

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Wednesday, 27 November 2013**

**(Extract from book 16)**

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## **The Governor**

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

## **The ministry** (from 22 April 2013)

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Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Crime Prevention . . . . .	The Hon. E. J. O'Donohue, MLC
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Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Bushfire Response . . . . .	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
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Cabinet Secretary . . . . .	Mr N. Wakeling, MP

## Legislative Council committees

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

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

## Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

*# Participating member*

## Joint committees

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

**Dispute Resolution Committee** — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr O'Brien and Mr Walsh.

**Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee** — (*Council*): Mr Eideh and Mrs Peulich. (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess, Mrs Fyffe, Mr McGuire and Mr Shaw.

**Education and Training Committee** — (*Council*): Mr Elasmr, Mrs Kronberg and Mrs Millar. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks and Mr Crisp.

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

**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 Thomson, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller.

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

**Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee** — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Carroll, Mr McCurdy and Mr Southwick.

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

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

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

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

## Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

**President:** The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

**Deputy President:** Mr M. VINEY

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

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The Hon. D. M. DAVIS

**Deputy Leader of the Government:**

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

**Leader of the Opposition:**

Mr J. LENDERS

**Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

Mr G. JENNINGS

**Leader of The Nationals:**

The Hon. P. R. HALL

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

Mr D. DRUM

<b>Member</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Party</b>
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Lenders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Northern Victoria	ALP	Melhem, Mr Cesar <sup>2</sup>	Western Metropolitan	LP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Millar, Mrs Amanda Louise <sup>4</sup>	Northern Victoria	LP
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pakula, Hon. Martin Philip <sup>1</sup>	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee <sup>3</sup>	Northern Victoria	LP
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Elsbury, Mr Andrew Warren	Western Metropolitan	LP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Guy, Hon. Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 26 March 2013

<sup>2</sup> Appointed 8 May 2013

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 1 July 2013

<sup>4</sup> Appointed 21 August 2013



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**Wednesday, 27 November 2013**

**The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.36 a.m. and read the prayer.**

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

**PETITIONS**

**Following petitions presented to house:**

**Swinburne University of Technology Lilydale campus**

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of residents of the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the proposed rezoning and sale of the Lilydale TAFE and university campus, which does not have the support of the local community.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria ensures that the Swinburne facilities remain solely for the educational purposes, and that that the land zoning is not changed to facilitate the breaking up of the Swinburne site.

**By Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (41 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**Nadrasca community farm**

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) (41 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**Healesville freeway reservation**

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the promise made by Heidi Victoria, MP, in 2010 to preserve the Healesville freeway reserve as open space for the community.

The petitioners therefore request that the Napthine government keep their promise and preserve the Healesville freeway reserve as public open space and not sell off the land to developers.

**By Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (33 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**MAGISTRATES COURT OF VICTORIA**

**Report 2012–13**

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) presented report by command of the Governor.**

**Laid on table.**

**PAPERS**

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Audit Act 1994 — Report on the Performance Audit of the Auditor-General and the Auditor-General's Office, November 2013.

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Portfolio Departments and Associated Entities: Results of the 2012–13 Audits, November 2013.

WoVG Information Security Management Framework, November 2013.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Minister's Order of 21 November 2013 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Queens Park Reserve.

Ombudsman — Report on issues in public sector employment, November 2013.

A Statutory Rule under the Public Records Act 1973 — No. 139.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 139.

**MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

**Project 10 000**

**Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan)** — My statement today concerns Labor's push to remove 50 of our worst level crossings if elected next November as

part of its Project 10 000, an integrated transport alternative for Victoria. Level crossings remain a major headache for commuters across Melbourne's western suburbs. They are a cause of congestion, creating bottlenecks on some major arterials such as Main Road, St Albans; Buckley Street, Essendon; and Ferguson Street, Williamstown. During peak times boom gates at crossings can be down for as much as 50 per cent or 60 per cent of the time, causing major delays and frustration for motorists. Grade separation will ensure less congestion for motorists and greater safety for all commuters.

Labor has already identified 40 of the 50 crossings to be removed, and more will be announced over the coming months. The 40 crossings already identified for removal eliminate the RACV's priority list and target the Australian level crossing assessment model safety list. They include at least seven crossings to be found across Melbourne's west. The increase to safety by removing these dangerous crossings cannot be overstated. Sixteen lives have been lost in recent years at Main Road, St Albans, alone, which is 16 too many. Calls for the immediate removal of the rail crossing have come from the community and media alike. Despite this, only a small amount of planning money has been provided for the grade separation of Main Road, St Albans. The Napthine government has said it is a priority, but it is currently on a funding drip feed and requires more funding as soon as possible.

### **Cobram ambulance station**

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I was pleased to recently join my colleagues the Minister for Health, David Davis, and the member for Murray Valley in the Assembly, Tim McCurdy, to mark the start of work on Cobram's new ambulance station. An old warehouse on Colgan Street is being revamped into a \$1.4 million home for the 11 paramedics who serve Cobram. It will be a modern fully-fitted ambulance station, with a three-bay garage, full-size kitchen and lounge area, two rest rooms and training and study areas. This vital project for the Cobram community should be finished in mid-2014.

### **Goulburn Valley Health**

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** — It was wonderful to visit Goulburn Valley Health in my home town of Shepparton with the Minister for Health, David Davis, to see firsthand the high-quality digital radiography equipment now in use there. The new machine was funded through the coalition government's \$60 million Securing Our Health System initiative, and will be used for more than 16 000 patients each year. It replaces a

15-year-old X-ray machine and means patients will be treated faster and with the best equipment available.

### **Toolamba Early Years Centre**

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** — An exciting moment for the people of Toolamba last week was the official opening of the town's early years centre. This project has been a special one, with a new facility replacing a building that was destroyed by fire in February 2010. I am proud to have allocated \$450 000 towards the project after the centre was left high and dry by the former government. This state-of-the-art centre will be much loved by Toolamba children for many years to come. It was an honour to officially open this new facility and see how important it is to the local community.

### **Climate change**

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — On Sunday, 17 November, along with tens of thousands of Australians in capital cities and many regional centres, I attended the National Day of Climate Action, calling on the Australian government to step up action to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. In September this year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its fifth assessment report, which states:

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia ...

Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850 ...

...

The rate of sea level rise since the mid-19th century has been larger than the mean rate during the previous two millennia ...

...

The atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last 800 000 years. Carbon dioxide concentrations have increased by 40 per cent since pre-industrial times, primarily from fossil fuel emissions and secondarily from net land use change emissions. The ocean has absorbed about 30 per cent of the emitted anthropogenic carbon dioxide, causing ocean acidification ...

In addition, the Climate Change Authority released its targets and progress review draft report last month, which states that Australia's 5 per cent emissions reduction target is inadequate and Australia can achieve stronger targets at a relatively small cost. Those opposite who keep denying climate change and

supporting the rollback of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Australia are totally irresponsible.

### **Ukrainian Holodomor commemoration**

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — On the weekend I marched with hundreds of members of Victoria's Ukrainian community to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Holodomor, which is the Ukrainian famine of 1932 and 1933 which was deliberately inflicted on that nation by the genocidal Stalin regime. Hundreds of Ukrainian Australians came together to commemorate the 7 million to 10 million people who died in the Holodomor and to remember the sacrifice that so many families, including my own, made during that disgraceful period in history forced upon the Ukrainian nation by the communist regime of Stalin. Senator Connie Fierravanti-Wells, Jude Perera, the member for Cranbourne in the other house, and I joined many hundreds of Ukrainian Australians, priests from the orthodox and Catholic churches, and others who came to commemorate this dreadful period in European, world and Ukrainian history and to ensure that the lives of millions of people that were lost because of the Stalin regime inflicting this genocide upon the Ukrainian nation will never be forgotten.

### **National Centre for Farmer Health**

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — I take this opportunity to congratulate the National Centre for Farmer Health, which has attracted yet another international award this month. Alison Kennedy, who is the centre's behavioural scientist, was one of two people to receive an award from the American Association of Suicidology. She received the award for her research project on suicide in farming families. This accolade is yet another in the long list of national and international awards won by the National Centre for Farmer Health. I have mentioned in this place on previous occasions that representatives of the Canadian government have flown to Australia and shown particular interest in the centre's programs. This interest has continued, and the Canadian government has invited the centre's director to visit Canada for further discussions on implementing the hugely successful National Centre for Farmer Health programs in Alberta, Canada.

With the ongoing interest in and numerous international awards for the centre, it continues to be completely baffling to the farming community around Victoria why the Naphthine government refuses to fund what is obviously a hugely successful organisation. Even the Victorian Farmers Federation has echoed this

sentiment, with the organisation's president, Peter Tuohey, being quoted recently as having said:

It's just beyond belief that they're not funding it; it's a sorry state of affairs.

Jim Fletcher said:

It makes us dismayed and frustrated that we can get international recognition, yet our politicians at this point haven't been able to provide funding.

Come November next year, every Victorian in country Victoria will remember what the government has done to this centre.

### **John Burt**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the outgoing mayor of the City of Ballarat, John Burt. John Burt's one-year term was a challenging one for him and for the City of Ballarat but, like he does with his other passion and commitment to the specialist school and farm, he rolled up his sleeves, made the hard decisions and left the city council with a legacy of a sound foundation, a future plan and a blueprint to take the city forward. He is an honourable man who was committed to lead and serve the Ballarat community as best he could. I commend and thank John Burt.

### **Joshua Morris and Darryn Lyons**

**Mr RAMSAY** — I also congratulate Joshua Morris, the incoming mayor of the City of Ballarat, who I understand is the youngest person to wear Ballarat's mayoral robe. I wish him and his councillors well for the next year, as I do the second directly elected mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Darryn Lyons. He is not your traditional, stock-in-trade mayor, but he is equally passionate and committed to the City of Greater Geelong. He has a big heart, and I wish him well in leading the Greater Geelong City Council during his term.

### **Run Geelong**

**Mr RAMSAY** — While on Geelong, it was exhilarating to be one of the 12 000 runners and walkers who participated in the Cotton On Foundation's Run Geelong event at Eastern Beach last Sunday, which raised \$532 156 for the Geelong Hospital special care nursery. Congratulations to the Cotton On Foundation, the *Geelong Advertiser*, the sponsors, and those who supported the run and took part in it.

### Asian Cup soccer tournament

**Mr RAMSAY** — I also put on record my support for Ballarat's bid to host training facilities for the Asian Cup, starting January 2015 at the regional soccer facility at Meredith Park. A key driver of the bid is Duncan Smith, and I ask our government to do everything it can so that Ballarat, which is the only Victorian bidder, can be one of the cities to host a nation and can bring the facility up to a standard to put us in the best position to do so.

### Shave Your Head for Ned

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — This coming Saturday, 60 people will be shaving their heads in support of Ned Osborne, a 10-year-old boy from Echuca who was recently diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma. Ned has been undergoing cancer treatment at the Royal Children's Hospital since he was diagnosed in October. Ned is the son of Jaki and Brent Osborne. In the past Ned's mum, Jaki, has raised more than \$70 000 for the Leukaemia Foundation. She was the 2001 Victorian Leukaemia Foundation Quest winner after organising the World's Greatest Shave — then known as Shave for a Cure Day — in Echuca in 2001.

The Shave Your Head for Ned family day will be held on Saturday at Echuca Primary School, with Ned's classmates, basketball teammates, friends and teachers registered to shave their heads. Organiser Kirsten Simpson told the *Riverine Herald* that the response has been amazing. It is mateship and community spirit at its absolute best. This fundraiser is a country town rallying to support a family — the Osbornes — who have helped so many others over the years.

In the past Jaki and her husband, Brent, have held fundraising events, including where both of them shaved their heads to raise money for families in Echuca who were suffering from the effects of cancer and leukaemia. I am sure that Saturday will be a lot of fun, and I hope that they are able to raise a lot of money for this very worthy cause. I wish Ned all the very best for the future.

### Western suburbs government achievements

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — Returning from the sod-turning ceremony at the now under-construction Braybrook community hub on Monday it occurred to me just how much things have changed in Melbourne's west over the past three years. The sod turning, this one with the Minister for Local Government, Mrs Powell, and the Minister for Sport

and Recreation, Mr Delahunty, no longer seems all that unusual. After all, ministers in the Napthine government are now a common sight in the western suburbs. From Werribee to Craigieburn to Williamstown and all parts in between, residents of the west are enjoying the pleasure of no longer being the poor cousins of Melbourne.

New developments, extra funding and hitherto unknown government attention is something locals in the west are very easily getting used to. Despite that fact, one thing has not changed: Labor still neglects Melbourne's west. Labor's announcement that it will scrap the western link if elected is a huge smack in the mouth to my constituents. The Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, has let it be known that he is happy for traffic congestion to remain the order of the day on the West Gate and Tullamarine freeways. He does not care about the west. In fact in a tweet he sent last week about a level crossing Labor promised to fix in 1999 he actually misspelt St Albans. He does not know, nor does he care. That is business as usual for Labor.

Thankfully we now have a government that actually does care about Melbourne's west and its people. Team Napthine is leading from the front and showing westerners that the Liberal Party is their party. Under the Napthine coalition government Labor's neglect is a thing of the past. Melbourne's west has finally come in from the cold.

### Project 10 000

**Mr EIDEH** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to congratulate and thank the Victorian opposition and my parliamentary colleagues who have contributed to the extensive Project 10 000, which will make a significant difference in the lives of Victorians across the state, and particularly in my electorate. On many occasions I have raised my concerns about the issues of public transport and deadly level crossings in my electorate, but, not surprisingly, nothing has been done to change these pressing issues. This is why I am very proud of Project 10 000. Finally, Victorians, and my constituents in particular, have a realistic and affordable alternative that will alleviate traffic congestion and, most importantly, make their safety a priority. I am personally pleased to see that Project 10 000 will finally address and remove the dangerous St Albans level crossing, one of the state's deadliest and a crossing I have spoken about in this place on numerous occasions without response, despite the 16 innocent lives which have been lost there.

The plans of Project 10 000 are simple. They are to remove 50 of the state's worst level crossings, build more metropolitan rail capacity, get 5000 trucks a day off the West Gate Bridge, invest \$2 billion in better roads and in doing so create 10 000 construction jobs. Project 10 000 will be one of largest job creation plans in Victoria's history, which is another reason I am proud to support it. We on this side of the house know the value of building for the future and creating jobs for the next generation.

### **Phillip Johnson**

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — On Friday evening at the Samson Hill Estate in Kangaroo Ground a group of gardening and landscaping enthusiasts were treated to an enthralling presentation by Victoria's own award-winning landscape designer Phillip Johnson, winner of the Best in Show medal for his garden at this year's Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show in London. Phillip Johnson was accompanied by his general manager, Vaughn Greenhill, and Vaughn's wife, Anya.

To put the win into context, Londoners celebrate the change of seasons with great enthusiasm, and the Chelsea Flower Show represents proof positive that the gloomy winter weather has been rolled back. There is intense focus on the Chelsea Flower Show. Great pride is taken by the exhibitors and the competition is fierce. Phillip Johnson and his team won the gold medal in the Chelsea Flower Show centenary year. The judge's decision was also historic — for the first time in 100 years it was unanimous.

Phillip regaled his audience with his account of how the massive Australian Garden was built over the excruciatingly short 17-day on-site construction and layout period. The exhibit was a stunning example of design, planning and logistics, with 400 tonnes of carefully selected rock being transported from Scotland to form the backdrop of a canyon and waterfall. The exhibit contained a pavilion, billabongs and a stunning floral carpet of Australian wildflowers and native grasses. The exhibit was visited by Prince Harry, Princess Beatrice and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

The team was assisted by the Victorian government through Living Victoria, as it rolled out an exemplary project for the harvesting and management of stormwater systems. Victorians should be justly proud of this stunning success story.

### **Linton Country Fire Authority brigade tanker**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — On Sunday, 17 October, I had the privilege of handing over a new medium tanker to Linton Fire Brigade. This four-wheel drive medium tanker will provide the safety features and water capacity to help the Linton brigade fight fires more effectively. It will be a valuable asset to the 87-member brigade, which can trace its history back to 1885. The new tanker was partly financed through the 2012 volunteer emergency services equipment program (VESEP). The brigade also contributed \$50 000 to the final cost, which is an excellent contribution consistent with many other contributions from our volunteer fire services and their communities.

VESEP is a partnership between the government and communities that allows emergency services volunteers to purchase equipment that will support the ongoing protection and safety of all Victorians. The Victorian government will deliver a record \$12.23 million in VESEP grants during 2013–14. The coalition government has successfully fulfilled its \$49 million commitment to deliver 124 new tankers to Country Fire Authority brigades across Victoria.

### **Bellbrae Country Fire Authority station**

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I was also pleased to join Mr Katos, the member for South Barwon in the Assembly, at the opening of the new Bellbrae fire station last Saturday.

### **Darryn Lyons**

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I congratulate Darryn Lyons on his election to the position of directly elected mayor of Geelong.

### **Pat Drum**

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Last Monday I witnessed a fine eulogy for a terrific Victorian, Pat Drum, delivered by my colleague Damian Drum. It was a testament to her life. Pat was born on 28 December 1922 and died on 11 November 2013. Pat was the mother of seven children and many grandchildren. The packed church for the 90-year-old demonstrated her commitment to her family, community, local sporting clubs and importantly the church, for which she was so fondly remembered.

### **Victorian certificate of education students**

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to acknowledge a number of meritorious events across the south-east and also express the concerns of

the constituents whom I represent by introducing a 'thumbs up, thumbs down' segment, which I will apply to my members statement.

My first thumbs up goes to the 83 000 Victorian certificate of education students who completed their exams. I thank all their families, friends and teachers for the support they have given to these students. I remind students that failure is not falling down; it is staying down. Although many will succeed, some may not. It is important for them to use whatever resources that are available to map a journey forward, and it is a lifelong journey to achieve their goals.

### **City of Kingston community cabinet**

**Mrs PEULICH** — Thumbs up for the Kingston community cabinet, which was held on 18 November. It gave the Kingston community the opportunity to celebrate local achievements and hear about local priorities. In particular I would like to commend the Kingston community forum for having a very productive discussion of important local issues.

### **Protective services officers**

**Mrs PEULICH** — Thumbs up for protective services officers' presence across the south-east. The number of railway stations that this program has been rolled out to is ever-increasing. Thumbs down to the Labor Party, which has been very circumspect in its support of the protective services officers program.

### **Cranbourne and Narre Warren Relay for Life**

**Mrs PEULICH** — Thumbs up to the Narre Warren and Cranbourne Relay for Life and the organisers of this marvellous event, which celebrates cancer survivors and remembers those who lost their lives. This is part of the fightback against a disease that takes far too many lives.

### **Old Geelong–Forsyth roads, Hoppers Crossing**

**Mr ELSBURY** (Western Metropolitan) — I am pleased to inform the house that work has started to improve safety at the corner of Old Geelong Road and Forsyth Road, Hoppers Crossing. Over the past few years this intersection has been notorious for the many serious incidents occurring there. The population in the area has increased with more people moving into the region and no additional resources being made available. This \$860 000 project will start shortly. Traffic signs have been erected around the intersection. Although the member for Altona in the Assembly continues to belittle this project, I remind her that it was her government which ignored this issue for 11 years.

### **Australian Labor Party transport plan**

**Mr ELSBURY** — Speaking of ignoring Melbourne's west, that is what the opposition's new transport plan does. It completely rips out the western section of the east–west link and leaves us without a second river crossing. Not only that, but this new project also does not deliver any new trains and bus routes and definitely no new trams for the people of Victoria or Melbourne's western suburbs.

### **Point Cook and Brimbank Relay for Life**

**Mr ELSBURY** — On a final note, I would like to pass on my congratulations to those people who participated in Relay for Life across the western suburbs. Fortunately I was able to attend the Point Cook Relay for Life and also the Brimbank Relay for Life, lending my little bit of support to what is a fantastic cause.

### **Queenscliff Music Festival**

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — Last Friday I was honoured to represent the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Louise Asher, at the launch of this year's 17th Queenscliff Music Festival. The Victorian coalition government is proud to support this iconic event, which for many years has been a boon in promoting Queenscliff and the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula region. From its modest beginnings as a small community festival, this nationally renowned music event now attracts around 18 000 visitors and some of Australia's best established and new performers to the Bellarine Peninsula. Well-known groups such as Living End, John Butler Trio and Spiderbait were amongst the main attractions. Emerging artists such as the five-piece alternative folk band from Hamilton, Buddha in a Chocolate Box, which made its first appearance at Queenscliff this year, were also popular.

More than half of festival attendees come from Melbourne and interstate, which support provides a considerable boost to the local economy. The Napthine government understands the important role of the Queenscliff Music Festival in promoting tourism and encouraging longer stays on the Bellarine Peninsula, and through Tourism Victoria it provided \$18 500 to assist in marketing and growing this popular annual Queenscliff event. My congratulations go to the numerous musicians and performers who entertained audiences over the three-day event, and to festival director Michael Carrucan, his dedicated team and the many volunteers who have worked tirelessly to put the Queenscliff Music Festival firmly on the entertainment calendar in Victoria.

## GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — I move:

That this house condemns the Baillieu-Napthine government, after three years in office, for failing to bring down cost of living pressures on Victorians, as promised at the last state election, and for their failure to tackle law and order issues, maladministration of the public sector and cuts to the education and legal sectors as evidenced by —

- (1) the rate of crime at train stations, currently at its highest in over five years, and the continuing rise in the overall crime rate across Victoria;
- (2) front-of-house public servants struggling to keep up with demand as a result of public service cuts, which the government promised not to make;
- (3) schools across Victoria that are in dire need of funding and rejuvenation works;
- (4) the health crises in emergency rooms and ambulance waiting times;
- (5) the inability of Legal Aid Victoria to provide for the growing number of people who require their services;
- (6) the inability of the court system to cope with the ever-increasing workload placed on it;
- (7) the upheaval to the government's legislative program as a result of recent events in the Parliament;
- (8) the fact that Victorian teachers are still not the highest paid in Australia, despite the government's promise;
- (9) cuts that have decimated the Victorian TAFE sector and damaged one of Victoria's largest export industries; and
- (10) the jobs crisis in Victoria, with youth unemployment reaching the highest rate of all mainland states and territories;

and calls on the government to, as promised throughout the 2010 election campaign, fix the problems and build the future.

For Victorians this has been a three-year lesson in the gap between rhetoric and reality. Governments can disappoint. Governments can get tired. Governments often have to respond to changing circumstances, like a global financial crisis or fires and floods of incredible proportion, but never has there been a better example of the gap between promise and delivery than as that evidenced under this government.

Three years ago Victorians went to the polls, and in one year they go to the polls again. In the years and months leading up to November 2010 the Liberal Party and The Nationals painted a picture of what Victoria might be like if they won the election. They said they would govern in a way that would be open, transparent and accountable. They said they would be tough on crime.

They said they would be an education government, with the best paid teachers and world-class facilities. They said they would fix everything that ever went wrong in public transport. They said they would spend \$1 billion in regional Victoria and would provide strong, stable government for Victoria.

It is a grand vision, but Victorians were sold a lie. This government was elected on false pretences, and the gap between what it was selling and what Victorians have wound up with three years later could not be greater. The government said it would provide transparent, open and accountable government, but what has it given us? It has given us the scandal involving Simon Overland, Tristan Weston and Peter Ryan, the Deputy Premier. The former Director of Public Prosecutions, Jeremy Rapke, was hounded from office. The government's record on FOI has been slammed by every expert on government transparency around, including the Ombudsman, George Brouwer, and the Auditor-General.

On IBAC the government told Victorians that we would have something like the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales, with wide powers of investigation. The nicest thing anyone can say about IBAC is what Grahame Leonard from Transparency International Australia said, which is that IBAC is 'very much a work in progress' and that he hoped it would be reviewed and refined over time. Stephen Charles, QC, a former Court of Appeal judge who was involved in the expert panel advising the government on the commission, has described it as 'seriously flawed' and indicated that the legislation that provides the framework for IBAC 'makes it very difficult for IBAC to investigate a complaint'.

The story about IBAC that the government told before the election could not be further from what Victorians have experienced, and a report tabled in this place just yesterday and reported in today's media says, 'Victoria's peak anticorruption body is unable to investigate an allegation that a senior member of police command breached federal telecommunications laws in his previous job with the Office of Police Integrity'. That is another example of IBAC falling short, because actions cannot be established to constitute serious corrupt conduct at the very high bar that has been set in the legislation by this government.

Cast your minds back to the things that Ted Baillieu, the member for Hawthorn in the Assembly and the then Premier, was saying about this issue in 2010. We have deals with the member for Frankston in the Assembly and arrangements with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly about which non-government members can

only scratch their heads in wonder, as well as the media reports of policy commitments given to these individuals to keep the show on the road. Just yesterday in the Assembly we saw the government kick out a couple of members of the opposition until next year so that it can operate the Parliament. We have a Legislative Council that yesterday and on the Tuesday of the last sitting week had to go home early because the legislative program has been so disrupted that there is no legislation. It could not be further from what Ted Baillieu promised.

The government said that it would be tough on crime but crime statistics have soared. We have a crime prevention portfolio that seems to be about cleaning up graffiti. The promise for protective services officers has been downgraded from every station to some of the stations to on an as needs basis. We now hear that courts are going to be opening on weekends to cope with demand. Prison cells are bursting. There are charges — —

**Mr Lenders** — Prisoners are roaming around the state. They get out.

**Ms PULFORD** — And prisoners are escaping, as Mr Lenders says. There are people serving custodial sentences in police cells because the government is letting our criminal justice system fall into disarray. Indeed there are people serving sentences in prison cells who have substance abuse and mental health issues that members of the police force are not adequately trained to deal with.

In terms of education, the Liberal Party and The Nationals made a crystal-clear promise before the election that Victorian teachers would be the best paid, not the worst. That was clearly a lie. The government's approach to the school capital program is nothing short of a disgrace. Some of the values-based decisions that it has made around the education maintenance allowance and other cuts affecting the ability of children to fully participate in school are outrageous. Again, it could not be further from the story people were told in the lead-up to the 2010 election.

In terms of TAFE cuts, again government members seem to think that if they go around telling everybody in Victoria often enough that everything in TAFE is all rosy and cheery, then people will believe it. But there are campus closures, course cuts and people who cannot access training because it is now simply not affordable for them to do so. Then, to add insult to injury — as if the TAFE cuts from a couple of budgets ago were not enough — it is like the government woke up and realised that there were still a few courses and

campuses that were not supposed to have survived but had. Those courses and campuses are now having to endure a further round of cuts in addition to the initial cuts of \$300 million. The subsidy rates are now being reduced again.

In health the government promised 800 beds. Can the Minister for Health identify a single one? No. This is something we have interrogated him about time and again in this place. It has been three years, and it is time to stump up a bed. The only response this government can offer to the crisis in our emergency rooms and our ambulance system is to blame a federal government that does not exist anymore. The response to the waiting room and ambulance crisis — the now infamous dump-and-run policy — basically moves the crisis from the car park to the waiting room. It does not actually help at all.

**Mr Lenders** — Next the minister will blame his parliamentary secretary.

**Ms PULFORD** — I think as time passes since the federal election and it becomes harder and harder for the Minister for Health to sustain this argument he will be looking for new people to blame. This is a health minister who is wholly focused on finding someone to blame rather than on dealing with the crisis in emergency waiting rooms and our ambulance service and finding one single bed to stick in a hospital out of the 800 that were promised. Again it is a massive gulf between what was promised and what has transpired.

On transport, who can remember Terry Mulder as opposition spokesman on public transport being on the TV every Sunday — forever, it seemed — up to 2010 talking about public transport? It is as if Terry Mulder the Minister for Roads has taken Terry Mulder the opposition spokesman on public transport and locked him in the boardroom at 121 Exhibition Street.

**Hon. E. J. O'Donohue** — He's busy delivering projects.

**Ms PULFORD** — Is that right — like the regional rail link, which will be the sole public transport project that this government will be able to point to and which was well under way before the election? Terry Mulder the advocate for public transport has disappeared under the weight of Terry Mulder the apologist for the \$8 billion tunnel project.

Punctuality targets are met only by the government stretching travel times. Reliability is down. Jobs in the supply chain are being lost — obviously because the public transport versus roads argument was lost at the budget and expenditure review committee and the

trains were not ordered in time. As far as this government is concerned, public transport is totally off the agenda in Victoria, and the Labor Party is putting it squarely back on the agenda. On the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel project, again the government seems to be happy to go down the path with Tony Abbott and put all its eggs in the east–west link basket.

The condition of regional roads is also deteriorating. Before the election the government promised a \$1 billion fund for regional Victoria. When Labor members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee asked at a hearing this year where exactly the second half of the \$1 billion fund is, the answer they got was akin to, ‘It’s the vibe; it’s in the legislation’. The government cannot put \$500 million in legislation; it needs to put it in the budget. If the government is going to tell everyone it is a \$1 billion fund, it should have \$1 billion in it.

As government members know, money from the \$1 billion fund is also used in Melbourne’s interface areas. Under this government the money for regional development has dropped. It said the \$1 billion was extra funding, but basically the government absorbed all the old programs. The \$100 million natural gas project, which is a component of the Regional Growth Fund, is going so badly that it requires a bailout by the new federal government. Based on the current rate of progress, people in towns all across regional Victoria who were told they were going to get natural gas will not have natural gas before the election. Under the then Baillieu government everything in regional Victoria ground to a halt.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms PULFORD** — Liberal Party and Nationals members know that to be true. Now they are furiously playing catch-up, in the hope they can cut a couple of ribbons before the election to try to resell this story about the \$1 billion that is not there. It is always the same with The Nationals in government.

On jobs, this is a government that has no plan for jobs. Before the election government members talked about a strong and vibrant economy. They have no plan for jobs in renewable energy, they have a reckless disregard for the automotive industry and youth unemployment is the highest of any state in mainland Australia. It is a complete dereliction of duty. Is it because members of the Liberal Party believe that the market will sort it all out? We think there is a role for government in supporting the creation of jobs, and we would do things differently.

Finally, on stability, before the election Victorians were promised stable government. The government has lost a Minister for Police and Emergency Services and a Treasurer. Losing a Premier is more than a little careless. In the last sitting week the Legislative Assembly sat for 11 minutes. Last week and this week this chamber has had to go to bed early. The government cannot run its legislative program because it is held hostage by the member for Frankston. Legislation is delayed. During question time on Thursday of the last sitting week Mr Lenders asked Mr Davis what his understanding was of the consequence of legislation being delayed, and the Leader of the Government in this place was unable to answer that question. The only way the government was able to regain control of the Legislative Assembly was to send the member for Bendigo East in that chamber, Jacinta Allan, on maternity leave a week early and then just keep booting people out until a majority was regained.

There were extraordinary scenes yesterday. I know members in this place probably do not spend a lot of time in the Legislative Assembly — I did not spend a lot of time there yesterday — but there was quite an extraordinary scene in the Legislative Assembly yesterday, and frankly Victorians deserve better. This government could not be further from what Victorians were promised three years ago. They were promised a strong economy, an outstanding education system, trains that would run like clockwork, an IBAC with sweeping powers of investigation and less crime. Victorians were deceived. Three years down and one to go until Victorians can pass judgement on the enormous gap between what they were told they would get and what they actually got.

In the history of Victoria there has never been a government elected on so much promise that has achieved so little. The Liberal Party and The Nationals painted a picture three years ago for Victorians. They sold a lie, and in 12 months they will be judged for it.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) — That was an interesting preselection speech by Ms Pulford for promotion. I must say, given the motion before the house, I would have thought Ms Pulford would have put a bit more structure into outlining the exact items she wished to raise —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I am merely 36 seconds into my contribution and already we have inane comments from across the chamber from Ms Broad. I love the fact that Ms Broad —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I hope Hansard is getting this because it is wacky Wednesday — —

**Ms Broad** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I notice Ms Broad is not on the speaking list at this point. She might perhaps like to put herself on the speaking list and have the opportunity to prosecute some of the views that she is now putting by way of interjection.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I am happy to make my contribution and stop every time Ms Broad interjects, because ultimately it is the opposition's motion. If Ms Broad wishes to make a contribution, I am more than happy for her to do so.

**Ms Broad** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — There she goes again! As I said, it was disappointing that Ms Pulford provided no structure to the issues that were outlined in the motion before the chamber, because quite clearly she has put some work into putting before the chamber those matters which Labor sees as important. I will now go through and respond to each of those in some detail.

In terms of the argument put forward about a failure to tackle law and order issues, can I say that we on this side of the chamber were very proud to have a strong law and order policy before the last state election. In fact we brought forward a funded position in terms of a strong law and order policy. Our policy was, for example, not to include home detention, which those on the other side wished to bring in. It is a weak approach to law and order. Sending those who have been convicted of serious offences to spend their time watching Foxtel at home was not something we saw as a viable alternative, so we abolished that. We also improved the community correction orders to make it more feasible for the courts to have a better outline than was the case under the former administration.

