

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Wednesday, 2 April 2014**

**(Extract from book 5)**

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## **The Governor**

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

## **The ministry**

(from 17 March 2014)

Premier, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing . . . . .	The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for Regional and Rural Development . . . . .	The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP
Treasurer . . . . .	The Hon. M. A. O'Brien, MP
Minister for Innovation, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Employment and Trade . . . . .	The Hon. Louise Asher, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. . . . .	The Hon. T. O. Bull, MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Finance and Minister for Industrial Relations. . . . .	The Hon. R. W. Clark, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing . . . . .	The Hon. D. M. Davis, MLC
Minister for Education . . . . .	The Hon. M. F. Dixon, MP
Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs . . . . .	The Hon. D. K. Drum, MLC
Minister for Planning, and Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship . . . . .	The Hon. M. J. Guy, MLC
Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects and Minister for Manufacturing . . . . .	The Hon. D. J. Hodgett, MP
Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development . . . . .	The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads . . . . .	The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP
Minister for Energy and Resources, and Minister for Small Business. . . . .	The Hon. R. J. Northe, MP
Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Crime Prevention . . . . .	The Hon. E. J. O'Donohue, MLC
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry . . . . .	The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC
Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Youth Affairs. . . . .	The Hon. R. Smith, MP
Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Consumer Affairs . . . . .	The Hon. H. Victoria, MP
Minister for Higher Education and Skills . . . . .	The Hon. N. Wakeling, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water. . . . .	The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Bushfire Response . . . . .	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Disability Services and Reform . . . . .	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
Cabinet Secretary . . . . .	Mrs I. Peulich. MLC

## Legislative Council committees

**Privileges Committee** — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, Ms Lovell, Ms Pennicuik, Mrs Peulich and Mr Scheffer.

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

## Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

**Environment and Planning References Committee** — Mr Dalla-Riva, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, #Mr Leane, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Peulich, Mr Ronalds, 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 D. R. J. 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 D. R. J. O'Brien, #Mrs Peulich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

*# Participating member*

## Joint committees

**Accountability and Oversight Committee** — (*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mr Ronalds. (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Mr McIntosh and Ms Neville.

**Dispute Resolution Committee** — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, 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, Mrs Millar and Mr Ronalds. (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess and Mr McGuire.

**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 Delahunty.

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

**Family and Community Development Committee** — (*Council*): Mrs Coote. (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr Madden, Mrs Powell and Ms Ryall.

**House Committee** — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*) Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mrs Peulich. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Blackwood, Ms Campbell, Ms Thomson, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller.

**Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee** — (*Council*): Mr Viney. (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Mr Kotsiras, Mr McIntosh 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 D. R. J. O'Brien and Mr Ondarchie. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Garrett, 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 D. R. J. O'Brien. (*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 Melhem, Mr D. R. J. O'Brien, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik,  
Mr Ramsay, Mr Tarlamis

**Leader of the Government:**

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. D. K. DRUM (from 17 March 2013)

The Hon. P. R. HALL (to 17 March 2013)

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN (from 17 March 2013)

Mr D. K. DRUM (to 17 March 2013)

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Melhem, Mr Cesar <sup>2</sup>	Western Metropolitan	LP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Northern Victoria	ALP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Millar, Mrs Amanda Louise <sup>4</sup>	Northern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David <sup>8</sup>	Eastern Victoria	Nats
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 <sup>5</sup>	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 <sup>7</sup>	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Ronalds, Mr Andrew Mark <sup>6</sup>	Eastern Victoria	LP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leanders, Mr John	Southern 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

<sup>5</sup> Resigned 3 February 2014

<sup>6</sup> Appointed 5 February 2014

<sup>7</sup> Resigned 17 March 2014

<sup>8</sup> Appointed 26 March 2014



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**Wednesday, 2 April 2014**

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

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

### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I take the opportunity to advise members that we have two guests from the New South Wales Parliament in the gallery today. We welcome Deputy Clerk Steven Reynolds and Clerk Assistant, Procedure, Stephen Frappell, both from the New South Wales Legislative Council. They are having a look at how we do things and deciding if the procedures of the New South Wales Parliament can be enhanced.

### **CHILDREN'S 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.**

### **ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

#### **Victorian government report 2013**

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing), by leave, presented report.**

**Laid on table.**

### **NOTICE OF MOTION**

**Notice of motion given.**

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS having given notice of motion:**

**Mr Lenders** — I am raising a point of order on Mr David Davis's notice of motion, given that this issue is an item, as I understand it, on the notice paper today and a notice of motion has been given now as to how that is to be dealt with. I am seeking clarification. Is it the intention to put something on the notice paper today to refer a live item on today's notice paper to the Procedure Committee?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — On the point of order, I have had a discussion with Ms Hartland about an amendment that has been presented, and we would be very happy with that amendment. If the amendment is not accepted, we intend to move the motion I have just put on the notice paper. If the amendment is accepted, we would not move the motion. It is giving notice of motion. We would by the normal process be able to debate that on the next day of meeting, and we would then proceed if that were required.

**Mr Lenders** — I thank the minister for his explanation.

**Ms Hartland** — On the point of order, for clarification, I received this about 4 minutes ago and we had a very brief discussion about it. It is undated. As to when the report back would occur, I would need further discussion. Therefore to say that it has been discussed with me is not quite right.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Further on the point of order, it was a brief discussion and I have given the notice of motion to Ms Hartland early in the day so that she can have a discussion. This is intended to be used if required. It is up to Ms Hartland whether she accepts a suggested amendment or she does not. If she does not accept the suggested amendment, that is her choice.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I thank members for their explanation.

### **MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

#### **Health funding**

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — Yesterday the Premier refused to accept that the \$10 million cut from the Northern Hospital's budget as a result of the federal Liberal government's cuts will have a significant impact on local communities in the region. The Minister for Health refused to accept that these Liberal cuts, that will affect patients across Victoria, even exist.

I would like to point out to the Victorian Liberal health minister what hospitals in northern Victoria stand to lose from their budgets and staffing. Yea & District Memorial Hospital will lose \$73 501; Seymour Health, \$371 837. Going right the way in northern Victoria to Mildura Base Hospital, the figure is \$2 807 388. The figure for Kilmore & District Hospital is \$331 768; Heathcote — —

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On a point of order, President, members who read matters into *Hansard* need to be accurate, and it would be unfortunate if the member were misleading the house, which I believe she is.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! It is a point of order as such, but I cannot uphold the point of order. The member is entitled to provide the information that she believes is correct. I would accept a member's assurance that when they refer to documents in this place, they have shown a courtesy to the house by believing the figures or quotes that they use are accurate. The minister believes these figures do not represent the position as he understands it. That is a matter of conjecture and a matter that could be pursued through debate and by other mechanisms in this place, but Ms Broad is entitled to put the information as she wishes to do so to the house.

**Ms BROAD** — These cuts are on top of \$826 million in cuts from Victorian hospitals by the Victorian Liberal government. I might add another in the time remaining: \$177 151 from Alexandra District Hospital, and the list goes on.

### Coastal management

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — In February the Victorian National Parks Association released its report *The Coast is Unclear — An Uncertain Future for Nature along the Victorian Coast*. This comprehensive report explores coastal planning and management issues all around Victoria's coastline. The main focus of the report includes the identification of native plants, animals and habitats that exist within each bioregion along the Victorian coast and the impacts they face from ongoing and emerging threats. The analysis found that there were many threatened coastal habitats and individual plant and animal species on the coast that are under increasing pressure and in need of enhanced conservation measures. An evaluation needs to be made of the effectiveness of existing legislation, institutions and processes in the coastal planning protection and management framework in protecting the coast's natural values and maintaining the social ones.

The review found the existing framework to be disintegrated and inadequate to deal with the increasing pressures of coastal development and provided an evaluation of the roles of state and local government, a review of the Victorian coastal strategy and catchment management authorities and a set of recommendations aimed at protecting and enhancing the natural health of Victoria's coastal bioregions.

One of the key findings is that of the 95 habitats within 500 metres of the shoreline, more than 70 per cent are either endangered or vulnerable, including Coast Banksia woodland and estuarine wetlands. There is so much in this report to guide the state government on

how to better look after our fantastic Victorian coastline.

### Foundation 97

**Mrs MILLAR** (Northern Victoria) — On Monday I had the very great privilege of representing the Premier, the Honourable Denis Napthine, at the launch of Foundation 97's Lucky I'm Alive Day in Eaglehawk. Foundation 97's Noel Clarke spinal cord injury project seeks to raise awareness, particularly in regional Victoria, of spinal cord injury and to enhance the lives of Victorians with spinal cord injuries by providing equipment for active participation in sport and recreation or for training or courses to gain skills for employment opportunities. Lucky I'm Alive Day and the various events this week, from 31 March to 6 April, call on Victorians to donate just 97 cents to support this important work. I pay tribute to the founders of Foundation 97, Noel and Tracey Clarke, who formed Foundation 97 after Noel, a champion motorbike racer, was left a paraplegic after a racing accident in 2009. The long road which followed for Noel and Tracey highlights the need for better support for Victorians with spinal cord injuries who are not covered by insurance; thus Foundation 97 came into being. Noel and Tracey are inspiring, and just to meet them is to be touched by their drive, passion and dedication to others.

At the launch I also had the privilege of meeting inspirational Foundation 97 ambassadors Danni di Toro and Naz Erdem, OAM, two champion athletes in their fields who have proven that the sky is indeed the limit in pursuing your goals, and both of whom have inspired so many through their achievements. I call on all Victorians to give just 97 cents this week to Foundation 97. Where else can you buy true inspiration for just 97 cents?

### Wally Curran

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — I rise to pay tribute to Wally Curran, who passed away on 24 March. Wally Curran was a member of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union for over 60 years, serving as the Victorian assistant secretary for 16 years and as state secretary for 24 years.

Wally Curran was a driven man who made sure that sacking people in the meat industry just before Christmas was a practice of the past, that occupational health and safety were paramount and that equal pay for women was an issue for all workplaces. Wally Curran was able to see beyond the day-to-day industrial matters. His vision for ordinary workers to have sufficient funds for retirement culminated in

superannuation. Superannuation is now a reality, and many workers can now live a retirement that has quality and choice.

Wally Curran also had a love of the arts and fought for the arts to be accessible to all. Along the way he also taught the trade union movement a thing or two about the importance of the arts and the role they play. Wally Curran was a man of many things. At his memorial service at the Williamstown Football Club rooms last Thursday the fullness of his character came to life, not only through the wonderful eulogies from those who knew him in his public life but also through his family, especially his granddaughters. Both were instructive in giving us a wider appreciation of Wally, all of which will keep a smile on our faces as we remember not just the solid contributions Wally Curran made to the working class but also his antics, which are appreciated across all generations. Vale Wally Curran.

### Kids Under Cover

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — Last Wednesday I was thrilled to join Kids Under Cover in its 25th anniversary year for its 2014 Cubby House Challenge, where I presented the Special Minister's Award for Best Architectural Design to the Grubby by Cedar Woods. Again the designers have shown their imagination and creativity, transforming the humble cubby to raise funds for the important work of Kids Under Cover. The Cubby House Challenge has been running for five years and has raised around \$300 000, becoming one of the most important attractions at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show.

### Maternal and child health services

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** — Last Thursday I was pleased to open the Maternal and Child Health Conference and detail the review of the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Service. Through this review we have developed the *Victoria's Maternal and Child Health Service — Strengthening the Foundations for Victoria's Children — Proposed Future Directions Consultation Paper*. The key focus is to present future directions aimed at maintaining a high-quality, evidence-based, universal service for all children and families, while improving outcomes for vulnerable children.

### National Playgroup Week

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** — Recently I was pleased to launch National Playgroup Week at the Melbourne Museum. This is a time of activities, parties, open days

and visits from the Playgroup Victoria bus. Playgroups are attended by 40 000 Victorian children from 25 000 Victorian families who build friendships, share ideas, learn through play and socialise with their peers. We have invested \$1.2 million in the rural playgroup initiative announced last year, which has set up new playgroups and enabled those on the brink of closure to stay open. Congratulations to Vivienne Cunningham-Smith and all involved in Playgroup Victoria.

### Victorian Farmers Federation

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is not happy with the Liberal-Nationals state government transport policy, because it is so city centric. The VFF has accused the government of forgetting about the bush and has demanded answers from the coalition. VFF president Peter Tuohey told the *Weekly Times* that he is increasingly concerned that the big election announcements are purely focused on buying Melbourne votes. The Minister for Public Transport, Mr Mulder, announced major reforms to transport recently, but Mr Tuohey said that free tram travel does not help regional Victorians or deal with ageing transport infrastructure in regional areas. He said we need to grow, transport, process and deliver food and fibre to the world. This is all on top of the simmering tension between the VFF and the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh, over the allocation of research and development funds. Here we have another example of how much the Liberal-Nationals state government fails to understand what is important to regional and rural communities.

### Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — We have seen numerous allegations of thuggery and intimidation in the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) in partnership with organised crime syndicates. Now we have seen these allegations held up by a court of law, with the CFMEU being fined \$1.25 million for illegally protesting at the Grocon site. The allegations against the union movement are deserving of a new *Underbelly* series called 'Underbelly — Corruption'. The series could begin with bikies assisting unions in invading the homes of businessmen and women, demanding that they sign over lucrative business deals to the unions' companies of choice. The series would need a raft of corrupt union officials, from workers on the ground to senior management, who unwaveringly and violently enforce the word of the union.

We would see average workers being terrorised into signing up to the union and being blocked from their place of work when all they want is to do their job in peace. These practices would make Alphonse Gangitano, Tony Mokbel and Carl Williams proud. We have to remember that the people accused of this thuggery are the people driving the Labor Party — the people responsible for the party's dodgy backroom deals and policy announcements.

The coalition stands in stark contrast to Labor on this matter. The constituents of Victoria can know for certain that in the coalition the people driving policy are our parliamentary representatives and no-one else. The Labor Party must either lend its strong support to the CFMEU or remove its members from the ranks of the party and give back \$136 000 that the CFMEU has donated. Let us not forget who the real victims of this corruption are — the hardworking employees that these unions are meant to be helping.

### **Peter Yiallouris**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to pay tribute to Peter Yiallouris, who recently passed away. Peter was born in Limassol, Cyprus, served in the Second World War and emigrated to Australia in 1950. Having experienced the difficulties of being a migrant in a new country, he and his wife, Katina, resolved to assist future newcomers to Australia. In particular, in 1974, when Cyprus was invaded and many people left their homeland for Australia, Peter and his wife opened their home to whoever needed assistance.

Peter served as either president or as an office-bearer of the Cyprus Community of Melbourne and Victoria for more than 30 years. He was a strong advocate for the Cypriot community and worked tirelessly and passionately, not only for the Cypriot community but also for the wider Greek community. Peter was also a founding member of the federation of Greek senior citizens clubs, a founding member of the Justice for Cyprus Co-ordinating Committee, known as SEKA, contributed to the establishment of the Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition and was an active supporter of the Australian Greek Welfare Society.

Peter will always be remembered for his community leadership and his constant activism for the rights of the elderly. For his dedicated service to the Cypriot and Greek communities, and the wider community, Peter was honoured with a Medal of the Order of Australia in 1998. He was greatly loved and respected in the Cypriot and Greek communities. I extend my deepest

condolences to Peter's family, his children and his grandchildren.

### **Royal Australian Air Force East Sale base**

**Mr RONALDS** (Eastern Victoria) — My electorate of Eastern Victoria Region is home to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) East Sale base. This is one of the key training establishments for the air force. It is the home of the Roulettes acrobatic display team, which I am sure we have all enjoyed on numerous occasions. It is home to the officer training school, and now it is also home to a new air simulation facility that was officially opened last month. Last year the federal government approved plans for a \$186 million redevelopment of the base, which I was fortunate to see earlier in the week.

One of the highlights of this redevelopment is that much of this money is going to local contractors. According to the commanding officer, James Svede, the RAAF base in East Sale contributes about a quarter of the town's employment, and about 400 airmen and women are stationed there at any one time. Defence personnel, defence contractors, public servants and their families are an integral part of the shire of Wellington and the Sale community. We had a good celebration on Monday at a special reception which I was privileged to attend. I commend the RAAF for its contribution to the local community, and also the great support of Wellington Shire Council, in particular the mayor, Mr Scott Rossetti.

### **Friendly Neighbours Family Day**

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) — Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending the Friendly Neighbours Family Day, which was organised by the City of Maribyrnong. Over 3000 people turned up to that event. The Friendly Neighbours program is about encouraging neighbours to catch up over a cuppa or a barbecue, or to just make a friendly connection. A resilient neighbourhood is one where people are willing to help each other, in good times as well as bad. Knowing who lives nearby and offering to lend a hand, or simply letting each other know that you are there, are all part of creating a connected neighbourhood and helping to keep your neighbourhood safe.

I want to acknowledge a few of the people who organised the event: Mark McAuliffe and Rick Morris from the Maribyrnong City Council, Senior Sergeant Jason Templar and my electorate officer, Patricia Giannakos. It was a great event and I think we would like to see more of that throughout the state. One of our biggest issues in living busy lives in or around the city

is that we do not get the chance to get to know our neighbours or to lend a hand. I hope this will spread throughout the state. Well done to the City of Maribyrnong and the organisers.

### Farm World

**Mr D. D. O'BRIEN** (Eastern Victoria) — On Saturday I had the pleasure of attending the Farm World field days at Lardner Park, just near Warragul, a great part of West Gippsland that produces some great people and some great representatives in this house as well. It was a beautiful West Gippsland day to be at the field days. The field days are in their 52nd year, and they are now one of the largest agricultural machinery field days in Australia. There were 650 exhibitors there over the four days, and 53 000 visitors went through the field days over those four days. I am told that that was up 10 per cent on last year, so it is a very good outcome.

The field days were opened on Friday by the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals, the Honourable Peter Ryan, where he also launched the Gippsland food plan, a plan to put Gippsland food on the map, encourage investment and promote Gippsland's competitive strengths, of which there are many — good soils, clean water, a skilled farming and food industry workforce and access to ports and major markets, including Melbourne. I am pleased to report that the coalition government invested \$250 000 into the food plan through the Regional Growth Fund.

There was a rather buoyant mood at the field days, particularly among local dairy farmers, dairy being a major economic contributor in Gippsland, particularly in West Gippsland and South Gippsland. Milk prices this year are looking good, but dairy farmers have done it tough over the last several years. Let us hope the good season and prices continue for the benefit of all farmers and the Gippsland dairy industry in particular. I commend the organisers of Farm World for another great field days event.

### Volunteers

**Mr EIDEH** (Western Metropolitan) — The change of season from summer to autumn represents not only shorter days and a change in weather; it also represents a change in how Melburnians spend their time. With winter approaching, we Melburnians take on a new face. Communities gather to celebrate what it is to be in Melbourne. All over our state, sporting clubs are gearing up. Local football clubs, soccer clubs and rugby clubs come together to play sport, celebrate community and enjoy the kind-hearted, full-spirited support of

volunteering and volunteerism. Over the last few weeks many of us have had the pleasure of attending local sporting events and witnessing firsthand the generosity of thousands of Melburnians.

This spirit, while readily visible at the various sporting clubs every weekend, is also visible in less popular areas, such as schools, aged-care facilities, community centres and youth groups. Over the last few weeks I have had the pleasure of visiting some of these places, and I have witnessed firsthand the giving spirit of these people. I take the time to personally acknowledge and thank those people who freely give up their time to help make our communities stronger and more liveable places. To all of those who volunteer their time, labour and support to various causes in my electorate, I take this chance to thank you, acknowledge you and recognise in this chamber your contribution to our community.

### Lake Bolac Eel Festival

**Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — On Friday, 21 March, I was pleased to attend the Lake Bolac Eel Festival on behalf of the Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan. The Lake Bolac Eel Festival is a unique art and music event. It has been going for approximately 10 years, and it revives the traditional autumn gathering of Indigenous people on the banks of Lake Bolac to share food and enjoy cultural activities. This year's theme was 'Return to country'. The festival attracts about 1000 attendees and provides a major boost to the local economy. It has been well supported for many years by significant local artists, such as Neil Murray, Shane Howard and Archie Roach. It is also a testament to the local community, which struggles hard to put together community events like this. I pay my respects and tributes to the committee organisers, including Una Allender.

With a strong passion for live music and through the work of Mr O'Donohue, the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, and others, this government has been a significant supporter of music festivals and cultural events and continues to be so. It is also a significant supporter of all diverse cultures in this community, particularly our Indigenous communities.

### VicRoads Ballarat relocation

**Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN** — On Sunday, 31 March, I was also with the Premier and other government MPs and candidates, including our sensational Nationals candidate for the new Assembly electorate of Buninyong, Sonia Smith. We witnessed an exciting announcement that the coalition government is

investigating the VicRoads relocation to Ballarat. This is a significant announcement to move approximately 400 positions to Ballarat. It will be great for western Victoria and the Western Highway. It is a significant indication of this government's commitment to regional Victoria and to sensible policy initiatives.

## PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

### Debate resumed from 26 March; motion of Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house:

- (1) notes that the business case for the proposed east–west link, ordered by the resolution of the Council on 11 December 2013 to be tabled in the Council by 19 February 2014, has not been received by the Council;
- (2) notes the letter of 19 February 2014 from the Minister for Roads in response to the Council's resolution did not include the business case or any commitment to release the business case;
- (3) affirms the privileges, immunities and powers conferred on the Council pursuant to section 19 of the Constitution Act 1975;
- (4) affirms the need to protect the high standing of Parliament and to ensure that the Council may properly discharge its duties and responsibilities; and
- (5) requires the Leader of the Government to table by 6 May 2014 a copy of the business case for the proposed east–west link.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am happy to speak in support of Mr Tee's motion. The opposition acknowledges that a letter from the minister regarding this issue was tabled in this chamber yesterday. This letter has not changed the intent of our motion, because the letter says that the government will not deliver its business case. We still call for the business case for this project on behalf of concerned citizens of Victoria. The minister did provide what is called a short-form business case with the letter, which contradicts some previous contributions from government MPs in this debate. They waved this document around saying, 'Here it is. We don't know why you're calling for it'.

The minister has confirmed in his letter that this is not the business case. This is just 12 pages, including the covers, so it is 10 pages. The first page contains a number of coloured triangles with an image inside them. The second page contains a half-page map. The third page is a picture of a container. As we go on, the seventh page is a picture of a reserve. I suppose that is the reserve that will have to be dug up. The fifth page contains a half-page illustration of people walking across a part of the CBD, which I have determined is

5 kilometres from the project. My favourite page is a more than half-page picture of a tram. This is what government members have been waving around saying, 'This is the business case that justifies our spending \$8 billion on a project we had no mandate to build when we were elected'. The government's mandate was for the projects it said it would build, which includes a rail line to Doncaster and a number of other projects which the government has not built.

This document represents this government. The whole project represents this pathetic government, which is probably the worst government Victoria has ever had to endure. It is the worst government this great state has had to endure. What will the government have if it succeeds? It will have contracts signed for its only major project. After four years, the government might get a contract signed — a contract that the majority of Victorians do not want signed. It is a pathetic, hopeless government. It should be ashamed of itself.

Other things the government has tried to pass off as major projects include a design competition for Flinders Street station with no money — a colour-in competition. It might as well have sent out the *Herald Sun* with Corinella to see how it went with that. The government gave an overseas architect half a million bucks for a design it was never going to build. It is pathetic.

The government is taking credit for any other projects it can. Government members stand in front of these projects. They put on their hi-vis vests and hard hats and stand in front of paintings and concept design drawings. They put on their hard hats and hi-vis and stand in front of paintings — 'Oh, careful, the painting might fall over and hit you!'. The government's pathetic new Premier was going to be all singing and all dancing, and he was going to change everything — Action Man Napthine. The government never explained why it got rid of the former Premier, Mr Baillieu, the member for Hawthorn in the Assembly. No-one knows about that. It happened overnight. Action Man Napthine is out there putting on the hi-vis vest and the hard hat and standing in front of paintings. That is all he ever does. Victorians have worked this out. Victorians have worked this government out. Good luck!

If you wanted to do the right thing by Victoria, you would not sign this contract on your way out. If you wanted to do one noble thing in four years, you would not sign this contract and sign Victoria up to an \$8 billion project that no-one wants. You are pathetic. You are hopeless, and Victoria knows it.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I ask Mr Leane to speak through the Chair. That way he may not be quite so provocative, because I assume he will not call me pathetic and hopeless.

**Mr LEANE** — This government is pathetic. It is absolutely hopeless. There is talk of design competitions, artists impressions, feasibility studies, round tables, kitchen tables and nothing else. It has done nothing, and it will do nothing, but the one noble thing it could do on its way out is to reverse its decision and not sign up to this hopeless project.

**Mr ELSBURY** (Western Metropolitan) — What we have just learnt about Mr Leane is that when he is given a document, he just looks at the pretty pictures. He would do really well with the Dick and Jane books we had back in primary school, or maybe the *Mr Men* series — but they would probably be above his reading level.

