights as far as the eye can see. The growth in the west and north-west of Melbourne has been extraordinary over recent years, and as a result our roads have struggled to cope. You would go as far as to say, in fact, that they have not coped. There are a lot more minor roads that are struggling, of course, but our freeways, into which all these minor roads funnel traffic, have not been able to cope at all. We therefore desperately need the east–west link.

Mr Barber — To go to Doncaster?

Mr FINN — The people of the western suburbs demand that the east–west link be built.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Barber does not particularly care about people in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. He makes that very clear on a very frequent basis. A lot of the people using the West Gate Freeway and the Tullamarine Freeway — yes — do want to go further. As Mrs Kronberg said, 40 per cent of users on those freeways want to go beyond the city. They would use that tunnel.

I can say to Mr Barber through you, Acting President, that he might be interested to know that in a previous life I travelled from Sunbury to Wantirna and back again on a daily basis. When I began that daily trek it took me about an hour and three-quarters. Two years later it was taking me between two and a half hours and two and three-quarter hours. Generally speaking it was taking me about an hour longer than it had two years earlier when I had begun taking that journey. I certainly, therefore, would have jumped at the opportunity to get in a tunnel and travel from the Tullamarine Freeway to the Eastern Freeway. That would have been absolutely delightful.

For the life of me I cannot work out why Mr Barber is so opposed to this. There are thousands and thousands of cars that every day travel down the Eastern Freeway, and what do they do when they get to the end of the

Eastern Freeway? They hit Collingwood, they hit North Fitzroy and they hit Carlton. Who do you think largely inhabit Collingwood, North Fitzroy and Carlton?

Mrs Kronberg — The Greens.

Mr FINN — The Greens voters! You would think, Acting President, that Mr Barber would be absolutely jubilant at the prospect that all those cars travelling through Collingwood, North Fitzroy and Carlton would be going through a tunnel underground. If you had half a brain in your head, wouldn't you say, 'Yes, I want to clear the streets where my voters live. I want to get rid of all those dreadful cars that are polluting the city with CO₂, that dreadful gas, and sending it into the ozone layer' or wherever it is this week that it goes. You would think that Mr Barber would absolutely be champing at the bit to have the east–west link built; but no, when it comes to the Greens, logic comes a very distant last on every front. It is a nonsense to suggest otherwise.

The Labor Party has its own problems in that it does not actually know what it wants to do. My understanding is that it used to support the east–west link, and then there was a by-election in Melbourne. It was desperate to keep that seat of Melbourne; can you believe that in this day and age the Labor Party regards Melbourne as a marginal seat? It is extraordinary. That tells us a great deal about how the stocks of the ALP have fallen in this country. I do not know whether that was due to the fact that people had not forgiven the state Labor government for the neglect and vandalism it caused in Victoria over 11 long years, or whether they were taking it out on the state Labor Party for the sins of the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and her government in Canberra. Clearly that is ongoing and there are a lot of people who are on their verandas with baseball bats just waiting for the opportunity to get hold of the Gillard government — or it may be the Rudd government by that time, or it could be the Crean government. Alternatively, as I said this morning, Dick Adams deserves a run because we have not had a Tasmanian prime minister for a very long time, and I think Dick is prime ministerial material.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr FINN — He carries a lot of weight behind him — but then in front of him, too. He is beside the point to a large extent. This plan is quite vexing for the Labor Party, because while the party used to be very supportive of it, now it is totally opposed to it, according to Mr Tee. However, according to Mr Leane perhaps the Labor Party is not so opposed to the idea of the link. Perhaps Mr Leane might have some idea of

what the people in his electorate think. I have absolutely no doubt that Mr Tee has not got a clue. Mr Tee gets around with a bubble around his head. He is not on the same planet as the rest of us, but Mr Leane just might be. He might have visited the local hotel, the local TAB or his local footy match and got a very good idea from his constituents that they too support the east–west link and they want government to build it. To be kind to him, he very largely conceded the next federal election to us. To be perfectly frank, that is a reasonable thing for anybody to do, given what —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr FINN — He has been pragmatic. When he was working with Dean Mighell in the Electrical Trades Union all those years ago, the degree of pragmatism he showed had to be seen to be believed. But he understands that the people of the eastern suburbs, and indeed the people of the western suburbs, are very anxious to vote for the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, for a number of reasons but in particular because of the \$1.5 billion that Tony Abbott has committed to the east–west link — a very important project. It has to be added that it is not just the people of the eastern and western suburbs who will benefit from this link. The benefits of this project will go right through to Ballarat for the people of Ballarat to enjoy. The people of Geelong down on the Surf Coast will also enjoy the very real benefits of this project. I am sure that, for example, when people in the federal electorate of Corangamite decide to vote later this year they will put the cheeseburger in the bin and vote for Tony Abbott in very large numbers, because they can see he has made a commitment to the sorts of projects that people want.

This is taxpayers money that we are talking about. To listen to Labor members, to listen to Mr Barber, you would think it was their money. It is not; this is the taxpayers money; this is the people of Australia's money. As governments we have an obligation, a duty, and the privilege to distribute that money according to our priorities. That is as it should be. I personally would much rather see a little less of it being distributed, but that is something we can discuss another day. The Labor Party and the Greens seem to think it is their money to distribute according to their own sectional needs, whereas we on this side of the house accept that the money that comes from taxpayers should be returned to taxpayers either directly through tax cuts or via these projects which will benefit the greatest number of people. I do not think any member in this chamber, if they were honest with themselves and with us, could say that the east–west link will not benefit millions of Victorians, because clearly it will.