It is interesting that we hear that the rate of crime at train stations is currently at its highest in over five years. Can I just put that into some context? As a former police officer — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — As a former police officer I can say that if you are out on the street, you actually detect crime.

**Hon. E. J. O'Donohue** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — It is a funny thing. Those opposite do not understand, but if you have more law enforcement officers out on the beat, you actually — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I will just wait for the inane interjections. It is their motion. I am happy to stand here all day, because there are no time limits.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I will keep going. For the *Hansard* record, I am just pointing to those opposite.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Dalla-Riva without assistance, thank you.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — President, I am taking up and listening to the quality interjections from those opposite. That was with some level of sarcasm, for Hansard. I will say that the more law enforcement officers you have on the beat — be it protective services officers (PSOs), be it police officers — the higher the level of detection of crime. That is the reality of our policy in relation to PSOs.

The motion states that the rate of crime at train stations is currently at its highest in five years. It is interesting to note that when you employ more police officers and more PSOs you actually have a higher level of detection. Currently we have 533 PSOs. For the record, we know that Labor wants to abolish the PSOs. It wants to remove protective services officers from the railway stations. Let us be very clear what Labor's policy position is. Members opposite are raising this issue because they do not want PSOs on the train stations. They do not want law enforcement on the train stations. That is their policy.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — They can interject as much as they like, but the reality is that that is their policy, and I think the people of Victoria should be made well aware of that. For every railway station where there is a PSO, I hope Labor members will be out there saying, 'The Labor Party's policy at the next state election is to keep the PSOs there'.

**Ms Broad** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — Are you going to do that, Ms Broad?

**Ms Broad** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I know you will not be there.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I am sure Ms Broad would love to take a train ride into the city knowing that she will be safe at the railway stations that are being protected by the PSOs. I know that; it is a fact.

The reality is that since February 2012 the PSOs have issued more than 14 000 infringement notices for a wide range of offences. As I said, more PSOs on train stations will result in the number of reported incidents increasing. That is a fact of life. When you increase the number of law enforcement officers, that will occur. In response to the notion that for some unknown reason the rate of crime at railway stations is at its highest in five years, as I said, that is because of the increase in PSOs. We can rule out the first part of Ms Pulford's motion as being incorrect.

We know why this motion has been put up by Ms Pulford. We know the Labor Party has a clear policy intention for the next state election to abandon the PSOs. It will defund the PSOs and railway stations will be left unmanned and without any PSOs from 6.00 p.m. until the last train. Unless opposition members can get up and counter that — either Ms Pulford in her right of reply or any other speaker on the other side — that is where I believe they will stand in terms of their policy.

The second point in the motion concerns front-of-house public servants. The point to note is that as this motion is being put up by Ms Pulford, I gather that the Labor Party is intending to hire an additional 4200 public servants and reverse the sustainable government initiative. The question I have is: how are they going to pay for this? What front-line services will be cut back? I will tell you who will be cut back.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I know who will be cut back, because it was in the first part of the motion — the PSOs. Their policy is to get rid of the PSOs so they can employ more back-of-office public servants. That is what they are intending to do. The first part of the motion is about getting rid of the PSOs and then increasing the number of public servants by abolishing the sustainable government initiative. That is fair enough, but just make it more transparent. Let us get rid of the AAA credit rating if that is what they are intending to do. Let us remove that. Let us just spend money. What do we call it? Desalinomics is what we are calling it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — It is desal economics. We know what their economic approach is. What they are intending to do is abolish the PSOs and increase the safety risk at railway stations. By abolishing the PSOs they will increase the number of public servants by 4200. That is the intention of Labor members. Let us see them counter that in the debate. That is where this is heading.

In terms of schools being in dire need of funding and rejuvenation works, I point out for the record that Labor was in government for 11 years. We have been in government for three years and those opposite are saying schools are in dire need of funding — —

**Mrs Peulich** — Dire!

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — In dire need. That would seem to indicate that nothing occurred before 2010. Apparently up until December 2010 it was all perfect and in the last three years it has all fallen apart. Schools are in disrepair and need maintenance all of a sudden since December 2010. We know that is not true.

**Ms Pulford** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — Ms Pulford, we know that is not true. We know that since 2011 the Victorian coalition government has committed \$611 million to school capital.

**Mr Lenders** — We did that every year.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — 'We did that every year', says the former Treasurer. Imagine if the former Treasurer had had his finger on the pulse when he was signing up to the desal plant. Think of that \$1.8 million per day we are now paying to fund the failed desalination plant. I think water storage is currently at 81 per cent — —

**Mrs Peulich** — It is 81 per cent, and 84 per cent for the Thomson Dam.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — It is 84 per cent for the Thomson Dam. That is amazing. We have got this desal plant sitting there, not having drawn one drop, while the former Treasurer barks across the chamber about his financial credibility. He signed up to the \$1.8 million that Victorian taxpayers will be paying every day for the next 27 years. When Mr Lenders is well retired from this place — and I wish him all the best — he should remember 27 years down the track that there will be a component of the water bill he is paying for which he is responsible. That is the dire need

that we have. We know for a fact that schools are being well funded by our government and will continue to be maintained.

In terms of health, I know that Labor members see health as a bread-and-butter issue amongst their constituency, but I must say that since we have come to office we have increased health funding by \$2 billion. We are spending a record \$14.3 billion on health, and the health budget for this current financial year has increased by over \$660 million, or 4.8 per cent, from the previous financial year. We are investing more than \$4.5 billion in health infrastructure in terms of new emergency departments.

The first three budgets have allocated funding for the Frankston Hospital emergency department project, the Northern Hospital emergency department expansion, the Box Hill Hospital, Austin Health, the Bendigo Hospital project, the Echuca hospital redevelopment, Mildura Base Hospital, the Warragul hospital emergency department upgrade and so on. In terms of the part of the motion relating to 'the health crises in emergency rooms and ambulance waiting times', we are putting more into health than ever before. I think that part of the motion put forward by Ms Pulford is clearly not true.

In terms of legal aid and the courts, the Victoria Legal Aid annual report of 2012–13 demonstrates that Victoria Legal Aid continues to improve its ability to service those requiring legal assistance. We have had referrals to appropriate external agencies increase by 62 per cent due to the implementation of effective new triage, intake and referral models. I know those opposite want to try to link the court system with crime rates and everything else, but the reality is we had a very clear law and order policy before the last state election, and that is exactly what we are following now.

I heard Ms Pulford mention in her contribution the upheaval to the government's legislative program. The reality is the legislative program is proceeding in the other chamber and legislation will obviously proceed through here. We know those opposite are trying to hijack democracy. They do not like democracy, being typical socialists.

**Mrs Peulich** — That's right. If they can't control it, destroy it.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — If they can't control it, they destroy it, but the reality is that legislation will flow through, and as we saw yesterday, the process will move forward.

In terms of teachers, I must say that during enterprise bargaining negotiations the government did put on the table an offer that would have seen our best teachers becoming the best paid in Australia. But what happened? The union got involved. The union heavyweights did not accept the offer. An alternative agreement was negotiated in good faith and accepted by all negotiating parties. Paragraph 8 of Ms Pulford's notice of motion does not correspond with what the union agreed to on behalf of the teaching profession. The offer was there to make our best teachers the best paid in Australia, but it did not happen.

On the cuts to TAFE, I will say that in the interest of cheap political point-scoring the Australian Education Union and those in opposition want Victorians to believe there is less funding available for TAFE. We know that the funding available under the previous government was significantly less than what we have provided this year and into the forward estimates. We are putting \$1.2 billion per year into vocational training in Victoria. The reality is that in Labor's last year of government TAFEs received only \$542 million in funding. Since coming into government we have seen an overall increase of 19 per cent in TAFE funding. The reality is that the assertion made in the motion Ms Pulford put forward is not correct.

In terms of the jobs crisis — Ms Pulford talked about regional unemployment — Victoria's unemployment rate is 5.9 per cent. We currently have the second-lowest unemployment rate amongst the states, only behind Western Australia, and we are equal with New South Wales, which also has an unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent.

Seasonally adjusted, there were 2 917 400 Victorians employed in October 2013. When you look at the raw figures, you see that this compares to 2 844 300 in December 2010. Since coming to power we have seen an increase of 73 100 jobs, and Victoria's employment growth since December 2010 is the second highest of all the states, behind only Western Australia. The interesting point is that the youth unemployment rate for those aged between 15 and 24 was the second-lowest youth unemployment rate among the states in October, behind only Western Australia at 7.4 per cent. The notion that there is a jobs crisis because we do not want to follow some jobs plan developed by the opposition is an absolute furphy. On the raw facts it is clear we are well ahead.

The regional unemployment rate for Victoria was 5.1 per cent in October 2013 compared to 5.4 per cent in December 2010. There is no national regional unemployment rate released by the Australian Bureau

of Statistics. In three-month moving average terms, the unemployment rate in regional Victoria was 5 per cent in October. Since December 2010 we have seen regional employment increase by 25 600, or 3.5 per cent.

The motion before the chamber looks good on paper, but when you break it down in a step-by-step approach you realise that the hysteria surrounding the motion does not stack up with the raw facts and the way things are going. We are getting on with the job of delivering for all Victorians, and we are demonstrating that through a series of initiatives as outlined in my contribution. On that basis we do not believe that the motion should proceed and will not be supporting the motion as presented.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — Clearly this is not the kind of motion the government would like to have presented to the Parliament, but unfortunately for the government on so many of the important, vote-changing issues listed in the motion the report card is already in, at least as far as the public's opinion goes. Congratulations to Channel 7 and its pollster on releasing a survey of the public's attitude on the state of Victoria, its economy and a number of important public services.

This information was published recently, and what the public is saying about the state of the Victorian economy is that 44.8 per cent find it to be satisfactory while 27 per cent find it to be poor or very poor. When it comes to rating the public health system, 37 per cent find it to be satisfactory while 45 per cent find it to be poor or very poor. On the public transport system, and I think members will know what the answer is going to be before I read it out, 37 per cent find it to be satisfactory while 46 per cent find it to be poor or very poor. If a survey like this was taken with train commuters on the Ringwood line outbound in the evening peak, I am sure you would get 100 per cent saying that the state of it was poor or very poor.

In relation to the courts and the police service collectively, there is not too bad a rating — 37 per cent find it to be satisfactory and 26 per cent find it to be poor or very poor, with the majority finding it to be good or very good. With the public education system, 40 per cent find it to be satisfactory and 26 per cent find it to be poor or very poor. That is the state of mind of the Victorian public, and one year out from an election the best the government can do, it seems, is blame the former government — or perhaps in a number of areas blame the former federal government. But when you control both houses of the state Parliament, more or less, and you control both levels of government, state

and federal, you really do not have a lot of excuses. You can try to push down the problem and pretend it does not exist, you can try to push the blame on to someone else, but in the run-up to an election voters' ears are pretty keenly attuned and what they are looking for is solutions.

Voters' blood would boil if they read the reports by the Auditor-General that were tabled yesterday and today. Yesterday's report in particular, which for obvious reasons received next to no coverage, talks about the government's recent record on a bunch of major projects and its complete failure, by the way, to disclose in a timely fashion to the Parliament, to the Auditor-General and to the Victorian public the state of play of those projects. With the regional rail link the headline was in fact a subheading in the Auditor-General's report, 'Regional rail link — lack of timely disclosure of a revised project budget to VAGO'.

This is the somewhat embarrassing situation that the Auditor-General found himself in. In November 2011 he reported that the budget for the regional rail link was under review. But a year later, in late 2012, he became aware that the project cost had in fact been revised in March 2011. The government made major changes to that major project and did not even tell the Auditor-General about it — would not, in fact — for 18 months, and that was with draft reports being provided to the transport department and the Department of Treasury and Finance for comment from the Auditor-General and fact checking, he says. They just sat there mum — don't ask, don't tell. The Auditor-General was asking. He gave Treasury and Finance every opportunity to come up with a comment, but the department just pretended that nothing was happening.

Similar large changes were being made to the scope and the structure of the Wonthaggi desalination plant, and not much was being said about that. The Auditor-General had to actually lay it out for the government because clearly it did not get it. At 4.2.1 of the report the Auditor-General says:

Transparency and accountability are central tenets of the Westminster system. Over time it has been customary for Victorian governments to disclose the expected total end cost of major projects when announcing the projects. However, as governments move to the market and private sector to build and operate major infrastructure projects, either in part or in their entirety, disclosure of the expected cost of a project or a project's contingencies can potentially work against the achievement of value-for-money ...

The absence of project cost information limits the ability of Parliament and the public to hold the government to account for the efficient and economic delivery of projects.

In other words, the government outsourced water supply, it outsourced railway construction, it proposes to outsource the east–west link, and in the process it thinks it has outsourced its Westminster accountability. This is an absolute indictment, and as we go into an election year it is clear that whatever black plans the government will cook up next, including the east–west road tunnel, it could be a year, a year and a half or two years before the public even finds out what it is the government has signed us up to.

Then there is myki, for those members who are still taking an interest. Some members might recall that in June 2011 the Minister for Public Transport and the then Premier said the government had de-risked the myki contract and we could take its word for that. It took until yesterday to find out exactly what changes had been made to the myki contract. I see no evidence presented here that the government has reduced the risk in the myki project. In fact we now find that there is a shorter contract term, a revised allocation of risks, including a variable rather than a fixed-price arrangement, and a redefined scope of services. At the end of paragraph 4.6.1 we read:

The total cost of the system under the contract is now not capped, and therefore the total cost to the state is variable.

In fact it appears that the government, wanting to get myki out of the headlines, put the risk onto the Victorian taxpayer.

Some say we are lacking funds to maintain and build new and necessary infrastructure, but what reports such as this show quite clearly is that there are huge investments going into infrastructure either for projects we do not need or projects that are being totally mismanaged. There is plenty of infrastructure money being spent on the wrong things by governments that do not know how to run major projects — and I am talking about Labor and Liberal governments. The best they can do is bury them for 18 months — bury all of what is going on in those projects and hide it from the Auditor-General and the Victorian public — until it is too late to do anything about it anyway or even to question it. That is the situation we find ourselves in as we come up to the next election.

In addition to the measures that Ms Pulford includes in her motion, she raised a few others as she went along in her contribution to the debate. She talked about the issue of FOI and transparency and generally talked about some of the other failings in the public transport area, which widened out the scope somewhat. Ms Pulford's motion talks about crime rates at train stations and what she described as a failure of the protective services officer (PSO) program. She talked

about legal aid being overburdened and the court system being clogged up. She talked about the cuts that decimated the Victorian TAFE sector. The underlying cause of the problems with all those matters was either created by Ms Pulford's party when in government or voted for by her party when in opposition, and this government went ahead with those matters. The government and the opposition are both the parents of this particular set of problems. I hope they are proud parents because there is an indictment of the offspring right here on the notice paper.

**Hon. R. A. Dalla-Riva** — What did you do? You've done nothing.

**Mr BARBER** — At least the Greens have maintained a consistent stance as we have gone along.

**Hon. R. A. Dalla-Riva** — You have built nothing.

**Mr BARBER** — We might come back to what the Greens have built in a moment because Mr Dalla-Riva, or at least his federal colleagues, are busy trying to tear it down even as it is being built. I thank him for the invitation.

The Greens did not vote for the PSO program, and the problems with it are now pretty clear. Even on the day of launching new PSOs at railway stations it was emerging that at least some of the PSOs are not sufficiently trained for the job they have to do, which is in fact a very difficult job. The job is to interface directly and constantly with many members of the public and make a whole bunch of judgement calls about which particular laws and behaviours they are meant to be enforcing. This situation has led to the notorious incident at Broadmeadows station when during a random ticket check a PSO pulled out his capsicum spray canister and brandished it in the middle of a crowded and enclosed train station waiting room. That later led to the spraying of someone just outside that waiting room with effects on the public, railway station staff and one of the PSOs, who appeared to spray himself or was perhaps sprayed by his buddy.

The government did not carefully consider what its objectives were. The government now has private security, PSOs, authorised officers and transit police all out there on the rail system, and none of them are really clear about exactly where their responsibilities begin and end. The underlying problems of crime, antisocial behaviour and multimillion-dollar revenue loss through fare evasion, or perhaps fare confusion, are continuing unabated. Fare evasion is now rising again.

Crime is rising. Some of the increase in assaults on railway stations is actually from assaults against PSOs.

It shows that we are no better off than we were, unless you feel comforted by having a couple of guys with semiautomatic pistols standing bored on a railway station very late at night. I for one would be more comfortable having a friendly neighbourhood stationmaster and good public surveillance from people coming and going the whole time. Perhaps the station master could help you with directions and so forth if you are a first-time user of public transport and, for that matter, there could be a toilet, which we still do not have.

The cuts that have decimated the Victorian TAFE sector were an intended consequence of the previous Labor government's policy. This government has been more open in how it has stated it. It was a union-busting exercise designed to create more private training colleges where low-paid teachers would give dubious quality education instead of a TAFE system that was fundamentally working well, was trusted and had a great reputation.

The constant ratcheting up of suspended sentence, parole and bail measures has created an inevitable cost to the legal aid system, an inevitable backlog in the courts and an inevitable increase in the prison population. On each of these measures that have come through the Greens have supported those measures that we think are sensible and could lead to an improvement in the system, but we have also voted against measures in a number of areas. Again, the government needs to get its diagnosis of the problem right. It was not simply the Adult Parole Board of Victoria that was responsible for recent failures but the courts and in some measure the police as well. We will give this minister some credit for looking carefully at those problems, but he would now well and truly understand the old saying, 'There are no votes in prisons'. The coalition may have thought there were votes in law and order when it was in opposition, but the rising cost of its blunt instrument measures, which the Greens have — —

**Hon. E. J. O'Donohue** — Which you voted for.

**Mr BARBER** — No, we voted for those measures that we found acceptable, but we voted against the blunt instrument measures that implemented the government's bluster and bravado from opposition, rather than a carefully considered program to ensure that the right people are taken out of the community and the wrong people — people who do not represent a clear and present threat to the community — are not in prison, clogging up the system. It is not just members of Parliament who have been pointing out the problems that some of the government's blunt instrument policies

have created. Magistrates and other judges also have been pointing to problems.

In terms of FOI transparency, the great initiative that this government put forward as its major improvement to FOI, being the role of the FOI commissioner, has delivered practically nothing. I have had a number of FOI requests go through the system, including through the FOI commissioner, and there have been some really large ones in relation to the east-west toll road for which the government has failed to give an accounting. The result of that initiative in terms of increased transparency has been practically nil. However, it has certainly added more cost and more delay to the process. The government should start again and perhaps take a leaf out of the book of ACT Greens MLA and minister Shane Rattenbury, who is about to present an FOI bill to the ACT Parliament that is going to propose major changes in that area.

In public transport we have seen an approximately zero increase in tram, train and bus services, city and country, when we compare the budget papers from the government's first year with the most recent budget papers. There have been a few changes around the edges, but across the board there is practically zero increase in service kilometres.

Then there is the issue that is dear to my heart, being a daily tram commuter, and that is the delayed delivery of the brand-new trams. We were promised that half a dozen new trams would be put out for testing prior to last Christmas, to be followed by 10 a year being delivered after that. We are now told that we will get those 6 trams early next year as part of an ongoing delivery of 50.

Half a dozen trams carrying 200 people might bring some relief on some lines, but the level of overcrowding on our trams is now extreme. It has led to a noticeable increase in trip-and-fall injuries because many more people are standing for longer periods and struggling to get in and out of doors, and that injury toll is steadily rising. The government is simply treating it as a you-beaut, ribbon-cutting exercise, as if we should be grateful to have any new rolling stock at all. It is the government's failure, and there has been no accountability for it.

Then there is the overarching failure to build a sustainable budget revenue and cash flow in order to meet future challenges. I acknowledge that we have a record high capital works spend in the budget.

**Mr Ramsay** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — It is a simple fact of opening up and reading the cash flow statement, Mr Ramsay. Why would I not acknowledge it? The cash flow statement seems to be the one part of the budget papers that you guys have not succeeded in rigging, if I am correct in my reading of the Auditor-General's statement from yesterday. There is a record spend going on, some of which is due to the hangover of the federal government's stimulus package from many years ago. It has taken that long for the money to start being delivered through our budget. But what is clear is that we will not be relying on the federal government for any new train funding soon. It would be a brave state government or opposition that would hang its future infrastructure plans on large licks of money coming from the federal government.

In terms of infrastructure, the state is quite clearly on its own for the foreseeable future. It needs sustainable revenue on which to base itself. If one takes, for example, the Public Transport Victoria plan for Melbourne's rail system that was released some time ago — not as an official government plan but actually written by Public Transport Victoria and mailed to the minister — one can read the minister's response, which was that it was very interesting and he would have to have a look at it.

Beyond Zero Emissions recently released an estimated costing of that entire plan, which may or may not be the official government plan for Melbourne's rail system, and costed it at \$37 billion, or \$1.7 billion a year. In the past nobody had ever accused Beyond Zero Emissions of overestimating the cost of things, so let us assume that it is a reasonable estimate of what is required just to deliver a government entity's plan for a rail system for metropolitan Melbourne. By the way, nothing is provided in that plan for any kind of increase in rail freight, and in some cases — such as for the poor old souls using the Ringwood line — it will be 2030 before any extra services are guaranteed, due to capacity investments made under this same plan. Yet to build it would require \$1.7 billion a year.

This year's budget contains about \$5.3 billion in capital works, falling to \$3.5 billion next year, with state government borrowings rising to about \$25 billion at the end of 2015. Standard & Poor's, in its rating of Victoria's budget, describes our debt levels as moderate and manageable. But the government's projection is to see debt — in real terms and as a percentage of the gross state product — start to decline after 2015, with the government building up these whacking great surpluses.

**Mr Finn** — We can't have a surplus, can we? That would mean we're in good economic shape. We can't have that, can we?

**Mr BARBER** — A surplus, Mr Finn, is just your Treasurer's way of saying, 'I taxed you too much'.

**Mr Finn** — Next thing you know we'll be giving money back to the taxpayers!

**Mr BARBER** — I do not have to hand the amount of the tax increases that Mr Finn's government has introduced, but I know it is a very large figure. It proves what should be obvious to most people — that Liberals do not cut taxes. They talk about it when they are in opposition, but they do not cut taxes. They massively increase taxes, they blame a previous government, they call it budget repair, but in Victoria the taxes that Mr Finn's government is increasing, and on which his government will become even more reliant, are some of the most regressive taxes possible. Mr Finn has a problem. He needs more tax revenue to deliver even the modest plans put forward, but the taxes he relies on are highly regressive, such as those on insurance policies, stamp duty, homes and the rest of it.

Therefore it is necessary for the government to have a good hard look at itself and make some clear statements to the public about how it wants to create a sustainable surplus beyond that convenient out year it has in its budget. When the Labor Party scratched its head and thought about this problem, its solution was to sell the port. The Auditor-General tells us this morning that the financial sustainability of the port itself is in the high-risk category, up with a number of other government enterprises that are meant to be self-sustaining in terms of their financial viability. This brings me to Mr Finn's earlier question about what the Greens have ever built.

**Mr Finn** — No, I was asking about the carbon tax.

**Mr BARBER** — This goes to both, so Mr Finn will be satisfied at the end of my answer.

We now have a government-owned trading enterprise that is self-sustaining with respect to revenue. It is called the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC). It gave testimony at the estimates process in the federal Parliament today. It stated that with its early investments funded by off-balance-sheet borrowings, which do not have an impact on the government entity's overall credit rating, it is actually intending to deliver a dividend of hundreds of millions of dollars while simultaneously reducing emissions and funding projects that otherwise would not be funded.

What is Mr Finn and the Liberal Party's response to that? They want to shut it down. Why do they want to shut down the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which is making a profit, returning a dividend and doing it with borrowings that do not impact on the overall credit rating? Because it works. They want to shut it down because it is hurting coal. As they are rolled out, all these renewables are hurting the profits of coal companies. Those dividends and those profits from renewable energy companies that CEFC is financing are coming at the expense of coal-fired profits, and the Liberal government is running a rearguard action not just against the carbon tax but against any single measure that the Greens have managed to achieve that actually works. No wonder it is terrified of an entity that has so far lent about half a billion dollars and leveraged private investment worth three or four times that. And the government has nothing to show in its place by way of energy infrastructure, let alone carbon emission reductions.

It should be pretty obvious that every member of the public — or certainly a strong majority — would agree with the contents of the motion. These are crises. In the last sitting week we saw an Auditor-General's report that talked about the crisis of the immediate impacts of climate change, which, according to the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority, are having an impact on government-owned assets valued at \$7 billion that are in harm's way. There is also the growing and out-of-control obesity crisis, which is the subject of an almost daily debate in Victoria. And in a number of other areas the Auditor-General simply pointed out, as his office has been pointing out for years, that there is no government plan.

There is no government plan, so it is not surprising that so many areas are described in this motion, plus a few more that I have chosen to add and that have been added in the course of debate. The public gets it. The government may not want to hear it from the opposition parties, but this is absolutely the list that the public is putting forward and that it expects to hear from the government on as we move into the election year. Therefore the Greens will support the motion.

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) — Thank you, Acting President.

**Mr Finn** — Do you support the carbon tax, Cesar?

**Mr MELHEM** — What is wrong with the carbon tax?

**Mr Finn** — It is a tax on jobs.

**Mr MELHEM** — Just get back to reality, mate. Climate change is real, and it is about time Mr Finn started believing in science. I am not going to waste my time trying to convince him; he has made up his mind. He wants to live in the past, and a dinosaur might as well stay in dinosaur land.

I have the pleasure to talk on this motion, and I just want to make a few points. One is that I think it is about time this government acknowledged that it inherited 11 years of surplus from the former government. I do not see those opposite talking about that. There was a AAA rating for 11 years. We had a vibrant economy and went through the global financial crisis, so those opposite inherited well — and they should just remember that. Unfortunately over the last three years they have been doing one thing: blaming someone else. They have been blaming the previous government for three years now. I think they need to get off that point and say, 'We had better take some responsibility; we have to be responsible'.

When they get into government former opposition parties tend to blame the previous government for the first 12 months, but after that they get off that wagon and start to take some responsibility for their actions. Obviously this mob cannot do that. They also blame the federal government, but guess what? There has been a change of government now. So they have a dilemma: they will not blame their own colleagues. I have not heard them blaming Tony Abbott and his government for — —

**Mr Finn** — That's because he is doing a very good job.

**Mr MELHEM** — Exactly! He is doing his job by reneging on the Gonski review, by reneging on the same agreements which Mr Finn's Premier signed before the election to provide better education funding for kids in this state. The Premier, Denis Napthine, was the champion of and was so proud of signing that agreement with Bill Shorten, the current federal opposition leader, and now what is he doing? I do not see him doing what Barry O'Farrell, the Premier of New South Wales, did — that is, calling it the way it is and saying to the federal government, 'You are no longer in opposition; you're actually in government, and you honour deals when you get into government'. The federal government has broken that promise.

I do not see government members moving a motion here in this house condemning the federal government for reneging on that agreement, but they were quick to move various motions criticising the former federal government. But, no, they cannot criticise their own

people. They just cannot. Maybe they are not allowed to. I do not know which is the reason.

Let us talk about the scorecard for the last three years. I will not cover it all, because other opposition speakers will be discussing these issues. I will begin with health. The government promised 800 new hospital beds. We cannot find them. It also promised a 12-year health plan within its first 150 days of office. It promised a \$1 billion building fund for hospitals, to be funded by drawing on revenue from pokies licences, with \$447.5 million to be dedicated to the development of Box Hill Hospital. The former Treasurer and now Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Kim Wells, said when he was shadow Treasurer in the coalition opposition, that he would write the new government's promises on a whiteboard and tick them off one by one as they were delivered. There was to be a scorecard. I am not sure what happened to that whiteboard. The Minister for State Development made the same commitment.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr MELHEM** — That is right. I think it must be a clean one. Maybe government members do not have a texta to write on the whiteboard. Maybe we should buy them some textas.

I could continue talking about the coalition's record on health, which is dismal. In 2012–13, 264 patients at Werribee Mercy Hospital waited in the emergency department for more than 24 hours. The government's target was that no patient should wait in an emergency department for more than 24 hours. It has failed on that. Further, it has cut \$616 million from the Victorian health system. It just wants to slash and burn. It wants to achieve a budget surplus and AAA credit rating at any cost, even if that means not spending any money. When we were in government we achieved a surplus and a AAA credit rating, but we actually spent money on hospitals, education and so forth.

In 2012–13 more than 2000 people waited in emergency departments for more than 24 hours. I am not making these numbers up; they are there. An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report showed that in 2012–13 a shockingly low 68 per cent of those with semi-urgent health issues were seen within a 60-minute benchmark. In Victoria 21 755 patients were left in emergency departments at their own risk before being seen, and 84 380 simply did not wait. Both of those figures are the second highest in this country. That is a record to be proud of!

Recently a leaked report from the Victorian Perinatal Information Centre has confirmed that neonatal intensive care units at the Monash Medical Centre, Mercy Hospital, Royal Children's Hospital and Royal Women's Hospital were at that point either closed or restricted for new patients. A leading reason for the closures was that there were not enough staff to keep the beds open. The government promised 800 new beds, but the minister has not detailed where they are. If he keeps looking for them, hopefully one day he will find them. The government also promised \$250 million for Monash Children's hospital at the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton. We are also still waiting for that to happen. The government took \$16.4 million out of that project, including cutting the children's mental health unit, a sleep lab and so forth. The government is cutting, cutting, cutting, but not delivering on its projects.

I will return to my discussion of the government's federal colleagues. We do not see government members jumping up and down about the performance of the federal coalition government. The former Labor federal government promised to provide funding of \$100 million for the redevelopment of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. The Abbott government — the federal comrades of the state coalition — is now renegeing on that. I do not see government members jumping up and down about this or moving a motion of condemnation because the federal government is not going ahead with that. It is obviously fine for a federal coalition to renege on agreements. That will go unpunished by this government. Why are government members not out there chasing their colleagues in Canberra to make sure they provide that money for the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital? They are not allowed to do so. They are probably too scared of them.

I will now discuss law and order. I heard Mr Dalla-Riva asking what the Labor Party is going to do about protective services officers (PSOs). Will we abolish them, sack them or send them home? Our position is clear: the PSOs are here to stay. We support the PSOs. But let us try to work this out. I thought if there were more PSOs and more police, that would eventually lead to less crime. However, the government puts the argument that more people are reporting incidents whereas in the past they were not, which has led to an increase in crime figures.

If the government were fair dinkum about law and order, it would start looking at what causes people to commit crimes. What sorts of programs and systems could be put in place to make sure fewer people commit crimes? The government is not interested in that. All it

does it provide more police, more PSOs and more jails. It waits for people to commit crimes, arrests them and puts them in jail. What happened to prevention? Obviously the government does not believe in prevention. Government members are not interested in prevention. They want to build more prison beds. Perhaps they should focus on more hospital beds instead, but that does not seem to work for the coalition government.

Where can I start with transport? I could go on and on and on. I am trying to work out how many projects the coalition has launched in its own right since it was elected three years ago. There are not many. The regional rail link was not the coalition's project. It sat on the regional rail link for 18 months. It said, 'We want to review it'. After 18 months it said, 'We've done the review. We will go ahead with it'. The regional rail link is a Labor project. What other big projects are there? The government suddenly came up with the east-west link. However, it will not start it until 2015.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

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

**Mr MELHEM** — Go and talk to these construction companies. They are sacking people left, right and centre.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr MELHEM** — It might be a laughing matter for Mr Finn; I know he does not give a damn about construction workers losing their jobs. I do. I have seen it. I have seen a lot of construction companies in the last three years laying people off because there are no projects on the horizon for which to employ people, and the east-west link will not even kick off and provide employment for people until 2015. Our project we could do now. We need to spend money today, not in 2015. Those opposite have no plan; they should just face the facts.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr MELHEM** — That was your fix, actually. I am glad Mr Ondarchie raised this, because their fix — —

**Mr Finn** interjected.

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

**Mr MELHEM** — The government's answer to the construction industry and the lack of projects and investment was, 'Let's get a building industry commission to police these unions. That will lift productivity. That will make new projects'. Guess what? It does not. Let me say this — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr MELHEM** — Mate, you do not know anything about construction projects. I do. EastLink was built under the same commission that was introduced by your comrades in Canberra. Guess what? That was delivered six months ahead of time and under budget. How many infrastructure projects in this state were delivered? Those opposite should not just come up with excuses and drum up things. They have no record and cannot invest in anything.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr MELHEM** — How many prosecutions have there been? Get on with it.