We have provided information about the east–west link and about its benefits to the people of Victoria, and it is not just for the metropolitan area. This project will change and improve the logistics of our state beyond belief. I feel as if we have been dealing with this topic for some time.

Those opposite have no vision for what they actually want to do for the state. They just want to stop one of the biggest projects that this state has ever seen. It would be like someone saying that we should not have built the West Gate Bridge or the Eastern Freeway or even the Western Ring Road. If we did not have any of that infrastructure, the city would be at a standstill, somewhat similar to our dear friends in Sydney. Their road networks are hopeless.

We have a plan for this state, which is to improve our road infrastructure. Part of that plan is the east–west link. We do not want to just build the east–west link between the Tullamarine Freeway and the Eastern Freeway, we want to build the entire project, as Sir Rod Eddington suggested in his 2008 *Investing in Transport* report. We want to build a link from the Eastern Freeway all the way through to the Western Ring Road. That will provide us with a huge logistical advantage. It will take pressure off the M1 corridor, being the West Gate Bridge and the Monash Freeway. We will also see a direct link to the port of Melbourne and into Swanson Dock. This is a very important part of the project for my electorate in the western suburbs of Melbourne, because having a direct link into the port of Melbourne will reduce truck traffic in West Footscray and surrounds. For too long the people of West Footscray

have put up with trucks thundering through their suburb and the additional noise and traffic that that causes.

To have a direct link from the freeway into the port of Melbourne will reduce that truck traffic. I cannot say it will eliminate it completely because trucks will still use whatever routes they want to use, but the most efficient way will be through the east–west link and on to the Swanson Dock. Other projects that are also coming online and that will assist in reducing the number of trucks that need to use the inner and western suburbs as a rat run to get to the port of Melbourne include the intermodal hub out at Truganina and the expansion of Webb Dock. We also have plans for the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel system.

Unlike those opposite, we will not go with a cheap option on that particular project. The opposition was just going to dig up Swanson Street. Can you imagine Swanson Street being dug up for three years? Apart from the fact that it would rip the heart out of our city, there are social issues coupled with that idea. If you were to rip up Swanson Street, you would be interrupting business in the CBD and what is a vibrant hub of culture in the heart of Melbourne. The Anzac Day march and the Moomba parade would have to be diverted because of construction works in that part of the world.

These things just were not considered by those opposite when they were in government. Apparently we are pathetic, but I put it to those opposite that the issue is that they have no vision at all for this state. They have no vision at all, they just come in here, rant and rave and beat their chests, somewhat like we saw Mr Leane doing just a few moments ago.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — And he continues to carry on now. Four and a half minutes of just ranting and raving — —

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I say to Mr Finn that I am surprised he is here, because last night opposition members were not here. They decided to knock off early, and it took a ringing of the bells before two of them could find their way back into the chamber. It was something unbelievable that people have not seen before. Members of Parliament who have been here for 20 years have not seen such a disgraceful lack of respect for this place.

Those opposite continue to say that this is a bad project and that we cannot go ahead with it because we have no

mandate. I remind those opposite of the Scoresby freeway. That was a freeway that was supposed to be free. It is now the EastLink tollway. Those opposite did not go to the people of Victoria to gain a mandate to build a tollway. The previous government went into the eastern suburbs of Melbourne and told the residents they would get a freeway. I remember that issue quite distinctly because it was an important issue for Victoria. Again, it was a major project that should have delivered a freeway which could have been used for more efficient logistics across the eastern suburbs, and now that we are trying to improve logistics in the west, apparently those opposite just want to take their bat and ball and go home.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — It seems that Mr Leane feels he should have spoken for longer. However, I think if he had gone on for much longer he would have burst a blood vessel.

Support for the east–west link comes from many and varied quarters. Need I remind members opposite of the *Submission on the Eddington East–West Link Needs Assessment Study* by the Australian Workers Union Victorian branch. On the front page there is a name that most would recognise — ‘Cesar Melhem, state secretary, Australian Workers Union’. That document was submitted in support of the east–west link project when the opposition was in government in 2008, and who can forget that? During the same time it was a government that could not manage a ticketing system. It could not deliver that ticketing system on time or on budget, nor was it able to sell pokies licences for the full value, losing some \$3 billion of their value. That \$3 billion would have gone a long way in assisting us with road infrastructure and certainly it would have helped us with the cost of the east–west link, which is a vital piece of infrastructure into the future.

Several members of federal Parliament agreed with that proposition at the time: the then member for Gellibrand, one Nicola Roxon; another, Brendan O’Connor, the member for Gorton; someone else whose name members might recognise, the Honourable Julia Gillard, the then member for Lalor; and last but not least, a certain member for Maribyrnong, one Bill Shorten. They wrote a letter to the Department of Transport on the east–west transport options review in which they said:

As the federal representatives of Melbourne’s west, there are two important points to be made in this debate — that the population of the western suburbs is growing at a rate three times that of Victoria, and that a thriving west is vital to Melbourne’s future.

This was from four federal members of the ALP, in fact quite prominent members, who said that this project must go ahead, and that was on 15 July 2008. Suddenly the importance of this project is eclipsed by the political need of those members opposite.

They need to show themselves as being somehow different from those on this side of the chamber. I accept that; they are very different. I would not want them on this side of the chamber. I do not think the people of Victoria should have to endure them on this side of the chamber ever again, and I will be working as hard as I can this year in the lead-up to the election to ensure that that happens.

The people of the western suburbs deserve the east–west link. We deserve the capacity that this project will provide to the people of the western suburbs. We deserve to be able to reduce the impact that trucks have on our roads. We are never going to stop all trucks, because, strangely enough, you cannot reverse an N-class locomotive into Woolworths to deliver milk. You still need trucks to undertake the short-haul trips from various warehouses across the western suburbs, but reducing the bulk of traffic coming into the port of Melbourne would assist us, and this is something that our friends in the federal Parliament would have recognised at the time they wrote this letter advocating for the east–west link project to go ahead.

We have those opposite talking about the economic arguments behind the need for this project to go ahead. We have handed over quite a substantial amount of information to them. We have provided public documents on the importance of this project and how it would benefit the people of Victoria. Again Mr Leane chose to look just at the pretty pictures, but that is simply how he works. We also have to take into consideration some of the technical aspects of setting up a major project of this type. When we were in opposition we did not receive all the information about the EastLink project. We did not get all the information about that deal.

**Hon. E. J. O’Donohue** — There was nothing on the north–south pipeline.

**Mr ELSBURY** — There was nothing on the north–south pipeline, as Mr O’Donohue points out. And where is the business case for the desalination plant, a project that is going to cost Victorians \$1.8 million a day for the next 27 years? That is outrageous. We have tried to reduce that cost. We have taken measures to refinance that project, but it is

still costing a lot of money. For \$1.8 million a day we could build a school after a week or a new hospital after a month. But in any case we are talking about projects that those opposite just could not manage.

We also have the problems that were caused by Labor when it was trying to build the regional rail link. Those opposite will say that this is their project, that the regional rail link is a Labor government project. Before a rail had even been lifted or a construction worker employed, the project was in the red. I find it difficult to understand how a project can be in the red before it even starts. That project was in trouble before it had even started. It was also in trouble because someone did not take into account the need for signalling to be placed on a train track. These were going to be pretty quick trains if they were not being restricted in any way, shape or form, and those opposite, members of the former government, designed this entire project without taking into consideration the need for any signalling. They did not take into consideration the additional rolling stock that was going to be needed, and the project was already in financial strife. Add to this the federal government taking half a billion dollars out of the project and we can see that we were left in somewhat of a quandary.

If we are to continue the regional rail link project, we will have to pump additional money into it, and if we do not do it, the people of rural Victoria and the people of my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region will have to continue to use a public transport system which is at capacity. We are adding as many trains as humanly possible to the Werribee line and through Sunshine as well, but it will cause us great pain in the future if we do not make that investment, so we have decided that we need to go ahead with the regional rail link project — that important project for the western suburbs — and we have done some amazing things with it. We are replacing two level crossings at Anderson Road, Sunshine. If we had not —

**Mr Leane** — On a point of order, President, this motion is a motion about the business case for the east–west link. Mr Elsbury is not the first government member to speak on this and talk about anything but handing over the business case.

**Hon. E. J. O’Donohue** — On the point of order, President, in his contribution Mr Leane commented on a range of projects, people, issues and matters. This has been a wide-ranging debate from the previous sitting week. Mr Leane broadened the scope of that debate considerably with his contribution. I suggest that Mr Elsbury is actually responding to the motion in a more constrained way than Mr Leane did.

**Mr Finn** — On the point of order, President, in the previous week’s debate on this motion we heard a concerted attempt by the opposition to suggest that because of the east–west link the government will be in no position to spend anything on other projects. I think what Mr Elsbury is attempting to do is refute the arguments made prior to today’s debate but on this particular motion. I believe he is well within his rights to do so, given the debate that has occurred on previous days.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! There is some difficulty when we have a motion that has been carried over, because members do not necessarily have full recall of the material previously introduced into the debate. I have some recall of other projects being discussed on the previous occasion when this motion was before the house. Indeed Mr Leane did refer to some other matters in his contribution. Nonetheless, I think the point Mr Leane made about this substantive motion is a valid one that members ought to bear in mind as they make contributions. They should recognise that the motion on the notice paper is fairly specific.

It is obviously quite fair for members to refer to other projects, and as Mr Finn has indicated, other members have introduced the question of whether the cost or scale of the project might prevent the government from undertaking other projects, and one of those projects is the one to which Mr Elsbury has been referring. It is valid for Mr Elsbury to take this line of argument, but I suggest that he not be too expansive going forward. Much of the point has probably been made, and the motion is relatively specific, so debate should be confined in that sense. However, I accept what Mr Finn says in particular in terms of the carryover of the debate — on the last occasion a number of other issues were raised as part of the debate.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Thank you, President, for that guidance in the direction of this debate. The point I was making was about the Anderson Road overpass and underpass, which were reinstated by the coalition government —

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Things need to be scoped properly, I inform Mr Leane, who continues to talk across the chamber without taking any notice of what the President has said throughout this morning. Mr Leane seems to think he is much more important than anyone else here. You need to scope a project completely, and you have to take into consideration the impact the project will have across the community.

What was not being considered was the impact the regional rail link project would have on Anderson Road and the people of Sunshine because the boom gates would be down for 40 minutes in every hour during peak times, causing absolute traffic chaos. The crossings are in the process of being removed; the first one has already been removed and the second is well under way towards completion some time later this year. A great amount of work needs to be done to ensure that the project is done properly.

The reasoning for the east–west link project is sound. The Eddington report found, regarding the M1 corridor:

The current demand on this road is immense, with traffic volumes varying from 130 000 vehicles per day to nearly 200 000 vehicles per day along the length of the route.

That is only going to grow. As has already been pointed out by the federal members of Parliament who made a submission to the east–west transport options review, growth in the western suburbs is only going to increase. Growth in the northern suburbs is also going to increase, which will put greater strain on our road networks as they stand. It is important that this project go ahead because the impact of not undertaking this project will be beyond belief. As someone who drives to the city or catches the train from Hoppers Crossing, I dread to think what will happen if we do not make this move to improve traffic flows from the east of the city to the west and from the west to the east.

Those opposite want to call it the west–east tunnel project, as if that makes it different. Semantics are so important to those opposite. We have seen that in their discussions about the effect of the zone 1 and 2 ticketing changes and their reasoning that if the Liberal government does it, it will somehow disadvantage people in regional areas. However, apparently it will work out perfectly fine when Labor copies that policy. It is all peachy and there is sunshine, lollipops and rainbows everywhere.

This government has provided a substantial amount of economic information on this project and information about its importance to Victoria. Just stage 1 of the project — we are not even talking about stage 2 — will create 3200 construction jobs. Once the project is complete it will improve travel times, especially along Alexandra Parade. I do not know how many times I have been stuck in that traffic trying to travel to the east to get either to work or to go to see family and friends in that part of the world. I have also been caught in that traffic driving a 3-tonne truck, and it was not much fun driving in traffic that had to stop and start at every traffic light along the way. It would have been much easier for me to hop on the east–west link, had it been

built, to get from the western suburbs through to the eastern suburbs to do the work I had to do.

This project is not just about moving cars. It is about moving trucks, buses and numerous other forms of transport — we could even move motorbikes if we really had to — through the east–west link tunnel. It is about improving traffic flows across the city and improving our connectivity to Melbourne Airport as well, something that I know people in the eastern suburbs have a bit of a bugbear about. The airport was built at Tullamarine, and I am proud that it plays such a key role in our state. It is a major employer in the western suburbs. Avalon Airport is situated just outside my electorate, and it is also a major employer of people who live in my electorate. They live in places such as Wyndham Vale or up in Caroline Springs. People who live as far away as Craigieburn will travel to Avalon Airport to work. This is an important project to connect the state’s major infrastructure.