If Mr Barber, Mr Leane and Mr Tee have a different view, can I suggest that they do a run on the Tullamarine Freeway or the West Gate Freeway tomorrow and tell those people who are patiently waiting in their cars to get across the West Gate Bridge or through the tunnel or into the city off the Tullamarine Freeway that their time does not matter, that Labor and the Greens do not really care that those thousands of people are stuck in traffic on a daily basis, because that is the truth. They do not care about people stuck in traffic jams every day. If they did care, they would be in here in large numbers supporting the east–west link.

It is not surprising that the Greens oppose this project. If there is one thing you can say about the Greens, it is that they are consistent, whereas the Labor Party is incompetent and will go to extraordinary lengths to prove it, whether it be at state or federal level. However, the Greens deliberately go out of their way to destroy civilisation as we know it, and that includes the motor car. Its members hate the motor car. In fact the last time anybody hated motor cars as much as the Greens it was a bloke called John Cain, a former Premier of Victoria. He hated freeways so much —

Hon. D. M. Davis — He built a car park — the south-eastern car park!

Mr FINN — He did build a car park, as Mr Davis points out. He built the car park that is the Monash Freeway, as it is called now. Back then John Cain told his driver that he was not allowed to travel on freeways. They would travel miles out of their way just to avoid a freeway. One cannot begin to imagine how much carbon dioxide and how many emissions were sent into the atmosphere as a result of that Premier's particular hatred of freeways and efficient motoring.

But the Greens just hate cars. I hope Mr Barber and his comrades in the Greens will strongly support the proposal that Mr Guy, Mr Elsbury, Mr Katos, the member for South Barwon in the other place, and I put forward this week — that ferries should soon take many thousands of people from the western suburbs to the city. It is an exciting development that I believe will engage the imagination and support of the people of the western suburbs, but we have not heard from the Greens about whether or not they support that. One would think that to get all those cars off the roads and onto a ferry —

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

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

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Parliament of Victoria's Family and Community Development Committee's report on its inquiry into opportunities for participation of Victorian seniors and the Victorian government's response, which was tabled in this place in February. Committees go to an inordinate amount of trouble to produce really professional reports. A lot of time and effort goes into committee inquiries, with many people speaking at many hearings, and then professional reports are presented to Parliament and we wait for the government response. Under the previous Labor government the response would often come back as, 'No change. We're not going to take this up. We're not going to do that. We're not going to do anything at all'.

That represents a marked point of difference with the attitude expressed by the report. I would like to read from the introduction to the government response. On page 2 of this 15-page document it talks about the recommendations. It says:

A central theme of the report is in relation to improving advocacy for the participation of senior Victorians across government through the establishment of a commissioner for older people, with responsibility for the development and implementation of a whole of government strategy for older people, and a lead minister for older people reporting annually to the Victorian Parliament. Many of the recommendations of the report are appended with a recommendation that specific tasks and responsibilities be referred to the proposed commissioner.

As a member of the committee, I am particularly pleased with the response that we got to the report. One of the things we heard time after time from people who presented to us — stakeholder groups and individuals — was that they felt with an ageing Victoria it is imperative that the particular needs of senior Victorians are taken into account and acted upon. Aside from being an enormous economic challenge for our community, it will be an enormous challenge for seniors to be active within our community and to stay as healthy and as well as they possibly can into the future. Their needs should be not just listened to but acted upon with authority. As you can imagine, I was enormously pleased to read these paragraphs following the quote I just gave:

In response to the report's recommendations, the Victorian government will appoint a commissioner for senior

Victorians, who will chair a select ministerial advisory committee and who will report to the Minister for Ageing, already the lead minister for older people.

The ministerial advisory committee will be empowered to develop a whole of government older persons action plan, detailing strategies and actions under way across departments to address the participation of older people, and coordinate the plan across government. The ministerial advisory committee will advise the impacts of policies and programs relating to the participation of senior Victorians and will advise the Minister for Ageing to request consideration of particular issues by other ministers and departments where required.

One of the things we heard continually when we were taking evidence was that people are sick to death of having to tell their story to many different departments. They had told their story to the Department of Transport, to the Department of Human Services, to the Department of Health, to the federal Department of Health and Ageing and then again to the police, and on and on it went. They want a cross-government approach, and that is what is so good about what the Napthine government will do in appointing a ministerial advisory committee that will listen to all these issues.

I know that the Minister for Health, with his excellent new parliamentary secretary, Georgie Crozier will do something in reality for the older citizens of Victoria. Not only is Georgie Crozier the Parliamentary Secretary for Health; she is also the chairperson of the Family and Community Development Committee. If anyone understands what these issues are and also the issues that were raised during the committee's inquiry, it is Ms Crozier, and I know she will do an excellent job.

The most important thing is to understand that this government recognises that there is a growing number of seniors in Victoria. They have particular issues and challenges and need a dedicated ministerial advisory committee and commissioner to make quite certain that those challenges and issues are faced in a working government program. I am pleased to see that that is the response from the government.

Ambulance Victoria: report 2011–12

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I rise to make a statement on the Ambulance Victoria annual report for 2011–12. Firstly, I congratulate the chairman, Just Stoelwinder, the board and the staff of Ambulance Victoria for their commitment to providing high-quality pre-hospital care and medical transport. Ambulance Victoria has a long and proud history of serving our community. In August 2011 a new board was appointed, and financial viability and operational

performance have been the focus of the organisation since the appointment of that board.

In terms of performance, Ambulance Victoria continues to provide a world-class response to medical emergencies. In this report we see that Ambulance Victoria achieved a number of significant highlights during the reporting period, including the expansion of the 12-lead electrocardiogram capability of the mobile intensive care ambulance units throughout rural regions, which I am particularly pleased about. This initiative has led to significantly better outcomes for patients who have heart attacks, because they receive appropriate hospital intervention much more quickly.