Those opposite talked about the desalination plant. Let me tell you about the desal plant. People forget that when that decision was made we were facing drought. That thing was built, and I am glad the Labor government built it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr MELHEM** — I am coming to that; just hold your horses. The former Labor government had a vision that we would build a desal plant to make sure that the 4 million Victorians who live in greater metropolitan Melbourne would never be exposed to a situation where, when drought hit, they would be running out of water. Those opposite should get their heads out of the sand; climate change is real, and drought is real. Their argument is, 'We don't have to use it'. Thank God they are not in charge of the defence of Australia. If they were in charge of that, we would probably not have a defence force, because their argument would be, 'This government hasn't been attacked since the 1940s, so we don't need air force jets. We don't need submarines, because no-one is going to attack us, so we won't invest in that'. Guess what? The desal plant investment was to drought-proof Melbourne so that we would never have to be subject to the effects of a change in the elements. It is a good project, and let me tell you — —

**Mr Ondarchie** — Tell us if you support the funding model.

**Mr MELHEM** — I think the funding model was a good model, so just get over it. Citing the recent report

from the Auditor-General, we are \$1 billion, rather than \$900 million, better off. Those opposite should read the Auditor-General's report. They should make up their minds: one minute they are criticising, and the next minute they are saying something else. They should just get it. It is all about drought-proofing Melbourne, and we have done it. Those opposite should just get on with the program.

**Mr Ramsay** interjected.

**Mr MELHEM** — That is good; you are not paying for it. I am happy to pay for it to make sure that my kids do not have to be subjected to — —

**Mr Ondarchie** — They will be paying for it; don't worry about that.

**Mr MELHEM** — That is fine, mate. I am happy to pay for it, in the same way I am happy to pay to have a police force to protect me and happy to pay for emergency services to come to my aid or my kids' aid or your kids' aid when we need it. I am happy to pay tax to support the armed forces to protect this country. Let us hope no-one ever fires a bullet; that would be great. That is a good investment. It is the same with the desal plant and the same with all the water projects we undertook during our 11 years in government to make sure that we will be able to deal with a crisis when it comes. I bet those opposite would not have been saying that five years ago, when Melbourne's water storage was down to less than 20 per cent. They have short-term memories. Wake up, Charlie! Let us not play politics.

Let me move to some of the comments Mr Dalla-Riva made. He talked about the unemployment figures, and he was very proud of that record. He was the Minister for Manufacturing, and he was not doing a bad job until unfortunately he got the sack when he was in India.

**Mr Ondarchie** — Do you support the north-south pipeline as well?

**Mr MELHEM** — Of course I do, and let us hope we never have to use it. I support it; I helped build it. It actually goes through my property as well. I am proud of it.

**Mr Ramsay** — Did you get that great big compensation?

**Mr MELHEM** — No, and I do not need it. Let me tell Mr Ramsay that I did not. I did not ask for it; I do not need it.

Let us look at the unemployment numbers. The national average is 5.6 per cent. The Victorian figure is 5.8 per cent, which is 0.2 percentage points higher than the national average, and it is climbing, so I cannot work out why all those opposite still brag and say, 'We created all these jobs, and we are doing better than everyone else'. Actually we are not. We have lost more manufacturing jobs under this government than we lost in probably the 11 years of the Labor government. I wonder why!

**Mrs Peulich** — Do you think the FBT was a good idea?

**Mr MELHEM** — The fringe benefits tax changes were there for barely three months, so do not blame them. They barely even came in. I have not seen those opposite getting their hands dirty. I do not know what they are doing today about saving the automotive industry. What active role is this government playing in lobbying the federal government and this government to make sure they put some proposals in place — —

**Mr Ondarchie** — We know your actions on component manufacturers, don't we?

**Mr MELHEM** — That is right; we need to give them some certainty and make sure that they stay in this country and in this state. There are 33 000 jobs affected in this state. I do not see government members out there helping these manufacturers, because it might cost a bit of money. The government's record on manufacturing is abysmal. With those comments, I will leave it at that. I am sure my colleagues will have more matters to raise. I had better finish before Mr Finn takes the chair.

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Let me have a stretch and get the boxing gloves on! On a serious note, however, I am very pleased to speak against the motion put by Ms Pulford on behalf of the Labor Party. It is a very long motion. In many ways, if you take a perspective that is beyond the myopia of the next Labor Party reshuffle, which obviously Ms Pulford is preparing for, I believe this was a promotional speech, and it was a little underwhelming.

**Mr Ramsay** — It was a bit light, a bit lightweight.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Yes, it was a little bit light. Ms Pulford is going to have to muscle up a bit if she is going to get down to the front bench, given the massive retirement plan. I think so far — —

**Ms Broad** — You have done so well yourself for 17 years.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Ms Broad is wasting away on the backbench, and there will be lots of champagne corks popping when she announces her retirement come the closure of nominations for the Labor Party on Thursday at noon. We will see democracy under Labor in action, and that democracy will be parachuting its union bosses, its chieftains, into prize seats and determining which seats are under the control of which factions. The factions will then nominate their candidates for each seat — —

**Ms Broad** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I ask Ms Broad to calm herself. The constant barrage of interjections in the last few minutes cannot be tolerated by any Chair, and I ask Ms Broad to contain herself whilst we listen to Mrs Peulich.

**Mrs PEULICH** — I was just saying what the Labor Party thinks about democracy, of which its own internal workings are a very sad reflection. The factional chiefs divvy up the seats. In most instances, with very few exceptions, they decide which faction controls a particular seat and which Labor Party operative is going to be parachuted into those seats. In most instances there will only be one nomination, and we will no doubt learn about that following the close of Labor Party nominations on Thursday at noon. There may be the odd seat that has more than one nomination, and we will go through the pretext of the Labor Party conducting a preselection, but most have got the wink and the nod.

I am very happy to receive the regular email updates from Labor Party aspirants. The most recent was following the retirement announcement by Ms Barker as the member for Oakleigh in the Assembly. I received an email from Stephen Dimopoulos, deputy mayor of Monash, advising that he is putting his hand up for the job. No doubt he has got the wink and the nod, and similarly with Nick Staikos in Bentleigh. That is Labor's notion of democracy.

We saw Labor's notion of democracy play out in the Assembly yesterday. I sat through question time and was appalled to see the shadow Minister for Education disgrace himself. I was appalled to see an otherwise intelligent young woman, Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in that chamber, disgrace herself in the most despicable way. In 18 years of Parliament I have not seen such disgraceful conduct. It is not fit behaviour in the schoolyard or in a sandpit, let alone on the floor of the Assembly. I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition review his strategy, which has clearly been designed by the Socialist Left as some cheap and

tawdry effort to wrest control of Parliament, observing the cynical view that if you cannot control it, you destroy it and you cause chaos. That is what we saw played out on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

I commend the government for dealing with it decisively and quickly to restore order. The Labor Party asked for the numbers to be tested on the floor of the Assembly and it did not like the result. But importantly, Victorians were able to stream the proceedings of Parliament, and they were appalled at what they saw. In many instances the Labor Party's notions of how democracy works and of governance have been the root cause of the problems that have been here identified by Ms Pulford, who is obviously positioning for a promotion.

This should be a letter of apology. The coalition, when in opposition, identified issues that were of Labor's making over its 11 years of indecision and inaction, first of all by the very affable and very good-looking Steve Bracks, who regrettably did not take the tough decisions that needed to be made. Secondly, we saw the switch to Premier Brumby, who was defeated as Leader of the Opposition and deemed to be unelectable six months out from the election in 1999. He then attempted to compensate for the lack of action, but we saw some appalling decisions being made and some phenomenal amounts of money being wasted.

The desalination plant is an iconic example of the failings of Labor Party members. They cannot manage, and the key issue as to why they were tossed out of government, albeit by a slender margin, was the waste and mismanagement that people saw. Their precious resources, their taxes and their earnings as a state were flushed down the toilet, instead of being invested in much-needed infrastructure, such as roads, public transport and other services demanded by the fact that our population is growing at 100 000 or more every year. Victorians saw a desalination plant being constructed with no business case and at triple the capacity at which it should have been built, for which we are now paying \$2 million in interest every day, even though we have not yet drawn a single drop of water from it because our reservoirs are almost full. Dams in our catchment areas are 81 per cent full or even 84 per cent full, as with the Thomson Dam. Members of the Labor Party were saying those dams would never be full again.

We saw the Labor government squander \$3 billion in the botched poker machine auction. It flogged the poker machines off at \$1 billion when it had been forecast that they would generate \$4 billion. Victorians could have had an additional \$3 billion to fix up at least some of

the most obvious mistakes that the Labor Party left behind. One of those was, of course, the very serious neglect of schools, involving the lack of maintenance and upgrades and the need to build new schools. It is very easy to fudge things when the accountability, transparency and governance mechanisms are not put in place to disclose those things to the public.

Victorians had to wait until we came to government to reinstate what was in place under the Kennett Liberal government — that is, an audit of school maintenance. We did it regularly and we were able to apportion whatever money was set aside for the maintenance of schools based on an objective measure such as an independent audit. Each school knew what its maintenance needs were. Each school could be put in priority order without having to cosy up to politicians and invite them to open facilities or unveil plaques.

Having left a zero in maintenance backlog at the defeat of the Kennett government in 1999, the government is now looking at a \$420 million maintenance backlog. Part of the reason for that is that the former Labor government decided to restructure the way that schools were funded. The Labor government rolled the maintenance money into the student resources index. Often schools squandered that money, not spending it on what it was actually designed for, and over time we saw money wasted.

There is a litany of projects, including the ultranet on which \$60 million was wasted on building something that was not particularly useful to teachers or students. A range of other projects, myki and the like, were mismanaged.

The list of complaints in the motion are largely a product of the Labor Party's waste and mismanagement over 11 years. Now Labor Party members criticise the coalition for not being able to fix the mess that Labor created. They want us to fix that mess in three years. We are politicians, not magicians. We are certainly making very substantial progress and the biggest improvement is to eliminate waste and mismanagement.

Members have heard the contribution of the speaker for the Greens, Mr Barber. The federal Labor and Greens coalition under both Rudd and Gillard has a lot to answer for. The carbon tax is one thing. No doubt the fringe benefits tax changes would have gone through with their endorsement as well had they won government. I commend Australians for taking very decisive action to get behind our industry, our jobs and our manufacturing by voting Labor out of office. That

is probably the most significant thing that has happened in terms of turning policy around.

The list of complaints in the motion — I will deal with them one at a time — should be a letter of apology to Victorians for the mess that Labor created, a mess that government members are now trying to fix. We are trying to put Victoria on the path of building a better, stronger and more prosperous future. We do not want to return to the 11-year period under Labor when the good years were wasted, the problems were allowed to mount up and the money was squandered. Now coalition members are playing catch-up and Labor members are trying to hold us to account for not fixing their mess in just three years. Here of course is the trickery that Labor members are so good at. They are very good at being in opposition and they are very good at conflict; they are appalling at being in government.

The first point is a criticism of the rate of crime at train stations. Labor members claim that currently it is at its highest in over five years and that there is a continuing rise in the overall crime rate statistics across Victoria. First and foremost, the reason why there has been an increase in the crime notifications on railway stations is that the government has unrolled the program of protective services officers (PSOs). It is a very popular program that has been warmly received. Every community that does not have PSOs at its local railway station wants them there. The reason is that there are of course people who do not have too many options and need to use public transport and many, in particular women, have felt unsafe to do so.

The program that has now seen PSOs deployed at 81 railway stations across Victoria has some wonderful outcomes. There is extremely high satisfaction in those communities whose members have been the beneficiaries of the program and Victoria Police is actually applauding the program. Initially it was critical; now it is applauding it. So far we have 12 PSOs across South Eastern Metropolitan Region and we look forward to more of them coming on board.

Public Transport Victoria commissions a regular customer satisfaction monitor survey. It shows that now passengers feel significantly safer at railway stations at night compared to during the day. These surveys are undertaken at a network-wide level. In order to assess the impact of PSOs a separate baseline survey was commissioned to determine how safe people feel on the rail network after 6.00 p.m. That initial survey was conducted during June 2012 at Frankston, Box Hill, Yarraville, Noble Park, South Yarra and Epping railway stations and across the broader community. The survey found widespread support for PSO deployment

at railway stations — of course anyone who believes otherwise is clearly not in touch with the community.

I am concerned, however, that Labor Party members have indicated that, should they be returned to government, they would firstly take the PSOs from areas that are not considered particularly unsafe. That would be the beginning of the dismantling of the entire system. The reason safety has improved is due to the presence of the PSOs.

In addition to that a number of Labor MPs have indicated that they do not support PSOs — Jude Perera, the member for Cranbourne in the Assembly, is one of them — even though it is an initiative that has been broadly welcomed by the community. I am concerned for the future of the program should Labor be returned to office. The focus of the PSOs is the prevention of crime, violence and antisocial behaviour. They patrol the railway stations from 6.00 p.m. until the last train, seven days a week. They undertake a 12-week training course which includes two weeks of the same operational tactics and safety training given to police officers, including training in the use of firearms and other defensive weapons. There are currently 533 PSOs deployed at 81 railway stations, and I certainly commend the government on this initiative.

I would now like to talk about education. In point 8 of her motion Ms Pulford criticises the government for what she says is the fact that Victorian teachers are still not the highest paid in Australia despite the government's promise. I would like to set the record straight here. During the negotiations for a new enterprise bargaining agreement between the government and the Australian Education Union the government put an offer on the table which would have seen our best teachers become the best paid in Australia. The union did not accept this offer, and an alternative agreement was negotiated in good faith and accepted by all negotiating parties. Furthermore, Ms Pulford condemns us for the cuts in education funding. This is an absolute furphy, as she knows full well. Total educational expenditure in 2012–13 was \$11.547 billion compared to \$10.64 billion in 2010–11. The government has increased funding to education by \$913 million, or 8.6 per cent, since 2010.

Moreover, the issue is not just about the funding; it is about what you do with the funding and what you do with the facilities and the maintenance. We are getting on with the job of bringing some rigour and order to that. Further to that, promoting good education is about improving the quality of learning and teaching. We have a string of initiatives that have enhanced the quality of learning and teaching. We have committed

\$113.7 million over four years for 150 primary welfare officers to help kids through their problems before they become entrenched in educational disadvantage. We have committed \$2 million to professional development for teachers to assist them in dealing with challenging student behaviour, \$2.5 million over four years for school specialisation grants; \$6 million for language teacher scholarships and \$1 million for start-up grants to schools to offer languages other than English. Learning a second language, especially an Asian language, is going to be critical to the future of our state and our nation, and we are taking this very seriously.

We have also committed \$4 million to combat bullying. Of course it does not help when the opposition displays it in the workplace, the chamber of the Legislative Assembly, over successive days, yesterday being the most appalling display. Ironically it was the day dedicated to our remembering to take a stance against violence, and I think some of those Labor MPs were on the steps taking the oath.

We have committed \$12 million for community language schools, \$24 million for 100 science and maths specialists and \$5 million for diploma of education scholarships for 400 science graduates, because the Labor Party ignored the fact that we do not have enough science teachers. We have committed \$10 million to school improvement funds and \$240 million to increase funding to non-government schools to 25 per cent of the cost that educating a student in a government school attracts. Labor is against choice, and the Greens are totally against choice. They want to force everyone into the government system.

First of all, dealing with such an influx would mean that the funding available would be stretched and the quality of education that we provide would be compromised. We support the right of parents to choose which particular school they are going to send their child to. If that is an independent school or a Catholic school, that is fine. It adds to the mixed economy of education and keeps every sector on its toes, striving to provide the very best quality of education they can.

We have also provided \$257 million for capital projects, including \$20 million for the new Torquay secondary college, \$9 million for Mount Erin Secondary College, \$10.5 million for Ashwood College, \$10 million for Bairnsdale Secondary College, \$11 million for stage 3 of the Colac Secondary College development, \$18 million for Sebastopol College, \$8 million for Bendigo Secondary College, and the list goes on. The Labor Party neglected schools in its own neighbourhood. There are schools that were literally

falling over because they had not received a single brass razoo in funding.

We have committed \$20 million for TAFEs to partner with regional universities. We hear a lot about the cuts to TAFE. Let us get the facts straight: in 2009 when in government the Labor Party reformed the funding of the sector by opening it up to competition. It established competitive neutrality and opened the sector up to private registered training organisations. As soon as you open the sector up to competition it is logical and reasonable that money will move out of the TAFE sector. Since 2009, through Labor's initiative and policy, we have seen that money shift away from TAFEs.

The Labor Party then continued to criticise the changes in subsidy levels. This coalition government has unashamedly changed those subsidies from oversubscribed courses that generated poor employment outcomes to areas of national skill shortage. We would be failing in our duty, we would be failing educationally, we would be failing families and we would be failing our young people if we continued the old failed formula — of funding courses that led to poor employment prospects.

There have been phenomenal results from that change, and there ought to be no apologies whatsoever for changing that mix. In fact there was an obligation for us to do that to make sure we were doing the right thing by taxpayers, by young people and by the nation.

In terms of other wasted educational opportunities, federally we saw the Building the Education Revolution fund. The way it was administered in the Catholic school system meant that Catholic schools were able to rebuild their entire facilities, but in the government sector it was sluggishly and poorly administered, and many of those funds were wasted. There were short time lines for the program and poorer outcomes for schools.

I could speak at length about the mess that Labor has left behind, including in health. Its members keep talking about cuts. However, since coming to office the Victorian coalition government has increased health funding by \$2 billion, to a record \$14.3 billion, and it is investing money in areas that Labor neglected, including the rebuilding of emergency departments, which was neglected over 11 years of Labor. The government has committed \$40 million to the Frankston emergency department project, providing 49 point-of-care beds, 12 same-day short-stay observation beds and emergency medical imaging services.

Those opposite constantly harp on about the ambulance service. The budget for the ambulance service has actually increased by 17 per cent — to a record \$662 million in 2013–14. That is a \$97.8 million increase. The government has increased the number of paramedics by adding 465 additional paramedics. That is a 19.6 per cent increase since 2009–10. There are now 28 598 additional shifts — an increase of 9.8 per cent since 2009–10.

Some of the benefits we are seeing include greater cardiac arrest survival rates because ambulances are turning up faster; those rates have more than doubled in rural Victoria since 2009. We have halved ambulance fees. An amount of \$241.9 million was provided in the 2011–12 budget to halve the cost of ambulance membership subscription fees to provide more affordable access to ambulance services for Victorians.

A number of other reforms are currently under way. Through better cooperation between hospitals and Ambulance Victoria, ambulance paramedics will spend more time on the road attending to the needs of their patients rather than waiting in hospitals for very long transfers. That will now change, with hospitals assuming responsibility for patients upon arrival of an ambulance at an emergency department, allowing ambulance paramedics to be out on the road earlier to tend to patients.

There are many reforms on track. We cannot fix up 11 years of mistakes in a short three years, but we are certainly well on the way. It has been my great pleasure to speak on this motion. I could speak for much longer. We can see the hypocrisy of the Labor Party in moving this motion. It really should be a confession or an apology to Victorians for the mess Labor left behind, which we now have to fix.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased that the previous speaker ended her speech noting hypocrisy, because I have in my hand the coalition how-to-vote card that every coalition MP in 2010 handed out at the ballot box, and it was full of lies.

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Victorian Building Authority workplace bullying

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to the Victorian Building Authority (VBA), and I ask: can the minister

confirm that there are investigations under way into allegations of bullying of employees of the authority?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — I am not aware of that at all. I was aware of investigations in similar circumstances during the Labor government under the old Building Commission, but no, I am not aware of the issues that the member raised.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for answering the question. The opposition has been made aware that there are allegations, and I wondering if the minister would be able to make some inquiries and come back and report to this house in terms of whether or not there are any allegations of bullying being investigated at the authority?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — I am happy to take up part of Mr Tee's question; it is quite reasonable. I would say, though, that I obviously would not want to make any reference to information on a workplace complaint or harassment issue that discloses someone's identity. It is relevant, though, to this Parliament, seeing the bullying that has occurred in the last 24 hours, I guess, is it not? It is a fair point for Mr Tee to raise the issue of bullying, considering the behaviour towards the Presiding Officer in the lower house and the bullying — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Tee** — On a point of order, President, the question I asked related to a quite specific concern about bullying at the VBA. The minister is straying outside of that issue. He is debating the answer, and I ask you to bring him back to answering the question.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I concur that the minister was debating that answer. I think the minister has actually completed his answer in any event.

**Ambulance officers enterprise bargaining**

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Honourable David Davis, the Minister for Health. Noting social media traffic by the ambulance union, will the minister update the house on recent developments in relation to the ambulance union enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA)?

**Mr Lenders** — On a point of order, President, I have raised this point of order before and I raise it before the minister answers. The minister has previously said and his colleague Mr Hall has said that it is illegal to be talking about live EBAs. The point of

order I raise is about the appropriateness of the member's question inviting the minister to comment on a live EBA. I would think that was outside the scope of government administration, given answers from ministers in this place.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On the point of order, President, I and indeed other members in this place have drawn a clear distinction between the policy parameters around the government's position and the position — in this case of Ambulance Victoria — of a statutory authority and the precise negotiations that may have occurred in a particular forum, particularly at the Fair Work Commission. We have drawn that distinction. The member's question, as I understand it, relates to some matters on social media that are in the public domain, and that seems entirely appropriate. I can indicate to the house, as part of this response, that steps have occurred in the EBA that I could report on in a general manner to the chamber.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Before the point of order was raised I was going to ask Mrs Kronberg to repeat her question because I did not hear it because of interjections from my left. Mr Lenders has better ears than I have, because he heard the question and had concerns with it. I did not hear it. It must be Mr Leane's projection — it is coming at me rather than at Mr Lenders. I ask Mrs Kronberg to repeat the question, and then I will rule on the point of order.

**Mrs KRONBERG** — I will do that with great pleasure. The question is directed to the Honourable David Davis, the Minister for Health. Noting social media traffic by the ambulance union, will the minister update the house on recent developments in relation to the ambulance union EBA?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Maybe the first line was not heard because other members were in the same boat as me — that is, having Mrs Kronberg drowned out by some of the interjections. Mr Lenders's point of order is valid to the extent that it is important that EBA matters that are afoot are not canvassed in this place by a minister unless the minister recognises that in doing so they are opening up this whole area forever; in other words, opening all other ministers up to questions on EBAs and the specifics of EBAs.

I am concerned about the breadth of the question that Mrs Kronberg raised, or the way in which it was couched, because it did actually ask for developments on the EBA. The minister in his response to the point of order suggested that he could inform the house of some

matters related to the EBA without getting into the specifics. I accept that as the position he will take in his response and I will allow him to answer, but I caution the minister that if we start to open up these EBA negotiations, there will no longer be a defence for ministers to avoid questions on EBA matters that they might find uncomfortable, simply because we have established precedent here today.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — President, I thank you for your ruling, and I thank Mrs Kronberg for her question and for her strong advocacy for the people of the eastern suburbs. If people wish to go and look on a number of social media sites, they will see that the ambulance union is in fact out commentating on a series of matters relating to the EBA. It is a free country — —

**Mr Jennings** — They have a right to.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — ‘It is a free country’, is what I just said, Mr Jennings. I am going to confine myself to matters that are not inside the Fair Work Commission, as it were, but relate to the broader parameters of the EBA. It is disappointing that the union has chosen to misrepresent yesterday’s developments. It is my understanding that the union is not prepared to seriously consider any of the various issues that could have been progressed in a useful way. What I can say is that the union appears to be persisting with its hardline claim for more than a billion dollars in additional funding, its hardline push to see a massive wage claim — a wage claim that is unrealistic. The government wages policy is well known. It is 2.5 per cent plus productivity outlines.

The union has not been prepared to come forward with sensible suggestions that are in a reasonable framework. It appears that what occurred at Fair Work yesterday — I will not reflect on the actual happenings at Fair Work but I will reflect on what has occurred outside Fair Work — was that a decision was made, as I understand it by all parties, that at this point the happenings at Fair Work were not making the progress that was required. My understanding is that the proceedings in terms of the Fair Work conciliation process have been adjourned. I am informed that they can be reopened by either party at any point when they have something further to add.

I am indicating to the chamber my disappointment that that is the position and that the union appears to be persisting with its billion-dollar salary claim. This is a very unrealistic claim at a financially difficult time. I note that the secretary of the union has been out on a number of social media sites — in the public domain I

might add, not at Fair Work, so I think it is entirely reasonable for me to express some points about that. He says he will keep the information coming. This is on his YouTube channel: ‘But hang in there, keep writing on the windows of the ambulances, keep your campaign T-shirts on’, et cetera, ‘keep feeding us as much information about ramping up, response times, adverse cases’.

What we have here is a hardline, left-wing ambulance union advocating writing graffiti on ambulances. Previously the union had tried to maintain that this was something happening at a local centre. Now we know that graffiti on ambulances is being centrally directed by the hardline, left-wing ambulance union. That is the fact of the matter. This is not secret Fair Work business discussed in conciliation; this is out on YouTube for the whole of the universe to see. Steve McGhie, the hardline, left-wing union advocate, is out there saying you should graffiti the sides of ambulances. He is saying you should violate the personal freedom of people and in fact put their personal information from cases into the public domain. I think that is a scandal, I think it is an outrage — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Thank you, Minister.

### East–west link

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning. With regard to his response to my question yesterday, I have been in contact with both the mayor and the CEO of Moonee Valley City Council. These are the facts they have supplied. The east–west link was raised at a meeting between the council and the minister on Wednesday, 23 October 2013, as a significant issue likely to impact on Moonee Valley. On 30 October, after a LeadWest delegation, the CEO of Moonee Valley council met with Ken Mathers and was given a map of the proposed off-ramps, but there was no discussion. Council has told me that it has been told to respond via the comprehensive impact statement process and that it still wants to meet with the minister because it believes the Ormond Street off-ramps will have a major impact. When will the minister agree to meet with the council?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — With respect, that is not the question Ms Hartland asked me yesterday. Yesterday Ms Hartland asked me a question based on the premise that I had not met with the council. My response to her was that I had met the council, and she states correctly that in fact I met with the council on 23 October, some four weeks ago.

**Mr Barber** — Deliver the bad news.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Hang on, Mr Barber. To state in the chamber in the question to me that I had not met the council, as I stated in my reply, that is not factually correct; I had met the council. What the council said to me about the east–west link — and it was a very brief topic — was it had some issues in relation to it. Again my understanding of the question Ms Hartland raised with me yesterday was that it was not in relation to the part of the question she raised yesterday — that is, what the council discussed with me on 23 October.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Mr Jennings may like to interject and make a buffoon of himself, but I am trying to give a member a serious reply.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Goodness! Heckled by Capt'n Snooze again.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Ms Hartland has asked a reasonable question. As I understand it, the minister is prepared to answer that question, notwithstanding the fact that he has so far focused more on the points that were made yesterday, and that was certainly raised in the preamble so it is valid. I ask that the minister be given the opportunity to address Ms Hartland's question without assistance.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Ms Hartland raised a sensible and a serious question, and I am absolutely giving her the details of what she should be given, and that is a proper reply to the question she has asked, without some interjections from the Labor side.

I say to Ms Hartland, in response to her question, if the City of Moonee Valley wants to meet with me again in relation to more refined specifics about the east–west link, yes, I am happy to meet with them. Of course I am happy to meet with them, whether it is about that, about its zone translation or about activity centre rezoning. If the council would like to meet me as part of that discussion, I am more than happy to do so.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — Considering this process is rapidly going on and it was not until the 30th that the council became aware of the Ormond Road off ramp, can I have some sense of when that will happen, because submissions will close on 12 December.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — Obviously this issue has been raised by Ms Hartland, and no doubt she will go back and have contact with the City of Moonee Valley. I am sure something amicable and sensible can be arranged in a time frame that suits all of us. As I said, I am more than happy to meet that council.

### **Victorian Heritage Register grants**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — I too have a sensible and serious question for the Honourable Matthew Guy in his capacity as the Minister for Planning. Can the minister advise the house what action the Victorian government has taken to expand and improve Victorian Heritage Register grants?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — It is quite a serious issue — —

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — I thank Mr Leane. The issue has been raised by Mr O'Brien principally because we are here today to announce that the coalition government over the period 2013 to 2015 will indeed provide \$2.7 million for the Victorian Heritage Register grants program that is going to be so important for councils to be able to preserve issues of heritage within their municipalities. Members on this side of the house, and certainly Mr O'Brien in his previous career — he has been an advocate for heritage as a member of Parliament as well — have been very keen to ensure that Victoria's heritage, whether it is in built form, whether it is in an area, an environment — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Including in Bacchus Marsh, as Mr O'Brien would know very well. These areas need to be protected and heritage needs to be appreciated. That culminates in the state government, about two weeks ago, going forward with the final design for the heritage precinct around the Royal Exhibition Building and the world heritage register. That builds the case, as we have seen, for this government ensuring that we are not just looking at our state developing and growing over the next 30 or 40 years but importantly we are doing the work to ensure that heritage, be it in built form or whatever form, can be preserved for future generations.

The Victorian Heritage Restoration Fund is around \$2.7 million. The fund is made up of representatives of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), the City of Melbourne, the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and of course regional councils. It is an independent organisation that delivers a more

efficient and flexible use of heritage grants programs. It will be exceedingly successful and will, certainly throughout this state, go a long way to preserving Victoria's heritage.

Grants are available from \$20 000 to \$200 000, and they are there for councils to apply for to use around heritage places, and there are \$5000 to \$20 000 grants for conservation of heritage objects. The first round closes in late February 2014. I encourage all councils to be a part of this important process in ensuring that Victoria's heritage, be it in built form, object or place, is preserved for our future generations.

### **Victorian Building Authority chief executive officer**

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to the resignation of Mr Dimasi as CEO of the Victorian Building Authority, and I ask: can the minister confirm that one of the reasons Mr Dimasi resigned was a dispute over appointments at the Victorian Building Authority?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — No, that is not correct.

#### *Supplementary question*

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister. Mr Dimasi was appointed, as the minister knows, in September, and his sudden resignation has undermined confidence in the ability of the Victorian Building Authority to operate effectively as a regulator, so I ask: can the minister provide any explanation as to why Mr Dimasi resigned after being in the job for less than three months?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — The building authority put out a statement which was very clear, and that was that Mr Dimasi has resigned for his own personal reasons and they are reasons for himself, as it states, and personal. I do not wish to elaborate upon them.

### **Rural playgroup initiative**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. Can the minister update the house on the latest initiative to strengthen parenting skills and boost child development in regional Victoria?

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing interest in early childhood development. He was with me in Ballarat

last week to turn the first sod on two of nine new early childhood facilities that are being built in the city of Ballarat thanks to grants made available by the state government.

I was also pleased while we were in Ballarat last week to announce a new playgroup trial to connect rural families locally. This is a three-year trial, with a \$1.2 million government-funded partnership between the Victorian government, Playgroup Victoria and the Early Learning Association Australia. We were joined by Viv Cunningham-Smith, the CEO of Playgroup Victoria, and Shane Lucas, the CEO of the Early Learning Association Australia, for the announcement of this trial.

The trial will allow a community development worker in each area of the trial to help local playgroups better connect with families and give additional support to families with complex needs. It will also help parents to better build their capacity by sharing tips and experiences and learning together how to navigate daily challenges. The facilitated playgroups teach parents important skills in interacting with their children and provide a great benefit to parenting in the community.

The communities that will benefit from this trial are in the council areas of: Ballarat, Hepburn, Central Goldfields, Pyrenees and Ararat in western Victoria; East Gippsland, Latrobe and Wellington in eastern Victoria; and West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Yarriambiack, Buloke, Loddon, Northern Grampians and parts of southern Mildura in the north-west. The trial builds on the coalition government's \$16.5 million investment in the 2012–13 budget to support vulnerable families. We are very pleased to be working in conjunction with Playgroup Victoria and also the Early Learning Association Australia to deliver this important trial in country Victoria.

### **Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council**

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation. Can the minister advise the house how often the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council (RGMAC) has met since he became the minister seven months ago?

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) — I am pleased to respond to the question from Ms Pulford. I was very pleased to appoint Mr John Walter as the chair of the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council earlier this year. The government believes in engagement with the

community through a range of forums that take feedback about responsible gambling measures. We do that through engagement with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. We established the Gambling Information Resource Office, a \$3 million commitment within the foundation, for councils and other organisations to access information about gambling.

A clear commitment of the coalition government's election platform in 2010 was to reconstitute RGMAC to be more broadbased — to have broader representation from across a range of community sectors. The government appointed Mr John Walter as chair of RGMAC.