After the construction of the east–west link there will be massive growth in industry. You only have to look at what has happened in the Scoresby corridor to see the industry that has been built up as a result of EastLink. I remind those opposite of the Scoresby freeway project and the plan to build a freeway along that corridor. That plan was replaced by a tollway. Even in the western suburbs there are numerous logistic companies and a number of industries along the Western Ring Road because of the advantage they have in gaining road access to either the Western Freeway or the Princes Highway to get their produce either interstate or onto ships at the port of Melbourne.

Throughout the Brooklyn area of my electorate in the western suburbs there is already talk about the potential benefits that will come from the east–west link. A number of businesses are already upgrading their facilities in order to be able to take on new roles. It will mean there will be fewer container parks than there have been in the past and a little more warehousing. A little more work will be done towards higher-end development in that part of the world as more businesses move into the area as the east–west link is constructed.

If those opposite want, we could build this project in a very callous manner. If we did not care about the amenity of Melbourne or the people who will be impacted, we would not build a tunnel.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Mr Leane talks about parks. Mr Leane is suggesting that we should not spend all of

this money. Perhaps he is suggesting that we should build this entire project above ground and then see how many houses we can — —

**Mr Leane** — On a point of order, Acting President, the member is misleading the house by verballing me and saying that I said we should build it all above ground. You just cannot make stuff up in here.

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

**Mr ELSBURY** — I find Mr Leane's constant interjections quite disconcerting. Perhaps Mr Leane should have spoken for a bit longer, although we would have all been comatose, or perhaps he would have had a heart attack. In any case, if we did not care, we would just pave the park. It does not make sense to do that, and that is why we are spending the extra money that is needed to build a tunnel instead. This will have the lowest possible impact on the environment, on the people above ground and on the parks above the project.

We have already provided a substantial amount of documentation and numerous pieces of information that those opposite just choose to ignore. I remind them that this was a project that they supported when they were in government. It is a project they were egging on and saying, 'We need this built'. They had their federal members coming out and saying we needed to build it; they had unions coming out and saying we needed to build it. We are building it. That is what we are doing. We are building the very project that those opposite said — —

**Mr Barber** — Flip-flops.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Exactly — flip-flops. This is the first time I am going to agree with Mr Barber. He says that the Labor Party is a group of flip-flops, although he is from New Zealand, so that means thongs. But anyway, that is a different story.

**Mr Barber** — No, that's the Kiwis.

**Mr ELSBURY** — That's the Kiwis?

**Mr Barber** — I am a Kiwi, but that's not what I meant.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I thank Mr Barber for the clarification. In any case, I should not be responding to interjections.

We have provided numerous documents, and we have provided a raft of information. Some information will

not be made available, just as it was not made available on the EastLink tollway project that should have been a Scoresby freeway, just as there was no information provided for the north-south pipeline, just as there was no information made available for the desalination plant, and certainly we are still waiting for on some sort of a business case for what was going on with myki. Having taken up enough time of the house, mainly because Mr Leane continued to interject, which was a bit distracting, I believe I have made my case strongly enough and I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate.

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

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## EMPLOYMENT

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

That this house —

- (1) notes that unemployment continues to grow, the current rate being the highest for more than a decade;
- (2) expresses concern at the alarming figures for youth unemployment, identified in the Brotherhood of St Laurence *Australian Youth Unemployment 2014 — Snapshot*, in particular the increases across the state of 29 to 48 per cent;
- (3) recognises that the impact of the Ford, Toyota, Holden and Alcoa closures is yet to be realised in the unemployment figures; and
- (4) requires the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee to inquire into, consider and report by 19 August 2014 on the crisis confronting Victorian families through unemployment, with reference to —
  - (a) effective measures to address youth unemployment in regional areas and metropolitan Melbourne;
  - (b) the impact that cuts to TAFE and the education sector may have had on providing workers opportunity to reintegrate into the workforce;
  - (c) the creation of full-time employment versus other precarious forms of employment;
  - (d) the reviews of the Victorian and South Australian economies that were due to be reported to the federal government in February 2014; and
  - (e) measures to reverse the current unemployment trend.

The first point in this motion notes that the unemployment rate continues to grow and that the current rate is the highest it has been for more than a decade. However, in Victoria today there are

55 400 more unemployed people than when the coalition took office — that is, 38 per cent more unemployed Victorians in the space of three years. The coalition has only created 1500 full-time jobs during its term so far, and less than 2.25 per cent of the new jobs are full-time jobs. During its last year in office Labor created 66 900 jobs, more than the coalition has managed to create in its first three years, and 67 per cent, or 44 900, of those jobs were full time.

When we talk about unemployment and full-time, part-time, casual and temporary jobs, and contract and labour hire employment, those figures and percentages only tell part of the story. The reality is that long-term unemployed retrenched workers and our young people have been having enormous problems trying to secure employment, which we know is having a major impact on families and which obviously is going to continue.

On many occasions in this chamber I have spoken about the spiralling loss of jobs in our state. I have read the study conducted by Flinders University of the closure of Mitsubishi. The study is an evaluation of the impact of retrenchment and focuses on affected workers and their families and communities, and also looks at the implications for human service policies and practices. I am also highly aware of the *Geelong Advertiser's* recent survey of the impact of job losses in our region and the issues of social dislocation, depression and suicide. I do not believe the human side of what we are seeing is being given sufficient weight in this debate. As legislators it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the most needy in our society are looked after in vulnerable times and that they are afforded every opportunity to re-establish their lives. I also believe this is a measure by which a civilised and caring society can be judged.

I am exhausted by and frustrated with having to raise these matters given the wealth of material that litters our history on this subject. We all know the impact that joblessness can have on a community and a family, yet there seems to be absolutely no plan by this government to address it. However, opposition members continue to hope that sooner or later compassion will break through the barriers of political intractability. I hope the government will adopt a holistic approach to the challenge that is before it. I also hope at some point the government will realise that the engine room of Victorian manufacturing is fast losing steam. But it appears that it is not to be, because as soon as I raise my eyes to the broader horizon hope begins to fade.

The Napthine government continues to fail the test of true leadership and the federal government simply blames the workers, everyone playing politics and

nobody caring about the soon-to-be displaced. These views are borne out by a recent survey by the *Geelong Advertiser*, which links the direct impact that joblessness is having with the mental wellbeing of our community, maintaining that depression levels have spiralled as manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Those same figures identify an increase in admissions to the Geelong Hospital for mental illness-related matters, with about 22 400 adults reporting that they suffer a high level of psychological distress. The survey does not factor in the more recent high-profile departures from the region, but nevertheless it shows a staggering increase of 4.7 per cent in depression levels on the 2008 statistics.

Healthy Together Geelong spokesperson Chad Foulkes said rising levels of depression correspond with the rise in redundancies across the manufacturing sector and the growing insecurity around jobs. Healthy Together has also pointed to other effects of joblessness, highlighting the potential for heart attacks, strokes and the likelihood of other chronic mental disorders. This was evident in the Mitsubishi study, where it was found that the demographic was not dissimilar to that of Ford or Alcoa — that is, the affected employees were generally middle-aged to older men with limited formal education, and most were married or had partners. It is important to note that in their search for work following the closure roughly half found paid employment, but on closer examination a third were found to be employed on a casual basis only and 15 per cent were employed on short-term fixed contracts. Of the participants in the study, approximately 50 per cent said their lives had changed — but not for the better, as the Prime Minister recently suggested. That famous comment the Prime Minister made in relation to the announced closures of car manufacturing plants is that vehicle workers had been 'liberated' from their jobs. They are being liberated into very precarious employment or into unemployment queues.

The study demonstrated that even early on there were indicators of a community and population under stress, with a significant number of redundant workers reporting that job loss had affected their family life and sense of wellbeing. Some workers falling out of the labour market expressed concerns about housing costs, home rental and home ownership, and for those lucky enough to find jobs, it tended to be less secure and well-remunerated employment. Full-time permanent work that provides well-paid, reliable incomes to working families is central to the health and wellbeing of our communities. A life where families are barely able to scratch out a living is not an adequate recognition of the outstanding contribution these people have made over their entire working lives.

This is a crisis that we are facing both socially and economically. The community has the right to ask what industries will replace labour-intensive heavy industries in Geelong, Elizabeth, Altona, Broadmeadows and other manufacturing centres around Australia. Surely the government appreciates that our manufacturing employment still dwarfs mining employment and that mining is not geared to absorb the existing automotive industry skill base. Manufacturing provides stable wages and working conditions across a range of industry sectors. It also employs 1 million workers directly, contributes almost 10 per cent of gross domestic product and accounts for around one-third of our exports. These are often long-term well-paid jobs that span several decades, unlike those created through infrastructure projects that have to be reinvented every so many years.

To date this government's response to this nightmare has been slow, sloppy and self-interested. Its inaction will without a doubt form a lasting legacy of long-term unemployment and misery for thousands of Victorians. The only area in which the government seems to demonstrate any skill is its ability to compound disasters. I put it to you, Acting President, that we have what I would call a Sara Lee of disasters, layer upon layer of which are now coming to light through the Brotherhood of St Laurence's recent report entitled *Australian Youth Unemployment 2014 — Snapshot*. This report produces some frightening figures that should set alarm bells ringing for even the most despondent Napthine government members.

By way of example I will look at Geelong, which of course is in my electorate, and the statistics are truly alarming. The report identifies that Geelong is facing a youth unemployment crisis and that Geelong is one of the worst affected areas in the state. It quotes Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showing that the rate of youth unemployment has risen 29 per cent in the last two years and will hit 19 per cent by 2016 if nothing is done. Tony Nicholson, the Brotherhood of St Laurence executive director, is quoted in a media release as saying:

Victoria is facing a generational crisis. For young people caught up in this jobless spiral this can be a road to long-term poverty and reliance on welfare.

He also said:

We know youth unemployment has a profoundly scarring effect on young people that will hurt their life chances, including the prospect of even holding down a job further down the track.

This is also bad news for the ... economy.

According to the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the rate of youth unemployment has risen to a staggering 48 per cent in Melbourne's outer east, including Ringwood, Croydon and Lilydale, over the past two years. The Geelong figure is 14.7 per cent, up 29 per cent on what it was two years ago. These sorts of figures send shock waves through the community of Geelong, as community members constantly read newspaper headlines such as 'Warning over jobless increase', 'Alarm on Geelong jobs — report reveals most suburbs at risk of further job losses', 'TAC to shed 70 workers', 'Barwon Water sheds 53 staff' and '27 more jobs gone — Truck supplier blames fading mining boom for redundancies'.

Other headlines include 'Our hidden job losses ... state axes up to 500 in our region', 'Cool trade shutdown — 200 jobs on hold', 'Fight over job cuts — Napthine urged to "come clean"', '15 carpet jobs go', 'Job cut fear for parks', '40 more get axe at Avalon', 'Job losses hit women — Region ranks highest for female unemployment', '600 jobs on the line', 'More job cuts fear at Avalon — Workers on edge', 'Job cuts shattering', '35 jobs on the line', '30 jobs to go at Gforce', 'Cement job losses — Boral to sack nearly 100 at Waurm Ponds', 'Jobs fail to take off — Geelong workers sacked', '126 workers in limbo', '400 jobs lost each day in Vic', 'Jobless numbers for young pointing to crisis — Warning' and 'Youth work level forum — Jobless rate concerns agencies'. The list goes on and on, and they are mostly newspaper headlines in the *Geelong Advertiser*.

If you go further into my electorate of Western Victoria Region to Warrnambool, the Brotherhood of St Laurence report mentions that in other parts of the south-west unemployment has risen by 36 per cent in the last two years. The Brotherhood predicts that youth joblessness in the region will hit 22.5 per cent in two years if nothing is done. The youth unemployment rate in Warrnambool has soared to 16.6 per cent, prompting the region's job agencies to hold urgent talks to discuss ways of lowering these figures. Officials from the South West Local Learning and Employment Network are involved, along with the South West Institute of TAFE, Deakin University and other Warrnambool institutions, in trying to grapple with the problem that is facing the local community, particularly the young in the region.

However, the Premier, who is the lower house member for the area, continues to bury his head in the sand. He pretends that there is not really a problem and that it is just Labor wanting to twist the figures. I would like him to sit down face to face with the Brotherhood CEO and say that, but, I do not believe he would. Labor is not

twisting the figures. This is a Premier who cannot bring himself to admit that unemployment levels in his own electorate have skyrocketed on his watch. The reality is that there were 65 200 people employed in January, and in February that figure fell sharply to 59 700. The Premier might not like to hear these figures, but they are the facts.