Other highlights included the successful introduction of a rostering and electronic timecard system into rural regions to complete a single statewide information platform; the continued program to renovate and rebuild branches across the state; the introduction of blood supplies to three more helicopters, meaning Ambulance Victoria helicopters now all carry blood, so paramedics can administer blood, with medical authority, to patients in urgent need of a transfusion; and the expansion of the emergency medical response program to about 125 career Country Fire Authority firefighters — and some of those are from Shepparton — as part of a 12-month pilot program.

Ambulance Victoria responded to floods in north-eastern Victoria in March 2012, including the emergency evacuation of the Numurkah hospital and local aged-care facilities, which was a particularly traumatic time. There was the subsequent deployment of two field primary care clinics at Numurkah, providing emergency and overnight stay beds, which were still in place at 30 June, as this flooding took quite some time to abate because of the low-lying ground where the flood occurred. If it had not been for the fantastic work that was done by our paramedics during that time, we would not have had such a smooth evacuation and accommodation of those patients.

Ambulance Victoria began the roll-out of equal employment opportunity training to about 640 employees who have a supervisory component to their role. It introduced new lifting equipment as part of a proof-of-concept collaborative project with WorkSafe Victoria, Ambulance Employees Australia-Victoria and insurer QBE to address paramedics' high risk of musculoskeletal injury. It increased ambulance membership to more than 1 million people as at 30 June 2012, which is an increase of some 46 393 people.

I also wanted to mention that Ambulance Victoria continues to face serious challenges, and that is around

its enterprise bargaining, which is currently being negotiated. Victorian paramedics are highly trained, but they are the lowest paid in Australia, which means that communities throughout northern Victoria are faced with the possible decrease of experienced paramedics if the state fails to boost their wages and protect their conditions. Paramedics are extremely frustrated that if they were to work interstate, they could earn anywhere between \$8000 and \$25 000 a year more. Paramedics are now being worked longer and longer without breaks, and at times they do not even get them. Workloads are increasing. They are required to work overtime, and response times are blowing out. Ambulances are increasingly being ramped at hospitals until beds become available, which takes them out of circulation for sometimes hours at a time.

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

Auditor-General: Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to make a contribution in relation to the Victorian Auditor-General's report of June 2011, *Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements*. As you would be aware, Acting President, that was an allocation decision made by the previous government.

I well recall when Mr Lenders became the Treasurer of Victoria. He said he would be a safe pair of hands. With the management of electronic gaming machines (ECGs), Mr Lenders and his colleagues were anything but a safe pair of hands. Members have heard me quote before, but it is worth recounting again that in the conclusion on page viii the Auditor-General's report says:

The revenue obtained from the sale of the entitlements was around \$3 billion less than the assessed fair market value of these assets. As a result of this very significant difference, the allocation largely failed to meet its intended financial outcome of capturing a greater share of the industry's supernormal profits. This was due to the lack of demand at auction, combined with a low reserve, inadequate information and training for venue operators, and poor decisions made during the auction.

It concludes by saying:

Large venue operators, rather than the community, are the beneficiaries of this windfall gain.

On page ix the Auditor-General's report goes on to say:

DPC and DTF appropriately raised concerns on the merits of proceeding with the auction with their respective ministers —

one of those being Mr Lenders —

However, no formal review was undertaken.

The outcome of this is stated on page x, which says:

The industry paid \$980 million for the right to operate EGMs over a 10-year period. This is equivalent to around a third of the total revenue generated by EGMs in a single year, and a quarter of the estimated fair market values of the entitlements.

We valued the EGM entitlements in the range of \$3.7 billion to \$4.5 billion, with a midpoint of \$4.1 billion.

The state will collect \$980 million over a 10-year period. Mr Lenders was advised that the auction process was flawed. He decided to proceed, and the outcome according to the Auditor-General is that the midpoint of the fair market value of \$4.1 billion was not achieved. In fact the Victorian Treasury has been short-changed by \$3 billion, so any time members of the opposition come in here and seek funding for infrastructure, for projects and for improvements to their local community, let them ask Mr Lenders how he got it so wrong. How did he get it so wrong?

The former Minister for Gaming and now Treasurer, Mr O'Brien, will have to deal with this mess. When the report was released he issued a media release and said:

Labor's massive economic incompetence has today been exposed as causing the worst single loss to taxpayers in Victoria's history ...

That is the legacy of former Treasurer Lenders. One purpose in raising this matter in statements on reports and papers today is to note that the Auditor-General's prediction that large venue operators would be the single biggest beneficiaries of the Labor Party's financial incompetence, financial mismanagement and Mr Lenders's failure to achieve fair market value by around \$3 billion has come true. As I say, the Auditor-General anticipated that the large venue operators would be the biggest beneficiaries.

I refer to articles in the *Age* of Friday, 1 March this year, and the *Age* of 10 December 2012. The article of 10 December 2012 headed 'Punt on pokies proves a big winner for Woolworths' by Colin Kruger states:

Profitability —

that is, profitability for the Woolworths electronic gaming machine operation —

... should increase dramatically as per the new arrangements —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — Order! Thanks, Mr O'Donohue.

Royal Children's Hospital: report 2011–12

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Royal Children's Hospital 2011–12 annual report. May I begin by offering my sincere congratulations to the CEO, Professor Christine Kilpatrick, and all members of the board on putting together this wonderful report and on all their successes of the last financial year.

In saying this I cannot stand up here without thanking all of the dedicated doctors, specialists and nursing staff who work tirelessly around the clock to provide children from not only Victoria but from across the country and the world, for that matter, with world-leading health care in a welcoming and comforting environment. Having a young daughter myself and speaking as a parent, knowing the level of care that is provided to children at this facility is reassuring.