**Mrs Coote** — He's a good man!

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** — He is a very good man, Mrs Coote. He is a very well respected and learned man who has had involvement in the gambling industry on and off for many years, as well as having involvement in a range of other industries as a result of his role as a senior leading lawyer in Melbourne.

Together with Mr Walter, the government has worked to make appointments to RGMAC that reflect the intent in the gambling policy of having broad representation. I am very pleased that RGMAC is meeting shortly with its new broadbased membership that reflects input from the Indigenous community and from multicultural and culturally and linguistically diverse communities and has representation from country Victoria, the industry, the foundation itself and those who advocate for a reduction in gambling in Victoria. I look forward to RGMAC providing me with important information and feedback about a range of issues.

This cannot be seen in isolation. RGMAC is just one component of the government's very clear agenda when it comes to responsible gambling measures. The government has invested \$150 million over four years to establish the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, a 41 per cent increase in the funding provided by the previous government. Importantly, and without diminishing the excellent work of the Department of Justice, we have given the foundation the independence, with an independent board and independent CEO, to go out and deliver world best practice. With the 100 Day Challenge we have seen world best practice when it comes to the foundation running innovative new campaigns. We have also seen the impact of the coalition's policy of removing ATMs from electronic gaming machine venues, with a 7 per cent reduction in expenditure on electronic gaming machines during the last financial year.

This government takes responsible gambling and responsible gambling measures very seriously. The reconstitution of RGMAC with a broader membership that reflects all relevant stakeholders is but one component of a broad comprehensive policy that this government took to the election and is implementing in relation to responsible gambling.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — I note that the minister took a full 5 minutes and failed to answer what was a very simple question. I can only assume that the minister either does not know or is refusing to say how often RGMAC has met in the seven months he has been minister. Perhaps by way of a supplementary question I can ask: can the minister at least advise the house when RGMAC last met?

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) — In my substantive answer, in the 4 minutes, not 5 minutes, that ministers have to answer questions, I responded to Ms Pulford's question in detail. I was very pleased to appoint John Walter as the chair of RGMAC. I have been working closely with John Walter since his appointment. I look forward to RGMAC contributing to the development of and responding to issues in the gambling space. As I said, it is one of a range of initiatives that this government has implemented. I know RGMAC is meeting in early December. I look forward to its work, with its broader membership base, as part of a broader framework that this government has in relation to responsible gambling initiatives.

**Vocational education and training subsidies**

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. Can the minister inform the house of recent subsidy changes to the Victorian training guarantee, and how the government is responding to changes in market behaviour?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr Dalla-Riva for the question and for his interest in this matter. The Leader of the Opposition informed the house yesterday that the applicants for 2014 training contracts were advised of the conditions and terms of those contracts on 15 November — that is, 46 days notice before those terms and conditions come into effect. We thank the Leader of the Opposition for confirming that yesterday, when I was only required by law to give 20 days notice.

I am pleased to say that a couple of very exciting initiatives came out of those changes. One that I was particularly pleased to announce was an increase in the loading applied to training delivered in regional and rural areas. Members will know that there is currently a 5 per cent loading applied to training delivery in non-metropolitan areas, and a recommendation of the TAFE Reform Panel earlier this year was that the government look at that. We have looked at that and have now doubled the loading, so there is now a 10 per cent loading applied to training delivery in regional Victoria.

I am also pleased to announce that under the changes being announced there is a significant benefit for concession students. Members will know that currently concession students pay 20 per cent of the advertised student contribution towards their training, and providers are reimbursed by government currently at 90 per cent of the difference. Government has made the decision now to reimburse 100 per cent of that difference to providers as an encouragement for providers to meet the training needs of students who qualify for concessions.

There were some significant subsidy level changes. Some subsidies increased but others decreased as a result of various factors, which I will talk about. Mainly the subsidy changes were in the areas of foundation skills, transport and logistics, civil constructions and community services. I do not want to suggest in any way that the government does not place an emphasis on those areas compared with other training areas, because in each of those four areas the amount that the government is contributing in terms of training effort is far more significant than what the previous government did and what has been contributed over the last couple of years. For example, in foundation skills we have spent in the year to date — that is, to early November of this year — \$175 million in foundation skills. That compares with \$130 million in total for 2012, and in 2010, under the previous government, that expenditure level was \$58 million. It is now \$175 million, and in each of the four areas I mentioned there has been a significant increase in training dollars being spent.

There were two main reasons for the subsidy changes. One related to the existence of low fees currently being paid by students for those courses. The other was through a mechanism called channelling, which I will happily explain to the house during the course of my answer if I have time. The issue of low fees is an important one, and I site, for example, the foundation skills areas. The average fee in the foundation skills area is around \$50 for the full course. That represents about a 1 per cent contribution from the student and a 99 per cent government contribution. We think it is fair

and reasonable that all people make a modest but reasonable contribution to their particular course of study, and there is capacity in some of those areas to lower the subsidy and therefore give options to the providers to recover more by way of student fees.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer. The minister made reference to the word ‘channelling’ when talking about subsidy level changes. Could the minister explain the meaning of that term and give an example of where it is occurring in the system?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — It is a good question, and I am happy to answer it. Channelling is a term used where providers — more for their own purpose than for the outcome of students — are enrolling students in courses other than what they would have originally intended for the purposes of receiving a greater subsidy level. I cite for members in the chamber this example: for certificates II, III and IV in outdoor recreation, the total enrolment in 2012 was 854 students. Up until quarter three of 2013 that had increased to 3178 students. It has gone from 854 to 3178. If you look at certificate III and IV in fitness instruction, you will see the figure last year was 10 343, and to the end of this quarter, 3689. There has been a displacement where students enrolled in fitness are now being enrolled in outdoor recreation, then exiting at an earlier time to take the benefit of the higher subsidy. That is inappropriate and something the government is addressing.

**Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council**

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — I refer to the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation’s answer to my previous question that all significant stakeholders will be part of the reconstituted Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council (RGMAC), and ask: can the minister advise the house which organisations will be represented?

**Hon. E. J. O’DONOHUE** (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) — Even though it was not articulated, I anticipated the question was for me. In my substantive answer I said to the house, in response to Ms Pulford, that RGMAC would have a broadened membership base.

**Ms Mikakos** — You said all stakeholders.

**Hon. E. J. O’DONOHUE** — I pick up the interjection. The intent of my answer was to say that the

intent of the coalition's policy prior to the 2010 election is being implemented and will be implemented through a broader membership base. The membership base of RGMAC has been broadened to include a range of important stakeholders in the gambling space, whether it be those who advocate for a significant reduction in gambling, such as the Inter-church Gambling Taskforce, whether it be key representatives of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, who experience particular challenges when it comes to gambling or have a high propensity towards problem gambling, whether it be the Indigenous community, representatives of local government or key representatives of the gambling industry.

The key point is that RGMAC will have a broad membership that reflects some of the key stakeholders in the industry, to provide appropriate and informative advice and feedback to me as the minister. As I said in the answer to the previous question from Ms Pulford, this is but one element of the coalition's plan to deliver and address problem gambling. It is the new foundation. It is removing ATMs from electronic gaming machine pubs, clubs and hotels.

**Mr Lenders** — It is a sham consultation.

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** — Mr Lenders says it is a sham consultation. I can assure the house that Mr Walter, the chair of RGMAC, is a respected senior lawyer in Melbourne. He has significant experience as a chair.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! There are too many interjections, although I understand why there is some interjection. I would have thought that the questions posed by Ms Pulford to the minister were fairly straightforward. She asked what organisations were represented and, in terms of her previous supplementary question, when this body had met. Perhaps the minister can give some indication to the house as to whether that specific information can be provided to Ms Pulford or to the house, perhaps later this day if it is not available to him immediately at this time.

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** — In the remaining time I have available, as I said in my previous answer to Ms Pulford, I have appointed Mr Walter and RGMAC is meeting in December. A time and location has been established for RGMAC to meet next month, and a broad range of organisations have accepted the invitation to be members of that council. I look forward to RGMAC helping to contribute to important work in

this space, which is part of a much broader framework that the coalition government is delivering.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — Can the minister advise the house whether the Salvation Army has been invited to be part of the reconstituted RGMAC, or has it been dropped?

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) — As I said to Ms Pulford in my previous answer, a number of organisations that advocate for a significant reduction in gambling, such as the Inter-church Gambling Taskforce, have accepted an invitation to be members of RGMAC. The Salvation Army has not been extended an invitation to be part of RGMAC.

**Corrections Victoria community partnerships**

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — My question today is to clearly the most popular minister today, the Minister for Corrections, the Honourable Edward O'Donohue. I ask the minister if he could inform the house about the important community partnerships under way in Victoria's corrections system.

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** (Minister for Corrections) — I welcome the question from Mr Ondarchie, because he understands — as do other members on this side of the house — the important work of community partnerships in the corrections space. We as a government, and myself as a minister, are very focused on offenders helping to serve the community and repaying their debt to the community and to society through engaging in work in the community. This is not just good for the offenders. It gives them a sense of purpose, real work and a sense of achievement. It gives them skills and a relationship — —

**Mr Lenders** — On a point of order, President, on the issue of anticipation. The first paragraph of Ms Pulford's motion 688, which is being debated on either side of this question time, talks specifically about crime rates in the state and policy around that. I put it to you, President, that Mr Ondarchie's question anticipates that debate and the minister's answer is dealing with matters in paragraph (1) of the motion, which is live — it was being debated up until 11.59 a.m. and that debate will resume as soon as this question time finishes.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On the point of order, President, the motion moved by Ms Pulford is a very

broad motion. There is a legitimate point about the anticipation rule. I know you, President, and others in this chamber are aware that there is a legitimate debate to be had at the Procedure Committee about reform of the anticipation rule and how we might get the very best outcome in terms of preventing unreasonable anticipation but equally not ruling out a huge range of questions. If you look at the breadth of the motion Ms Pulford has on the notice paper, you will see that there is hardly an area of government that is not touched on. These omnibus motions, by their nature, may well rule out an enormous range of questions. I put it to you, President, that the breadth of the motion in itself would rule out a vast array of questions from either the government or the opposition.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Ondarchie has given me the courtesy of showing me the question he asked of the minister. In taking up the point of order by Mr Lenders and looking at both the question and the motion on the notice paper, I am of the view that the question is able to proceed and the minister is entitled to respond to this question. Whilst the anticipation rule does address matters that are before the house — and, as Mr Lenders rightly says, debate on this motion straddles this question time — the fact is I do not think that paragraph (1) in Ms Pulford’s motion of itself impinges on the question, which was about community partnerships under way in Victoria’s corrections system. I think that is a different matter to rising crime rates. It might well be that the partnerships are focused on addressing some of those crime rate issues, but nonetheless, having looked at both the question and the motion on the notice paper today, I think it is a separate matter. I do not see that the anticipation rule is compromised on this occasion.

**Hon. E. J. O’DONOHUE** — As I was saying in response to Mr Ondarchie’s question, this government is very focused on offenders paying their debt to the community through work in the community. We are continuing the very successful and very popular Landmate program, which operates from a number of country prisons, where offenders go out to do environmental work and fencing work and remove weeds and other noxious materials, helping farmers, helping the environment and helping local communities. A range of other programs operate across the correctional system for offenders who have been ordered to do work either as part of a community correction order or as part of a custodial sentence.

Last week I was delighted to attend Corrections Victoria’s annual community work partnership awards with people from all over Victoria, including Department of Justice employees, members of local

councils who manage or are involved with these partnerships and representatives of community organisations. In 2012–13 the community benefited from 604 000 hours of unpaid work by prisoners and offenders throughout Victoria. The estimated value of this work is more than \$15 million, which is a significant sum.

However, the stories behind that dollar figure show the true worth of these projects. They provide tangible opportunities for offenders to be involved — to learn new skills, improve their education, engage with the broader community and improve their communication skills. These skills may make all the difference in helping offenders gain employment and reintegrate into the community at the end of their sentence. As part of the awards, I was delighted to have the opportunity to select and announce the winner of the minister’s award. The winner was Prisoners on the Run, which is a project that holds a special place in the hearts of many local communities.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. E. J. O’DONOHUE** — The opposition may scoff at the notion of prisoners doing community work, or in this particular instance prisoners raising money for charities. Indeed prisoners have raised over \$1 million for charity. This is a program that has run for over 15 years. It was established in 1998 — —

**Hon. P. R. Hall** — By the late Jean Topps.

**Hon. E. J. O’DONOHUE** — Established by the late Jean Topps. I was very pleased to make this award, and I congratulate all those involved in the community partnerships.

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### Answers

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 8152, 9257–84, 9521–2, 9524, 9535, 9568–81, 9583, 9586–7, 9589, 9786–8, 9799, 9833–4, 9842, 9915–6.

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — Unfortunately it is impossible to know whether my outstanding questions on notice are amongst those 60 answers, but I take this opportunity to raise a number of outstanding questions on notice. If I have an opportunity to reflect on this list, I will be able to determine whether they are answers from the Minister for Housing to the outstanding questions on notice. I preface this by saying I wrote to the minister on 29 October about outstanding questions on

notice 8476–84, 8595, 8993, 9285–6, 9464, 9523, 9551–8 and 9840. I wrote to the Leader of the Government on 29 October regarding questions on notice 9532 and 9589. I also asked the Leader of the Government in correspondence on 29 October about an outstanding question on notice to the Minister for Youth Affairs, which was 9533.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I can respond to the member's inquiry on all those questions on notice. Some of those questions may be in the list that has just been provided. I can inform the member that on each occasion she has recently raised the issue of outstanding answers to questions on notice I have followed up the matter. I am happy to follow up myself, as well as with the relevant ministers, any answer to a question on notice that Ms Mikakos says is outstanding.

It is not always the case that the answers Ms Mikakos seeks are outstanding. For example, Ms Mikakos wrote to me on 29 October indicating she intended to ask for an explanation as to why question on notice 9531 had not been answered. For the information of Ms Mikakos and the house, the answer to question 9531 appears in *Hansard* of 17 October, which was some time before Ms Mikakos's letter to me of 29 October. However, I make the point that I am happy to follow up any matter or question that is outstanding and will do so with the list that the member has provided today.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) (*By leave*) — I made an interjection during questions without notice that was picked up by my ministerial colleague Mr O'Donohue. I incorrectly named a person who I said initiated the Prisoner on the Run program. The name I mentioned was Jean Topps. However, that is not the correct person. Jean Topps is alive and well, and she is a lovely person who advocates and works for the disability sector in Gippsland. The person I meant to name was a Mrs Jean, who was the originator of Prisoner on the Run when it was at Morwell River prison farm. I offer that explanation and sincerely apologise for mentioning the wrong name.

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I take this opportunity to note that in the visitors gallery today is Mr Tayfun Eren, a former member of the Legislative Council. Welcome.

## GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

### Debate resumed.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to continue to speak on Ms Pulford's excellent motion, which points out what a let-down this government has been for the Victorian populace and also points out a number of election promises that have not been fulfilled. It is interesting to note that when you go to the Liberal how-to-vote cards from 2010, you see that one of the commitments was to reform parliamentary question time. It was stated by a number of senior members of the coalition that the coalition would eliminate Dorothy Dixier questions. Today the Minister for Health handed a Dorothy Dixier question to Mrs Kronberg. He obviously did not draft it correctly, because Mrs Kronberg had to think fast on her feet and correct it so that it made sense. That is further proof that even though coalition members promised to eliminate Dorothy Dixier questions, they have not done so. The problem is that although they have continued asking them, they cannot even get them right.

Thinking back to the leaders debate of 2010, Mr Baillieu, the member for Hawthorn and the Leader of the Opposition at the time, in answer to a question from one of the journalists on the panel, who might have been Josephine Cafagna, could not have been any clearer in saying he would eliminate Dorothy Dixier questions. Mr Baillieu completely ruled out having Dorothy Dixier questions as part of question time under a government he would lead if he won the election. At 5 minutes to 12 o'clock on a Wednesday or Thursday and at 5 minutes to 2 o'clock on a Tuesday we can all see Mr Koch handing out questions to various MPs sitting around the other side of the chamber — questions they have never seen before.

### *Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr LEANE** — Mrs Kronberg is angry with me, but I actually gave her a big lift before, because I said she made the question the health minister gave to her better when she asked it in her own words. I give her credit for that. Obviously the health minister is not up to writing his own questions. Maybe he should get Mrs Kronberg to write all his questions for him; they would be a hell of a lot better.

### **Mr Elsbury** interjected.

**Mr LEANE** — Maybe Mr Elsbury should write his own questions. I am not sure they would be better, but maybe he should have a crack at it. Mrs Kronberg clearly made the question better, but I am not sure that Mr Elsbury's questions would be any better. We would have to wait and see. I suppose he has not been in that situation before.

Let us go back to the Liberal how-to-vote cards. Let us just pluck some of this stuff out at random. Let us go to 'Protecting the environment', which has a picture of Ted Baillieu. This is Dee Ryall's —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! We will suspend the house. The chair will be resumed at 2 o'clock. The reason I am suspending the house is that there is no minister in the house.

**Sitting suspended 12.56 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.**

**Mr LEANE** — Before the house was suspended I was concentrating on the Liberal how-to-vote card and the promises made by the Liberal Party throughout the 2010 election campaign, which are referred to in Ms Pulford's motion. I was going to pluck some points out at random.

Under the heading 'Protecting our environment' there are a number of dot points, including, 'Work to reduce emissions by 20 per cent by 2020'. This promise did not last long at all after the election. Mr Wells, as the Treasurer back in those days, was asked about this commitment and was reported as saying to journalists, 'We didn't promise that', but it was actually on his how-to-vote card. That promise was dropped straightaway.

Part of the plan to reduce emissions was the commitment to change to T20-type fluorescent streetlighting, which is energy-saving streetlighting, by supplying councils with a heap of money to do so, but unfortunately that commitment did not last long either. The government just said it was not going to do that now. Before the election the then Leader of the Opposition was photographed in a cherry picker next to a public light fitting on Nepean Highway, and he was reported as saying, 'We are going to change all these to energy-saving light fittings'. Then not long after the election he said, 'We are not going to do that now'. People who voted for this government on the back of that commitment to change public lighting to energy-efficient fittings were duped. The government duded those people who voted for it on that issue.

Let us look at another one. Under the heading 'Government you can trust' there is a dot point that says, 'Slash spending on government advertising'. Anyone who has opened the *Age* or the *Herald Sun* or looked at bus stops or at the backs of buses lately would know that that is far from the case. The Napthine government has been out there with its 'Moving Victoria' campaign — it is moving on very soon — which alerts you to a website that talks about stuff that has not been done and probably never will be done by

this government. The people who voted for this government on that commitment have been duped as well.

Under the heading 'Fixing public transport' there is a dot point that reads, 'Two new railway stations at Southland and Grovedale'. I am happy to be corrected about Grovedale but —

**Mr Finn** — You will be.

**Mr LEANE** — I am happy to be corrected, I will be waiting. But I will also be waiting for the defence of Southland train station, because if you want to catch a train to Southland, get off at Southland and shop there, you will be very disappointed. You would be able to see the big shopping centre as you are travelling along the Frankston line, but you would have to jump off the train because it will not be stopping at this new train station. The government has been wishy-washy about it, saying in turn that it is not going to build it and then saying, when people jump up and down, that of course it is going to do it — but it is not going to do it.

Here is one from a particular site-specific how-to-vote card from Mary Wooldridge, who is currently the member for Doncaster in the Assembly. The first dot point is 'Train line to Doncaster'. I remember the future Premier and Ms Wooldridge being out there, saying, 'This is the best day for Doncaster. If we are elected, we will build a train line to Doncaster'. They said, 'We're going to do a study' — and it is always scary when those opposite mention a study — 'plan it, get the funds and we are going to build it'. Members know that that is far from being the case. The people of Doncaster who voted this government in because of that one issue have again been duped.

On health reform, there has been a lot of discussion in this house about the Minister for Health actually identifying 1 of the promised 800 hospital beds. We have asked, 'Just tell us where 1 of the 800 new hospital beds that were committed to in 2010 by the then opposition if it was elected to government is'.

**Mr Finn** — Werribee Mercy.

**Mr LEANE** — Mr Finn might have to keep going, because there is a dot point that says that there will be 1600 new hospital beds statewide. This is on a Liberal how-to-vote card that was handed out at every polling booth — 1600 new hospital beds.

**Mr Finn** — We didn't get one.

**Mr LEANE** — Here you go, Mr Finn.

**Mr Finn** — It wasn't on mine.

**Mr LEANE** — Mr Finn might have to bring his how-to-vote card in and table it. I am happy to table this document, and I am happy to be corrected if his how-to-vote card was different. This is one of the ones handed out on my side of town.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr LEANE** — I am happy to be corrected on the how-to-vote cards on Mr Finn's side of town if that was the case. The card also states that if elected the coalition would slash hospital waiting lists. Obviously that did not happen. Another group of dot points is headed 'Support for families'. An annual families statement was going to be presented by the Premier. Do members remember that every year a statement about families was going to be presented to the Parliament by the Premier? I remember when the first statement was made. In it the government said, 'We're going to go out there, and we're going to talk to families around kitchen tables. We're going to have round table and square table discussions. We're going to do all this consulting'.

**Mr Scheffer** — Benchmarking.

**Mr LEANE** — That is right; benchmarking. They said, 'We're going to make ourselves available to families'. I do not know that government members are as available anymore and I do not think that families are happy with them. I do not think they particularly want coalition MPs around their kitchen tables after they have been let down so badly by this government. Those opposite have let Victorians down so badly that I am not too sure they are welcome for a cuppa around family kitchen tables. Perhaps the next speaker on the government side will let us know about that.

Under 'Government you can trust' the Liberal how-to-vote card has 'Establish an independent anticorruption commission'. We have to question whether the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission is what the government promised. It is interesting to note that this week IBAC actually tabled something. The issue addressed concerned a former Premier's chief of staff and his interaction with a minister's adviser. The chief of staff at the time, Mr Coulson, told the adviser, 'No, IBAC wasn't set up to look at us, IBAC wasn't set up to look at corruption. Don't worry about it. It was never our intention'. When all that stuff with a former Chief Commissioner of Police was going on, the Premier's main adviser was telling someone, not to worry about that because it was never set up to actually investigate stuff. It is just about a number of letters. Government members promised and committed to

producing a number of letters and that is what they have done, but there was nothing other than that.

Ms Pulford's motion has a lot of solid ground to it. Victorians can feel pretty disappointed. Actually, they should be gutted. This government was going to do all sorts of things — fix all the problems and build the future. Unfortunately it is very hard to point to what the government has actually done, other than finishing projects that were started by the previous government.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr LEANE** — When it comes to the Minister for Major Projects and his portfolio, the only thing those opposite can point to which they have actually initiated and finished is a competition for a design for the redevelopment of the Flinders Street railway station, a design which will never be implemented. I do not know why anyone would want to change what Flinders Street looks like. Tourists from overseas come to see that iconic building which we are lucky enough to enjoy. The one major project that those opposite have finished was a competition that ended up with an overseas architectural company pocketing half a million bucks of taxpayers money. That is the major project, that is it, the end of the story as far as creating jobs goes. Major projects are usually seen as creating jobs.

This government has reduced jobs in most industries and even in the public service. Government members might have a certain view of people in the public service but they did not announce that in 2010. The then Leader of the Opposition said, 'There'll be no loss of public service jobs. The public service will not be reduced'. What happened when those opposite came to government?

**Mr Scheffer** — 4200.

**Mr LEANE** — Four thousand two hundred jobs. The first dot point under 'What we stand for' on another how-to-vote card is 'Jobs'. They said they stood for jobs and then a couple of months after coming to government 4200 public servants were told, 'Hit the road. Here's your pink slip' — after those opposite had promised not to reduce the public service. The second dot point is 'More help for families'.

**Mr Scheffer** — The families statement.

**Mr LEANE** — There was a families statement in the first year, so I suppose they had a crack. Another dot point is 'Fixing country roads'. At the moment country roads are absolutely appalling due to three years of cuts to VicRoads funding. The sixth dot point is 'Cutting hospital waiting lists'. All members know

that those lists have blown out because this government has reduced funding to health to the tune of \$825 million. The Minister for Health jumps up with all sorts of excuses. He says that it is not about what he has done; it is about what everyone else has done. It would be a start if he had not cut funding by that amount. Another dot point is 'A healthy environment'. That commitment to reduce emissions by 20 per cent by 2020 lasted a couple of weeks, so there was no real commitment to that.

On this how-to-vote card there is a picture of Mr Baillieu, the member for Hawthorn in the other place, then the Leader of the Opposition. Above his signature the card has the slogan 'A government you can trust'. Not even he could trust them. Here is his picture with the words 'A government you can trust' above it, but even this poor bloke could not trust them. As soon as the polls went down they necked him. That all worked out very well, and now I suppose they are back in the same position with Dr Napthine as they were with Mr Baillieu.

It was interesting to see that Minister for Planning Matthew Guy was reported as the person who got things back on track. It was a bit like watching *Pulp Fiction* with Mr Guy as the Wolf: 'We've got a big problem here; we had better ring the Wolf'. So they rang the Wolf. He turned up in his Ferrari and went into the member for Frankston's office. Then he went into Premier Napthine's office and told someone to do this and someone to do that. He told someone else to wash the blood off them. The Wolf fixed it. How long will they be able to call on the Wolf before the Wolf decides that maybe he should be running the show, especially with the polls where they are at now?

**Mr Barber** — We're sending in the cleaner!

**Mr LEANE** — Then they will crush the car! Maybe they will crush the office of the member for Frankston when he leaves. We will see. As Ms Pulford's motion suggests, this has been an over-promising, under-delivering, very disappointing government. I try to be fair; I think I am a fair man. I try not to be too parochial or let things colour the way I see them. There is only one way this government can be summed up on its third anniversary. I do not know what present is usually given on the third anniversary, but I imagine that whatever present this government gets will not be shiny. It will be something far from shiny. In closing I look forward to Mr Finn's contribution in reply, and I support Ms Pulford's motion 100 per cent.

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I am sorry to disappoint Mr Leane, but in fact he will have to listen to

another couple of contributions before Mr Finn can respond. A contribution from Mr Leane is always a hard act to follow, particularly when we have the pantomime theatre of the Red Bull at work.

**Mr Finn** — I'm pretty sure he's been to lunch.

**Mr RAMSAY** — It must have been a good lunch. Typically on Wednesdays we find the opposition wanting to waste the time of the chamber by putting forward motions that are neither constructive nor productive and do not provide any sort of — —

**Mr O'Brien** — Insight?

**Mr RAMSAY** — It is not even insight; they do not provide any sort of critique of what the government is doing or not doing. They just contain a lot of rambling and ranting. What I find most disappointing is that Ms Pulford chose to move the motion. I do not normally see her as such a negative person, and I can only assume there is a wolf in sheep's clothing at work in the form of Mr Pakula, the member for Lyndhurst in the Assembly, who is using Ms Pulford as a spokesperson for this motion.

Before I respond to the issues that Ms Pulford has identified in the motion, I would firstly like to set the scene regarding the areas that I represent, because none of the issues listed in this motion are consistent with what I am hearing in the field. In fact from a climatic point of view I can tell Mr Barber that western Victoria is having one of its best seasons to date. The dams are full across the region for the most part. The grass is growing, the sun is shining and there is going to be a bountiful harvest. The commodities are all looking very healthy. In fact for a farming constituency things are looking good. There is no sign of climate change except for the normal seasonal change we have every year. It is very pleasing to see that the federal government is responding to normal climatic activity by removing one of the most penalising taxes this country has ever seen, the carbon tax. Good riddance to it when the Senate finally approves its removal!

A couple of the other issues identified in the motion are about protective services officers (PSOs). I do not know what world Mr Leane, Ms Pulford and the other speakers from the opposition side have been living in, but the areas I visit in my western Victoria region are supportive and have congratulated the government on its investment in PSOs at railway stations. In fact there is a significantly increased feeling of safety and wellbeing from knowing that there is security not only on platforms but also in the car parks, because travellers have to get from the station to their cars. The fact that

the PSOs now have the responsibility of overseeing the car parks as well as the stations has given the communities a feeling of increased safety and wellbeing.

I have heard no criticism of the government's investment in PSOs. We are on track. In the information provided to me I see that there are 533 PSOs deployed on 81 railway stations. Since the first deployments in February 2012, PSOs have issued more than 14 000 infringement notices for a wide range of offences.

**Mr Leane** — You haven't got enough. You promised 900.

**Mr RAMSAY** — They are coming. We have got another year to go, and we have nearly 600 PSOs, with nearly 65 per cent of them working at the moment. The community has been very appreciative of that investment.

It is the same with law and order. The communities that I represent and the people I speak to on a daily basis are appreciative of the increase in police numbers. Ballarat has its full complement of police officers as promised, as has Geelong, and the rollout continues.

In relation to emergency services I can say that when Parliament is not sitting I spend my weekends handing over new fire trucks or opening new fire sheds right across the region I represent, as does my colleague David O'Brien. There is a continuous turnover of vehicles and sheds from old infrastructure to new infrastructure so that we can give our volunteer firefighters the very best in firefighting equipment. Here again the government is being very supportive of the regional and country communities I represent. It is a significant investment to support our fire service volunteers.

In her motion Ms Pulford identifies 'front-of-house public servants struggling to keep up with demand as a result of public service cuts'. We said right from the outset of our term of government that we would reduce the number of public servants by 4200, and we have committed to that. In fact the public service —

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — The cost of the public service to the budget was exceeding the revenue generated. That is fairly typical of Labor's policies and Labor governments in the past. They have no appreciation of the fact that you have to generate revenue that surpasses the cost of expenses. That is something Labor has never really fully understood. That is why it is important that

we have committed to the AAA rating, to surpluses, to reducing debt and to running an economic, sustainable and viable business as the government.

I spend many hours in the car, and it is pleasing to see the significant investment in health in my electorate. As I mentioned in my members statement this morning, last Sunday I participated in a fun run in Geelong where the Cotton On Foundation and many other sponsors supported a fundraiser for Geelong Hospital. There has been a significant increase in infrastructure investment at Geelong Hospital and we have committed to the Epworth development in Waurin Ponds. The government has also committed to a new ambulatory centre and 68 beds — more beds, Mr Leane — at Ballarat Base Hospital. We have further committed to a helipad and a multistorey car park there.

Only yesterday, on behalf of Minister Davis, I was out in the country again, at the Beaufort and Skipton, and Warracknabeal health services. We have seen significant investments in both those health services. In fact Rural Northwest Health indicated at its annual general meeting at Warracknabeal that it is building stage 2 of new acute and aged-care facilities at its hospital. About eight months ago I announced \$370 000 to improve the primary care, student accommodation and doctor offices at the Beaufort hospital. It is fantastic to see investment going into country hospitals. I can also state that a new ambulatory care centre is presently being built right next door to the Beaufort hospital. It should be open in March. It will provide an ambulatory care service for Beaufort and district. I was also at Creswick where Minister Davis and I did the sod turning for a new ambulance station. I could go on and on. It has been significant. I can almost hear Mr Finn saying, 'Why don't you?'. Perhaps I will take the opportunity.

The budget for Ambulance Victoria has increased by 17 per cent to a record \$662 million for 2013–14. That is an increase of more than a \$97.8 million. Since coming to government the coalition has added 465 paramedics, an increase since 2009–10 of 19.6 per cent: 193 in metropolitan; 44 in Loddon Mallee; 65 in Hume; 77 in Gippsland; 36 in the Grampians; and 50 in the Barwon south-west region. The number of qualified paramedics has increased from 38.2 per 100 000 in 2009–10 to 43.4 per 100 000 in the 2011–12 figures. Not only are we investing in stations but we are investing in personnel as well.

We talk about a reduction in taxes. I note that \$241.9 million was provided in the 2011–12 budget to halve the cost of the ambulance membership subscription fees to provide more affordable access to

ambulance services for Victorians. I challenge those in opposition to go out into the community and ask, 'Is that a worthwhile investment, providing affordable membership of Ambulance Victoria for the community?'. I think they would say yes.

Through better cooperation between hospitals and Ambulance Victoria paramedics will now be able to spend more time on the road attending to the needs of patients. The Napthine government has brought hospitals and Ambulance Victoria together to clarify, for the first time, the clinical responsibilities of each party through some new principles which had not been agreed previously. Again in regional Victoria, and the Western Victoria Region that I represent, it is important that our paramedics are not tied up in the emergency departments of hospitals waiting for the triage system to allocate beds for patients. They should be able to drop patients off, put them in the care of the hospital and then get out on the road and respond to call-outs as quickly as possible. I was pleased to hear the minister announce a couple of weeks ago that there will be more paramedics on the road more quickly as they will not be involved in work within the hospital system, which creates a backlog.