It is not uncommon to see headlines in the Warrnambool *Standard* talking about job losses similar to those in the Geelong papers, with headlines such as '20 factory jobs axed', '27 jobs lost as trucking branch closes', 'MG job cuts ire', 'South-west youth suffer high unemployment', '30 lose their jobs — Kitset shuts doors', '130 jobs face axe', 'Workers lose out as DSE shrinks', 'State jobs face axe — Public sector in firing line' and 'Tough times hit jobs — Business suffers'. All these articles have appeared whilst the Napthine government has been pretending there is no problem. Excuses and inaction do not create jobs, and the Napthine government has proven that over the past years.

Miles Coverdale, the CEO of Westvic Staffing Solutions, which has offices in Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland, Colac and Camperdown, was cited in the Warrnambool *Standard* as saying job seekers have 'suffered a double blow with the removal of training funding'. He went on to say that this has had a real impact on young women in the region and that there has been a decrease in the number of apprenticeships.

If you go to another major regional centre in my electorate, Ballarat, you see that the unemployment rate has also increased over recent months. On 21 February the Ballarat *Courier* published an article titled 'More join jobs hunt in Ballarat', which explained that in February the unemployment rate had jumped to 6 per cent. That was a 1.7 per cent increase from the previous December. Just over a month later, on 22 March, the Ballarat *Courier* published an article titled 'Ballarat's jobless rate jumps in February', which explained that Ballarat's joblessness rate had risen another 1 per cent, to 7 per cent. These are very recent figures. However, they do not mirror the long-term figures. Since the government took office in November 2010, unemployment across the state has risen, and it is now at its highest level for more than a decade.

What compounds this sorry state of affairs are the savage cuts to training and education in Geelong, Warrnambool and across the whole state by this government. At a time of unprecedented need, the government shows no sign of restoring funding to the industry and is still deaf to the calls of educators on

what needs to be done. On this side of the house we say the starting point has to be the restoration of funding as it was under Labor. Once equity is restored in the system, the industry will then be able to advise what more it needs to deal with in terms of our current crisis.

As I travel around my electorate, I hear stories on a repeated basis. I was at a function on Thursday night where the MC — a self-described country girl — spoke of how her brother was involved in a TAFE course and that the course no longer exists as a result of the TAFE cuts. He had two choices: stay in town and not go to TAFE, or shift. Often people do shift; they try to follow the course. That also impacts on our rural and regional communities, particularly rural communities that are already heavily impacted by population drift. That drift is often outweighed by the number of youth who leave those towns in search of employment and further study. That clearly is being exacerbated. It has been over the last 18 months and will continue to be as long as this current government is in power.

It is also important to add to this debate the Auditor-General's comments in the report on apprenticeship and traineeship completion that was recently tabled in the house. The Auditor-General's report demonstrated to us the hard and old reality that this government has turned its back on the community and young people in Victoria in the area of apprenticeships and traineeships. One of the findings was that the government had failed to improve the number of qualified people being introduced into the workforce. It also found that 38 per cent of people who commence a traineeship or apprenticeship do not complete it, with the most common reason for quitting being a lack of support and low wages.

Rather than assisting our young people to complete their training — these are people who want jobs, want to be trained and are in the system — this government has scrapped a range of assistance measures that were in place. The apprenticeship accommodation allowance, designed to assist people who have to travel for their training, which is particularly relevant in my electorate, has been scrapped. The apprenticeship trade bonus, which financially supported people at the beginning of their training, has been scrapped. Even more alarmingly, the apprenticeship training completion bonus, which provided financial incentive to finish training, is gone.

The Auditor-General makes the observation that this report exposes the government's position on training in Victoria. It simply has not applied any consideration or assessment of outcomes, nor has it vested any interest at all in our young people and their skills. It is not the

Labor Party saying that; it is not even the Brotherhood of St Laurence saying that. It is the Auditor-General saying that the Napthine government has walked away from apprentices and trainees in this state. He said that the government has denied the importance of having qualified and skilful members of our workforce and that that will have an impact on industry and the livelihood of our state. This is a damning indictment of a government that is in the slow lane.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence report says:

Make no mistake: no skills, no job, no quality of life.

The Napthine government must accept that these issues impact the whole nation. The disadvantage is not isolated to a select percentage of school leavers or even future generations of school leavers; the impact will extend to the nation's economy, industry and production. This government will condemn young people to a life sentence of poverty, contributing to a permanent underclass, if it does not act. Surely there are those on the other side of the chamber who do not support this.

That is why I have chosen to put paragraphs in the motion before us today that refer this whole issue of unemployment, youth unemployment and the fact that the large closures do not yet feed into the unemployment numbers, because a lot of those closures have not fully occurred. That is why I am also seeking some indication from the government as to whether it recognises that there is a significant problem we have as Victorians generally, regardless of political party. That is why I have sought for this matter to be referred to an upper house committee for an inquiry into these key issues. It would give the opportunity for this house to examine the reports that are available. It also calls for the federal government report on the Victorian and South Australian economies and the documentation and evidence that has been provided to the federal government to be examined. Moreover, once knowing that information, members of the committee would have the opportunity to reflect on the situation and the evidence and then work together in structuring their views and ideas on a positive approach to job creation.

This is what Labor is looking for today in relation to this motion. It wants some indication that this government is now going to get very serious, albeit late, about what the issues are, stop playing political football with the serious issues before us, sit down and have a proper parliamentary inquiry into the situation, utilise the full support and services of the Parliament to be able to conduct the inquiry and, moreover, have the responsibility to search, look for and make

recommendations on how we can create jobs in this state/ It should be concerned about the wellbeing of Victorians who are impacted by this current crisis and not just look at job creation but also work on the other mechanisms that are required to ensure that the enormously negative impact this job crisis is having on Victorian families is alleviated somewhat.

The response so far from the government has been ad hoc at best. There certainly has not been a plan. There have been some announcements. There was a recent announcement in Brunswick this morning, but it does not connect with the skills that are held and required. There is no connection to manufacturing workers who are being retrenched, and it certainly does not go looking for any young people who are desperately in search of a job.

The committee would also express its views on the government's response so far, and whether it has been an adequate response. Moreover, where it has been an inadequate response, the committee would produce recommendations that actually get people back in work and get this state moving again. It would make sure that there are jobs, not just in the blue-collar area but also white-collar jobs — and not just for retrenched workers or the long-term unemployed but also for young people, who we have to look after. I commend this motion to the house.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate on Ms Tierney's motion this morning. Ms Tierney spent a lot of time talking about her electorate and the seeming lack of jobs in her electorate. I would say to Ms Tierney at the outset, here is an idea: she should spend some time in her electorate or at the very least download the local paper, because this government has been instrumental in creating a number of jobs in her electorate and beyond. It is easy to sit over there, make the occasional visit to your electorate and claim you know what you are talking about.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I am in my electorate right now, in case anybody is not sure.

**Mr Finn** — You represent Preston, don't you?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I do represent Preston. I was born, I live and I raise my family in my electorate. Preston is certainly one of places that I represent. If members are not sure how to get from Preston to Geelong, I can tell them how to get there.

**Ms Tierney** — On a point of order, Acting President, there has been a ruling by the President on comments concerning geographical locations, whether these be direct or inferred, and I would ask you to refer the President to the transcript of the words that have been used this morning. The President knows exactly what this issue is about, as does the rest of the chamber. I seek your cooperation.

**Mr Finn** — On the point of order, Acting President, I find it extraordinary that Ms Tierney is inferring that the word ‘Preston’ is unparliamentary. It is nonsensical that you cannot use the word ‘Preston’ in debate. Ms Tierney has taken exception to it. She may have her own reasons for doing that. I am not sure what they are, but I find it hard to follow why she is drawing an inference from the use of the word ‘Preston’.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr D. R. J. O’Brien)** — Order! I have given both parties a fairly long time to make their points. While there is no point of order, Ms Tierney’s comments relate to *Hansard* and were directed to the President. The President will no doubt do what Ms Tierney asks, to the extent he considers it necessary. I call on Mr Ondarchie to resume his contribution, without interruption.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — It is a delight to rise and talk about this motion, particularly in relation to my electorate, because apparently there is a problem with me talking about my electorate in this chamber. What is interesting is that others are keen to talk about their own electorates. Allow me to talk about mine as well, if I can. There was an advertising campaign some time ago with the slogan ‘the guilty party’. Some things never change.

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows Victoria’s annual employment growth is the strongest of the non-mining states.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — As I was waiting, I was contemplating how I could drive from Preston to Geelong.

Victorian employment growth over the past year was driven by full-time employment, which increased by 18 900 jobs. There are now 64 200 more jobs and more Victorians employed than when we came to government. Victoria continues to have the highest labour force participation rate of all the non-mining states. Our regional unemployment rate is 6.1 per cent, which is below the national average and lower than when Labor left office in 2010. How quickly they forget.

The Victorian government has been working hard to secure jobs for Victorians, particularly in the regions. A \$22 million coinvestment with SPC Ardmona has secured jobs in Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley. I am waiting for the cheers from across the chamber. That is a great initiative for the people of Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley. Thousands of jobs have been created through investments funded by the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. Thousands of jobs will be created by our major infrastructure investments such as the \$2.5 billion Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor projects. Construction jobs will be created by stage 1 of the east–west link. Those opposite oppose this project, which will create 3200 jobs.

I will spend a bit of time talking about job creation in this state, but we know that the biggest job killer in this state is the carbon tax. Those opposite support it; they support the big job killer. Given ample opportunity in this place, they have not yet denounced the carbon tax. You have to ask: where are they on this? They stand there saying that they care about jobs, working families and opportunities. However, they have not once said in this chamber that they denounce the carbon tax. Silence is golden. There is no claim. We know very well when it comes to jobs the Labor Party members are only interested in one thing — their own jobs. We know that they and their factional mates get together to work out who goes into what spot. For example, the local people of Macedon wanted someone to represent the Labor Party, but they did not get the opportunity because Mary-Anne from Macedon is rolling in, and she is coming in — —

**Ms Tierney** — On a point of order, Acting President, I seek that the member be directed to deal with the matters in the motion.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr D. R. J. O’Brien)** — Order! It is a wide-ranging motion, and the member is responding to contributions and partly responding to interjections. The member is perhaps somewhat provoking those interjections, but I rule that there is no point of order.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Interestingly enough, every time I make a strong point opposition members want to stop because they know they are the guilty party, and when it comes to jobs in the regions, their upper house preselections are just a joke. We know the member for Eltham in the other place is abandoning the electorate of Eltham to move to the upper house and represent somewhere close to his heart, Northern Victoria Region — —

**Mr Leane** — On a point of order, Acting President, going to relevance, basically the member is misleading the house, for starters. It is not relevant to the motion. I fully understand why this government would not want to touch on its billion dollar TAFE cuts and how jobs have left the state in droves on its watch — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr D. R. J. O'Brien)** — Order! If Mr Leane had allowed me to interrupt earlier, I was going to find in his favour in relation to the earlier part of the point of order, which is that despite my earlier ruling I believe Mr Ondarchie is beginning to stray a little from the motion and I call him back to the motion. The other points Mr Leane made were in the manner of debating the point of order, and enough has been said on that.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Continuing on jobs, there are those across the state and particularly in regional Victoria who are moving around Victoria to create jobs for others. Who knows, a move to the upper house here could be creating a future job for somebody else. At what point would we welcome union organiser Emma Walters to this chamber? I wonder how that is going to go?

Victoria has the strongest state finances in Australia. We are spending a record \$5.8 billion in 2013–14 on infrastructure, rising to \$7.2 billion in 2014–15, and we are the only state to hold a AAA credit rating with a stable outlook from both major rating agencies. This is the state of opportunity, where there is investment and where investment creates jobs. This is a government creating jobs and building a better Victoria. People are voting with their feet and moving to Victoria in greater numbers than ever before. The latest figures show that Victoria's population increased by 110 500 people, or 2 per cent, over the year ended September 2013 and stands at 5.77 million people. People want to come to Victoria. They want to be in this state, the state of opportunity, which is led by a government that is fiscally responsible and understands how to manage finances, because we know that Labor cannot manage money.

The growth rate in Victoria is significantly higher than the national population growth of 1.8 per cent and much higher than the New South Wales growth rate of 1.5 per cent. Victoria gained more people from interstate migration than any other state or territory. They get it. They get that this is the state of opportunity.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — However, Ms Tierney asks me about jobs, and I thank her for that interjection

because the government has allocated funding to build stage 1 of the east–west link, linking the Eastern Freeway to the Tullamarine Freeway, which will create 3200 jobs. It is job creation. We have announced a \$2.5 billion upgrade of the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor, including level crossing removals, power upgrades, high-capacity signalling, a maintenance depot at Pakenham East and bringing to 40 the number of new trains ordered by the coalition government. It is another job creation activity.