A total of 4500 people make the Royal Children's Hospital what it is today. They should all be very proud. They make extremely significant contributions that cannot be matched. In addition to this, a very honourable mention must be made of the countless volunteers who devote many hours on a weekly basis to many aspects of this institution.

Every time I drive on Flemington Road I look at this hospital with absolute amazement. How could you not? Its design is simply second to none. Its coloured windows, to me, represent light to the hospital and its health care — something that is often feared by children. I truly believe it is one of the greatest legacies that Labor will leave in our state. This, like many other Labor health-care initiatives such as the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, have proved to this state and to this country, for that matter, that Labor cares. Labor cares about the health and future of people, not just Victorians but all Australians. I wish I could say this for those who are currently in government — just. I can say that without a question of doubt in my mind, because I can still hear the echoes of criticism and slamming that occurred during the days of construction. What a shame. But I do not want to dampen the wonderful report that this Victorian institution has put together with recent tragic memories.

There were many highlights in the last financial year, not only financial ones but also monumental steps in health care. I was simply amazed to read that the Royal Children's Hospital, alongside the Austin Hospital, successfully performed the nation's first paediatric intestinal transplant. In over 10.5 hours of surgery a 13-year-old teenager, who has been a patient of the Royal Children's Hospital their whole life, successfully

received a liver, small bowel, pancreas and duodenum. In addition to this, the Royal Children's Hospital fostered a new initiative with the University of Melbourne's Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit, with a three-year pilot program that provides individual support to Aboriginal patients and families.

The hospital has also seen an increase of 50 per cent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving treatment from the hospital. I believe the youth community plays an important part in shaping the future of this state, which is why I was extremely impressed that in 2011 the Royal Children's Hospital hosted its first Royal Children's Hospital youth forum, which I am sure will become an annual event.

Also in 2011–12 the Royal Children's Hospital made essential health care for children more accessible to those living in regional Victoria with its initiative Telehealth. This service helps families meet with their specialists via video consultation from their homes, which saves sick children having to make the long journey into the city.

These are only a few wonderful things that this world-class hospital has delivered in its last financial year. I am looking forward to seeing what else this hospital will bring in the future for its patients. I commend this report to the house.

Auditor-General: *Implementation of School Infrastructure Programs*

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I have recently spoken on the report that was tabled in February by the Victorian Auditor-General entitled *Implementation of School Infrastructure Programs*. But tonight I would like to focus my comments predominantly on the Building the Education Revolution (BER) component of the report. As members would know, the Building the Education Revolution — and I think that fell a little short of its name — was a program that was introduced in 2009 by the commonwealth government, when it announced that \$16.2 billion would go towards government schools infrastructure under BER as part of its national economic stimulus plan, intended to militate against the global financial crisis. The BER program covered capital works only, and certainly the revolution that it brought to the system is the cost that it has left behind.

Mr Barber — Acting President, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mrs PEULICH — I thank Mr Barber for arranging an audience on this very important issue — that is, the mismanagement of the BER program in terms of delivering better outcomes to our Victorian schools and the legacy of asset mismanagement that has been left behind and that this government has to face. Specifically I am referring to the fact that BER was poorly administered, which has now left our schools with a significant amount of surplus space. That surplus space will eventually need to be brought back to departmental expectations. In the meantime, the maintenance of BER projects has not been accounted for by the federal government.

Additional outgoings, such as for heating, lighting and cooling, and the implications for school costs have not been factored in. That certainly places under stress the resourcing that is provided to schools for maintenance. Already a substantial backlog had been accumulated under the former Labor government. This is not accounting for the fact that the additional expenditures on the BER buildings would place that maintenance backlog under even greater stress. I note that the outstanding bill, payable by the federal Labor government to the Victorian taxpayer, is around \$70 million, which arises from BER money which the federal Labor government has not been forthcoming with. As I said before, it has left the coalition government to find this extra funding cost overruns. I am not talking about all of the other costs, just cost overruns.

On top of that is the \$420 million maintenance backlog which the coalition has identified as a part of its audit. The Auditor-General is scathing about the lack of asset management that occurred under the previous government for 11 years in terms of capital works and its maintenance obligations. This government will need to fix those problems and build the future.

In terms of the \$420 million maintenance backlog the Victorian coalition government has identified as part of the statewide maintenance audit of all government schools, the government has spent an additional \$100 million to address the backlog, and there is a further \$51.5 million to address the most urgent maintenance needs identified in the audit. We also tried to remedy things by giving schools the flexibility to take charge of their own BER projects. All of the projects where we gave the schools that autonomy have been delivered on time and on budget.

A further \$5 million was spent on the reinstatement of playgrounds lost through the BER program. In terms of losses to schools, a further \$37 million was needed to support maintenance, utilities and cleaning costs

associated with BER facilities. Is it any wonder that Labor's brand name is Poor Management? This is yet another example of poor management practices by the Labor government. It takes a coalition government to fix the mess that Labor has left behind. Regrettably it impacts negatively on our school communities. Hopefully we can see our way through it and build the future by accepting the recommendations of the Auditor-General.

Auditor-General: *Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services* of March 2013. Due in part to the nature of the duties performed in our emergency services departments, it is easy to understand that levels of personal leave or unplanned leave would be substantially higher than that taken by public service officers who risk neither life nor limb in the performance of their daily duties.