I want to speak on a couple of issues in relation to education. I have noticed that Ms Pulford has been very active in Ballarat. In fact she has attended a couple of rallies outside my parliamentary office protesting about TAFE cuts.

**Mr Barber** — Was this your new office or your old office?

**Mr RAMSAY** — I have got a new one thanks, Mr Barber. You have given me the opportunity to promote my new parliamentary office, which is at 211 Dana Street, Ballarat. I certainly look forward to the constituents of Western Victoria Region being able to access that office in the future and to my being able to support and help the constituents in that region where I can. I was distracted somewhat.

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — I beg your pardon, Mr Lenders?

**Mr Lenders** — Catherine McGowan might go to Warrnambool!

**Mr RAMSAY** — I do not think we will see that. But as Mr Lenders knows, we have a very fair and democratic process for preselection, while unfortunately poor old Labor Party faithful members do not get a look in at all.

**Mr Finn** — They do not.

**Mr RAMSAY** — There is no democracy there. The once-promised democratic system that Labor was going to introduce to allow party members to become involved in the process has been shelved now. The Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, said, 'I want all our MPs in place by the end of Christmas'. There is no time for Labor Party members to have any sort of involvement in the preselection process. What we see is the unions at work parachuting their apparatchiks into positions depending on the factional forces at work.

I was saying in relation to education that Ms Pulford was actively demonstrating outside my office in relation to TAFE cuts. It is a shame she did not take the opportunity to perhaps explain to those people who were there — I might add that they were mainly Australian Education Union members; there were even a couple of electorate office employees of Labor MPs in those seats around Ballarat, who were wasting taxpayers money just standing around the road —

**Mr Finn** — They have got to do something. They don't do anything in their electorate offices!

**Mr RAMSAY** — There is obviously no work in the office, but they can stand around in the middle of the road with a banner complaining about suggested — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr RAMSAY** — No, they were not complaining about making TAFE cuts. Just for the record, and it has been said in another contribution, it was Labor that introduced a contestable model for vocational education and training (VET) sector funding. It was Labor that created the opportunity for private registered training organisations to tender for service delivery of training. It was Labor that created the oversupply of courses that had no relationship to market demand, and it was Labor that overspent the VET sector budget of over \$1 billion. Typically it was the coalition government that had to clean up yet another mess of the Labor Party.

Yes, it is true that some TAFEs did come under pressure in relation to how they had historically provided service. That was not a bad thing. In fact I think some TAFE CEOs have been quoted in local papers as saying that a review of the bureaucracy surrounding some of these TAFEs and the services they were providing was probably overdue. Now we are seeing a much more rigid, prioritised approach not only by TAFEs but by training providers generally in terms of how they will deliver their courses, who they will deliver them to and what market requirements are out

there in relation to these courses. As we have just heard from the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, he has increased the subsidies for trainees doing some of the courses that are required by the marketplace.

As a government we have continued investing in the vocational education and training sector. In fact we have invested more than Labor did, and we have prioritised courses and heavily subsidised courses which have been subject to market failure in terms of getting students into the marketplace. That mess that Labor created reminds me of the Ararat jail mess in which one stakeholder in the public-private partnership was not able to meet its financial commitments. But the trouble was brewing long before that, when the whole management of the Ararat jail was compromised. Sadly, I had a number of subcontractors come through my office concerned by both the wastage that was occurring out there at the prison and the way the agreement that was set up would leave a number of those stakeholders exposed in the case of one of them not meeting their financial liabilities, and of course that is what happened.

Congratulations are due to the then Minister for Corrections, Mr McIntosh, who started the ball rolling, and to the previous Premier, Ted Baillieu, who renegotiated with the banks a contract that allowed subcontractors, contractors and workmen to start work under a new arrangement at Hopkins Correctional Centre, as it is now known. The feedback I am getting is that the coffee shops are full around Ararat now as there is strong employment around the Ararat and Ballarat region. Out of yet another Labor failure it was pleasing to see that the coalition government managed to put investment into the corrections system back on track, and regional Victoria, in the areas I represent, is really making use of it.

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — Typically any time I make a contribution in this chamber Mr Barber tries to goad me into making responses about wind farms. Again, for the record, Mr Barber — I'll take up a bit more time if you like — the fact is I am not against wind farming. What I am against is the way the Labor government, in yet another stuff-up, in its dying days confettied planning permits across the board. Councils were given no input in relation to placement and had no involvement in terms of how wind farms would affect their long-term planning strategy, and there was a lack of forethought about the impact on road networks of introducing a new industrial centre into a regional area. Labor left us with another mess to clean up. Mr Scheffer talked about

roads. I can assure members that in those areas that are heavily populated by wind farms the road network has deteriorated significantly. That is because there was no foresight in relation to imposing the condition on developers that they be responsible for any significant deterioration of roads subjected to heavy traffic during the construction of these wind farms.

While I am on that topic, Mr Barber has raised a question, and I raise it again. Obviously there are a number of wind farms operating as we speak which have no noise compliance clearance. I wait with bated breath to see some of these wind farms being ticked off in terms of meeting their permit conditions. However, I think wind farms have a place amongst our renewable resources. Certainly there has been some successful planning of wind farms across Victoria, and I encourage that, but I also encourage and support the maintenance of the guidelines that we have put in place to protect communities that do not want to be subjected to the impact of wind farms in close proximity to their residences.

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — That is the difference between you and me, Mr Barber. You would not know the impact a 3-megawatt turbine would have on your livability if it was sitting right outside your bedroom window, whirring away 24/7. The amount of power it could generate on any one day is disputable, and it would be heavily subsidised by the taxpayer, I might say. There is a lack of investors wanting to invest in wind farms at this stage. There are many live planning permits out there in the field that were issued under the old Labor government when there was no restriction in terms of buffer zones, yet those companies have not taken the opportunity to start construction. The only reason I can understand for that being the case is that they have not been able to forward contract into the grid for the wholesale electricity market. I suspect the reason for that is that they cannot compete on a cost basis or cannot provide reliability of supply.

Members should not blame the government for its guidelines on wind farms. They can probably blame current market conditions in relation to developers not being able to raise the money through banking or financial institutions to allow construction and to be able to forward sell their electricity into the grid. That is not the fault of this government; that is the reality of the commercial marketplace, the workings of which are something the Greens have yet to fathom. I am digressing somewhat from the motion, thanks to Mr Barber, which I suggest is what he wanted me to do.

I want to refer briefly to Ms Pulford's motion again. She identifies a number of issues to which I have responded. In her motion Ms Pulford talks about the rate of crime at train stations currently being at its highest in over five years. The fact is that we now have protective services officers (PSOs) on platforms and in car parks. They are there as a deterrence to criminal activity and also to serve notice on those who are engaged in criminal activity. There will obviously be more reporting of criminal activity, such as antisocial behaviour, but that is a sign that the PSOs are doing their work and a sign that the community is feeling safer about the serving of notices on perpetual criminals or those who engage in criminal activity or antisocial behaviour at stations. As I said, we will keep rolling out PSOs, as we committed to doing, and meet the target of 940 PSOs that we committed to at the outset of this election cycle.

The third point in the motion is about schools across Victoria that are in dire need of funding and rejuvenation works. That is true. They have always been in dire need of funding. Some years ago I was president of a school council for six years and I cannot remember a time when we were not seeking additional funding, whether it was for capital works or staff resources. That has been an ongoing, historical problem.

What we did see when the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, went through the audit process was that there were about 430 schools that were in dire need of significant investment, and that is because of the run-down of capital maintenance during the 11-year reign of Labor. There has been a significant catch-up in the maintenance and capital programs of schools. We have prioritised that so as to bring those schools that were rated poor to at least an average rating and invested it in new schools across Victoria in areas where there has been significant population growth. A classic example of this concerns my own daughter, who teaches at Torquay. She will be moving into the new Torquay P-12 school next year, which will be great to see for the Torquay community.

Ms Pulford also mentioned Gonski in her contribution. The fact is this is not about Gonski; it is about a better school improvement program. Poor Mr Gonski would be horrified to hear his name being bandied about by Labor as a mechanism for saying that this government is not committed to a Better Schools improvement model. Premier Denis Naphthine did the very best he could for Victorians in making sure that any agreement that Victoria reached in relation to the Better Schools program would be in the interests of all Victorians. I congratulate him on his efforts in getting Victoria very

well placed to receive significant funds for our schools across the board. We certainly look forward to the federal government committing to the agreed positions that Victoria signed off on in relation to the Better Schools program. I understand the federal Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, is keen to review those agreements because they were scattergun agreements and differed with each state. He has committed to funding until 2015, with a review, as there should be, because we know from the past that when Labor says it has signed off on agreements there is a lot of snake oil in the system.

We have seen that with Regional Development Australia (RDA) commitments in the regions that I represent. Catherine King, the federal member for Ballarat, made a number of announcements in relation to RDA grants when the former federal government was in caretaker mode and not one of them was signed off. We have the water reticulation project in the food precinct in Meredith not signed off. We have the Daylesford Victoria Park multipurpose facility not signed off. We have Halletts Way in Bacchus Marsh not signed off. I could go on, but the fact is that while there was a lot of spin, there was no substance in the announcements. The federal Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Warren Truss, is having to review the publicly announced, but not contractual, commitments of the RDA projects that were eagerly proclaimed by federal Labor MPs when the government was in caretaker mode.

It is pleasing to see a significant investment in roads in Western Victoria Region. I have identified many of them in this chamber before, but anyone travelling along the Princes Highway west will be pleased to see the duplication of sections of that highway on time and on budget. The Winchelsea leg is well on course. It is also pleasing to see that we now have commitments from the federal and state governments to the second leg, which is the Winchelsea to Colac leg — a \$550 million project for which the planning process is starting at the moment. There is a lot of road development going on along that significant highway, as there is along the Western Highway, where I was yesterday. The Beaufort leg of that upgrade and duplication is well on the way. The Western Highway now has a very good run from Melbourne to Burrumbeet, and that is moving towards Beaufort.

There will be opportunities for the Pyrenees Shire Council to have discussions with the government in relation to a potential bypass for that town and the planning options that VicRoads will provide for the duplication towards Ararat and up to Horsham. There are significant investments being made in those two

major highways in Western Victoria Region, as well significant upgrades on many of the minor and smaller arterial roads on that road network.

It is also pleasing to see the announcement of the Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder, of \$160 million of additional funding to rural councils — over \$1 million a year for each rural council — to allow them to maintain and upgrade some of their minor roads. I have to say that with farming businesses getting bigger and the need for B-doubles and heavier transport to use some of these minor roads, it is always going to be a challenge for councils to continually maintain and upgrade the roads when such heavy traffic is using them. That is why I raised the point, when Mr Barber interjected, that when you are creating precincts where there will be a requirement for heavy vehicle movement, councils should be given the opportunity to have within their permit conditions a requirement for the developers of those precincts to take some responsibility for the roads in those areas. Sadly, it was not done in the wind farm planning, but it will certainly be done in the future if the Moyne Shire Council has anything to say about it. I look forward, as I am sure councils do, to that opportunity to make sure that is well covered in any development, whether it be industrial or otherwise.

The last point in Ms Pulford's motion is about the jobs crisis in Victoria, with youth unemployment reaching the highest rate of all mainland states and territories. Ms Pulford raised an issue about unemployment which again has been historical in many ways. Even though it is not funny I almost laughed when I heard that, because one of the biggest cost impacts on businesses that employ people is the carbon tax. We have seen members on the other side of the chamber standing up, screeching and ranting about jobs. They talk about their jobs plan, yet none of us have seen it. We do not know what it is. They just talk about a plan for jobs.

In the same breath, they are supporting a tax on small business that is not allowing the opportunity for those small businesses to grow and employ people. If you remove some of the regulatory burden and taxes from small businesses and allow them to have a go, they will be more inclined to employ people as part of the growth of their business.

That is consistent with the vocational education and training sector training investment where we have prioritised courses in sectors where there are job vacancies so that students will be appropriately trained and have the skills and knowledge to go straight into the workforce and avail themselves of those opportunities. Under the Labor model there was not much point in investing significant amounts of

taxpayers money into creating an oversupply of hairdressers and fitness trainers and other skills the marketplace did not require. It was taxpayers money. We have redirected taxpayer funds through subsidies to those courses that deliver skills that allow people to get jobs. That is a very good jobs plan, and equally so is a strong fiscal environment where the government has the opportunity to invest in significant capital infrastructure that will create jobs.

I refer to the east–west link and the commitment of \$1.5 billion to that project by the federal government. In fact it was a commitment from the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, when he was opposition leader. The Victorian government has committed to the east–west link which will create a huge number of jobs for Victorians, as will the regional rail link and the investment in the Ballarat West employment zone. That growth corridor through the employment zone, the freight hub and residential planning will create over 10 000 jobs. Jobs will also be created as a result of the investments we are putting into smaller cities like Geelong. Everyone bemoans the fact that the manufacturing industry is under challenge in Geelong — and it is — and they highlight some key industrial areas like Shell and Alcoa, but they rarely talk about the good-news stories.

We have not heard good-news stories from Ms Pulford, and in fact her motion and her contributions have all been extremely negative, which is disappointing because the city that she lives in, Ballarat, has significant good-news stories in relation to its hospital and education facilities. I am amazed by the asset-rich education facilities that Ballarat has and the reputation that its health service has in its hospital management and service provision. I can never understand why Ms Pulford is always willing and wanting to stand up in this chamber and be so negative about some of the good-news stories around the area that she represents.

I digress, but for the good-news stories to happen, small businesses need to grow and create job opportunities. Deakin University is investing in a carbon fibre centre. There is interest and a willingness from the international marketplace, from Russia and other countries, to invest considerable amounts of money to develop a carbon fibre centre which can provide a whole range of products. That is a good-news story for Deakin University itself, but it is also good news for its ancillary work. That has come about because the government is willing to invest, because there is strong fiscal management and because the government has committed to undertaking what it said it would at the start of its term, through all policy platforms. It should be remembered that we are only in year three, yet Labor

is very happy to criticise us after it was in government for 11 years and the state was run down both in its assets and its resources, including its people resources.

On that basis it has given me no pleasure to speak on Ms Pulford's motion. To my mind it is not a productive motion, and it is disappointing that she has seen fit to waste opposition business time in bringing forward such a motion to this chamber. However, it allows members on this side to put on record the good work the government is doing in its policies and investments, and what it will do in the future.

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to speak in support of Ms Pulford's motion. We have heard contributions from Ms Pulford, Mr Melhem, Mr Barber and Mr Leane. It is clear that Ms Pulford's motion is a stark, 10-point reminder of the promises the coalition made to Victorians just three short years ago in those halcyon days when success was at its back and government was imminent. Ms Pulford's motion invites us to ask how it is possible that a new government, led to victory by a new Premier against an 11-year-old Labor government, could after three short years be as reduced as we find it today. How has it come about that in three short years this Victorian coalition is unable to confidently look forward to an assured second term, giving the appearance of inexorable collapse?

The rot started well before the last election when the then coalition opposition did only half the job it was supposed to do, spending almost all its time criticising the then Labor government and hardly any time on developing its own policies and programs that would strengthen the development of the state. It failed to understand that government is fundamentally about implementing the plans devised in opposition that would propel the state forward and strengthen the wellbeing of the people. By all means, it is the job of an opposition to criticise the work of its opponent, but this is not the main game of government. The reason the coalition has fallen into this trap is because, frankly, it had been too lazy to do the hard policy work.

The famous adage that oppositions do not win elections, governments lose them, proved to be true in 2010. The coalition government has for the most part been a government in name only, because as I said, it has failed to lead Victorians to a new understanding of the future and how we will get there. It started in late 2010 and early 2011 on what it thought was the way to success, and that was reviewing key Labor initiatives that it thought were so unpopular that it was handed the election on that basis. It reviewed, for example, the

desalination plant, the north-south pipeline and the myki ticketing projects.

The coalition suspended other initiatives, such as the universally supported Victorian schools plan, which it had promised hand on heart to keep. It announced that it would introduce massive budget cuts to education, police, emergency services and health services, and it set about slashing 4200 public service jobs. The effect was to delay, and divert attention and energy away from, forward-looking and positive infrastructure investment. Instead the coalition fiddled around with Labor's projects, which it used to re-prosecute a battle with Labor that it had in fact already won, because it was in government. Before too long we had the spectacle of the business end of town — the likes of Lindsay Fox and Elizabeth Proust — pushing the Baillieu government to, for heaven's sake, start thinking about long-term infrastructure development in the interests of all Victorians as well as business.

The massive budget cuts, the \$600 million-plus that came out of education and the \$550 million that came out of health, directly affected hundreds of thousands of Victorian families that derived benefit from those services that were being trashed before their very eyes. The dismantling of the Victorian schools plan that I mentioned, did not only harm — and it will continue to harm — the capacity of the state to educate and skill up the next generation of Victorians. It also harmed the economy and the construction industry, for a start, and it diminished the standing of the new government in the eyes of parents who send their children to state schools.

Then of course there was the attack on Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) funding. That was another blow to our secondary schools. It forced schools to cut exactly those programs that make a difference to young people who need broader options to help them succeed. I know that in the end many schools in Eastern Victoria Region redirected funds from other programs — such as maintenance or Victorian certificate of education enrichment projects, for example — to keep their VCAL program going. In my most recent round of visits to schools it was made clear to me that schools are starting to reach their limits. Three years on, the coalition budget cuts are biting ever deeper, and school principals fear the worst. The recent announcement by Christopher Pyne, the federal Minister for Education, that the money the federal coalition promised when it was in opposition will now not be coming through is of course a further blow.

The VCAL cuts were just a precursor to the savagery of the \$300 million per annum cuts to the TAFE sector, amounting to some \$1.2 billion over the four-year

forward estimates period. These cuts generated the biggest campaign I have ever seen since I have been in this Parliament. Every member will have been inundated with emails, telephone calls and letters objecting to the cuts and pointing out how they or a member of their family were being directly and adversely affected. In my view if there is a single policy decision that explains why the coalition has lost mass public support, it is most likely the budget cuts to the TAFE sector, which we know were reluctantly presided over by the hapless Peter Hall, the Minister for Higher Education and Skills.

The collapse in support for the coalition that we are seeing and its failure to fix the state's problems and build the future is not the product of one single policy failure or one set of budget cuts. The cause lies in many breaches of faith. The electorate has felt those 1000 cuts. The cause also lies in the many occasions where the coalition has failed to understand and to act.

The coalition came to office after 11 years of Labor government. Labor developed sound policies in line with a clear plan that was set out in a document titled *Growing Victoria Together*. The 11 directions contained in that document served as a consistent policy framework over three election cycles and 11 budgets. If you go back and look at those budgets from those 11 years, you will see that each of the programs that Labor committed to in the 1999, 2002 and 2006 elections is accounted for in those successive budgets. That trail is there for history to judge. Labor's program was clear, concise, planned and largely delivered.

I will review some of the achievements of the Labor government over those 11 years to draw out the contrast with where the coalition government finds itself after three short years. We restored teachers to schools after the Kennett cuts; we increased hugely the number of nurses in hospitals and police in the community; we invested massively in building schools, hospitals, and police, fire and ambulance stations; we invested in roads and public transport; we invested in rail, port and freight systems; we invested in renewable energy, such as wind and solar; we expanded our national and marine parks; and, very importantly, we built the water grid, the desalination plant and the north-south pipeline.

I will have members know that when I sat down in Strangers Corridor with a prominent leader of the Victorian Farmers Federation during the last term of the Labor government, he said to me words that I will not forget. He said if there is one thing that the Bracks and Brumby governments will be remembered for, it is the

water grid that will stand this state in good stead for generations.

Labor also expanded our legal institutions, establishing therapeutic courts and enhancing alternative dispute resolution approaches. It tackled alcohol and drug dependency issues and introduced and passed groundbreaking legislation — the Abortion Law Reform Act 2008 is just one example.

There is absolutely nothing comparable that the coalition government has even begun to map out, much less deliver, because at the time of its election three short years ago it had no idea where it wanted to take Victoria. The only idea the coalition had was to wreck as much as possible of the Labor program as soon as possible, without a credible and positive program to replace or exceed it.

This mindset led to a negative, backward-looking approach that eventually set up the coalition to act not as a new government but as an opposition in control of the levers of government. The disgraceful attack on the integrity of the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Simon Overland, which went right to the top and into the offices of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, and the fallout after so much of this tawdry exercise was revealed by the Ombudsman, led to further erosion of the standing of the government in the community and among opinion formers.

Mr Leane referred to the flagship law and order initiative the coalition trumpeted in its last term in opposition, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. It was going to show up how weak, indecisive and downright scared the previous government was when it came to seriously tackling corruption. As we know the IBAC was finally, after many months of delay, delivered. It was heavily compromised, not by any stretch of the imagination matching the coalition's big promises. It was roundly and almost universally condemned by members of the legal fraternity, and at least in its initial stages the government was unable to find suitably qualified personnel to preside over the commission.

Under huge pressure from the business sector over the lack of infrastructure investment that I mentioned earlier, the coalition decided to back the east-west link at a phenomenal cost, without a business case, without rigour and, very importantly, without public support.

The story is the same in manufacturing — a productive sector in which Victoria has for many decades led the nation. The coalition came to government without a policy and without an idea of what its role should be.

During the last sitting week Mr Somyurek, in a debate on the future of the automotive industry in Victoria, pointed this out when he reminded the house that the first thing the coalition did when it came to government in Victoria was to call on the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission to formulate a manufacturing policy. That process took 11 months — almost 25 per cent of the term of the government — because no work had been done while the coalition was in opposition. There was no preparation so there was no policy. The government had to make its policy up and that took up valuable time — 11 months at the beginning of its term.

That delay meant that the government sat on its hands and businesses were forced to either scale down their operations or close up altogether because they lacked confidence that the new coalition government would be able to understand that business and industry grow when there is a cooperative relationship between the sector and the government. All the while there was turmoil within the coalition parties due to the disproportionate influence that individual MPs and micro-factions were having within the government, with a majority of one, and the difficulty of keeping order in the Legislative Assembly, as week after week members felt that they were not being heard. Yesterday's events in the Legislative Assembly were one sad outcome of a profound lack of political leadership.

Earlier this year these tensions led to the undermining of the then Premier, Ted Baillieu, the member for Hawthorn in the Assembly, his eventual dismissal and the elevation of the now Premier, Denis Napthine, whom the coalition hoped would be able to restore some semblance of order to the coalition and lead it to victory in 2014. With the election in sight the coalition government knows that time is running out and that everything it has tried to do has collapsed, and there is a surreal air of unreality and desperation taking hold of the government. The Victorian coalition is racked with uncertainty. I see those opposite scratching their heads and asking each other, 'How can it be that we coalition members in this state, in the government, are in decline when across the country the coalition appears to be in the ascendant? Why is New South Wales doing as well as it is doing when the Victorian coalition is doing so badly?'

Twelve months ago Labor released its Plan for Jobs and Growth, and last week our leader, Daniel Andrews, released Project 10 000, focusing on rail services, road networks and job creation. Members opposite will remember that the jobs plan included measures to repair the damage that the coalition had inflicted on the TAFE

sector. It signalled Labor's approach to infrastructure investment and support for business by reducing costs and attracting investment as well as committing a future Labor government to supporting local manufacturing through state and local government procurement.

Project 10 000 builds on the jobs plan and tackles the important area of traffic congestion that directly and daily affects road users, commuters, business and industry. There are overcrowded and unpunctual trains, as well as the deteriorating roads that we have mentioned in suburban Melbourne and country Victoria. Labor has shown from opposition that it is possible to think through deliverable ways of improving transport infrastructure for Victorians, and this is why Labor's Project 10 000 has met with a very positive response from Victorians.

For all of these reasons Ms Pulford's motion is correct. It is well targeted; each of the 10 points it mentions is a running sore for the coalition. The government stands condemned for these very many failures to deliver services and good government to the people of Victoria.

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — If one had tuned into the scenes in the Legislative Assembly yesterday, one would have gained the impression that some of us do not like each other. If one were to see what we saw in the Legislative Assembly yesterday — an opposition deliberately going out of its way to provoke a near riot on the floor of the Parliament, a Leader of the Opposition misusing his position to attempt to bring Parliament to a standstill, an opposition defying the Chair in a way which was, to say the least, most unparliamentary — one may well form the opinion that members of Parliament do not like each other. That might be the case in certain instances, but I have to tell you one thing: I like the mover of this motion, Ms Pulford.

**Ms Tierney** — But!

**Mr FINN** — No, there is no 'but'. She has many fine attributes — and I am sure that is going to go down really well in her preselection — but probably the attribute I like the most is her sense of humour. She has a tremendous sense of humour and one that I have enjoyed many times over the last few years. If I thought Ms Pulford had a great sense of humour before, she has totally outdone herself today. This is almost like a second address-in-reply debate. You can talk about anything on this motion. She has got wacky Wednesday, and she has hit it right off the Richter scale.

I have never seen a motion quite like this. It covers everything known to man. We could speak on this motion from now until Christmas next year. We could go on until 6.00 p.m. on election night speaking on this motion alone because it has everything, based on a fair degree of falsehood and a fair degree of fallacy.

**Mr O'Brien** — It's got everything wrong.

**Mr FINN** — It has got everything wrong. There is one thing about the Labor Party and our friends on the left. This is to paraphrase the great, late US President Ronald Reagan, who said of the Democrats that they know so much that is wrong. You would have to say about Labor Party members that they too know so much that is wrong, and they are displaying that in all its glory today. I thank Ms Pulford for coming in here with this motion. I have had a good laugh throughout this debate, I have to say, listening to members on the other side of the house in particular, although a couple on this side have given me a chuckle too. I should also say to Mr Leane — he is over there with Mr Tee at the moment; he will be bored stupid — that I appreciate his contribution. He almost had me in tears a couple of times. It was highly entertaining, and I want to thank him very much for his attempt to keep this Parliament well awake.

Interestingly enough, as so often happens with these motions, the mover, Ms Pulford, for whom I have a great deal of respect and time, is not actually here. One can only assume that she is working the phones because, as we know — in fact there are only three Labor members in the chamber at the moment —

**Mr O'Brien** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — As Mr O'Brien says, there would be a lot of number crunching going on at the moment. I do not know why there would be number crunching, because we all know that Labor does not have preselections. What will happen is that about three or four blokes will get together in a room one afternoon at about 3.00 p.m. They will have a sixpack each, and they will say, 'Righto, we've got to be at the pub by 5.00 p.m.'. They will set out who is going to sit in the Parliament, in which seat and all that sort of thing. Then at 4.55 p.m. they will come out and say, 'This is your future'.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — There are women too, are there?

**Ms Tierney** — On a point of order, Acting President, on sheer relevance, Mr Finn is referring to

and debating the issue of ALP preselections. That issue is in no way contained within this motion.

**Mr O'Brien** — On the point of order, Acting President, as others have pointed out, this is an extremely broad motion which encompasses a lot of matters, including matters that might be said to be internal to the government's formation and political matters. If one listened, as Mr Finn and I did, to what was accurately described as the entertaining — in an ironic sense — contribution of Mr Leane, who also proceeded to traverse what might be called party-political matters, one would say that Mr Finn is entitled to respond in the manner in which he is.

**Mr FINN** — On the point of order, Acting President, I refer to some of your colleagues in the chair — and I might have been one of them — who allowed considerable discussion of a similar nature in the area that I am developing at the moment. This is not new material that I am raising. On that basis, I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Mr Finn may well ask that, but I have to say that just as Ms Tierney was getting to her feet I was reading through the motion, and I noticed it did not mention anything about preselection. I had also been thinking to myself that after 5 minutes I would draw Mr Finn's attention to the substance of the motion, which he has not yet turned his attention to. So I ask him to turn his attention to the substance of the motion.

**Mr FINN** — On a point of order, Acting President, you might like to have another read of the motion, because there is reference to recent 'upheaval to the government's legislative program as a result of recent events in the Parliament'. That is a direct result of what is going on in the Labor Party at the moment. The show-offs in the Labor Party are trying to get their union hack bosses on board so that when those three or four people get together —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! I think I made a very clear ruling. Mr Finn should not be challenging that ruling. Instead he should turn to the substance of the motion, as requested.

**Mr FINN** — Certainly. I was actually referring to paragraph 7 of the motion. I will quote it again, if you would like to read it with me. It says:

the upheaval to the government's legislative program as a result of recent events in the Parliament ...

That is a direct quote from the motion. If I cannot refer to a direct quote from the motion, I am not sure what is relevant.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Mr Finn knows very well that was not the subject of the point of order. I request that he return to the substance of the motion and not to the subject he was previously talking about, which is not referred to in the motion.

**Mr FINN** — As I said to you, Acting President, this is not the first time that the matter has been raised, but I will listen to what you say, and if you wish to overturn earlier discussions, well, so be it.

**Mr Barber** — Don't do a Jacinta.

**Mr FINN** — No, I do not think I will be doing that. I will get to the matter that I want to discuss this afternoon, and that is the cost of living. One of the greatest impacts on the cost of living for average Australians in this country today is the green industry, the industry that tells us about global warming, climate change and all that sort of nonsense. Let me tell you, I believe the climate does change. I believe that because I know that months ago I was wearing an overcoat and today I am not. If I were outside now, I would be wearing a T-shirt, because the temperature is warmer.

**Mr O'Brien** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — I was wearing a yellow and black overcoat, indeed, Mr O'Brien. I know the climate changes. In fact, if the climate did not change, we would be able to skate to work because the ice age would still be with us. We know the climate changes, but to impose all these costs and taxes on the community in an attempt to stop the climate from changing is insanity. It is lunacy of the highest order. There is no way you can change the weather by imposing a tax. There is no way you can do that, and the carbon tax is clearly an impost on every Australian. It is a tax on jobs, and members opposite have gone on the public record as saying that they support this tax. Their parties in Canberra imposed this tax, and I assume the parties of those opposite today still support this tax.

**Mr O'Brien** — They broke a promise too.

**Mr FINN** — They did break a promise. I am not sure whether that is covered by the motion. Is that covered by the motion? There are a whole heap of things in this motion that are covered by the motion, but I am not allowed to talk about some of them. I am not sure whether I will get into trouble for that.

I want to refer to the cost of living, which is part of the motion. It says, 'Bring down cost of living pressures on Victorians', just in case the Acting President was in any doubt as to whether this was relevant to the motion. It clearly is very relevant to the motion. One of the greatest impacts on the cost of living for Victorians today relates to the costs imposed as a result of the influence of the green industry. The carbon tax is one of those costs. It is a nonsense. It is a tax on jobs, it is a tax on small business — —

**Mr O'Brien** — Hospitals.

**Mr FINN** — It is a tax on hospitals, it is a tax on local government, it is a tax on transport — it is a tax on everything. In fact I recall when the GST was introduced there was a general concern about the impact that would have on the cost of living. Let me tell you that the GST is nothing compared with the width and breadth of the carbon tax. The carbon tax hits everything because it is a tax on electricity. If you use electricity as a means of production, you get taxed on everything. If you build cars, you are paying a carbon tax. If you make bread, you are paying a carbon tax. If you cure sick people at a hospital, you pay the carbon tax. If you take people to work on the bus, you pay the carbon tax. Whatever you do, the carbon tax is like a giant octopus with tentacles that reach into all facets of life.

**Mr O'Brien** — On your electricity bill.

**Mr FINN** — Indeed it is on their electricity bill, as Mr O'Brien correctly points out. We can see the direct impact on the cost of living of each individual Victorian in their electricity bill, but it is far wider than just individual electricity bills.

As I said earlier, there is ample proof that there has been no global warming for 17 years. There is ample evidence to show that and to prove that. In fact there is significant evidence to show that there was not even much warming before the 17 years, so this whole thing is a bit of a charade. What is even more of a charade concerns people such as Adam Bandt, the federal member for Melbourne, and Senator Christine Milne, federal leader of the Australian Greens, who have been referring to the Prime Minister as 'Typhoon Tony' and blaming what happened in the Philippines on climate change. That is total and absolute nonsense.

As one of my referees, I refer to one of the chief correspondents for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Peter Hartcher. The *Sydney Morning Herald* is generally one of the leaders of the cheer squad for global warming and the climate change industry. I listened to

Mr Hartcher on radio a couple of weeks ago and heard him asked whether global warming and climate change had any impact on the typhoon that hit the Philippines. I waited and thought, 'Here we go. This will be unbelievable'. He went on to say that he had looked at all the evidence and read what was written by all the experts and had come to the view — and I waited with bated breath — that no, there was no connection at all. Mind you, that did not stop the Greens, and it is not stopping one now.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! When Mr Finn says there was no connection at all, I have to say there is no connection at all, or very little connection, between this motion and the subject of the carbon tax. I am sure we are all very clear on Mr Finn's views. However, the carbon tax is not mentioned in Ms Pulford's motion. It is a federal matter. I refer Mr Finn again to the subject of the motion.