We have provided \$22 million as part of a \$100 million coinvestment in SPC Ardmona, securing 2700 jobs in the Goulburn Valley — another job creation activity. We began construction of the \$630 million Bendigo Hospital, which is great for the people of the northern area, great for Victorians and creates more jobs. Opposition members keep asking me the question, and I will keep answering it. We are delivering the \$4.8 billion regional rail link project. We have announced relocation of the Victorian WorkCover Authority to Geelong in Ms Tierney's electorate. Maybe she had not read the local paper on that day. There has been a relocation of 550 staff, creating \$50 million in additional economic benefits for Geelong. Ms Tierney stood in this place today, bleating about her electorate, yet here is another example of how the Napthine coalition government is supporting opportunities in Geelong and western Victoria.

We have commenced the \$1.6 billion expansion of the port of Melbourne, creating 3000 jobs — another job creation opportunity. The government has delivered 657 protective services officers (PSOs) to 92 railway stations, on track to meet our target of 940 PSOs by 29 November 2014. This is another job creation opportunity. We have secured the national disability insurance scheme headquarters for Geelong, creating 300 jobs in Geelong — another job-creating opportunity. We have welcomed the first of five new E-class trams made in Melbourne for Melbourne, which is another job-creating activity. We have announced funding of \$338 million for stage 2 of the redevelopment of Melbourne Park, creating 1300 construction jobs and estimated to generate in excess of \$22.27 billion in economic benefit for Victoria — another job-creating opportunity.

We have funded, built and opened the \$24.5 million expansion of the emergency department and special care nursery at the Northern Hospital in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region. It is another job-creating opportunity.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Ms Tierney continues to ask by interjection, ‘What about jobs?’. Here is the list, and I am happy to keep going. It is unfortunate that the standing orders allow us to sit until only 5.30 p.m today because I have got a list of job-creating opportunities that this government has created. Opposition members, who are policy barren, will just have to sit, watch and learn.

The coalition government began construction of the \$66 million upgrade of Ringwood station and bus interchange with only \$500 million in private investment. Eastland is another job-creating opportunity by this government. We began construction of the \$81 million Frankston Hospital redevelopment — another job-creating opportunity. We provided \$35 million for a 54-bed mental health wing at the Werribee Mercy Hospital, which was the largest ever funding boost for mental health services in Melbourne’s west and something that I know Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury have been very active about because they believe in creating jobs.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I pick up the interjection from Mr Finn. The Labor Party never would have done it.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — To keep appeasing Ms Tierney’s interjections, we began construction of the \$45 million Geelong Library and Heritage Centre, creating 300 jobs during construction, 17 direct ongoing jobs and 8 indirect jobs — another job-creating opportunity.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — They talk, but they never walk the talk. It is a shame.

We progressed to construction of the \$1 billion expansion of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. If members want to have a look at it at the top end, they will see lots of jobs happening there — another job-creating opportunity. We announced that Coles, because of the economic climate in Victoria, will invest \$360 million and create 3500 jobs across Victoria — another job-creating opportunity. But wait, there is a lot more, and we are going to go for hours on this one.

By 31 January this year 1245 additional police officers had been deployed. That is on track to meet our target of 1700 — another job-creating opportunity. We

announced the commencement of the construction of the \$1 billion Exxon Mobil gas conditioning plant, creating 250 construction jobs in Gippsland. We delivered 27 900 additional jobs for Victorians over the year to January, which was the highest number of all the states. We began construction of the \$26 million Grovedale railway station — another job-creating opportunity. Because of the economic climate in Victoria, Costco has opened a new facility in Ringwood, creating 350 new jobs — another job-creating opportunity. We opened the \$10 million RACV Inverloch upgrade, creating 20 new additional ongoing jobs — another job-creating opportunity. We announced the \$7.5 million youth employment start-up program to encourage businesses to employ younger workers — another job-creating opportunity.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr D. R. J. O’Brien)** — Order! The level of interjections is rising to an unacceptable level. I ask Mr Ondarchie to continue his contribution through the Chair.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — We opened the Australian Dairy Park in Carrum Downs. It is a project that will create 30 full-time jobs. That area is well represented by the member for Carrum in the other place, Donna Bauer, a remarkable woman who right now is going through some hardship and all our prayers and thoughts are with her as she works hard for her electorate despite her incapacity at this time.

We began construction of the \$90.4 million Baanip Boulevard, feeding into Armstrong Creek — another job-creating opportunity. We secured the \$60 million Olam almond processing facility in Victoria’s north, creating 41 jobs. I know Mrs Millar has been a strong advocate for that project — another job-creating opportunity. We have provided \$150 000 towards a \$560 000 project for Latrobe Valley’s Safetech Tieman Solutions, creating 20 new jobs in Moe — another job-creating opportunity.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — It is interesting that members opposite laugh and joke about new jobs in Victoria. This side of the chamber is taking the issue seriously, but those opposite see it as frivolity. We take job creation in this state seriously. Our advice is get on board or get out of the way. We secured 60 new high-skill IT jobs at University of Ballarat’s technology park with Primary Health Care — a new job opportunity. We created an \$8 million upgrade of the Northern Bay P-12 College in Corio, building on the \$8.3 million

already announced by the coalition government — another creation of jobs opportunity in construction.

We began construction of the new \$30 million police operational tactics and training facility adjacent to the Victorian emergency management training facility, also being built in Craigieburn in the northern part of Melbourne — another job-creating opportunity. We secured the regional headquarters of Japan's Muji in Melbourne and three retail stores, creating up to 40 jobs — another job-creating opportunity. We enabled Wagstaff Cranbourne to increase meat exports and create 110 additional jobs, thanks to a \$350 000 grant from the Victorian government — another job-creating opportunity. We have not even got to intermission yet; there is still a lot to go.

We delivered the \$100 million Food into Asia action plan, boosting Victorian food and beverage exports and jobs — another job-creating opportunity. We announced that Melbourne ICT company, DB Results, has experienced rapid growth and plans to create 100 additional ICT jobs. I know the Minister for Technology, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, has been a very strong advocate for the development of ICT jobs in Victoria — again, another job-creating opportunity. The government contributed \$2.9 million towards the 12.5-kilometre pipeline and supply of potable water to Golden Plains shire's 4000 hectares intensive agriculture precinct, boosting food production and jobs — another job-creating opportunity.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Here is one Ms Tierney may be interested in because it is about Geelong. She might learn something about Geelong by listening to this.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I am not talking about Preston at the moment. I am talking about Geelong now. We launched the \$11 million Geelong Advancement Fund to drive jobs growth, increase skills in innovation and deliver economic and community infrastructure in Geelong. I wait for the applause from those opposite. Gosh, they are not behind it. They are not behind job creation in Geelong. Does anybody else find that curious? They are not behind job creation in Geelong. The actions of those opposite speak louder than words.

The government worked with Shell to secure jobs in Geelong and across Victoria through the sale of its Corio oil refinery. This is another way the Victorian coalition government is securing jobs and opportunities in Victoria.

We began construction of the \$16.37 million expansion of the Mildura Base Hospital — yet another job creation opportunity in Victoria. We commenced construction — and I know this is a very important achievement, because Mr Finn has been a very strong advocate for it — of the \$12 million P-12 specialist autism school in Laverton. This is a great initiative by Victoria, it is a great initiative of the coalition government and it creates job opportunities down in Laverton as well. This is another job-creating opportunity.

The Victorian government's October 2013 China super trade mission is estimated to produce \$389.6 million in export sales over the next 24 months and to secure and grow jobs.

Here is another one for Ms Tierney; she might want to write this down. She should get a biro out and write this down because it is news about her electorate — something else she will learn today. We announced 300 Energy Australia jobs for the CBD in Geelong. Is that not a great initiative? Three hundred jobs with Energy Australian in Geelong, and where is Ms Tierney saying, 'That's great for my electorate'? Where is she commending that? Where is she getting behind the people in her electorate? She is silent today.

The new 60-bed Canton unit has been completed as part of the Ararat prison project, a project that will almost double the facility's capacity from 388 beds to 738 beds and generate jobs and investment in and around Ararat. This is another job creation project by the Napthine coalition government. We are on a roll here; there are lots to go.

The government approved development of a \$45 million retail centre at Warragul, creating 400 jobs; this is another opportunity. We began construction of the \$14.7 million Dandenong fire station and southern metropolitan emergency management complex, creating more opportunities and more jobs for Victoria. This is another job-creating project.

We announced planning approval for the Wyndham Harbour project, and I know that Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury are great supporters of this project. As Mr Finn often says, this is a huge game changer for the west, a huge opportunity for people in the west for jobs. It will create 3000 jobs over five years and 440 ongoing jobs.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — It is interesting that as I roll off the expansive list, the huge list of job-creating opportunities by the Napthine coalition government, all

we are getting from those opposite is frivolity because they do not really care. They only care about their own jobs and not those of Victorians.

We have progressed construction of the \$65.6 million Echuca hospital expansion, with construction progressing on time and on budget. This is another job-creating opportunity in Victoria. I know that the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips has been involved in the next project, which is the creation of 20 high-tech jobs by attracting the Equinix ICT company to Victoria. These are new jobs for Victoria. If the chamber would allow me, I would be happy to talk for 4 or 5 hours on all the things that are being created for Victoria.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — What is interesting is that those opposite do not like to hear good news. They want to talk down the Victorian economy, they want to talk down jobs. The Grim Reapers are alive and well across the chamber.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — They are here today. To be fair, they are here today. Victoria's youth unemployment rate was 12.4 per cent over the year to February 2014 and 0.6 percentage points lower than one year ago. Victoria was the only state to record a decline in the youth unemployment rate over the year to February. Of the Victorian youth population, 57.7 per cent were in full-time education and a further 32.9 per cent were employed over the year to February 2014. Only 4 per cent were both unemployed and not in full-time education, which is 0.4 percentage points lower than last year, 0.1 percentage points lower than in Labor's last year in office and 0.7 percentage points lower than the national average of 4.7 per cent over the year to February 2014. Those are the facts.

**Ms Tierney** — No, they're not.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Ms Tierney interjects with her normal gainsaying, 'No, they're not'. Those are the facts. The number of Victoria's youth in jobs is growing, both in metropolitan Melbourne and in regional Victoria. Victorian youth employment grew by 1000 persons over the year to February 2014. The number of youth unemployed fell by 3200 persons — that is, almost minus 5.0 per cent — over the year to February 2014. Victoria's metropolitan youth unemployment rate was 12.7 per cent over the year to February 2014, 0.1 percentage points lower than one year ago. The regional youth unemployment rate was 11.6 per cent over the year to February 2014. This was 2.1 percentage points lower than one year ago and

3.5 percentage points less than in Labor's last year in office. Oh, do they forget. Victorian regional youth employment increased by 2300 persons — that is, 2.1 per cent — over the past year. Victorian regional youth employment growth was the highest of all states over the year.

As I touched on earlier in my contribution, the Victorian Naphthine coalition government has developed the Employment Start Up for Business program, which offers a direct response to Victorian small to medium size businesses that are experiencing difficulty in filling skilled vacancies and those that want to employ and train a young person. Employment Start Up for Business provides funding of \$7.5 million over four years to achieve 1750 employment placements in small to medium size businesses. It will focus on both regional businesses and metropolitan businesses with unfilled vacancies and skill shortages. This is another strategy, another initiative, to create opportunities and jobs.

This program gives direct assistance to employers. Victorian regional youth employment growth was the highest of all states over the year. Businesses will receive an initial payment of \$1000 on employment of an unemployed young person, and a further \$3000 after 16 weeks of employment of at least 30 hours per week and evidence that accredited training appropriate to the new job has been organised. Young unemployed Victorians between the ages of 15 and 25 years will be eligible to fill the vacancies associated with this program. Businesses that wish to employ 15 to 16-year-olds will be required to provide evidence of school attendance exemption in line with Victorian legislation. The Employment Start Up for Business program began on 31 July 2013. There is lots of information about the program on the Business Victoria website, and grant applications can also be made through the website.

The Department of State Development, Business and Innovation also delivers the youth employment scheme, which places young people in traineeships with state government departments and their associated statutory authorities. Last year 341 young people were given the opportunity to work and train in the public sector. This year the youth employment scheme target is to place 450 young people into traineeships in public sector jobs. It is another strategy to provide job opportunities in Victoria.