Under normal circumstances a high incidence of systemic unplanned leave is indicative of low morale or poor management practices. I note that the Auditor-General's report makes frequent negative references to the United Firefighters Union (UFU) of Australia. The UFU is a proud union with a long history of defending and protecting its members rights, irrespective of the political persuasion of the government in power. It appears to me that the UFU is an easy target to blame for the mismanagement of unplanned leave by the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board. The fact that fire station managers are not in control of vital information regarding unplanned leave is a sure sign that senior managers who work off site, away from the coalface, do not want to relinquish this data to the very people who could control or at least manage unplanned leave by firefighters.

Let me talk about unplanned leave as it is outlined in the report. The report states that the majority of unplanned leave is taken by older workers or people with family responsibilities. The process of ageing is inherently degenerative. As our bodies wear out we become more susceptible to viruses and disease. That is a fact of life. Workers with family responsibilities are prone to dropping everything when a family emergency occurs, whether it is a young child or an aged relative who needs attention. This has always been the case and probably always will be.

Emergency services personnel, Ambulance Victoria officers, Victoria Police officers and firefighters have

the added stress of a physically demanding job that in most instances can place their health or even their lives in jeopardy. The Auditor-General has made several recommendations regarding managing unplanned leave. The one that makes the most sense to me is that proper consultation needs to occur between senior managers, managers and the actual workers who serve and protect us every day of their working lives.

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

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is my pleasure to resume my contribution in the reporting phase on the massive report, over 600 pages, from the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee's inquiry into livability options in outer suburban Melbourne. I draw the house's attention to chapter 3. The chapter heading falls within the terms of reference, and this chapter is where the committee examined and reported on housing affordability.

I will talk about one of the policies that has been adopted by two Canadian cities, Vancouver and Calgary, of allowing rather than turning a blind eye to what had been an illegal practice. By stealth about 30 per cent of rentals involved people who owned homes subletting those homes. There would be no examination as to the conditions of the subletting agreements; it was done by an informal process. With closer examination and further inputs, the municipalities in British Columbia and in outlying areas of Calgary in Alberta found that the adoption of secondary and tertiary suites under the one building envelope or roofline made a direct contribution to housing affordability in the outlying suburbs of those two fine Canadian cities.

The reason for this is that people were able to construct a substratum dwelling in a basement or a studio apartment on the top of a garage, and this aided the rental market to a very large degree. So what we would describe as small studio apartments, bed-sits and so forth have sprung up in these cities. The benefit is that this type of accommodation provides immediate relief for people seeking low-rental options, it is suitable for people recently divorced and people wanting to age in place who have sold larger properties and want to live in smaller premises, and it is also important for the people who own the dwellings and might be burdened with paying off the mortgages on them.

In chapter 3 of the report the committee placed great emphasis on what is described as a mortgage helper. It refers to those with the opportunity to sublet on one or

even two aspects of their building. For example, you might be able to sublet under your building or if you are on a street corner you might have a separate means of access. If you have garaging with rear loading, with a rear point of access which lends itself to the designs of Canadian housing nowadays — many of the house frontages are not taken up by garaging — the garaging with the rear loading can have accommodation built on top of it so that other people have a private means of access and security under the same building envelope. At page 194 the report shows four colour photographs illustrating that point.

When we visited the district of Maple Ridge and during the briefing there by the mayor, Cr Ernie Daykin, and a number of council officers, we learnt that their community plan for the city contains a range of policies that promote secondary and tertiary suites as a form of infill housing in existing neighbourhoods that is both compatible with and reflective of neighbourhood character and general amenity.

Department of Health: report 2011–12

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I wish to make some remarks on the annual report 2011–12 of the Department of Health. Much of general business time today has been used to focus debate on the performance of the government in relation to the delivery of health services, and we have heard a great deal about the need to rely on the data provided by authoritative agencies such as the Department of Health. On the very first page of the Department of Health annual report, the then new secretary, Dr Pradeep Philip, writes:

National health reform arrangements have been agreed and are well into their implementation phases, providing additional resources for the health system to drive improvements in quality and efficiency.

This is consistent with what the Minister for Health told the house in March 2011 — a few months after the 2010 election — that the then Baillieu government had got a better deal for Victoria in the commonwealth-state health agreement than the former Brumby government had achieved.

The minister said there had been a great victory in terms of the financial position of the state because Premier Baillieu had been able to get the Prime Minister to agree to lift the GST payment to the states from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. He went on to say that under the terms of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) deal Victoria would receive more funding for Victorian hospitals. But in recent times, after pulling \$616 million out of the health

budget, the minister has blamed the commonwealth for the disaster over which he is presiding.

The minister blames the commonwealth's decision to withdraw and then restore \$107 million to Victorian hospitals when he should and must know that the disastrous effect of his own budget cuts preceded the commonwealth's action which, for the most part, was neutralised by the restoration of the funds. On 6 March Mr Jennings reminded us that halfway through the first year of the present term, the then Premier promised that his government would deliver more elective surgery in 2011–12 than the Brumby government delivered in the last year of its term of office, and that is the period covered by this report. The fact is that the coalition government failed to meet this commitment, and this is proven beyond a shadow of a doubt by the evidence contained in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data.

Another glaring example of the coalition government's failure is that during the 2010 election campaign it made a commitment, a promise, to deliver an additional 800 beds in its first term. The health minister has done nothing that would help to deliver those 800 beds, and when the annual hospital reports came out last year, not one additional bed was reported in any of them. The minister was totally silent on the \$616 million in funding he slashed from the first two budgets; there was not a word about the blow-out in emergency department waiting times and in elective surgery waiting lists, or about the shortages in the availability of doctors, nurses and ambulances.