**Mr O'Brien** — On a point of order, Acting President, I am being careful in raising this point of order because you have made some broad rulings and I seek further guidance. No objection has been made by members. Mr Finn's contribution relates to his belief, and that of others, that the carbon tax and other green policies relate to the cost of living, which is not only a significant coalition election promise, as outlined in the motion, but has also been the subject of debate. In such a broad motion it is difficult for the Chair to editorialise as to which specific matters relating to the cost of living are in and out of the motion. I call into question the broad nature of the motion rather than Mr Finn's contribution on it. I ask you for guidance. As Mr Finn says, if he is not allowed to speak to matters referred to in the motion, it seems to me that the motion itself, rather than Mr Finn's contribution, may not be an appropriate matter for debate.

**Mr FINN** — On the point of order, Acting President, while you were involved in discussions earlier I made the point — and I wish you heard the point that I made — that I am making reference to the cost of living. The motion specifically refers to cost of living pressures on Victorians. I am making a specific reference to what I believe is one of the major impacts on the cost of living to Victorians. I can understand your sensitivity on this issue, but irrespective of that, this is a matter that I believe impacts on the cost of living. If members cannot talk about matters that are in the motion, I am not sure what the hell we are supposed to talk about at all.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Firstly, it has nothing to do with my sensitivities.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Secondly, Mr Finn should watch his language and make sure that his language is parliamentary, and I do not believe his most recent phrase was. Thirdly, Mr Finn had mentioned the carbon tax for at least 7 minutes as part of the cost of living. While I understand that there is a reference to the cost of living, I would say that tedious repetition is coming into play and that Mr Finn was not directing himself directly to the provisions of the motion. That is all I was asking him to do.

**Ms Hartland** — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn should withdraw the comments he just made about the Acting President that were in my hearing.

**Mr O'Brien** — On the point of order, President, that is a subsequent point of order. Mr Finn raised a slightly different point of order to mine. I am not sure if — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Which point of order are you speaking on?

**Mr O'Brien** — I am calling on your guidance to consider my point of order, which is that if it is the case — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Is this a separate point of order?

**Mr O'Brien** — It is on the original point of order, which I did not take you to have ruled on, because Mr Finn raised a variation of it. If it is the case that Mr Finn is not able to talk about cost of living pressures or the events in Parliament when they are in the words of the motion, it would seem to me to call into question the ability of the motion to be fairly discussed. I know you referred to tedious repetition, which can be an issue, but in an untimed debate certainly there are many other issues that can be debated at length. I seek your guidance to see if the matter is to be referred to the President — I understand the rulings you have made — because it would provide me with some inability to phrase what matters I would be referring to if we are not allowed to refer to matters that are in the motion.

**Mr Ondarchie** — On Ms Hartland's point of order, Acting President, as you would be aware, I was sitting very close to you when Mr Finn was sat down, and I could not hear any utterance from him at that end of the chamber. I am not quite sure what Ms Hartland is asking him to withdraw, because we could not hear anything about that at that end of the chamber.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! If I can refer to the points of order collectively, I was referring to Mr Finn reflecting upon the Chair in his comments about me, which I drew to his attention. I drew to his attention the use of what I regard as unparliamentary language. He should probably reflect on whether he withdraws both of those matters.

On Mr O'Brien's point of order and subsequent point of order, I concede that there is some reference to cost of living in the motion, but it is a very substantive motion. Mr Finn was talking about the carbon tax, which is not referred to in the motion and which is a federal matter. I simply asked him to refer to the substantive matters raised in the motion and drew his attention to those.

**Mr FINN** — On a point of order, Acting President, on the basis that you have ruled twice now that speaking on matters that are not contained in the motion is irrelevant to the motion, would you be kind enough to give me a list of things I can talk about so I can continue my speech?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! On the point of order, I have not said that Mr Finn cannot mention the carbon tax; I am just saying that there are more substantive matters in the motion. I am drawing attention to that. Mr Finn had referred to that matter, which is a federal issue, at length. I was referring him to that.

**Mr O'Brien** — On a point of order, Acting President, in light of your rulings I would simply ask that —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Is this a separate point of order?

**Mr O'Brien** — It is a separate point of order. It is a further request that you refer the issue of very broad-ranging motions to the President for guidance, because if they are going to be contained in the manner of your rulings — and I am not quibbling with your rulings; I accept that they are what you have made — it calls into question whether these motions should be on the notice paper in the first place, as it will put the house into debate as to the relevance of the motions in a way that is not conducive to the efficient running of the house.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! On the point of order, the President can make up his own mind as to whether a motion is in order or not, and I do not need to refer this one to him because it is already on the notice paper. Referring back to Mr Finn's earlier point of order, I refer him to the text of the motion and ask him to return to it.

**Mr FINN** — On a point of order, Acting President, you made some reference to the fact that I had been speaking about the carbon tax for 7 minutes. That is actually not the case, and, if I could, I suggest to you that if you had been actually listening, you would be aware of that. I made reference to the carbon tax most certainly, but I then moved on to talk about the green industry, which is a major impact on the cost of living in the state.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! I am on my feet. I would ask Mr Finn not to reflect on the Chair in his comments in points of order, and I ask him to withdraw that comment.

**Mr FINN** — Righto. I will get my crystal ball out and give it a rub, and hopefully I will be able to come up with something that will meet with your approval, Acting President, to speak about.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! I am on my feet. Mr Finn reflected upon me by saying I was not listening. I was listening. I ask him to withdraw that comment.

**Mr FINN** — I withdraw.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Thank you.

**Mr FINN** — Extraordinary; I cannot wait to get to Facebook on this one. The global warming industry — the green industry — has a major impact on the cost of living in this state. There is no doubt about that. The money that has been going into the green industry for years, particularly under the previous government, is one of the great rorts of our time. The desalination plant is sitting down in Gippsland doing nothing, rotting away at a cost of some \$2 million a day to the taxpayer. That is a result of the green industry. That is a result of what Labor Premiers and Labor governments have been told by Sandbags Flannery — Professor Tim Flannery — who said that our dams would never again be filled by the rain that falls from the skies. Of course that was before the Brisbane floods and the Sydney floods and numerous other floods. Our dams are now close to 84 per cent full.

The cost of living is a direct result of pandering to the green industry by previous governments. There is no getting away from that, and I commend Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the federal government on defunding the Climate Commission and removing Sandbags Flannery from his \$175 000 a year part-time job. That hopefully will have some impact on the cost of living as well by lessening the pressure on the cost of living

because we, the taxpayers, will no longer be paying that particular gentleman's salary.

There is not a great deal of time left, sadly, given that I have attempted now to speak on a number of subjects in the motion that have been ruled out of the motion, but I am going to keep going anyway because Mr Ondarchie says he is interested, and if Mr Ondarchie is interested, I am with him all the way.

The thing about the Labor Party is that it believes that if you spend money, you are doing something worthwhile — that spending money is in itself worthwhile. It does not matter what you spend it on; as long as you spend money, you are doing something worthwhile. We were elected, says the Labor Party, to spend money, and we are going to spend your money.

**Mr Ondarchie** — Taxpayers money.

**Mr FINN** — Taxpayers money. That is the difference between the people on this side and the people on the other side. On this side of the house we know that the money we are talking about is not our money; it is the money of the taxpayers of Victoria. Whenever I go to an announcement, go to a sod turning or the opening of something, I make a very clear point of thanking the taxpayers of Victoria for making this possible, because without the taxpayers of Victoria we would have nothing. It is the taxpayers of Victoria who keep this place open. It is the people of Victoria who actually work for a living who have to pay tax to pay Mr Leane, and what a rip-off that is. How would you like to be working 60 or 70 hours a week to find that 50 per cent of your taxes are paying Mr Leane? It is a disgrace, but that is something — —

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay)** — Order! I ask Mr Leane to cease interjecting. I advise Mr Finn that we can hear him very clearly.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Ondarchie wants a refund on his taxes if any of it has gone to Mr Leane and I can totally understand why.

The bottom line is that the Labor Party is no good with money. It does not understand money and it does not know how to handle it. It does not matter where the Labor Party is. Look at what the Greens-Labor coalition has done in Tasmania, a state which might as well sink for all it is worth these days. Look what the Labor Party has done in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Federally we were previously in the black and now we are \$300 billion in the red. This is what Labor does: it spends money. It

does not care where it spends it or what it is spent on; it just likes spending money. It reminds me of somebody I knew once, whom I will not mention because it will get me into a lot of trouble and I am quite capable of doing that without mentioning any names.

That is the Labor way. As I have said before in this house, every time Labor gets into government it stuffs it up and leaves a dirty, stinking mess for the coalition to fix up when it comes into government. That is the reality of life. If members opposite doubt that, I challenge them to get up and dispute it by providing some justification. When we came to government in Victoria in 2010, Labor had learnt nothing from the Cain and Kirner government years and was in the process of stuffing Victoria up all over again. I could talk at some length about the benefits — —

**Mr Leane** — Give someone else a go.

**Mr FINN** — I will. I trust Mr Leane is over there — —

**Mr Leane** — It is boring.

**Mr FINN** — I do not think it is boring. I think there are a lot of people who are very interested. Mr Leane is a bit dirty because a number of people have heard my speech on the web broadcast and, as we speak, are queuing in Spring Street for the refund that Mr Ondarchie is talking about!

Something I am particularly proud of is that we now have a government in Victoria that takes the western suburbs seriously. Never before has this happened. It is a great pity that Mr Barber is not here, because I want to point out that there is life beyond the tram tracks. Mr Barber seems to think that life ends where Carlton North ends. If you get into Fitzroy or some of those places, then that is it; you have a latte or whatever they have on Brunswick Street, and that seems to be the way the Greens think. They do not care about families out in Werribee, Sunbury or Gladstone Park — families who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. They are just concerned about the latte-sippers in Fitzroy, on Brunswick Street and all around there. We heard that again today, and it is a great pity.

I would like to give the Greens a little bit of advice, if I may: they should get out a little bit more. They should go and see some real people away from the inner city — away from Carlton and Fitzroy. That will be of great benefit to the Greens and I believe of great benefit to this Parliament. It would be a very good thing indeed.

We have a huge project on the drawing board which is going to be of huge benefit to the very people I am speaking about — people in the suburbs. It is called the east–west link. This is supported almost universally across this state by some of the biggest organisations you have seen, but there is one group that is opposed to it. It is the Labor-Greens coalition, as you would expect, because its members are opposed to everything. That is not to say that Labor used to be opposed to it; Labor used to support it. Mr Melhem in particular was a very keen supporter.

**Mr Ondarchie** — Mr Somyurek.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Somyurek too. I have a letter from Mr Melhem in my office that I am happy to table showing his support for the east–west link when he was secretary of the Australian Workers Union. Mind you, there have been a few secretaries of the Australian Workers Union over the years, but that is another story altogether.

**Mr Leane** — Not that many.

**Mr FINN** — Yes, a few slush funds there. What is involved with this east–west link is not just a new way of getting from east to west and from west to east but real jobs for the real people who those on the other side do not care about. The Labor Party in this state has been sucked into believing that Fitzroy and Carlton are all that matter, and I cannot begin to imagine why. It is losing support left, right and centre because of that. I could talk — —

**Mr Leane** — Have you read the latest polls?

**Mr FINN** — Which poll would that be? Mr Leane has got to stop reading the *Age*. If Mr Leane keeps reading the *Age* it will give him a false sense of security, and he has to be careful. There are a number of other areas I could talk about where this government has brought benefits to the western suburbs, but I will not do so because I know that other members are very keen to speak on this motion, even if the mover of this motion has not been seen in the chamber for quite some time.

I say to members of the Labor Party and their brother and sisters at arms in the Greens: you need a reality check. They need to have a good, hard think about what they did to the people of Victoria over 11 years. They did what earlier generations have done. The bottom line is that when it comes to government Labor members are just not very good at it, and it does not matter how much practice they have, they do not get any better at it. That is the problem: it does not matter how much time or how many years they are in government, they get no

better at it. The people of Victoria know that if they want a solid government whose members can handle money and give this state and the people of this state a future, they need a Liberal-Nationals government. That is the bottom line, not the sort of fabrication or nonsense that members see bounced around in this motion.

I urge the house to vote against this motion. I will most certainly be doing that, with bells on. I urge members opposite, the next time they come up with a motion as ludicrous as this, to use their self-control and resist the temptation.

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

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## HOME BIRTH PROGRAMS

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

That this house calls on the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis, MLC, to, as soon as feasible, take the necessary steps to expand public hospital homebirth services, including —

- (1) committing to fund start-up costs of homebirth programs to hospitals providing maternity services in the next state budget;
- (2) developing statewide guidelines and information for health services implementing homebirth services;
- (3) developing systems to prospectively collect costing data; and
- (4) supporting further research into the safety of homebirth programs and research to compare clinical outcome data associated with low-risk births in different birth settings.

I will speak only very briefly on this motion because it is about a fairly straightforward matter. I am bringing this motion before the house because I am concerned that the government is dragging its feet on expanding birth choices for women. Sixteen months ago, in June 2012, the final report on the independent evaluation of the homebirth pilot programs at the Casey and Sunshine hospitals was submitted to the Department of Health. It took nine months, until March, for the Department of Health's summary report to be released publicly.

The summary report is not a complex document; it simply provides a summary of the findings of the evaluation. The summary indicates that the Minister for Health had sought advice from the perinatal services advisory committee on the implementation and expansion of publicly funded homebirthing options in Victoria. Exactly when the minister asked for advice is

unclear, but what I can say for sure is that it is eight months or more since it was requested.

In the last sitting week, in response to a question without notice I posed about a different matter, the minister said that he has now received that advice on the homebirth program and that it was supportive of the rollout. It seems to me that each step in this process has been protracted: nine months to produce a summary of a report and eight months to receive advice. It is time the government got on with it and took the necessary steps to expand homebirth services to other leading hospitals in a safe, well-supported and well-monitored way.

Lately I have been talking about maternity services to a lot of women, especially women in the outer suburbs. Mr Finn apparently believes I never go there, but I actually live in Footscray. He seems to forget that many Greens, including myself, live in the western suburbs. It is time the government got on with the job and took the necessary steps to expand homebirth services to other hospitals. As I said, lately I have been talking about maternity services to a lot of women. I have conducted a survey of 1385 women. What I heard strongly is that women want more choice in publicly funded birthing options.

A public hospital homebirth program is one of the very important options women want. Currently public hospital homebirth programs are available to only a limited number of women who live in the catchments of the Sunshine and Casey hospitals. There is demand for these services in other areas because, amongst other problems that discriminate against private midwives, many women cannot afford the cost of a private midwife-supported homebirth.

While the sample size was not large, the homebirth pilot evaluation found very promising statistics, with 88 per cent of the homebirth group having a vaginal birth, compared to 70 per cent of the hospital group — that is, there were 18 per cent more natural vaginal births, which is a great outcome. With regard to neonatal outcomes, women in the hospital group were more likely to have intervention during labour and birth. The perinatal mortality rate was identical for both groups.

The homebirth pilot evaluation found that a public hospital-supported homebirth program provides this choice to women who otherwise could not afford it. Mothers expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the care, and there was very strong support for the program amongst midwives. The lower intervention rates, the higher number of natural births and the high

level of mother satisfaction provide a strong case for expanding homebirth services to other hospitals, particularly leading maternity hospitals as a starting point.

While there was a start-up cost associated with establishing these programs, the evaluation found that there were significant savings once programs were operating, with reduced bed day costs and staffing of postnatal wards in homebirth programs. Given that there are growing issues with the demand for maternity services outstripping the physical capacity of hospitals, especially in growth areas, a homebirth program seems to provide an important low-cost means of increasing the capacity of hospitals without compromising on quality or safety. A well-supported, well-monitored and safe expansion of the homebirth program will benefit women who desire this birth choice, and I believe it will benefit the Victorian hospital system.

I wish to finish by outlining the elements of the motion. The first point recognises that to get homebirth programs off the ground in additional hospitals some extra funds will be required in the short term. Paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) mirror recommendations outlined in the homebirth program pilot summary report and are elements that will facilitate the expansion of the program and help to ensure that it is well researched and monitored and delivers safe and cost-effective as well as women-centred services. I call on the government to stop dragging its feet on this matter and get on with the expansion of the public hospital homebirth program.

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on Ms Hartland's motion:

That this house calls on the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis, MLC, to, as soon as feasible, take the necessary steps to expand public hospital homebirth services, including —

- (1) committing to fund start-up costs of homebirth programs to hospitals providing maternity services in the next state budget;
- (2) developing statewide guidelines and information for health services implementing homebirth services;
- (3) developing systems to prospectively collect costing data; and
- (4) supporting further research into the safety of homebirth programs and research to compare clinical outcome data associated with low-risk births in different birth settings.

I have listened to most of Ms Hartland's contribution. In her concluding remarks she spoke about the additional resources required and said that additional

funds would not be needed in the short term. I would have thought the four areas outlined in Ms Hartland's motion would require ongoing funding. Continually collecting data and supporting further research requires recurrent funding. I do not know how long she expects them to operate, but these are significant areas for consideration, and I do not believe something as important as the statewide community health system she calls for can be regarded lightly. There are implications for the services she describes, and the government is taking a very considered approach to the issue.

Ms Hartland says there is not enough funding for this area of health care, but I remind her that in the 2013–14 state budget the coalition government committed \$14.3 billion to fund health services right across the state, and that included the growing demand for maternity and neonatal services. I practised as a midwife for 10 years. I worked in one of the state's leading hospitals, the Royal Women's Hospital, and I have a very high regard for the day-to-day services it provides. I commend all the nurses, midwives, obstetricians and gynaecologists, as well as the numerous allied health professionals associated with that organisation. They do an extraordinary job every single day. We have a growing population in this state, and there are greater demands on those services. As technology advances we are seeing more demand on neonatal services. There are improved outcomes after premature deliveries, and we are treating a lot more patients with complex health disorders.

In my time I managed one of the high-risk areas in maternity services: diabetes patients, particularly those with gestational diabetes but also women who had type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Patients in this high-risk category need intensive and thorough monitoring. Our health services do a tremendous job in caring for women right across the spectrum, whatever their health condition. I would like to commend the government for putting in the significant amount of money needed to support a growing population and the more complex needs our health system is facing year in, year out, specifically in relation to maternity care. In the 2013–14 budget there was a boost of around \$24.7 million, which went to providing more neonatal intensive care units (NICUs). A further \$22.4 million went towards funding the growth in maternity care and, as I said, treating more patients across the state.

The data tells us that there is a growing demand for maternity services in the northern and western regions, that latter of which Ms Hartland represents, and that in our public hospital system overall births have been increasing year in, year out. I have some statistics from

the public hospital system: in 2010–11 there were 52 064 births, in 2011–12 there were 54 362 and in 2012–13 there were 56 097. You can see that there has been a gradual and steady increase. Our hospital services need to meet these demands, and that is exactly what this government is planning for and undertaking. In saying that, there is particular demand for neonatal services such as NICUs, and because of the increase in the number of homebirths there is obviously going to be an increasing demand for those important neonatal services. I congratulate the minister on his investing in five additional NICU beds to meet the ongoing demand. We now have 95 NICU beds across the state, and as somebody who has worked in the area I understand their importance and the very big job that midwives and health workers do in looking after babies in the NICU.

Turning to the main point of Ms Hartland's motion in relation to homebirths, it is true that in 2009 a homebirth pilot program was commenced at Sunshine Hospital and Casey Hospital, and the Perinatal Services Advisory Committee (PSAC) reviewed the evaluation of the pilot. It is important to explain what the committee does. It is a ministerial advisory committee which was established in May 2012 to provide advice and make recommendations to the Minister for Health and the Department of Health on maternity and neonatal services in Victoria. Its website states:

In particular the PSAC provides advice on:

Effective service system design and management strategies to improve the quality and outcomes of care for women and newborns.

Approaches to improve the measurement and understanding of maternity and neonatal services and to evaluate the quality and outcomes of care.

Monitoring maternity and neonatal performance to improve planning and management of service capacity across the state.

Policies and strategies to improve the performance of hospitals with maternity and neonatal services and strengthen the interface between service providers and the community.

Specific matters referred to the committee by the Minister for Health and the department for recommendations as required.

The committee has far-reaching responsibilities, in particular for the very necessary and important areas of maternity and neonatal services.

I know Ms Hartland has a particular interest in homebirthing services. But from my experience I would suggest that it is not as simple and clean cut as one might think. There are certain things that need to be

undertaken, and there need to be certain regulations to ensure the welfare of mother and baby in the situation of a homebirth. As I said, the Perinatal Services Advisory Committee has undertaken a review of the pilot that commenced in 2009, and on the website a summary of what it has said about is fairly well spelt out. The committee expresses support for the expansion of the publicly funded homebirth models of care in Victoria but at the discretion of the individual health services, and that is the really important point.

Ms Hartland has suggested that homebirths need to be further supported within various health services. It is really up to those individual health services as to whether they want to undertake such a service. The health services should be able to decide, because they look at resourcing issues in relation to homebirths and at their day-to-day operation of maternity and neonatal services. The situation has to be fluid. You cannot have set bed days or bed times in relation to maternity and neonatal services. It can be complex and very challenging at times. As is highlighted on the committee's website, it is up to individual health services whether or not they want to undertake homebirth programs.

I know many privately practising midwives who have done an extraordinary job for many years, and I support their endeavours. There are eligible midwives who can seek admitting rights and provide maternity services in a public hospital, whether during the antenatal or postnatal periods or during labour. Those privately practising midwives have significant powers because of their experience and ability to provide maternity care for a woman. This is done in the health service and in an environment where there is significant backup, the service can be monitored and medical treatment is available if required.

Unfortunately homebirths, or any birth, can go terribly wrong. I have been in situations where I thought everything was going very well, but there could still have been tragic outcomes. That is the nature of birth and of women going into labour; all sorts of different scenarios might arise from particular situations. Things happen extremely quickly during labour, and circumstances can change very quickly, so it is only right and proper that private midwives should feel safe in practising what they do — and they do it extremely well — within the confines of a health service that can provide backup and support if something untoward should occur during the antenatal period, labour or, for that matter, the postnatal period. Privately practising midwives can have authorisation for access to the Medicare benefits schedule and the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, but those schemes are applicable only

to health services; they do not apply to the homebirth situation.

In speaking about her motion Ms Hartland's kept saying the government is dragging its feet in expanding various services. I have to say significant work has been done in this area. That was highlighted in the *Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022*. It talks about planning for the future, planning for population growth, providing the best health-care outcomes for women and their babies and looking at what we need to do in supporting the Victorian population. That framework has a specific focus on improving the health and wellbeing of all women and, as I mentioned earlier, looking at women who are at most risk. There are women who have complicating factors, and they need to be closely monitored throughout their antenatal, labour and postnatal periods.

The government's establishment of the Perinatal Services Advisory Committee is a good way of getting advice and continuing to monitor the data Ms Hartland referred to. The committee can keep an eye on what is happening and advise the minister and the health department about various situations. I commend the minister — and I am pleased to see that he is in the house — for developing the *Eligible Midwives and Collaborative Arrangements — An Implementation Framework for Victorian Public Health Services*, which was released just recently. It implements the framework for Victorian public health services and supports midwifery practice. That sends a tremendous message to all midwives in Victoria and gives them guidelines and a framework to work within. I think they would be most welcoming of that, because for years and years they have not received the same focus as we are providing with these collaborative arrangements.

Getting back to the pilot homebirth program at Sunshine Hospital and Casey Hospital, an independent evaluation commissioned by the department was positive in that it supported the continuation of the programs offered at the pilot sites.

I understand that the department is now commencing work to develop more guidance for public health services on the relevant clinical, administrative, workforce and other service issues to be considered prior to establishing a homebirth model of care. That goes back to the point I made at the start of my contribution to the debate, which was that Ms Hartland said the cost of bed stays and other neonatal costs would be reduced and there would generally be a low impact on costs. I have to dispute that. We have to be very careful about what we are looking at here. The work required by the department is prudent and should

be done. There may be unintended consequences of rolling out homebirth models without certain protections being put in place and guidance being given. Such a rollout should not be undertaken without that input.

The Casey and Sunshine hospitals are continuing their programs. The programs are being monitored for those eligible women. I would like to say again that the Perinatal Services Advisory Committee, which is providing advice to the minister, is doing a very good job. I commend the work it has done as well as the work of all the midwives and others who are involved in the delivery of maternity and neonatal services across Victoria.

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — On behalf of the Labor Party I am very pleased to support Ms Hartland's motion. The intention of the motion is to improve the range of services and birthing options available to women in Victoria and to improve the availability of homebirthing services, backed up by a safety net of clinical and hospital-based services to try to guarantee safe, appropriate outcomes for mothers and their children. The motion also calls on the government to implement the findings of the evaluation of a pilot homebirthing program established by the then Labor government in 2009 at the Casey and Sunshine hospitals.

We believe it is appropriate to call on the government to act in accordance with the findings of that evaluation of the pilot program and to act in a way which is consistent with the framework that has operated in Victoria since as far back as 2004, when it was established by the then Labor government, in relation to the way maternity services are designed, implemented and provided to families, and to women and children in particular. We in the Labor Party are very supportive of the intention to increase the range of services and options available to Victorian women and their children.

That is the overview of the Labor Party's position. This is one of those occasions when I am very pleased to wholeheartedly, unequivocally support Ms Hartland. Sometimes there are motions moved by the opposition parties in this place that are full of good principle and good intent but which fall short of getting full support in the chamber, but I think this is a motion that should be supported by all parties. I cannot see any reason the government should not be fulsome in its support for this.

The government may have some budgetary constraints and challenges in providing these services, but the cost

to be borne by the government on a system-wide scale would be relatively modest given the cost pressures hospital systems are generally under. The rollout of homebirthing options for women would be a modest, incremental cost within the overall running of the health system rather than something of a daunting scale in the health budget. Quite often the health minister goes on the public record to crow about the value of the health budget and quite often he does not distinguish between the different portfolio matters that he takes credit for, many of which are far beyond the scope of the programs rolled out in hospitals. Given that he pretends to the Parliament that he has access to \$14 billion worth of investment, even though only about \$8 billion goes into hospital systems, maybe the Minister for Health can call upon that other \$6 billion he always takes credit for and allocate some funds for this area.

The Labor government had a proud track record of policy development and configuration of maternity services during the life of its administration from 1999 to 2010, including having established back in 2004 a 10-year agenda for strengthening maternity services across Victoria. Indeed that model of care provided for a range of configurations of services to be provided to Victorian families. It allowed for the active participation and increasing role of midwives in the provision of maternity services, including in homebirth situations. It had to take into account professional indemnity issues, clinical governance issues and supervision issues to provide for the appropriate indemnities and insurance arrangements for people who work in this important service area and to give them and the patients in their care greater confidence.

Labor for that decade was very committed to the growth of these services. A relatively modest number of Victorian women have chosen to exercise this option for their birthing arrangements. On average somewhere in the order of 340 women each year exercise their discretion in making this their birthing preference. Of those 340 women, the majority have a safe birth at home, but around 13 per cent end up requiring hospitalisation, clinical intervention and support to keep mother and baby safe and to provide for their health.

In terms of market forces, demand for this service is relatively modest under current configurations of maternity services. While you would anticipate that if the service was universally supplied and made available to more Victorian women, it would lead inevitably to an increase in demand, given the fairly consistent numbers it would not seem likely to be an increase so rapid that it would either embarrass the provision of state services or embarrass the health services in

question in terms of being able to provide that level of support.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr JENNINGS** — I am certain the Acting President is aware of the volume of the personal conversation the Minister for Health is undertaking whilst I am making my contribution to the debate. If the minister wants to have that conversation, he may be well advised to take it outside. I am sure the Acting President is on the cusp of assisting me by ensuring that my contribution is protected by the Chair, and I thank him for that wholehearted assistance. As the volume increases exponentially in the chamber, I am certain that Hansard will either want my volume increased or perhaps the volume of other contributions decreased. Alternatively, I could be shut down.

I am not sure what is the preference of the chamber, but clearly there is no interest by the Minister for Health in this matter. The minister continues to equivocate, despite receiving very clear advice and receiving fulsome recommendations in the report of the review of the pilot program that ran from 2009 until 2012. The report included recommendations for rolling out the program and for quality assurance, transparency and guidelines, which Ms Hartland has called for in her motion and which is consistent with questions and propositions that Ms Hartland has put to the minister on a number of occasions in the house.

Up until the last 30 seconds of my contribution the minister was not the slightest bit interested in the view of the opposition on this matter, nor has he shown a great interest in adopting the recommendations. In fact, after a three-year pilot and the recommendations, instead of then taking those recommendations and implementing them, he has referred the recommendations to yet another body, asking it to provide him with an implementation plan, without a time frame by which we can have confidence that these services will be provided.

Clearly, the Labor government left a \$400 000 pilot program which was to be implemented in those two hospital locations so as to provide a network of support to homebirthing options in the community. The evaluation has indicated that this program is worthy of support. We have seen that 85 per cent of women who have taken up this option have been extremely satisfied, and it has delivered a safe and appropriate outcome for their birthing arrangements. Not only has the minister received the various elements of technical and clinical guidance and governance arrangements that are embedded in this report, but he then, despite all that

overwhelming evidence — the success of the pilot, the popularity of the program and the safe homebirthing delivery outcomes for families in Victoria — has said he is not in a position to analyse and consider it.

Now three years into this government's term in office the minister has said he needs more time and more space to consider the pilot, and he will do that in his own good time, including considering the program and what has been built in the last few years to provide for those services. The minister is continually running away from Ms Hartland's question or, more importantly, the consumers of which she is mindful, including the nurses and midwives that she is obviously well connected to and mindful of what they seek to do in providing better care options for mothers and babies. Despite it being obvious that those programs should be rolled out, the minister always wants more time.

It is not beyond his capability, if he chooses to make a contribution to this debate, to find some way to blame somebody else for not implementing those outcomes. His track record is to obfuscate his responsibilities and not respond to obvious outcomes within his portfolio. Rather he lays the blame for the floundering health system in Victoria at the foot of other people. Maybe today will be the day when the minister turns his track record on its head and delivers an outcome for Victorian patients, a better outcome for women in Victoria, a better outcome for the midwifery profession in Victoria, better clinical outcomes, better supervision and better integration of services. Maybe today he will step up and indicate that he sees the value of that program, and he will actually endorse the recommendations.

That is the challenge Ms Hartland has thrown out to the minister and the government today. It is something that the Labor Party is very happy to support. We wait to see how the minister responds to this opportunity to provide better health care for women in Victoria and better options in terms of the safe delivery of their children in the future. We look forward to the government stepping up and responding accordingly.

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am particularly interested in Ms Hartland's motion, which deals with the expansion of public hospital homebirth services, and I am pleased to make a contribution to this debate. At the outset of my contribution I will speak about what the excellent Minister for Health, David Davis, who happens to be in the chamber at the moment, has done for midwifery and children in this state. I remind the chamber that the Victorian coalition government has committed \$14.3 billion in the 2013–14 budget to

treat more patients across Victoria; that is an enormous commitment to health in this state. There is a recognition that maternity services have increased and that there is a need for additional funding in this area. It is interesting to note that there was a 3.2 per cent increase in births at public hospitals in 2012–13 compared with the previous year, and from 2010–11 to 2011–12 there was a 4 per cent growth in the number of public hospital births across Victoria.

It is also important to reflect on the investment in neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) cots and critical care beds. In the 2013–14 budget a \$2.2 million investment is being made for five additional NICU cots and critical care beds, which is a recognition of this difficult and sensitive health-care area. These additional respiratory support beds will provide sophisticated technology and medical management to care for premature babies with complex illnesses. The beds will be at Monash Medical Centre, Royal Women's Hospital and Mercy Hospital for Women, and two beds at the Royal Children's Hospital will open in January next year. This investment will increase the NICU cot capacity to 95.

In her contribution Ms Crozier spoke about some of the other initiatives put in place by this minister. She talked about the homebirth pilot program at the Sunshine and Casey hospitals and the Perinatal Services Advisory Committee, which has reviewed the evaluation of the pilot and future options for homebirth models of care in Victoria. The committee has expressed support for the expansion of the publicly funded homebirth models of care in Victoria. A summary of the homebirth pilot program can be seen on the Department of Health website, and I suggest members who are interested have a look at that. Sunshine Hospital and Casey Hospital are continuing to provide publicly funded homebirthing to eligible women as part of their maternity services. The guidance material will be developed in partnership with maternity service providers, and there will be community and stakeholder consultations.