The no. 1 threat to job creation in Victoria is militant unionism perpetrated by rogue unions like the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) — —

**Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips** — And their members.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — And their members. The disgraceful actions of these rogue unions delay projects, drive up costs, increase investment risk and ultimately cost jobs.

**Mr Barber** — I thought the carbon tax was the no. 1 threat.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I will pick up Mr Barber's interjection. He said, 'I thought the carbon tax was the no. 1 cause of job losses'.

**Mr Barber** — According to Mr Ondarchie.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — You cannot change *Hansard*, Mr Barber. You said, 'I thought the carbon tax was the no. 1 job killer'.

**Mr Barber** — But it is the unions apparently. Can you make up your mind?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — You cannot change the pink, my friend; that is what you said. Earlier this week the Supreme Court of Victoria handed down its judgement in relation to the CFMEU's actions at the Myer Emporium site — a disgraceful and abhorrent set of actions — finding it guilty of criminal contempt for its actions at that site and a related site. It is this sort of behaviour — these thuggish, loony-left antics — that is driving investment and the opportunity to create jobs away from the Victorian economy. Here is an opportunity for members of the Labor Party to stand up and say, 'We reject the CFMEU's affiliation with the Labor Party because beneath it all we care about jobs'.

Ms Tierney talked about TAFE. The Napthine government has allocated \$1.2 billion for training in the current budget, which is 41 per cent more than Labor spent in the 2010–11 budget. Labor spent only \$850 million.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — That is the problem that Victorian schoolchildren have when they come to watch parliamentary proceedings. Those opposite just make it up as they go along. What I am presenting to members today are facts, but they do not want to hear the facts. They just float along on their fanciful way with their symphony of sycophants and just keep running this line, which even they do not believe.

Let us get this right. In 2013 there were 645 000 students undertaking training, which is 54 per cent more than under Labor in 2010. Of these, 70 per

cent are undertaking training in areas of skills shortage compared with 49 per cent who undertook training in areas of skills shortages in 2010. Yet members opposite say they had it right. It is about time that Labor members stopped running the rhetoric and said they are serious about creating jobs and opportunities. One of the ways they can do that today is to denounce the carbon tax, to ring their mates in Canberra and say, 'Look, the Abbott federal government was elected on this platform. We should support the repeal bill to get rid of the carbon tax'. If opposition members are serious, they will do it today. If they remain silent on it, we will know that it is all rhetoric — that they will not walk the talk.

The other thing they could do is take advice from the Supreme Court, because it says members of Labor's allied union, the CFMEU, are rogues and thugs. The Labor Party spokesperson for the CFMEU, the shadow Minister for Planning, Mr Tee, could stand up today and say, 'We will denounce the CFMEU. We will disaffiliate, we will give back the money and we will encourage that union to pay its \$1.25 million-plus fine.'. Those opposite should encourage the CFMEU to write a cheque, because we know some of them are good at writing cheques. The problem is if Labor is elected to government, the CFMEU will have a seat at the table; it will decide Victoria's destiny. For the sake of Victorians we cannot let that happen. The Napthine coalition government is committed to and has a proven track record of creating job opportunities in this state, unlike those opposite. I reject Ms Tierney's motion.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — The main argument put forward today seems to have been from the mover of the motion who detailed a long list of jobs that have been lost, whereas the government's defence is a long list of jobs it has created. The net effect is, as we know, a modest increase in employment and a modest increase in unemployment. It is entirely possible for those two variables to move together in that way.

Like most Victorians, I am optimistic about the future of Victoria. It is a great place to live, and it has a diverse economy. However, most Victorians also recognise the challenges that are bearing down on us. They see the need for urgent intervention by government to prevent those challenges from turning into crises, but they do not see any of the necessary action from this government that would achieve that. They are looking for leadership, and they are not getting it.

Just listening to this debate over the last little while I was reminded of the inaugural address by former US

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which was given at a time of major economic crisis. He said:

So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigour has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory.

I would have thought that was a pretty good recipe right there, but look around us. President Roosevelt went further in diagnosing the nature of the problem:

The moneychangers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilisation. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.

Just as importantly, he made the very simple observation:

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This nation asks for action, and action now.

This is a motion to set up an inquiry into unemployment, so I do not think that in itself qualifies as action. We will support the motion, for what it is worth. It appears that the government will oppose the motion. I did not quite take that detail out of the last speaker's contribution. However, programs of action from either side, these so-called alternative governments, appear to be a bit short on the ground.

I would recommend a back-to-basics approach to address and head off these crises. We do not need a government that simply goes into public relations overdrive and starts adding the word 'jobs' to every single one of its actions. We need leadership in the form of a back-to-basics approach. Ms Tierney's approach to this debate was a little bit doom and gloom. You have to simply look at the thousands of people pouring into this state every year to realise that we are far from being an economic cot case or a rustbelt. Looking at the situation just through that simple time frame makes you realise that many of the problems we suffer, many of the things that are starting to put speed limits on our economy, are themselves failures to keep up with and provide for that level of population growth.

Before I go on to the Green's prescription for a more productive economy, I would like to talk briefly about what appears to be the one and only major economic reform alive in the land this day, and that is further privatisation of publicly owned assets. Members of the government do not call it privatisation anymore because even they have come to understand what a deeply unpopular measure that is. It is now called asset

recycling. I am generally a fan of recycling, and recycling would create jobs if this government would hurry up and get moving and implement the Green's plan for a container deposit scheme here in Victoria.

**Mr D. R. J. O'Brien** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — What about a national scheme, asks Mr O'Brien. I say, 'Yes, what about one?'. The government has had three and half years to bring one together, and it has failed. It has now started to acknowledge that leadership from Victoria rather than a talkfest in Canberra might be the way to get that particular measure up and running.

So far as the asset-recycling program of the Liberal-Nationals government goes — now apparently with all states signed on, although there was a slip in South Australia because the Labor Party held on — I read that the federal Treasurer, Mr Hockey, is offering incentives for the privatisation of \$100 billion worth of public assets and has referred to Infrastructure Australia's study on this matter. When I looked at Infrastructure Australia's study and at that \$100 billion target list, I was surprised to find both the port of Melbourne and Victoria's publicly owned water boards. I asked the state Treasurer via Twitter whether he had a plan to sell off Victoria's publicly owned water boards. I have not yet had a response, but I am sure it is a question that is going to be asked and answered one of these days. If the answer is no — and I estimate that those water boards are worth about \$10 billion — then Mr Hockey needs to stop saying \$100 billion and put the amount down to \$90 billion.

Alternatively the government needs to come clean on a plan for privatising those water boards. It needs to state what impact that privatisation will have either on our water bills and the bills of industry — particularly those which are large users of water, like the food manufacturing industry — or that there is going to be some sort of cost-stripping exercise that goes with that privatisation. It is those moneychangers referred to by Franklin D. Roosevelt who are the drivers of this kind of privatisation program, whether it be ports, water boards or any other significant asset that is there still to be sold. It is the little crumbs they make on each deal which therefore require those deals to be very big, which is of great interest to the moneychangers. Amazingly in today's *Australian* we see a story headed 'Obeids' plan to control city's water supply', with the opening paragraph:

Sydney's Obeid family had a plan to privatise and control Sydney's water and thought they would make more than \$100 million out of the deal ...

They are notorious members of the moneychanging clan. I wonder who is lining up to get the same skim off the top of the privatisation of Victoria's water supply. Let us put a stop to all that right now and simply rule it out. Unfortunately Labor and Liberal seem to be working together in harness to get the port flogged off as quickly as possible, a measure that will either place a further impost on exporters or be a job-stripping and cost-cutting exercise. In either case it is incompatible with the aim we are discussing here, which is the creation of more jobs.

There is a pretty obvious shortlist of measures that are needed to create the conditions in which businesses with highly mobile capital would want to come to Victoria and set up or maintain their business. The first measure would involve skills. A skilled workforce, and particularly a workforce that can continually upgrade its skills, is a major consideration of anyone wanting to set up a business these days. Unfortunately we have a job to do in repairing the damaged TAFE system, a system that was never broken but which former Premier John Brumby decided needed fixing anyway. His program is now being implemented with great vigour by the Liberal-Nationals government. Victorians understand that a major wrong turn has been taken and that we need to return to the original system where well-resourced, trusted and high-quality TAFEs deliver the skills that we as a community collectively agree are needed to put this new direction on track. That is leadership.

With that go a whole set of other opportunities to manage the transition from one job description to another, from one firm and enterprise to another and even from one industry sector to another. One of the worst aspects of the changes we saw to TAFE under the Brumby government was that the Brumby government made it harder, more difficult and more expensive to change people's skills into a new category. Subsidies to courses were offered where someone wanted to upgrade their skills within a particular skill set, like getting a higher degree or qualification in a particular trade. But if people wanted to move across into a new area of skill — so perhaps multiskill — the Brumby government in its time made it more expensive and more difficult to do so. That would appear to go directly against what we need most right now, which is the ability not just to upgrade people's skills but the ability for them to add new ones and even change into a new area of skill. The question we need to go back and address is, what was wrong with the old system?

Like all of us, businesses depend on a high-quality transport system to move their goods around and so that their employees can live near their places of work or,

for that matter, pack up and move or even commute when job locations change. While public transport is often seen as a day-to-day bugbear, in fact it is a critical success factor for any city or state that wants a productive economy. States that use public transport to perform a large amount of the transport task find that a lower proportion of their economic resources are consumed by transport costs. In European cities where high-quality transport is in place it is quite common that the proportion of the economy's resources absorbed just into moving people and stuff around is in single-digit percentages, whereas in car-dependent and truck-dependent cities like Melbourne it is up there in the teens. That is an economic deadweight loss that could otherwise be reinvested into the more productive part of the economy. Public transport is a very important factor, and with it is the general livability of a city.

Some of the businesses Mr Ondarchie mentioned and other ministers talk about as the creators of the new economy can set up anywhere they want in the world. They are often service-based, IT or even knowledge industries, and a lot of knowledge goes into manufacturing these days, so we could call manufacturing a knowledge industry as well. Such businesses will set up anywhere, and often they set up where they can attract the highest quality employees, and that means finding a highly livable city. It is essential for our economic future — and I am sure the Minister for Planning would agree — that we have a highly livable environment in Melbourne, because that is going to make it the kind of place where industries of the future will set up for that very reason alone. We must pay strong attention to that factor.

The next question I would like to address is about the competitiveness of the state tax system, an area long neglected by all Victoria governments. Since it is clear that the federal government is not going to have any spare change for many budgets to come, we can forget about a federal government putting a dowry on the table to get states to come together and collectively reform their taxes. We need leadership — there is that word again — from within the state to make our tax base more competitive.

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Health funding

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I remind the house that yesterday the Minister for Health informed

us that he is one of the nation's leading experts in health accounts. I ask him to take the opportunity — —

**Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips** — I don't think he said that.

**Mr JENNINGS** — I think that is exactly what he said. The quote from the minister was that he is one of the few people who understands national health accounts. Can the minister tell us to the nearest \$1 billion how much money was allocated to Victorian hospitals in last year's Victorian budget for acute health services for 2013–14?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I am happy to go back with the member and direct him to the exact page in the budget.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — For the minister's benefit, budget paper 3, page 119, indicates that the number is \$9.836 billion, so to the nearest billion it is \$10 billion. Why does the minister consistently stand up in this chamber and indicate that his government has allocated \$14.3 billion to hospitals in Victoria? Every time I hear him do a radio interview, he indicates that that is the number.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — The member is being a little naughty here, and I am not happy to be verbally by him. What I will say is that \$14.3 billion is the total health budget overall, which is \$2 billion greater than it was when we came to government. The member was very much part of the Labor Party push to cut funding from our health system in December 2012. In a disgraceful vote on 15 November 2012 in this chamber he and his mates voted against supporting the coalition government in its fight to see the \$475 million returned, instead voting to toady up to Labor, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and then federal Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek and to support cuts by the federal Labor government. That is what they did. They can hang their heads in shame.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Time, thank you, Minister. Yesterday I requested that Ms Pulford retract the word 'toady'. I do not know whether it is actually in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it is an expression that I do not think reflects kindly on the Parliament.