It simply is not credible for the minister on the one hand to say that his government has all the resources it needs from the commonwealth but on the other hand to blame the commonwealth's withdrawal and subsequent restoration of funds for its failures, and then foreshadow further commonwealth cuts as an additional alibi. It just does not stack up, and the minister's own words when set against the facts give the lie to this government's banal rationalisations that fraudulently seek to exonerate it from responsibility for its failure to meet its own promises.

The health minister and the government do not have the fortitude to argue their case on the basis of the truth, on the basis of the fact that commonwealth financial contributions to the Victorian health budget in the forward estimates will increase while the state contribution will fall, and that, in the minister's own words, the level of GST payments is also significantly higher. We would have thought that the release at the end of last month of the health services performance data might have forced the government and the health

minister to confront the reality of what they have allowed to happen to health services in Victoria. As we know, the data reveals a massive blow-out in the elective surgery waiting lists; it reveals record levels of people waiting in emergency departments; health services failing to meet targets; and a fall in the number of ambulances able to meet their target for transferring urgent and semi-urgent patients.

The failings of the Victorian coalition government and its incompetent and unresponsive minister are now very clear for everyone to see. It is very difficult to understand how a government with such parlous leadership and such an irresponsible approach to public administration can survive long.

Climate change: Victorian adaptation plan

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — I am proud to speak on the Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan, which is a great piece of work. Despite the commonwealth seizing the oxygen around looking after the environment and climate change by introducing a carbon tax, the state government has worked very hard to propose a plan around climate adaptation. This focuses on government preparedness by ensuring that appropriate risk management strategies are in place for public assets and services. It enhances disaster resilient strategies that are being implemented and government policies and programs to encourage and facilitate climate resilience in an adaptive capacity across the Victorian community.

The Victorian government committed to preparing for a change in climate in its response to the independent Climate Change Act Review 2011, and in late 2012 it strengthened the provisions guiding the preparation of the climate change adaptation plan. The plan provides the basis for building Victoria's climate resilience and establishes a clear framework for ongoing discussion and partnerships with local government and other stakeholders. The plan represents a whole-of-Victorian-government commitment to adaptation, and all 11 Victorian departments have been involved in its development; so it is not a solo performance by one particular department but a holistic approach to real solutions for adaptation for Victoria.

We have a broad scope of Victorian government adaptation responses already under way. The 'Roles and responsibilities' section of the report provides guidance on the role of government, in particular state and local governments in partnership, and also of the private sector, on the basis that climate risks are best managed by those closest to the risks. In relation to integrated climate risk management, it reinforces the

need to embed climate risk management across all portfolios of Victorian government and across all regions of the state.

In the Northern Victoria Region, which I represent, I would have to say we have seen it all, from drought to bushfire to four incidents of flood as well as locust plagues. We have had real extremes, which have had some very dramatic impacts on those communities. The key to surviving those extremes in weather and cyclic difficulties is preparing communities to adapt to them. Many of the smaller communities in my electorate that were affected have had to have significant work put into levees and road improvements. Green plumbers provide great assistance in many ways, offering real solutions from the ground up. Our government is working with communities, taking a ground-up approach, to provide the wherewithal for people to be able to undertake environmentally significant programs.

The management of risk to natural assets and natural resource-based industries is obviously an issue. The reports states:

The vitality of Victoria's economy and social wellbeing is interconnected with effective management of climate risks to the natural environment. Healthy soils, rivers and land, coastal and marine ecosystems support many of our successful industries such as agriculture and tourism. They provide Victorians with many health and wellbeing benefits through recreational activities in the natural environment.

The Victorian government has committed to maintaining a resilient, healthy environment for a strong productive future through its *Environmental Partnerships* document. *Environmental Partnerships* is a pathway for action for government, communities and businesses in Victoria, including overarching policy settings and direction for addressing climate risks to the natural environment.

The government is going about this in a very can-do way, working closely with organisations such as Landcare to increase ecosystem resilience and contribute to sustainable landscapes.

In relation to biodiversity the report states:

Threatened species and ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to climate change, especially those with limited habitat ranges and capacity to migrate. Government understanding of how climate risks impact on biodiversity is informed by research undertaken by a variety of institutions including the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research. The Victorian government will investigate opportunities to support adaptive capacity — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie) — I thank Mrs Petrovich for her contribution. Her time has expired.

Department of Health: report 2011–12

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to speak on the 2011–12 annual report of the Department of Health. Highlighted very early in this report are pictures of and a bit of a résumé for the two ministers responsible for this department. The ministers are the Minister for Health, David Davis, who is a member of this chamber — about whom we hear a lot concerning stuff he has not done in health — and the Minister for Mental Health, Mary Wooldridge, who is the member for Doncaster in the Assembly. It is interesting to see from the résumés that Mr Davis has been a member of Parliament 10 years longer than Ms Wooldridge. You would not know it!

Regarding this report and Minister Wooldridge in particular, 2012 was an interesting year, particularly in the east of Melbourne, considering the blow-out of waiting lists. At Maroondah Hospital alone there was an enormous blow-out in the elective surgery waiting list. That is contrary to what Ms Wooldridge put out in her election material in 2010 just before the election. I will read from the minister's election material, which I have with me. In it she made the commitment that:

A coalition government will slash waiting lists with an \$87 million plan to employ more doctors and health practitioners and streamline patient flow.

I am not sure if that plan has been implemented, but if it has been implemented, it has failed. I am not sure if the \$87 million has been put towards the Department of Health. Minister Wooldridge also said that the coalition would commit to 1600 new beds across the state and to a \$1 billion health infrastructure fund, as well as an extra 340 ambulance officers for faster response times. All of those commitments would have been good if they had been enacted. I am pretty sure there has not been a great deal of activity around those particular commitments in the Department of Health, for which Minister Wooldridge is one of the responsible ministers.