Another initiative is admitting privately practising midwives. The Department of Health has developed and published an implementation framework called *Eligible Midwives and Collaborative Arrangements — an Implementation Framework for Victorian Public Health Services*. The framework was developed in partnership with the Mercy Hospital for Women, Monash Medical Centre and the Royal Women's Hospital, in consultation with stakeholders and with the advice of an expert reference group. A number of approaches have been made by eligible private midwives in relation to establishing collaborative

arrangements. It is important to understand that these are some of the initiatives that have been implemented by Minister Davis.

I now come to the motion at hand. I believe Ms Hartland has put up her motion in good faith. While her sentiments are to be applauded, I believe her motion is ill conceived and some parts of the motion should be changed. I ask to circulate an amendment to Ms Hartland's motion. My amendment will tighten up her motion and make sure that it is more relevant to what Ms Hartland is trying to get at. I will talk about some of the issues in relation to the amendment, and maybe in her summary Ms Hartland would like to look at them too.

I think the amendment to Ms Hartland's motion will be well received in this chamber, and I will read the amendment in a moment. However, I have been in this place for long enough to know that we have a longstanding commitment to not amending motions put up by opposition parties. It is a longstanding convention in this place. We will not actually put this amendment to a vote, but I put this amendment before the chamber because I believe it enhances the motion Ms Hartland has put forward. It is a great opportunity for members of this chamber and for the public who read the debate to understand that this could have been a much better motion with a lot more impact. I ask that it be distributed to members.

In comparing Ms Hartland's motion and my amendment, members will see the difference and that a number of aspects have been tightened and tidied up. As I said, I am not critical of the sentiments that lie behind Ms Hartland's motion. I believe her sentiments are honourable. However, she has misconstrued the situation. Were we to force the issue and debate this amendment and vote on it, we would be out of line and out of step with the traditions of this place. I see Mr Lenders in the chamber. He is counting down to his time of departure. He will also understand some of the subtle rules in this place. Ms Hartland will be pleased to know that I am not going to push the issue of this amendment, which says:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place —

“this house —

- (1) congratulates the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis, MP, for taking necessary steps to strengthen the provision of hospital homebirth services, including the expansion of public services, noting the Perinatal Services Advisory Committee has provided advice on the expansion of hospital homebirth programs;

- (2) notes the budget provided additional funding for birthing services including homebirth programs;
- (3) notes the government has released statewide guidelines and information for health services implementing homebirth services;
- (4) notes the government has developed systems to prospectively collect costing data; and
- (5) notes the government has supported research into homebirth programs.”

This amendment enlarges on the sentiments expressed by Ms Hartland.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Mrs COOTE** — Mr Jennings looks as if he is about to leave. That would be a great pity because all he needed were the lights, the music and the soft tones and he would have been in his theatrical element. He was into reminiscing, in his own words, on the regime of the ALP. It sounds like something from Communist Russia. He talked about his time as a minister, and it was like, ‘Lights, camera, action, and I am on stage in the reminiscence’. He was going back to the seriously olden days of the ALP. It was his big moment on his reflections. He did not add anything to the debate.

As I said to Ms Hartland, I will not push the amendment. I want it put forward merely as a comparison to her motion, to show that some of the issues that were misconstrued have been tightened up and examined. In keeping with the conventions of this place I will not push my amendment any further, but I would like her to understand that it would have been a much better approach. I commend my amendment, without developing it further, and I also place on record once more my praise for the work that the minister, David Davis, is doing in this very important field.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I thank everybody who has contributed to the debate on this very important motion. I would have to say to Mrs Coote that her amendment is a government motion and entirely reverses the intent of my motion, so as much as I appreciate her doing this, I do not think I can accept it. The motion I put forward today is very straightforward and talks about a very specific area. One of the reasons I find the hospital-based homebirthing services so attractive is, as Ms Crozier said, things can go wrong during childbirth. You need the backup of a hospital. Many women can very successfully have home births, but there will be the one who needs a quick transfer, and that is what I find attractive about the hospital-based homebirth service.

There are quite small costs around the start up. The evaluation clearly found that it was economical to do it this way because it was supporting women who could safely give birth at home. One of the ways the government can support hospitals to implement this program is by providing the guidelines. Also, the evaluation shows quite clearly that there was a very high satisfaction rate among women. There were less interventions, with up to 18 per cent more women able to deliver vaginally rather than having interventions in hospital, and I think that says a lot for this program. I believe the government is dragging its feet on this matter, and it needs to consider the fact that the Casey and Sunshine hospitals were two pilots in two separate areas. There has not been a statewide rollout.

The pilot programs at Casey and Sunshine hospitals have proved to be highly successful, and it is time that the minister and the government looked at how they can roll the service out into other areas, especially in the growth areas where maternity services are quite limited. This would be a way for women who are going to have straightforward, safe births to do so at home, with support. The government has not indicated whether it is supporting the motion or voting against it, and I urge that it supports the motion.

**Motion agreed to.**

## GAS EXPLORATION

### Debate resumed from 13 November; motion of Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan):

That this house calls on the state government to implement a permanent ban on the exploration or development of unconventional gas fossil fuels across Victoria.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank the members who, during the last sitting week, took the time to think about their positions and speak on this motion. To recap what members contributed, Mr Drum, speaking on behalf of The Nationals, expressed some frustration with the fact that Labor is now opposing his government for doing things that the Labor Party did when it was in government and for adopting a new position in opposition to the one held by Mr Drum. I have a solution for Mr Drum: if he finds that kind of behaviour by the parties frustrating, perhaps they should merge their parties. The Liberal, Labor and National parties could merge themselves into a new party called the Fossil Fuel Party, and then they will all find themselves in constant agreement, all day every day.

Mr Lenders spoke on the motion and expressed a number of reservations about the way it is phrased,

including the reference to offshore or onshore gas development. If Mr Lenders is particularly concerned about the piece of ocean between the high-water mark and where commonwealth waters start, I am not aware of any gas development proposed in that area, but that should be something for him to worry about rather than using it to find a defect in my motion. It seems that he is in agreement with Mr Philip Davis, who spoke on behalf of the Liberal Party, that time is running out and that they need development of this new source of fossil fuels.

Time is running out. It is running out for the climate and also for us to transition our energy generation away from fossil fuels and on to more renewable sources. Mr Philip Davis proposed a series of amendments that he said he would not move — again, him attempting to improve my motion — but at the same time he said a move towards unconventional gas exploration was inevitable. Clearly, therefore, he is stating that he is in opposition to my motion. He expressed sympathy for farmers who find themselves in the situation of having a gas development on their land, but he will not be voting according to those sympathies, and in the meantime his government is issuing more permits for gas exploration — both conventional and otherwise — on land here in Victoria, some activities of which are under moratorium, but only until the Liberal-Nationals find themselves safely on the other side of the state election.

Mr Philip Davis also claimed that exploration was all about learning more about what resources are available. These exploration activities are extraordinarily expensive. Drilling can cost anything from \$1 million to \$3 million per hole, depending on how deep it goes, and of course those investors expect to be able to recoup that money. They are not conducting a public service to help us learn more about geology. They are in fact seeking to exploit those resources, and that will frequently mean high fugitive emissions and a lot of carbon dioxide released at the time they are burnt.

Fossil fuels are no longer an asset, as they were constantly referred to during Mr Philip Davis's history lesson on mineral development in Victoria, which at one point almost went back to the gold rush. Fossil fuels are in fact a liability. What is an asset in perpetuity is high-quality water, particularly groundwater, a productive agricultural landscape and the biodiversity that is spread through it. All these things will be under threat, along with human health, if we see unconventional gas exploration and extraction spread out across the landscape.

It appears that most voters who have confronted this issue have already made up their minds. Just on Monday night I was at a very large and feisty public meeting at Deans Marsh, an area of western Victoria that a number of members in this place have a keen interest in. Those at that meeting were unanimous in their opposition to seeing fossil fuel development expand into their region. I urge all members to support this motion.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) (*By leave*) — As this motion was moved during the previous sitting week, which was two weeks ago, it is important to put some perspective on it. The motion that has been put before the chamber is:

That this house calls on the state government to implement a permanent ban on the exploration or development of unconventional gas fossil fuels across Victoria.

Just for the record, last week the coalition government reaffirmed its commitment to open and transparent consultation on the future of coal seam gas development in Victoria. As we know, a report by the Gas Market Taskforce, which was established by the former Premier, was published in the period between the last sitting week and today's continuation of debate on this motion, and there is, of course, an opportunity to provide feedback on that report.

The extraction of natural gas has been safely regulated by the Victorian government for more than 40 years, protecting both local communities and the environment while providing an affordable source of energy for households and businesses. There is currently a moratorium on the use of hydraulic fracturing to extract coal seam or any other unconventional gas. This moratorium will now stay in place until at least July 2015. Any decision by the government will be made after careful consideration to make sure that any future developments protect the environment and can coexist with communities and existing industries. There will not be development at any cost. There is no coal seam gas, tight gas or shale gas production in Victoria.

As I have said, the release of the Gas Market Taskforce's report demonstrates the coalition government's commitment to transparency and is the first part of a consultative process to seek the views of Victorians on issues of concern with regard to onshore gas in Victoria. This report is but one input to inform any future decisions. The second stage of the government's consultation will involve the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Nicholas Kotsiras, commencing a face-to-face consultation process from April 2014 across Victorian communities to seek community and individual responses directly.

This 12-month face-to-face community consultation process will include public submissions, facilitated community meetings and workshops with key stakeholders such as farmers, environment groups, community groups and individuals across Victoria.

In terms of protecting Victoria's water assets, last week the commonwealth and Victorian governments announced the first phase of a major water study that will benchmark water aquifers across the state. There was a joint press release issued by the Honourable Greg Hunt, the federal Minister for the Environment, and the Honourable Peter Walsh, MP, Victoria's Minister for Water, dated Friday, 22 November 2013, and headed 'Major Victorian water study launched'. The study's first phase will compile and verify existing data on water assets across Victoria.

The water study will provide Victoria with a comprehensive understanding of the state's water aquifers and water-dependent assets, including groundwater springs, wetlands, rivers and estuaries, as well as investigating potential impacts of resource development. The second step will involve an independent, comprehensive bioregional assessment of the Gippsland and Otway basins undertaken by Geoscience Australia that will look at the potential impacts of resource activities on water aquifers and water assets in these two specific areas. The Victorian government anticipates that this comprehensive work will be completed by May 2015.

The Victorian coalition government will also enshrine in legislation a ban on benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene chemicals to further protect Victoria's water resources. The government's commitment to protecting regional and rural Victoria's food and fibre production, water aquifers, prime agricultural land and general livability is fundamental to our approach to these issues. The government will not support onshore gas production in Victoria unless and until all the scientific facts are known and clear evidence has shown that such an industry will not risk the state's assets. These measures are in addition to Victoria's already strict regulatory framework, which includes environment protection policies under the Environment Protection Act 1970 which do not allow discharge from exploration and mining activities that will pollute groundwater.

The Victorian government will not make any knee-jerk policy announcements on serious economic and energy policy matters. It has yet to be demonstrated that Victoria's brown coal is capable of producing coal seam gas. In contrast to the content of the motion put before the chamber by the Greens, the government has

made it clear that it wants to consult widely and is deeply aware of the concerns of the various communities in relation to the implications of unconventional gas extraction.

With those words I am pleased to put the government's position on the record. As I said, between the time that the motion was moved by the honourable member and the conclusion of debate today there has been significant activity by both the federal and state governments in taking account of issues relating to the use of unconventional gas in Victoria. The motion calls on the state government to implement a permanent ban; however, the government will not support a motion that asks for a permanent ban. As I have outlined in my brief comments, we are looking at all options. The government has made it clear that it wants to consult widely. It is keenly aware of the concerns, but equally it wants to ensure that we do not lock up areas where there may be opportunities in the future. On that basis, we are not supporting Mr Barber's motion.

#### House divided on motion:

*Ayes, 3*

Barber, Mr  
Hartland, Ms (*Teller*)  
Pennicuk, Ms (*Teller*)

*Noes, 35*

Atkinson, Mr  
Broad, Ms  
Coote, Mrs  
Crozier, Ms  
Dalla-Riva, Mr  
Darveniza, Ms (*Teller*)  
Davis, Mr D.  
Davis, Mr P.  
Drum, Mr (*Teller*)  
Eideh, Mr  
Elasmar, Mr  
Elsbury, Mr  
Finn, Mr  
Guy, Mr  
Hall, Mr  
Jennings, Mr  
Koch, Mr  
Kronberg, Mrs  
Leane, Mr  
Lenders, Mr  
Lovell, Ms  
Melhem, Mr  
Mikakos, Ms  
Millar, Mrs  
O'Brien, Mr  
O'Donohue, Mr  
Ondarchie, Mr  
Peulich, Mrs  
Pulford, Ms  
Ramsay, Mr  
Scheffer, Mr  
Somyurek, Mr  
Tarlamis, Mr  
Tee, Mr  
Tierney, Ms

#### Motion negatived.

### GAMING VENUES ATM BAN

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

That the Council take note of the answers given by the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation to a question without notice and supplementary question asked by Mrs Kronberg in relation to responsible gaming venues.

On 19 September the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, the Honourable Edward O'Donohue, in response to a question from Mrs Kronberg, claimed that 'this coalition government has banned ATMs from gaming venues'. Mr O'Donohue went on to attribute the success of the ATM ban, as indicated in the *Evaluation of the Removal of ATMs from Gaming Venues in Victoria, Australia* report, to this government.

I think it is important to set the record straight on this. The first step to ban ATMs from gaming venues was taken by the Labor government in 2007, via the Gambling Legislation Amendment (Problem Gambling and Other Measures) Bill 2007. That bill banned ATMs on the floor of pokies rooms; thus an ATM could be just outside the door, within sight of the machines, as long as it was restricted to \$400 withdrawals. This measure simply did not go far enough and would not have addressed the problem. At the time Mr Barber, the Greens spokesperson on gambling, suggested that a ban on ATMs across the entire gaming venue, as per the Greens policy at the time, would have been more appropriate.

In 2009 the government introduced the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Licensing) Bill to Parliament. The original bill contained no reference to ATMs and gaming venues. It was only through strong negotiation by my colleague Mr Barber with the former government that this reform was achieved. Mr Barber negotiated that former Minister Madden introduce amendments to the bill into the Legislative Council to ban ATMs in gaming venues. This was negotiated as a condition of our support for those gaming reforms, so it was the Greens who secured bans on ATMs in gaming venues.

It was in June 2012 that the current government extended this ban to close a loophole. It extended the ATM prohibition to include alternative cash access devices which do not require staff interaction. I acknowledge this as an important extension, but to claim that this coalition government banned ATMs from gaming venues is factually incorrect. If the government had said that it had extended the ATM ban to alternative cash access devices I would not have taken issue, but the ban on ATMs in gaming venues was achieved by the Greens in negotiation with the then Labor government in June 2009. I ask that the government retract this statement and not continue to take credit for a Greens achievement.

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — I join Ms Hartland in debate on her motion seeking to take note of Minister O'Donohue's answer to a question —

indeed a government Dorothy Dixier — on 19 September this year. In the short number of minutes allowed during which an answer can be provided, the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation said a number of things which require a response. The minister said:

That is why the coalition government created the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation ...

What the minister did not say is that in its doing so the foundation had been specifically barred from any role in policy or advocacy and that the government also defunded other advocacy groups, like the Victorian Responsible Gambling Advocacy Centre. The minister went on to say, as Ms Hartland has pointed out — and indeed this is the statement that I think caused her to bring this matter before the house so that, as she said, the record could be corrected:

... that is why this coalition government has banned ATMs from gaming venues.

This is something the former Labor government negotiated with Greens, and it is appropriate that the record reflect that Liberal members were not in the room for that discussion.

The minister went on to cite a report entitled *Evaluation of the Removal of ATMs from Gaming Venues in Victoria, Australia*. In doing so, he said:

One of the key findings is that because of the government's —

not quite the government's, but the Victorian —

ATM ban, problem gamblers are spending on average \$90 less each time they play electronic gaming machines in pubs and \$43 less each time they play them in clubs.

It is important to note that one of the other significant contributing factors is the ending of the Tatts-Tabcorp duopoly and the move to a venue-based operator model for the licensing of electronic gaming machines in Victoria, something I note that the Premier has referred to as stupid. There are many things that have contributed to those results. It is probably important that the minister spend a little less time taking credit for the work of others and a little more time, perhaps, on the next steps the government could be taking to ameliorate the risks of problem gambling in our community, the consequences of which are devastating for the families, friends and workplaces of those who are so afflicted.

**Mr ELSBURY** (Western Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak on this take-note motion that has been put by Ms Hartland. Before we get going on the actual substance of this motion I would like to correct the

record. Ms Pulford put forward that it was a Dorothy Dixier question. That question was actually from Ms Hartland, so unless we have some major bipartisanship occurring between the Greens and us, I believe — —

**Ms Hartland** — The question was from Mrs Kronberg.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I have it as being from Ms Hartland.

**Ms Pulford** — On a point of order, Acting President, I checked *Hansard* when Ms Hartland listed this item, and the question is from a government member — Mrs Kronberg. The point of order is that I would seek that the member correct the record.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie)** — Order! It is not really a point of order, but Mr Elsbury will have the opportunity to do what he chooses.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Thank you very much for that clarification. I have here a question that is of a very similar nature, though, from Ms Hartland, so perhaps I need to hone my skills a little bit more with looking up *Hansard*. In any case, we as a government have done a substantial amount of work in relation to problem gambling across the board since coming to office. We have seen ATMs and other mechanical methods of gaining access to cash at venues being removed from those venues, so you can no longer gain access to cash from a machine to enable you to then pump it into a gaming machine of any type. I know I have come across this situation when I have been out with friends, trying to get money just to go to the bar. It has become something of a challenge.

**Mr Finn** — I have never had a problem.

**Mr ELSBURY** — You've never had a problem going to the bar, Mr Finn? I am not surprised! In any case, that is not a reflection on the honourable member but more a case relating to the fact that with the restrictions that have now been placed at gaming venues the reality is that you must interact with a person to be able to gain access to cash. This means that an added psychological barrier has been placed between a gambler and their finances. If someone has a problem with gambling they are less likely to interact with a human being to gain the cash that they will then put into a machine.

You also have the added benefit of that interaction between two people, so that perhaps some information can be provided to the person who is participating in gambling with a pokie machine or some other

electronic gambling device. An interaction can occur, and that is when an intervention can occur, whether it is merely the handing over of a pamphlet or perhaps directing someone towards a gambling line.

We have also established the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. This move is major by the standard of any government across the country. We have provided \$150 million over four years to establish this independent body to reduce harm from gambling. This is the largest financial commitment of any government in the country and certainly much more than Labor put in when it was in office. It is an increase of 41 per cent in funding to this organisation. The foundation administers the Gambler's Help program, which is an integrated problem gambling treatment and support service operating across Victoria. When you go to a gambling venue you see posters, and pamphlets are available at the counter. Even when you go to the toilet you see information placed on the walls, and when you go to wash your hands information is there ready for you to grab as you leave the facilities. You will be able to take information with you about how to get help for any gambling issues that you may have.

The coalition is also introducing a voluntary precommitment on all gaming machines in Victoria by 2015–16. This is another initiative that will be undertaken to mitigate the issues that come with problem gambling. Someone can take control of the amount of money that they are placing into a machine for a 24-hour period, allowing them to participate in the enjoyment that some people find in gaming machines whilst not overindulging and causing themselves some financial harm into the future.

I am no stranger to gaming facilities. I, like many Victorians, do on occasion decide to try my luck with an electronic piece of equipment which is a random number generator basically geared towards taking my money away from me. But — —

**Mr Finn** — And it does.

**Mr ELSBURY** — It does on many occasions, Mr Finn, but I like to be able to use the money I earn to play a game of chance, and usually lose. But on the odd occasion — and it is a very odd occasion — you might be able to pay for the meal that you have had that evening. I have observed many an evening where that has not happened, quite frequently in fact, but there is the odd occasion when it can happen. It means that I have probably paid for that meal something like 16 times over, but that does not take away from the small bit of joy you feel when you are successful.

I cannot let it pass that the members opposite were lauding the changes that were made when the duopoly of Tabcorp and Tattersall's over gaming licences was changed to a much more broadly based system and a venue-based one. We saw the absolute debacle of that transaction where the value of the pokie machines was not realised. We saw approximately \$3 billion of revenue lost to the people of Victoria, money that could have been used to assist in the \$400 000 school maintenance backlog that we were left with under Labor, or to remove level crossings without having to resort to selling off the port of Melbourne. The projects that could have been undertaken with that money are almost endless, but we lost that opportunity because of a bungled process which saw the Labor Party in its administration fail to realise the full value of a Victorian asset. It is an asset that the people of Victoria will not be able to recoup.

There were some snide comments made by those opposite when I raised this once before. It was Mr Lenders who decided to interject across the chamber. He said that I was going to gouge money out of the people of Victoria, because apparently a \$1 bet on a pokie machine would cost more if we had taken more money for the pokie machine at the time of the auction. I find it very hard to believe that a \$1 bet could be valued at more than \$1. Indeed a 5 cent bet or a 10 cent bet does not increase in value; it is what it is. I cannot fathom how a venue could price gouge when it comes to a pokie machine.

In any case, there is a lot of work that has been done in the area of gaming machines in the state of Victoria to ensure that assistance can be provided to people suffering from issues of problem gambling. Indeed Gambler's Help, a service I have mentioned already, has a multitude of paraphernalia available. It has a free phone number and can be accessed 24 hours a day on 1800 858 858. There are also Web-based resources at [gamblingonline.org.au](http://gamblingonline.org.au), which provide people with information about the problems they are facing with gambling. That can be very helpful, especially when someone is at their lowest ebb.

The government has also established a Gambling Information Resource Office. It assists local councils to gather information and data so they can respond in a timely manner to applications for poker machine-licensed venues to be established in their municipalities. It is important that mechanisms are in place to allow proper and good information to be gathered when an application is made for a new licensed venue to be established in a municipality. Since the government came to office we have had the benefit of a decrease in the number of poker machines per 1000 people in the

state. That has been achieved during a time of great growth in our population. The increase in the number of poker machines currently available has occurred at a much lower rate than the growth in the population of our great state.

Government members have been more than happy to take note of the minister's answers to questions without notice on gambling reform in the state of Victoria and on the efforts that have made by the government to reduce the impact on people who are dealing with issues associated with problem gambling. We are proud to continue to work on our efforts to reduce the impact of gaming machines, whether that be through self-exclusion methods or through a voluntary precommitment regime which will allow a person to decide how much they intend to place on the line well in advance of going to a gaming venue. As someone who has been advocating that particular line for many years, I consider that to be something that is long overdue.

As has already been said, the abolition of ATMs in gaming venues, the removal of alternate money access machines and the need for face-to-face human interaction before gaining access to funds for gambling are all things that surely will benefit the people of Victoria for many years to come. In concert with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and its various mechanisms for assistance through Gambler's Help, those matters will assist people in dealing with the demons that come with gambling.

The people of Victoria by and large enjoy a flutter every now and again. We should not be impeding those people from being able to enjoy a gamble, whether it be on a poker machine, on the races or in any of the other multitude of ways that you can part yourself from your hard-earnt cash.

**Mr Finn** — And two-up.

**Mr ELSBURY** — And on two-up on Anzac Day. With that, government members certainly will take note of the minister's answers to questions that were asked during question time, and I look forward to speaking on problem gambling issues into the future.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — My colleague Ms Hartland moved this motion to give the government an opportunity to either back up or withdraw its claim that the ATM ban was a Liberal government initiative. The only speaker for the government has been Mr Elsbury. He has completely failed to back up the claim made by the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, so I think we have

made our point. The last time a gambling act was before Parliament members of the Liberal Party were interested only in maintaining poker machines. It was the Greens who took the initiative to introduce measures to address problem gambling, along with a change to the legislation.

**Motion agreed to.**

## STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

### **Auditor-General: *Implementation of the Government Risk Management Framework***

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report, tabled on 30 October, titled *Implementation of the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework*. In 2007 a Victorian Auditor-General Office's audit identified the management of interagency and statewide risks as a significant weakness and at that time several recommendations were made to address this problem. Now we are in the latter part of 2013 and it would appear that none of the recommendations aimed at addressing this problem has been implemented.

The Victorian government risk management framework was introduced in 2007 and then updated in 2011. According to best practice standards, effective risk management is essential for the development and delivery of quality government services. The Victorian Auditor-General's Office 2013 report identifies that the most important gap discovered during the audit is managing interagency and statewide risks and that the government is not well informed on the key vulnerabilities for the state. Further, the report notes that the framework needs to be strengthened and to provide greater clarity to agencies about minimum requirements for effective risk management.

It would appear that progress towards addressing this deficiency in information has stalled, and I am not sure why that is so. It is apparent that the current risk management information provided to the executive government is inadequate, and this poses a severe impediment to future planning exercises.

This is a serious matter, as we all know that the public service and its agencies are slow to institute change or establish interagency communication strategies. It is not simply a case of not letting the right hand know what the left hand is doing. This is a matter of the utmost importance, as it leaves us all vulnerable to statewide risks, but with proper planning procedures those risks are unnecessary. Prioritisation and identification of risks are the keys to a healthy risk management

strategy. I would like to see the Auditor-General's recommendations implemented sooner rather than later so that we can all rest in the knowledge that whatever may happen there is an effective solution before it happens. That is what effective risk management plans are supposed to accomplish.

### **Department of Human Services: report 2012–13**

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on the 2012–13 annual report of the Victorian Department of Human Services. I want to speak about a number of the coalition government's achievements in this area. There is a perception, which I believe is perpetrated by the Labor Party, that only the Labor Party and the ALP can look after our most vulnerable Victorians. That is an enormously misleading and inaccurate claim; in fact it is an absolute myth. We only have to look at this annual report to see the enormous achievements of this coalition government under the excellent direction of the Minister for Community Services and Minister for Disability Services and Reform, Mary Wooldridge.

Vulnerable Victorians are the responsibility of us all. In many instances it goes beyond politics. We need only look at the national disability insurance scheme and at how the then federal shadow minister for disabilities, carers and the voluntary sector, Senator Mitch Fifield, dealt with the implementation of the scheme to know that he was totally bipartisan about it. He did not play games with the scheme nor use it as a political football. In fact now that he is Assistant Minister for Social Services and responsible for disabilities and carers, he is in fact continuing to actively support the national disability insurance scheme.

In Victoria Minister Wooldridge and the former Premier, Ted Baillieu, took an active role in the national disability insurance scheme. On a national level we were at the forefront of how this implementation was going to happen. In fact it was Ted Baillieu who said that we wanted the national disability insurance agency located in Geelong. The coalition government wanted it in Geelong, and we put \$25 million on the table and made it happen. The excellent work of Minister Wooldridge in forming strategies to deal with disability and putting them in place makes Victoria the very best location for disability services. In fact as a state government we are committed to a bilateral agreement, and I have spoken in this place before about the enormity of our commitment, in partnership with the federal government, to support the national disability insurance scheme. It is one of the things that this government has done.

The disability sector knows how successful the coalition government is in understanding the issues, putting money into areas where it needs to be spent and creating strategic, long-term and focused programs with properly balanced forward estimates to ensure that we are not simply promising hot air but are delivering well-developed policies that will be sustainable into the future, unlike a lot of the hot-air promises made by the former government.

I am particularly pleased to talk about a number of areas in this report, including the child protection sector, which has been managed particularly well by Minister Wooldridge. I remind this chamber that it was Minister Wooldridge who appointed former Supreme Court judge Philip Cummins to conduct a review of Victoria's vulnerable children. The strategy document titled *Victoria's Vulnerable Children — Our Shared Responsibility* was released in May 2013, and its 10-year plan captures all the major recommendations from last year's inquiry into protecting Victoria's vulnerable children and translates them into positive actions for the years ahead. It was not only a recognition of the recommendations from the inquiry conducted by Philip Cummins but an active plan that received proper funding immediately upon its release. Child protection was at the forefront of the review, and Mary Wooldridge has strengthened support for child protection workers and done a significant amount of work in this area.

Another outcome of the review was the recommendation of an inquiry into child abuse by institutions and non-government organisations. As members know, the Family and Community Development Committee tabled its report on that inquiry in our last sitting week.

Another section of the report that is particularly relevant for this week looks at preventing violence against women. In October 2012 we launched the document *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women — Everyone Has a Responsibility to Act*, which is a \$90-million whole-of-government plan that aims to prevent family violence and improve responses when it occurs. White Ribbon Day was earlier this week, and members saw the huge support that Minister Wooldridge, and indeed this coalition government, gave to that event.

I could go on. There are so many great examples of what this government has done. Members can read all about it in the annual report. I recommend it to everyone.

## VicRoads: report 2012–13

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to make some comments on the VicRoads annual report 2012–13. At the outset I acknowledge the contribution of the chief executive officer, Gary Liddle.

VicRoads purpose is to support economic prosperity and livability by shaping the development and use of Victoria's roads as an integrated part of the overall road system. The authority had a number of significant highlights in its 2012–13 report on which it should be congratulated. Some of those highlights include celebrating its centenary, which was a huge achievement. VicRoads released a commemorative magazine and launched a photographic exhibition which toured around the state.

VicRoads continues to maintain and deliver significant improvements to our road network. It delivered a number of nation-building projects that included in my electorate of Northern Victoria the Goulburn Valley Highway and the Nagambie Bypass, which I have driven on many times as I travel to and from my electorate office in Shepparton. The highlights include: collaboration with partners at the Transport Accident Commission, Victoria Police and the Department of Justice on the road safety strategy and supporting the action plan that was launched in March this year that seeks to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roads by 30 per cent over the next 10 years; undertaking trials of a number of environmentally sustainable technologies, such as light-emitting diode streetlights and solar-powered barriers that will reduce energy consumption; and rest area upgrades, including at Mokoan in my electorate.

I have mentioned before my disappointment that negotiations on the Shepparton bypass and the Kilmore-Wallan bypass appear to have stalled, with the coalition now intent on building an east–west tunnel for \$8 billion that nobody seems to really want. Traffic projections for the tunnel do not stack up, and we are seeing public relations spin daily in our media as the government attempts to sell this project to the state.

Victorians living in regional and rural areas of the state have been abandoned by the Liberal-Nationals coalition government, which wants to put \$8 billion into this project at the expense of other essential transport projects, particularly those that are so needed in rural and regional Victoria. Victorian Labor will guarantee \$1 billion over eight years in funding for the repair and upgrade of roads in regional Victoria. With around a quarter of the state's population currently living in rural

and regional areas and the total population expected to reach around 2 million over the course of the next 20 to 30 years, regional Victoria needs more road funding, not less — and less is what we are seeing under this Liberal-Nationals coalition government.

In my electorate of northern Victoria a strong manufacturing and agricultural sector contributes to \$70 billion worth of economic output each year that is generated in regional areas of the state. In regional areas strong road networks and improved connectivity options are essential for creating job opportunities and keeping our rural communities prosperous. These opportunities can only be fully realised if the state government comes to the table and supports regional businesses — and that means investing in basics, such as roads and road improvements.

It is a very good report; it is well worth looking at. I suggest that all members have a look and see what VicRoads has been up to, not only in their electorates but also across the state. I commend the report to the house.

### **Western District Health Service: report 2013**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My contribution is on the Western District Health Service 2013 annual report. Specifically I refer to page 28, where outcomes from the work of the National Centre for Farmer Health are identified.

I raise this because in my previous role with the Victorian Farmers Federation I had a very close relationship with the work that the National Centre for Farmer Health was doing in Hamilton, specifically in relation to sustainable farm families and how the farming community was responding to a significant long-term drought and the impacts that was having on farm families generally across the state of Victoria. There has been some good work done in that division of Western District Health Service, both in the research work and also in identifying specific needs for that particular constituency.

I know that in the past the issue around the continuing funding of the National Centre for Farmer Health has been raised in this chamber in discussion, and certainly we as a government have committed to providing a contribution to the ongoing work that centre does for the farming communities. But given, as the title says, it is the National Centre for Farmer Health, obviously there was an expectation after the seed funding was provided that there would be national partnerships in the ongoing funding for the research work and

sustainable programs it was doing for the farming constituency nationally.

It is on that basis that I want to identify some issues surrounding the ongoing funding. I believe the centre still has a significant role to play. People might well ask why the farming constituency requires any specific priority attention in relation to the work that the Western District Health Service might do. I will say that it is because the farming constituency has a poor culture of health. It has significant problems around obesity, heart conditions, skin cancers and hearing loss because of the nature of the work. It is also because those in the farming community work in a workplace that is associated with their homes, and with that comes inherent dangers.