I believe 2011–12 was a very disappointing year for health in this state. When one of the ministers responsible for the department, whose electorate falls within Eastern Metropolitan Region, made some very large commitments around health — commitments for hospital beds and money to slash waiting lists — the fact that the opposite has happened makes it even more disappointing.

We have the budget coming up in the next few weeks. We wait in anticipation to hear that there will be some funding and that some of these real commitments that

people voted for the government on because their major concern was health might be fulfilled.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Department of Primary Industries: job losses

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh. Today the Acting Auditor-General, Peter Frost, tabled a report entitled *Management of Freshwater Fisheries*. The audit assessed whether the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is effectively managing recreational freshwater fisheries. Mr Frost noted that in 2011, during the life of the current Baillieu-Napthine government, the implementation of reforms DPI identified in an internal review were placed on hold indefinitely. DPI then developed a new set of reforms in 2012. However, Mr Frost has highlighted that those reforms do not adequately address the environmental aspect of management and have only a passing commitment relating to recreational fishing.

On page xi the Acting Auditor-General's report states:

DPI cannot provide assurance to either Parliament or the community that it is effectively and efficiently managing recreational freshwater fisheries to achieve long-term sustainability.

The action I seek from the minister is that he investigate whether this report, which is highly critical of the government, has come about as a result of the minister's cuts to the DPI budget and the reduction in staff numbers totalling hundreds, which comes now to more than 10 per cent of the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr Barber — I believe a quorum is not present.

Quorum formed.

Hospitals: federal funding

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health, the Honourable David Davis. As members know, the cuts in federal funding for Victorian health services have had a significant impact on the ability of those health services to deliver services for Victorians. As members know also, the commonwealth government has

decided, belatedly, to reinstate the funding for this financial year, but not for the forward estimates periods.

Notwithstanding the decision of the federal government to reinstate that funding and its erroneous decision to bypass the pool arrangement that has been developed and to pay those funds that had been cut for this financial year to the health services directly, my understanding is that many of those health services have not received the money that has been committed by the federal government. As the minister has advised the house, the federal government has given no assurances that the funding cut for the forward estimates will be reversed, so we still live in limbo and uncertainty as a result of the decision of the federal government.

I know that many health services in Eastern Victoria Region have been adversely impacted by the terrible decision of the federal government. As I said, notwithstanding the reversal of the decision to cut funding for this financial year, the impact of that decision has been felt as a result of redundancies, delays in surgery and other procedures, reduction in services and the like. It was a most regrettable decision.

The action I ask of Minister Davis is that he continue to work with the health services in my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region to develop mechanisms to deal with the cuts inflicted by the federal government as best as possible.

High Street Road, Wantirna South: duplication

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the attention of Mr Michael O'Brien in his new role as the Treasurer. It concerns an election commitment made by the member for Scoresby in the other place, Kim Wells, MP, now the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. He made an election commitment to duplicate High Street Road between Stud Road and Burwood Highway. I note that Mr Wells had been concerned about this project for some time. I remember him making statements about wanting that particular stretch of High Street Road duplicated, when we were in government.

No progress has been made since Mr Wells committed to the electorate before the election that he would ensure that that part of High Street Road was duplicated. The action I seek from the new Treasurer is that he make sure in the upcoming budget that duplication of that particular part of High Street Road is funded as per the election commitment Mr Wells made to the electorate.

Hamilton: red meat innovation centre

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Minister Walsh. I call on the minister to visit the site of the proposed red meat innovation centre in Hamilton to discuss its progress. I am aware that last year's budget outlined this exciting new project for Hamilton and stated that a \$3.45 million national red meat innovation centre would be established in the town. That was in addition to the recent announcement of a new south-west services hub for the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in Warrnambool, to be shared with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria. I am also aware that prominent lamb researcher Dr Matthew Knight has recently moved to DPI at Hamilton to continue his work on improving lamb production performance. Dr Knight's work centres on the impact of maternal nutrition on lamb fertility, survival and performance.

Red meat, including lamb, as Mr Ramsay well knows, is one of Victoria's major agricultural exports, and in 2011 it generated more than \$1 billion. Victoria is one of the world's largest suppliers of sheep meat, exporting over 100 000 tonnes per annum in recent years. I note that on average Australians consume more than 12 kilograms of sheep meat per year, as Mr Koch can well attest.

Industry research can assist producers by improving sheep fertility and lamb survival rates, improving lean meat yield from lamb production systems and developing new farming systems to cater for different regions in Victoria. On the latter point, I note that western Victoria, which has always been a centre for prime lamb production, changes markedly from south to north — from the cooler and wetter areas around Portland and Heywood to the larger farms closer to Horsham, which may run lambs as a supplement to cropping operations. Of course this can vary from season to season as climatic systems go through their cycles.

Lamb producers in my electorate have always been keen to trial new breeds and innovative practices. This can be seen in the changes between the on-farm mix of breeds such as Merino, Corriedale, Poll Dorset and Coopworth, which vary in their balance between wool and meat production. More recent newcomers include Poll Dorsets and the Ile de France breed. In that regard, I can refer anyone interested in entering this game to the Ile de France website, which indicates that the Ile de France breed flock was established in 2007 by Ian

McDougall and Trevor Troeth at 'Belmore' at Heywood in Victoria. The website states:

Trevor first heard about the amazing carcass of the Ile de France from his brother —

who I can reliably inform the house is Russell Troeth —

after a trip to Europe in the late 1970s and tried to import them from France, but due to health regulations was not able to.

I encourage all members of the house who consume red meat to continue to do so and promote it as a healthy — —

Ms Pennicuik — It's Meat Free Week.