I see important work to be done in the centre on preventive medicine. It is on that basis that I support and will continue to support the ongoing funding of that centre. But I do so on the basis that there is funding coming from the federal government and also from some national partnership stakeholders. I understand and am pleased to see that there are deputations going to the federal Minister for Health for a four-year funding round. I also understand that discussions are happening with the National Farmers Federation to make sure that some commercial partnerships are involved in the ongoing funding.

I am pleased to see the state government is reviewing its position in relation to the ongoing funding as a truly bipartisan approach with the federal government. I am pleased to see the federal government and the federal member for Wannon, Dan Tehan, are working towards bipartisan funding. It has some important work to do. The farming communities are reliant on some specific work being done in relation to farmer health. I am pleased to see finally that the key partners, the key stakeholders, are willing to continue or to look to an arrangement where there is continuing funding for the work of the National Centre for Farmer Health.

### **Victorian WorkCover Authority: report 2013**

**Mr EIDEH** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian WorkCover Authority 2013 annual report. In doing so I acknowledge the chairperson, David Krasnostein, the chief executive officer, Denise Cosgrove, and other members of the board for their contributions to this year's annual report. This organisation outlines its vision as being to keep all Victorian workers safe in their workplace every day, and I sincerely hope their vision comes to fruition one day. It is to ensure that no child will lose their mother or father, or a parent will not mourn the death of their

child at work due to an employer's carelessness around workplace safety.

WorkSafe Victoria seeks to prevent workplace injuries, illness and fatalities; reintegrate injured workers back into the workforce; enforce Victoria's occupational health and safety and accident compensation laws, both state and federal; and offer all workers a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week emergency response service.

On reading this annual report I noted quite a few concerning statistics that occurred during the last year in Victorian workplaces. In particular, 20 workplace fatalities have occurred; a total of 28 003 injuries and illness claims were lodged in 2013; 42 191 annual visits were made by WorkSafe during 2012–13, and of these, 16 961 notices were issued to unsafe worksites; and 85 per cent of them had a prosecution success rate. These facts and figures have highlighted how important this authority is to the safety of workers.

This year I am sure we have all seen on TV some graphic advertisements of workers being seriously injured at work. One of the most terrible ones in my mind is the butcher machine mincer maiming a butcher's hand — which I learnt through WorkSafe happens six times a day! And there is a young apprentice chef who is working in an intimidating environment, and he lifts a large pot of boiling water out of fear of doing the wrong thing and drops the boiling water on his face.

I congratulate WorkSafe on this campaign, because even though the advertisements were extremely confrontational and graphic, they sent a loud and clear message to employees and employers about the dangers associated with safety not being paramount in their organisations. I believe these advertisements have increased awareness of dangers in the workplace, and WorkSafe should be commended for bravely airing these campaigns to protect the welfare and health of Victorians.

Tragically, however, as I mentioned earlier, this annual report documents the loss of 20 lives at work during 2012–13. That is 20 deaths that could have been avoided, 20 lives that could have been saved. In August this year two young Victorian men lost their lives within hours of each other at their workplaces. Their deaths highlight why safety should be the no. 1 priority at workplaces across the state.

The annual report indicates that WorkSafe Victoria has focused on the safety of young workers in Victoria and that its research has found that Victoria has the safest workplaces for young workers in the nation. This is

commendable; however, the young workers who lost their lives this year highlight that despite this achievement there is still much more to be done. I commend the report to the house.

### **Education and Training Committee: extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools**

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is my great pleasure to make a contribution on behalf of the Education and Training Committee inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools. This report was tabled in the last sitting week, on Tuesday, 12 November. It is a very important report, and because there was a very busy agenda last sitting week and a focus on the *Betrayal of Trust* report handed down the next day it is good to have some clear air now to make some important points about music education in this state. I would like to draw the attention of the chamber to the notion of the intrinsic value of music education. I took over the role of chairing the Education and Training Committee after hearings had been conducted, the great body of evidence collected and the body of work done for this inquiry. I assumed the chair after a lot of that work had been done, but I must say that from looking at the inquiry's research — the transcripts and so on — and from the results of my own personal investigation I am convinced not only that the direction of this report is sound but that some of its recommendations have an imperative quality.

Recent research in the neuroscience area, particularly by people in the United States, goes to the heart of the matter, showing that there is actually a measurable difference in the brains of children who have been immersed in what this report refers to as in-depth and sequential music education. There has been research conducted in which those children had their brains scanned using magnetic resonance imaging technology which found there was a measurable difference in the brains of children who received in-depth and sequential musical education. The capacity of their brains was physically extended. There was actually another fold in the brains of children who received musical education.

I am profoundly moved by these findings, which were described to me by a friend who happened to be visiting Melbourne from Boulder, Colorado, just 10 days ago. She is a neuroscientist and she explained this to me. This is a profound, important and timely report in terms of its direction and what it has to offer in relation to the breadth of education and the potential to literally enhance the neural networks of the brains of Victorian children.

Of course there were many stakeholders who participated in the inquiry. They emphasised that music should be taught in schools — because of its intrinsic value as an art form. I say that the benefit of musical education goes further. Although it has not been possible to include it in the report it is worth emphasising that there is physical evidence now, coming from the United States — empirical evidence obtained through scientific endeavour — that provides proof positive that musical education is important and that children can benefit from it greatly. The population benefits greatly, the economy benefits greatly and people have a rounder, fuller life as a result of it.

This is what we are all about: offering Victorians a better, fuller life, equipping them for decision making, complex problem solving and helping them to contribute as well-rounded human beings, as consummate human beings. Music education enables people to embrace an art form without necessarily having the fine motor skills to execute it. It means they can go through life as appreciators of an art form.

In our quest for economic success quite often a lot of things children should be learning are reprioritised. They are moved further down the schedule. The light is not shone on the benefits of such things as a musical education. I think I have shared with this chamber in the past the fact that I trained as a secondary teacher, and one of my majors was drama. I can speak very highly of the benefits of the performing arts in terms of training in that area instilling an ability to express oneself.

### **VicRoads: report 2012–13**

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to make some comments on the VicRoads annual report 2012–13. VicRoads is one of Victoria's key statutory authorities, and there would not be a member in this house who has not had dealings with VicRoads in the interests of their constituents. We know that VicRoads' primary responsibility under the Transport Act 1983 is to shape the development of the state's road system, and it has undertaken this job with great skill over very many years. It is not the fault of VicRoads that for many years public transport did not have an authority sufficiently well resourced to ensure that the state's tram, train and bus networks could be ahead of the curve of public demand.

A visit to almost any Western European country shows the difference that decades of consistent investment in national rail networks, town and city tram and light rail and bus services can make. In the years that I was growing up in Melbourne, right up until the time of the

beginning of the Labor government, it would be fair to say that the levels of investment in public transport planning were completely inadequate, and government after government presided over a decline in public transport.

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee recently undertook an inquiry into crime prevention through environmental design and received evidence from experts in the safe design of rail stations. What came through was that the protracted lack of investment in public transport — in rail, for example — meant that Victoria lost not only a modern rail system but also the accompanying engineering and skill set that is necessary to underpin modern and innovative design in rail stations. The considerable public transport investments that the Labor government made during its decade in office created the conditions for the re-energising of interest in public transport, land use planning and the role that good engineering and design play in community wellbeing and economic development.

The development of roads was in many ways premised on the ascendancy of the private motor car. In the decades after the Second World War up to, say, the late 1990s, an unhelpful separation was allowed to develop between road interests and public transport interests. The current climate that has emerged over the last decade or so is much more open to an integrated transport approach. The VicRoads annual report includes consideration of the integration of the needs of cyclists and tram routes, but from looking at the report I do not have the sense that the thinking about roads takes place in the context of an integrated rail, tram, light rail, bus, cycling and walking network.

Labor's Project 10 000 carries the hallmark of the latest and most productive thinking about transport delivery in Victoria, with its solid emphasis on the complementarity of transport modes. The VicRoads annual report indicates that its strategic direction includes operating and maintaining roads so that road users can travel easily and reliably and do so safely.

Project 10 000 commits a future Labor government to remove 50 of the most dangerous level crossings on the metropolitan rail network at an estimated cost of between \$5 million and \$6 million. This will relieve the congestion that hundreds of thousands of motorists experience every morning and every evening as they drive to and from work, drop their children at school or run countless errands each and every day. The removal of these blockages will also save lives because the fact is that level crossings are the site of serious accidents as

motorists sometimes attempt to cross when trains are approaching.

The removal of 50 level crossings will make a huge difference to the number and speed of trains that can use the rail network.

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

### **Family and Community Development Committee: *Betrayal of Trust***

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the Family and Community Development Committee report on the inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations. Might I say that the naming of this particular report is entirely appropriate. The title of the report is of course *Betrayal of Trust* and the subject of this inquiry and the report could not be more of a betrayal of that trust. First and foremost I say that this will be my initial response to this report. I am hoping that further down the track I will have another opportunity to add to my comments here this afternoon.

I commend the committee on the work that it has done. I commend the Chair, Ms Crozier, in particular on the work that she has done. She led the committee with aplomb, dignity and a purpose, and she is to be commended very highly, because this must have been an extraordinarily difficult inquiry to conduct. There was a great deal of horrific evidence given and it must have been draining emotionally, physically, mentally and in every other way possible. But in the end what we have here is the most comprehensive chronicling of this sort of child abuse that we have had to this point, and that has to be a good thing.

I should say that I accept that the majority of priests and clergy of other religions are good people. They are good people who do good things for others. They are as appalled as we are and as everybody else is at what has occurred within the Catholic Church, within other churches and within other organisations with regard to child abuse. I know this to be true. Overwhelmingly the majority of clergy, wherever they might be, are good people and they should not be condemned for the crimes of the few. Nor should this report and the issue that surrounds it be used for sectarian purposes. Unfortunately there has been a degree of that for some time.

However, we must face facts. As a Catholic it has been very difficult for me to face these facts. For a long time I did not want to face these facts. For a long time I

refused to believe that what we now know to be the truth had been occurring. I just could not believe that a priest or priests would actually do this to children. But we have to believe it; it happened. I think my contempt is as great for some of the bishops who covered it up as it is for the priests and other clergy who committed these vile crimes. Interestingly, Cardinal Pell has come in for his fair share of criticism as a result of not just this report but other reports concerning this issue. There is an irony in that, because while Cardinal Pell — Archbishop Pell as he then was in Melbourne — might not have done enough, he was certainly the first one to do anything at all, and I think that is to his credit.

This report is for the victims, and I hope it vindicates the long battle that many of them have fought to strive for the truth. I know that as a child I was belted behind the ears when I criticised a priest. I remember it well. My mother used to say to me, 'You don't say things like that about priests'. I can only imagine what would have happened to those children if they had gone home to their parents back in the 1960s or 1970s and said, 'Father So-and-so has done this to me'. One cannot begin to imagine the reception they would have had.

I can relate to what they have gone through in some small way. I hope this report has gone some way to exposing the truth for the benefit of those people.

### **Education and Training Committee: extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — I commend Mr Finn on his contribution. I was here in the last sitting week and as a member of the Family and Community Development Committee made a contribution on that report. For now I believe the report and the contributions I have made will stand as my public statements on the *Betrayal of Trust* report. But I will obviously answer any inquiries that come my way.

Today I would like to talk about a report that was tabled by Mrs Kronberg last sitting week on a different, perhaps brighter, subject, and that is the inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools undertaken by the Education and Training Committee. This is another topic that is near and dear to my heart and in fact my whole existence in that my father was a mathematician and my mother was a music teacher. The relationship between the various topics that were canvassed by Mrs Kronberg were instrumental to my being in the first place because my mother and father's relationship certainly was very different in many ways. My father did not have much time for music, but he had a lot of time for my mother

and my mother had a lot of time for music and admired my father's mathematics, and the result was pretty much me and my six siblings.

The situation in relation to music education is a very important subject because, as has been identified by Mrs Kronberg in more recent times and certainly is something that I have been aware of through my mother's advocacy for this subject, music plays an essential part in early childhood education and neurological development. My own theory is that everyone is musical. I do not ascribe to the view that somebody would describe me as a musician; I would call myself a bass player or a person. It is an expression of everyone to sing. I know in the old Irish culture everyone could or did sing, whether they were tuneful or not. Many other cultures enjoy a wide embracing of music participation in dancing and in the activities of children — one just has to put on a Wiggles CD to see the response that kids naturally have to music.

**Ms Darveniza** — Go on, sing us a song.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — No, I won't.

**Ms Darveniza** — Sing us a song or give us a dance.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — No, I won't even do that, but I will one day, if you do perhaps, Ms Darveniza, then we can do a dance together.

**Ms Darveniza** — I will take you up on that one!

**Mr O'BRIEN** — That will probably ensure that we keep doing what we do here in this job. Clearly music is very important for the development of young kids, as has been documented in the excellent report of the committee chaired by Mrs Kronberg and in the contribution we have just heard from her.

At pages 64 to 67 the report points out that there are particular disadvantages, or have been over a long time in certain areas, in the education of rural and regional students and also students from a low socioeconomic background in relation to access to music. At the same time the committee highlighted and set out in the report some particularly good programs, including what Ballarat High School offers in relation to its classroom music subject. I am also aware of other music teachers, friends of mine and others whom I have known, including Rohan Keert in Warrnambool, Bryce Ewing and Dennis Toner, who are musicians who also provide excellent music training.

I would like greater participation by all Victorians, all families and all educators in the natural activity of music. I do not believe you need to be particularly well

trained or educated necessarily to have a participatory aspect in music, which goes to the broader benefits that were touched upon by Mr O'Donohue. In Victoria we are leaders in live music and the music entertainment industry and a key part of that is the part-time activity or participatory aspect of music. With that, I commend the committee on its report. I urge more people to take up Ms Darveniza's invitation and sing a song and have a dance as part of their day.

### **VicRoads: report 2012–13**

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to make a statement on the Roads Corporation annual report for 2012–13 and to talk about the fact that a number of funding streams for VicRoads — the Roads Corporation — have been limited over recent years and what that has caused. I was lucky enough to drive to Paynesville in Gippsland and back for a couple of days on the weekend, using the highways and freeways that take you there. I have to say that I was a bit disappointed with the condition of the roads. There was a lot of infill and a lot of potholes and the condition of the road is nowhere near what it has been for a long time. I always used to note that when you travelled to the New South Wales coast as soon as you passed the New South Wales border marker, past the turnoff to Mallacoota, you would find that the New South Wales roads were in worse condition than the Victorian roads, but now that is far from the case. Victorian country roads are worse than they have been for a long time.

I would say that is relative to the lack of funding for VicRoads for a number of years from this government. No-one would expect that situation to change, as far as maintenance of the roads and funding going towards it is concerned, if this government soaks up a lot of that funding and directs it towards the east–west tunnel, which seems to be the only plan the government has when it comes to roads.

In recent days the opposition has put out a transport policy, a year ahead the election. Part of that policy deals with roads and removing 50 of the worst level crossings in the state, particularly in the metropolitan area. Government members may try to mock this plan, but it is a bold plan that will ease congestion. Roads will become safer when they do not intersect rail lines. It also means that train services can be increased, because with fewer level crossings boom gates will not be coming down and holding up traffic to the degree that they do now or to the degree that would happen now if more train services were added.

The Roads Corporation report reflects the government's lack of funding and enthusiasm for road maintenance.

The number of personnel has been reduced, which obviously contributes to the huge issues with the condition of our regional roads in particular. There are three things that determine whether people can drive safely on our roads. The first thing is obviously the driver, the second is the car and the third is the road. The government does not have full control over the types of cars that people drive or the way they drive, but it does have full control over the roads. The state of our roads is a dire situation; they are in a dire state. The government really needs to rethink its priorities and put a lot more money into road funding.

### **Education and Training Committee: extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools**

**Mrs MILLAR** (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to make a statement in relation to the 2013 inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools. I am very proud to have briefly served on the Education and Training Committee, which has produced this report. The benefits of music education are profound, sustained, multidimensional and abiding. Some of these benefits are very clear but may not be easy to measure. Perhaps this is best summed up in the words of Victor Hugo, who said:

Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent.

The power of music in our lives is confirmed by this report, which identifies that 100 per cent of Australians intentionally listen to music, over 50 per cent of Australians attend live music performances and 15 per cent of Australians take part in making music. From these figures it can be seen that music plays a significant part in our lives and our economy and that it is greatly valued. This all starts with music education.

The inquiry received 244 submissions, including some very fine, well-informed and erudite submissions which are of significance and a joy to read. The committee held public hearings in both Melbourne and regional Victoria, including two days in Mildura, and conducted a number of school visits, including by way of virtual meetings. The report identifies 17 key recommendations to support further enhancements to the teaching of music in schools. These recommendations can be broadly categorised in terms of developing a new Victorian strategy to underpin school music and resourcing this strategy, supporting Victorian teachers to deliver music education and strengthening instrumental music in Victorian schools.

Importantly, the report specifically addresses the particular needs of rural and regional Victoria,

especially the need for specialist music teachers in regional Victoria. The committee considered it to be of special significance that children and youth in rural and regional Victoria have access to high calibre music education as a fundamental part of their school education and experience. The challenge from here is to make the identified benefits accessible and available to more Victorian children. Music should not be seen, as it is in some schools, as an optional extra but as an essential part of the mainstream curriculum. Education requires both depth and breadth — it is about both our development and our wellbeing — and the report identifies that music education is central to this. I have often spoken of my concern about the trend in education of becoming too narrowly focused on literacy and numeracy. This report clearly demonstrates why this trend is fundamentally flawed, and it presents a clear case for the significance of music education in this state.

I thank the chair of the committee, Jan Kronberg, together with the other committee members, especially the two most longstanding committee members, Nazih Elasmir and Peter Crisp, the member for Mildura in the Assembly. I note the outstanding contribution of the parliamentary staff who worked on this inquiry. I thank and recognise Michael Baker, Kerryn Riseley, Anita Madden and Stephanie Dodds. This report was made possible by their dedication and contribution.

In focusing our minds on the significance of music education in Victoria, I wish to end my contribution on this vitally important subject not with my own dull words but with the infinitely richer words of Plato, who said:

Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

### **Royston Range logging**

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise in the adjournment debate tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh. I recently visited the Rubicon Valley area in the lower house electorate of Seymour. I met with tourism operators, camp operators, tourism promoters and others in the area who were concerned about the impact of VicForests logging in the area of the Royston Range, south of Lake Eildon.

What is interesting here is that this is a group of businessmen who see the need for a mixed economy, for tourism jobs, school camp jobs and forest industry jobs. This group of people is not opposed on philosophical or ideological grounds to various forms of work, but they are concerned about the visual amenity and the impact burning coupe wastage is having on nearby horticultural businesses. There is a winery whose grapes are suffering from smoke taint and tourism operators who see the ridge line basically disappearing as the trees are being thinned.

Therefore these people are trying to engage with VicForests and Tourism Victoria to create a balance of jobs from logging operations, tourism and other areas. They come from the starting point that a mixed operation is appropriate, but they are particularly frustrated because they are trying to find a solution whereby logging can be done beyond the ridge line, so you could have both the local jobs from logging and still have the tourism jobs and the agricultural and horticultural jobs not being affected by the smoke taint issues. They have been to see the local member of Parliament, the member for Seymour in the Assembly, Cindy McLeish.

The action I seek from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security is that he travel to the Rubicon Valley, meet with these businesspeople, talk to them about the balance they are seeking — where you can have the VicForests logging operations as well as tourism and winery jobs — and explore the option of having some of the logging done behind rather than on the ridge. If the minister goes to meet with these thoroughly decent people who are trying to get a balance of jobs in the area and explores the options they have put forward, it would give them a lot of confidence that government is working, but it might also provide a solution where this community can have all the available job opportunities, not just one or the other.

### **Roadworks speed limits**

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads. I firstly commend the minister for the extraordinarily great job he is doing right across our state in fixing so much of the road infrastructure that was in a dreadful state. We now have a great program for rural and regional roads across the state, and there is a well-planned strategy to fix them, so I commend the minister for the work he is doing.

However, the issue I raise tonight concerns roadwork zones, particularly on weekends. Like many other drivers, I find roadworks speed limits particularly

perplexing, especially on weekends and on freeways leading out of the city. Sometimes there are 40-kilometres-an-hour roadwork signs when there is not a person on site. There are no workmen there. There is nobody around at all, but traffic is totally and utterly jammed, and there is no explanation. Then just a short way down the track there will be a 60-kilometres-an-hour zone and then a sign showing normal speed. There does not seem to be rhyme or reason as to what is happening with the system.

I would like to see a systematic approach taken to this major problem that causes much frustration among drivers. I see many people breaking the speed limits. In fact on the West Gate Freeway and the road to Geelong I have seen people doing illegal things because they are so frustrated. I am sure there is a very good reason, but I ask the minister for an explanation as to why there are so many roadworks signs, particularly in rural Victoria but also in suburban areas, that never seem to be removed, yet there is no explanation as to why they are there. I would welcome an explanation because my constituents are concerned and want to do the right thing, and if I could give them an explanation, it would make it much easier for me.

### **Victorian Music Library**

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Arts. The Victorian Music Library (VML) is a not-for-profit music resource centre managed by volunteers to preserve and provide a collection of sheet music for loan. It is the second-largest sheet music lending library in the world after the one in New York, with a list of more than 80 000 titles. It was established in 1974 under the then federal government's innovation grants. The original agreement was that the federal government would initially provide establishment money for the purchase of sheet music for string players and funds for location and staffing would be provided by the Department of Education, as it was then, with input from the community.

The library was established to aid schools, teachers and students, and it was to provide community access as well as support to musicians. The library was initially housed at Camberwell High School. Later it was moved to Graham Street Primary School in Port Melbourne, followed by a further relocation to Moreland City College. In 2006 the library relocated yet again to its current home at the Uniting Church archives in Elsternwick, a site which I have visited.

However, the library was advised last year that it will have to move again. On 28 August last year I raised this

issue with the then Premier and Minister for the Arts, and on 29 August this year I received a response from the current Minister for the Arts, Ms Heidi Victoria, in which she states that she is pleased to advise that the State Library of Victoria is in discussion with the VML regarding the future accommodation of its library. I have been in contact with personnel from the Victorian Music Library who advise that this arrangement has since fallen through and is not a possibility for relocation of the library.

Since October last year the Uniting Church has been extending the time for the VML to relocate but has advised the VML that it must be out by the end of the year or at the end of January at the very latest. The Victorian Music Library has been trying to find a new home in various locations and has had many discussions with various institutions, all to no avail. My request of the minister is that she meet with representatives of the Victorian Music Library as a matter of urgency to explore further options for a permanent home for the Victorian Music Library.

### **Underground electricity cable inspections**

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy and Resources, Nicholas Kotsiras. It is in regard to inspections of underground electricity cables on new residential properties, and the action I seek is for the minister to investigate the possibility of inspections being done by qualified inspectors prior to cable trenches being filled in with dirt and covered.

Under the old State Electricity Commission (SEC) in the 1990s there were compulsory inspections of underground mains in trenches. As every new home was built and had its cables installed they were visually inspected to ensure that they were safe. These inspections were thrown out the door under privatisation. Currently there are no mandatory or random visual inspections of cables before trenches are backfilled and the cables covered. The only mandatory inspections now involve an insulation resistance test and a test on the mains. This essentially boils down to one power point for the builder to work from, and an electrician must submit paperwork subject to an audit, which may or may not happen. This means we have no way of knowing whether installers are installing the cables correctly — for example, that they are at the correct depth — and that hinders our ability to rule out and narrow down the cause of fault on a property, if one should occur.

Recently a fault at the residence of one of my constituents led to a loss of power and an \$8000 bill to

get the issue fixed. The house was apparently only four years old. If mandatory or even visual random inspections had been in place, it could have been discovered that the conduit which housed the cable was broken and the cable insulation had been cut. Further, such inspections could provide a greater incentive to ensure that cables are installed properly on new properties, lowering the risk of electricity faults or harm to homeowners.

I was informed by a senior electrical inspector that these faults occur on a regular basis. There must be a better practice for ensuring that installation is correct. Under the SEC, inspections included a visual inspection, an insulation resistance test and then approval to backfill a trench. While mandatory inspections of every single new installation may be financially prohibitive, there appears to be no proper reason why we cannot investigate, at the very least, reintroducing random inspections as a practice. This would then put the tradespersons and builders on notice that they need to comply with regulations, as there would always be the possibility of an inspection.

If random inspections were to lead to fewer electricity faults and greater safety for Victorian families in their new homes, I believe it would be a measure worth considering. That is why I ask that the minister investigate the viability of reinstating compulsory or at least random inspections of underground electricity cables in new homes built in Victoria.

### **Geelong special schools**

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — Tonight my adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. It relates to the new special school promised for the Geelong region. On 9 November an article appeared in the *Geelong Advertiser* headed 'Special school plan'. It stated that a site for a new special school was being sought in the electorate of South Barwon.

I would like to put on record the tireless work of Michele Denham, who has fought for more than two years to have the issue of overcrowding at the Barwon Valley School dealt with. It is not just the Barwon Valley School; the Nelson Park School is now full as well, necessitating a new school. Michele is the mother of Brett, now 19, who has an intellectual disability and attended Barwon Valley School until he completed year 12 last year. Even though her son has now graduated from Barwon Valley School, Michele continues to fight for the students and families who attend the school to ensure that they are provided with the best opportunities to learn. She does this whilst managing a very successful business with her husband.

Michele stated in the article that she is pleased with the announcement, but will not rest until she sees students learning at the proposed new school. I also welcome the announcement of a third special school in Geelong; however, the government has not provided very much detail around the proposal. Indeed, many members of the community are sceptical. When the member for South Barwon made the announcement that the Napthine government is looking for a piece of land, he did not know the size, the cost or the general location of the proposed facility, and he did not know when it might be purchased, so I can understand the scepticism.

The action I seek from the minister is that he be clear with the people of Geelong and provide proper and accurate details on the cost of the parcel of land, where it will be, its size, the time line for its purchase and proposed completion and the bill so that local families can start planning for family members who will enrol at the new learning facility.

### **Goulburn Valley Highway–Moss Road, Wahring**

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder. It concerns the intersection of Goulburn Valley Highway and Moss Road in Wahring. Yesterday another serious crash occurred. A man in his 50s was put into an induced coma and airlifted to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. This collision was the third serious collision to occur at this intersection this year.

On 30 October this year a Toyota Corolla was turning right from the southbound lane of the highway into the roadhouse by the intersection when a collision occurred with a northbound B-double truck. On 19 July a two-car collision caused a pole to fall onto the road. On 30 August 2012 three people were injured in a two-car crash when a sedan travelling north collided with a car pulling out of the roadhouse. On 22 February 2012 a woman was airlifted to hospital after her car, preparing to turn right out of the roadhouse, collided with a truck travelling north on the Goulburn Valley Highway.

I travel on this section of the Goulburn Valley Highway frequently as I go to and from my electorate office in Shepparton. Moss Road crosses the highway and it is often very difficult to see traffic coming in from the left, if you are travelling north, or from the right, if you are travelling south, merging with the highway. When you are travelling south on the highway the exit to the roadhouse is on the right, whereas normally you exit a highway on the left. This causes some confusion. It is a very dangerous intersection.

The Goulburn Valley Highway is a vital transport route, connecting the significant fruit and vegetable growing industries in the Goulburn Valley in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region with Melbourne. The road is absolutely essential for freight movements for both domestic and export markets and reducing travel times and transport costs. The specific action I seek from the minister is that he commit funding in next year's budget so that appropriate safety strategies can be investigated and implemented at this intersection, decreasing the risk of accidents and improving safety for travellers on the highway. Fatalities from road crashes impact on our communities as well as on individuals. It is absolutely devastating when people are badly injured. It can take a long time to be fully rehabilitated, if full rehabilitation is in fact possible. I urge the minister to make funding available for this dangerous intersection.

### **Bayswater North Primary School**

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, Mr Dixon, and it concerns some portable classrooms at Bayswater North Primary School. The minister's department has proposed that those portable classrooms be removed at the end of this year, which the school community is very pleased about, considering that they have been there for 30 years. Through its fundraising the school community has actually improved these buildings, adding covered walkways, glass panels to provide light, an enclosed courtyard with a learning environment inside and a number of other things.

In response to the school community's concern that these rooms be removed, the department has stated that it wishes to remove these classrooms and take them to another school. The problem with that is that the school has had an asbestos audit done on all its buildings, and these four portables were found to contain asbestos. As a lot of us in this chamber would know, asbestos buildings can be maintained if they are not disturbed, but if they are disturbed, that is a whole different issue.

The school community is saying that it seems like a dumb idea to disturb these buildings and create an asbestos issue not just at Bayswater North Primary School but also at the one, two, three or four schools to which the department has decided to move these portables. As I have said, what we know about asbestos is that the real problems begin when it is disturbed. There is the potential for five school communities to be put in that situation because of this plan by the department to move these four portable classrooms at the end of the year. This could cause a real issue for those four or five school communities, or however

many it turns out to be, at the start of the next school year.

The action I seek is for the Minister for Education to get involved with this issue and ensure that these classrooms remain at this primary school and do not create a safety issue. I also ask for a bit of justice for the school that has done all the work to maintain these classrooms.

### **North Melbourne public housing residents**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter this evening is for the Minister for Housing. It relates to requests from residents of the public housing estate at 159 Melrose Street, North Melbourne. Two issues have been raised with the member for Melbourne in the Assembly, Jennifer Kanis, a very capable local member. She had a meeting with the tenants at 159 Melrose Street on 19 November. The residents raised a couple of concerns with her. One relates to access to smart meters and the other to hallway windows.

In relation to access to smart meters, the meters for the units are located in meter boxes on each floor. Each unit is individually metered. Until recently residents were able to open the meter boxes and read their meters. I understand there have never been any concerns regarding damage to meters. However, since the installation of the smart meters the meter boxes have been locked. Residents have sought access to the meter boxes so they are able to track their electricity usage but they have been denied access and the meter boxes, which have been renamed 'electrical switchboards', are now locked.

The tenants of 159 Melrose Street are excited about the possibilities of smart meters in enabling them to manage their electricity usage better. The action of denying residents access to the smart meters defies the reason for installing them in the first place. I urge the minister to provide public housing residents with the same ability as private housing residents to benefit from the technology of smart meters and to ensure that all residents have access to their smart meters.

The other issue relates to the hallway windows. I understand that the units at 159 Melrose Street are accessed by a common hallway. The hallways have sliding windows along them. Until recently residents have been able to open and close the hallway windows. The ability to open windows has been particularly useful on hot days when a cross-flow of air makes the building much cooler. However, metal grilles were recently installed on the windows. These grilles are of a

very solid construction. They cannot be removed or cut open and do not allow anything to be thrown out of the windows. Residents understand that there are health and safety reasons for the installation of the grilles. However, unless the sliding windows are modified the residents will not be able to fully open the windows and gain relief from the heat during summer. The residents are asking that the windows be modified back to their original form so they can be fully opened.

As summer is approaching, I ask that the minister give these matters her urgent attention so the residents at 159 Melrose Street, North Melbourne, are able to cool their homes sufficiently and access their smart meters.

### **Responses**

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I have a written response to an adjournment debate matter raised by Mr Scheffer on 26 June.

Eight issues were raised in the adjournment tonight. Mr Lenders raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security regarding the Rubicon Valley in Seymour and smoke from burn-offs in logging coupes.

Mrs Coote raised a matter for the Minister for Roads regarding speed limits in roadwork zones, particularly on weekends.

Ms Pennicuk raised a matter for the Minister for the Arts regarding the Victorian Music Library sheet music lending service.

Mr Melhem raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources regarding inspections of underground electricity cables on private properties.

Ms Tierney raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding the success of the member for South Barwon in the Assembly in securing a new special school for his electorate.

Ms Darveniza raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, who is also the Minister for Roads, regarding the intersection of the Goulburn Valley Highway and Ross Road in Wahring.

Mr Leane raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding portable classrooms at Bayswater North Primary School.

Ms Mikakos raised a matter for me regarding 159 Melrose Street in North Melbourne and access to smart meters. I have been advised by my department that there is other equipment in the rooms where the

smart meters are and that tenants are able to access their smart meters by making arrangements with the local housing office. She also raised a matter about the hallway windows, which have had to be secured due to incidents that have occurred in some of the high-rise estates. I believe the windows are now able to be opened to 125 millimetres, but I will check that for the member and get back to her.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I ask the minister to chase up an outstanding response to an adjournment matter that I addressed to the Minister for Roads on 8 May concerning the future of the Healesville freeway reserve. This is an emotive issue for people who live in the area, and if the minister could get a response to me soon regarding this issue, it would be very much appreciated.

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I am happy to chase that up with the Minister for Roads for Mr Leane.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The house stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 6.46 p.m.**