Mr O'BRIEN — It might be Meat Free Week, but I advise Ms Pennicuik that for me it will very much be a meat week because I like to consume meat; it is very healthy. I encourage people to get to Sheepvention in Hamilton again. It is a great annual event where people can meet with Mr Troeth and other breeders, along with Mr Koch, Mr Ramsay and me, and continue to promote the great sheep industry. I encourage Mr Walsh to again visit the DPI centre at Hamilton.

Waterbirds: protection

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. I am very disturbed to have been informed by Mr Laurie Levy from the Coalition Against Duck Shooting that rare and threatened freckled ducks and other protected non-game species were illegally shot on the opening weekend of the duck shooting season at the Box Flat nature conservation reserve, a wetland close to the town of Boort in north-western Victoria. Half the property is on Crown land, and the other half is on private property. I am informed that approximately 150 shooters were present at Box Flat last Saturday morning when around 2000 birds were shot. Game species took the biggest hit, with hundreds of pink-eared ducks falling victim. Pink-eared ducks do not leave a wetland when disturbed by gunshot — they tend to fly around low over the water, making them an easy target for shooters.

I was horrified to hear reports that many non-game species were also shot at Box Flat that morning, including approximately 200 rare and threatened freckled ducks and several rare blue-billed ducks. Both species are protected and cannot legally be shot. They are easily identifiable, and the blue-billed duck rarely flies. Those that were killed may have been shot while on the water, which is illegal and highly dangerous.

It was also reported that around 50 swans and other protected species, such as coot and possibly avocets — all protected waterbirds — and other protected non-waterbird species, including birds of prey, were shot. It was described as a massacre of threatened, protected and game species.

I am also informed that after the illegal shooting became known, Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Department of Sustainability and Environment officers attended the wetlands and many of the dead protected birds may have been removed ahead of the investigation that DPI has confirmed to Mr Levy is taking place. If that is the case, the investigation has been compromised, and the public may never know the truth about the number of protected species that were slaughtered that morning. Mr Levy was also informed that a similar incident took place last year but was hushed up.

Licensed shooters who shoot protected species or exceed the bag limit of game species must be prosecuted, and it would be difficult to believe that people would not be prosecuted after an incident such as this.

My request is that the minister immediately order the closure of the Box Flat nature conservation reserve wetland in accordance with the freckled duck action plan and the emergency provisions of section 86A of the Wildlife Act 1975. I also request that the minister instigate a survey of all wetlands where duck shooting is occurring or likely to occur and that he close them, including the Box Flat conservation reserve, under section 86 of the Wildlife Act 1975 if freckled duck and other protected species are present. I also request that the minister ensure that this incident is investigated thoroughly and impartially and the results are released to the public.

Ambulance Victoria: Wallan station

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health, and it concerns delivery of the 24-hour ambulance station promised to the community of Wallan by the Liberal and National parties at the 2010 Victorian election.

More than two years after the 2010 election the Minister for Health and Ms McLeish, the member for Seymour in the Assembly, are evidently still searching for a suitable site for an ambulance station in Wallan. Meanwhile the government has arrived at a truly Orwellian solution to its failure to deliver this promise: it has announced that a 24-hour Wallan ambulance

branch is to be located in Kilmore. Not surprisingly, ambulance officers have pointed out that a Wallan branch cannot operate effectively from Kilmore, which is at least 15 minutes from Wallan.

Ambulance officers have also pointed out that a high proportion of call-outs from Kilmore are to Wallan. They have further pointed out that modifications to the Kilmore ambulance station to accommodate the Wallan branch are creating difficulties for the existing service.

It is about time the Minister for Health explained to the community of Wallan when the government is going to deliver on the promise of an ambulance station located in Wallan, not Kilmore. In the Kilmore *Free Press* Ms McLeish proclaimed she is confident that the new Leader of the Liberal Party and Premier, Dr Napthine, will deliver the key infrastructure Victoria needs. Ms McLeish should urge Dr Napthine to make a start by delivering the promised ambulance station in Wallan, not Kilmore.

Responses

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I have three responses to adjournment debate matters raised by Mr Elsbury on 13 December 2012, Ms Tierney on 19 February and Ms Darveniza on 20 February.

Tonight there were six matters raised on the adjournment. The first was by Mr Lenders for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security on matters regarding a report of the Attorney-General that was tabled in the Parliament today. I will pass on that request for an investigation into the matter and into where the faults lie.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Minister for Health and urged the minister to continue to work with local health authorities to combat the federal government cuts to health funding in his electorate. I will pass that on.

Mr Leane raised a matter for the Treasurer regarding an election commitment given by the previous Treasurer, the member for Scoresby in the Assembly, regarding a road duplication in that electorate, and I will pass that on.

Mr O'Brien raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, urging him to visit the proposed red meat innovation centre in Hamilton, and I will certainly pass that on. I know Mr Walsh likes a steak, so I am sure he will be happy to go there.

Ms Pennicuik also raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, this time concerning duck shooting. She urged him to investigate a claim that protected species have been shot in the Box Flat nature conservation reserve. I will pass the number of requests contained in that adjournment item on to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security.

Ms Broad raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health regarding a commitment in relation to ambulance stations in Wallan, and I will pass that request on to the Minister for Health.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I want to ask the minister at the table if he could chase up for me a couple of outstanding adjournment items with other ministers. The reason I would like the minister to chase these up is that they are about individual constituents' issues, and those constituents are pretty keen to hear the responses. The first matter was raised on 24 October 2012. It was to the Minister for Planning, and it concerned the planning guidelines for vegetation removal. The other one was raised on 28 November last year. It was directed to the Minister for Public Transport, and it was around the taxi industry inquiry.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.38 p.m.