**Health funding**

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Honourable David Davis, the Minister for Health. Will the minister inform the house about irresponsible

and ill-informed scare campaigns being run in Victoria claiming that there have been hospital funding reductions despite the massive increase in spending on Victorian hospitals by the Napthine government?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question and for his advocacy for his hospitals, including Barwon Health and other hospitals and health services across western Victoria. That contrasts very starkly indeed with the decision of people opposite, those Labor and Greens members who voted to support cuts to our health system — —

**Mr Jennings** — That's not what we did.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — You did so. Those opposite voted against a motion that this house:

- (2) expresses concern about the factual basis of the commonwealth's decision ...
- (3) calls upon the heads of treasuries to convene urgently ... and
- (4) further notes that the six health ministers expressed concern —

including Labor health ministers. But what did the people on the other side of the chamber do? They voted in favour of the cuts. They voted to cut funding for hospitals around the state. Mr Koch well remembers the \$4.9 million cut delivered to Barwon Health. What did Labor members say then? They said, 'Go right ahead, make the cut — we're right behind Tanya Plibersek and Julia Gillard. We want to see more cuts; we're in favour of cuts'.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! As I understand it, Mr Koch's question was about misinformation on spending at this point in time. It was not about circumstances under the previous federal government. The minister is debating the answer by referring back to those matters and not being relevant to the question that I understand Mr Koch to have put. I bring the minister back to that question.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — When there are interjections I can easily be led to respond in that way. Let me be very clear. There are campaigns being run around the state at the moment by the Labor Party, federal and state. They are ill-informed campaigns, they are not factually based and I have told Mr Jennings they are not factually based. He asked the question directly, and I said, 'No, you're wrong'. I know he is wrong because additional payments were made. He does not seem to have cottoned onto the fact that I am directly counterpoising what Tanya Plibersek did, which was to make a cut — she cut cold on 7 December 2012 and

reduced the funding — with what occurred on this occasion. In fact Peter Dutton, as federal Minister for Health, actually made an additional payment. That is very much in contrast with what happened last time under Labor with the cuts that were supported by Mr Jennings. He was caught in that vote. We know how he voted; there is no way around the cold, hard fact that he voted in favour of the cuts.

I noticed on radio today out in Albury-Wodonga that Mr Jennings claimed it was his activities that reversed those earlier cuts. Yet at the time he accused me of saying that this campaign is being run by the Minister for Health and supported by a number of members across the state, including supporters in the region. He actually gave me credit for running a campaign then, but now he seeks to claim credit himself. There is enormous inconsistency here from Mr Jennings. He does not seem to be aware that funding for our health services has in fact increased this year. All of the health services across the state have seen increased funding.

Let us be quite clear. Mr Koch saw the \$4.9 million cut at Barwon Health under Tanya Plibersek. In fact funding at Geelong, at Barwon Health, has significantly increased — by 24.2 per cent over the last few years. It is a very significant increase in funding that stands in stark contrast to the behaviour of Labor. The scare campaigns around the state are ill-founded; they are not factual. We know that funding has increased and stands in stark contrast to the way the Labor Party and Tanya Plibersek behaved, with the active support and connivance of Mr Jennings.

### Health funding

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Health. The minister has demonstrated again that he is one of the few people in the nation who understands health accounts, and he demonstrated his fine eye for detail in his answer to Mr Koch's question. Continuing that line, within the \$277 million that has been cut by the Abbott government in the forward estimates for health services in Victoria, the minister has tried to indicate that the big saving in that was the \$66 million that has been allocated by the federal government. The minister gave us the impression that that money had been reallocated to Victoria. Can the minister indicate to us how much of the \$66 million clawback from that \$227 million in cuts has come to Victoria?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — The member will remember that yesterday I indicated this was part of a broader matrix that included indexation and a whole range of other factors that are under debate

with the commonwealth government, not least the national partnership agreement on improving hospital services. I have indicated very clearly that the government is prosecuting the case on that matter and on indexation matters very strongly with the commonwealth and with a number of national agencies, including the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority. This is part of a broader matrix. The decisions on indexation have not been made, so precise numbers are very difficult to tie down until all those decisions are made across the forward estimate period. Decisions on backcasting will also need to be made, and we are prosecuting a very strong case on matters around backcasting as well.

The answer to the member's question is that these matters are part of a broader picture, and the broader picture will depend on decisions made by the commonwealth government. We have put a very clear case to the commonwealth on all these matters. We did get a significant adjustment from the federal Minister for Health, Mr Dutton. But let us be clear. It depends very much on the impact of the backcasting, it depends on the impact of the indexation and it depends on the outcome of the national partnership agreement.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Within the matrix in which the minister is operating, has he been given any assurances in his conversations with the Abbott federal government that it will not make further cuts to health, beyond the \$277 million that it announced in December, in the budget that is being released in May?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — The member continues to make reference to numbers that are wrong, so I want to be quite clear. He is wrong, and he knows he is wrong, because adjustments were made and further adjustments will be made as well. He is flat wrong. He is wrong, wrong, wrong. I cannot be clearer than that.

I cannot predict what will occur on federal budget day. If I knew what was going to be in the federal budget, I would be in much demand across the land. If I was aware of what federal Treasurer Joe Hockey was going to deliver in May, I would be very much in demand. I confess freely that I do not know what is going to be in the federal budget in May. But I will say one thing that is very clear. This government, the Premier, the Treasurer, myself and others have advocated very strongly for Victoria. We have put Victoria's case, and we will continue to do that, unlike Mr Jennings and

Mr Lenders, who toadied up to Labor and were prepared to support Labor cuts.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I do not want to hear the word ‘toady’ again in terms of describing a relationship. I have asked that that word not be used. I do not think it is an appropriate word.

**North-western suburbs employment**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to my friend and colleague the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy. I ask: can the minister inform the house what action the government has taken to facilitate job growth in Melbourne’s north-western suburbs?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — Building a better Victoria is also about building a more sustainable Melbourne, and that is why this government has worked with the Metropolitan Planning Authority and the Moonee Valley City Council to bring forward a brand-new structure plan for the Essendon Airport-Essendon Fields-Airport West area that will see that area transform itself into a major jobs hub and job centre of the future.

This area around Essendon Airport, as many may know, has changed inexorably over the last few years. I was there recently with my colleague Mr Elsbury to launch the government’s new structure plan for this site, which will see it transform from a precinct with, at the moment, around 630 businesses and 9000 jobs to one which over two decades should gain an extra 16 000 jobs on top of the base of the existing 9000, to become a major employment hub for Melbourne’s inner north and north-western suburbs. That is why this government is getting on with the job of planning for job growth into the future.

The Essendon Fields area is a precinct in the north-west that is home to a major airport and of course major commercial and industrial areas, enhanced by the government’s recent reforms to industrial and commercial zoning. This \$2 billion investment over the next 20 or so years is going to be substantially important for job growth in existing suburbs. The preparation of this framework will incorporate strategic plans for Airport West and Essendon Fields, and it will see the whole of the Moonee Valley precinct growing into a jobs powerhouse for the northern and north-western suburbs.

As Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury know, several development projects have been identified in the early stages of the master plan, including a \$30 million, 150-

room hotel and conference centre, an \$80 million extension of the Auto Centro car retail hub, construction of additional hangars and aviation facilities and an additional 150 000 square metres of A-grade office space on this site.

This is substantially important, as I said, for the economy of not just all of Melbourne but particularly the inner north-western suburbs of Melbourne. This government — the coalition government — will not stand by and let job opportunities like this be jeopardised by a Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU)-dominated, industrialised, unionised workplace in Victoria. Opportunities like Essendon Fields are too good to be jeopardised by putting the CFMEU in charge of the industrial sector and the construction industry in this state, and that is what will happen under an Andrews government. That is what would happen if Brian Tee, the only member of Parliament who is a member of the CFMEU, were put in charge of the building industry in Victoria.

We will not stand by on this side of the house and let Essendon Fields, jobs in Moonee Valley and jobs in Melbourne’s inner north-western suburbs be jeopardised by a CFMEU-centric government. That is what the Labor Party is — and here is one of its chief sponsors — —

**Mr Lenders** — On a point of order, President, the minister is clearly debating the issue. On issues of government administration, as much as I would love to see a Labor government, we are not the government; we are the opposition. Mr Guy is debating the matter. Government administration is not affected by what he thinks of an opposition.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On the point of order, President, it is very clear that the CFMEU is having a major effect on the construction industry in this state, and it is very clear that that is a matter of significant concern to the government. The government is seeking to manage the impact of the CFMEU, so Mr Guy is entirely within his responsibilities as Minister for Planning to point to matters that are occurring in the construction industry and related jobs.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I note some press coverage today of the award against the union and the quoting of one of the industry figures, Mr Daniel Grollo, who expressed concerns about the future of the industry and jobs in the industry if there were a continuation of certain practices. Those practices are obviously open to debate in this forum and in other forums, but in the context of that ruling by the court and that commentary and the matter Mr Guy is pursuing in

terms of jobs growth and opportunities for Victoria, I think his commentary is relevant in this answer. I would be concerned if it continued much further because it is moving into the area of debate, but the commentary to this point has been relevant to the contemporary situation.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — I heard earlier in a debate Mr Ondarchie, I think, talking about the ‘guilty party’ in his contribution earlier. No wonder Desal John and CFMEU Dan get upset when in this chamber we get up on this side of the house and hold them to order.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister knows that when we refer to members of Parliament we refer to them by their proper title, not by phrases that are disparaging. Will the minister withdraw?

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Yes, I withdraw. As I said, on this side of the house we will always stand up for good job announcements like Essendon Fields. On this side of the house we believe that building a better Victoria is building a better Victoria for all Victorians, not just those who are sycophants to the CFMEU.

### Health funding

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. In the minister’s last answer to me he indicated that he could not give a guarantee that there would not be further cuts by the Abbott government to health in coming budgets, but in the minister’s discussions with the federal Minister for Health, Mr Dutton — —

**Hon. D. M. Davis** interjected.

**Mr JENNINGS** — You also confirmed that you could not say there will not be cuts in the Abbott government budget. I am inviting the minister to indicate whether Minister Dutton has indicated to him that he may be prepared to make adjustments that are positive in terms of increasing the budget allocations that were in the midyear economic and fiscal outlook, which is what the minister is implying. There was the \$66 million across the nation, which the minister has not been able to apportion to Victoria but nonetheless is a positive investment. Will there be other positive increases in the federal budget, rather than the decreases that are anticipated?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — One of the key points we have put to the federal government is the growth in the bureaucracy at a national level. The government has put very clearly that there are a large number of new quangos that have been created under the national arrangements, and these new quangos are

growing like Topsy. The National Health Performance Authority, the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, the lead clinician groups, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and the long list of other bodies created at a national level have grown faster and more sharply than anyone would have ever dreamt or expected, and none of them deliver even a single service to a patient. None of them deliver a cracker in terms of actual outcomes on the ground.

If I were part of a new national government, my gratuitous advice would be, ‘Do you really need all these strange and weirdly named national bodies that do not deliver services on the ground?’. Let me be very clear. I would put the money into additional hospital and health services. It seems to me to be a very good idea to get rid of some of the growth in bureaucracy and some of the additional layers that have been erected by the arrangements and the growth in these bodies, which has been sharply greater than anyone could have reasonably expected. I have certainly put to the federal minister that one place he could start is to rationalise some of these national bodies. What does the administrator really do? Could the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority narrow its task to the national efficient price determination alone, rather than expanding its remit into a number of areas?

Let me also be clear about this. A number of these national bodies are also competing with each other, trying to outjump and outfox each other. This is not delivering health services on the ground. Yes, I have made some positive suggestions, and one positive suggestion I am very happy to share with the chamber — and I have said it in public forums before — is that we could rationalise a number of these national bodies. We could do with less Canberra-based bureaucrats. As much as I love Canberra, and there are many fine national institutions there — the Australian War Memorial and others — I do not think that delivering more bureaucrats in Canberra is actually helping health services in Geelong, Ballarat or Bendigo. Here is an area where we can all win: less bureaucrats in Canberra, more health services and let us be a bit more efficient about it.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Perhaps I will encourage the minister to narrowcast his answer by narrowcasting the question. Does the minister anticipate there being any repeat of the one-off national \$66 million payment to compensate for the \$560 million cuts that were announced in December?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I have already indicated to the member that his numbers are wrong.

**Mr Jennings** — They are in the — —

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — No. They are flat wrong, because they are part of a matrix that involves backcasting, indexation and also additional adjustments.

**Mr Jennings** — Are you numerate?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I am very numerate on this. Let me be quite clear. There are ways forward. The federal minister is very aware that the lumpiness and the failure to have smooth and predictable outcomes for health services and for states and territories are major issues. He is aware of the need to smooth these arrangements so that there is a more predictable outcome.

I do not know what is in the national budget. I wish Joe Hockey would just pick up the phone to every health minister around Australia. It is only a few calls — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Time!

### Melbourne Park

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Honourable Damian Drum. Given the nature of the question, he is probably also representing a minister in another place. Could the minister inform the house how the Victorian coalition government is helping to grow the Victorian economy, build infrastructure and create jobs for Victorians?

**Hon. D. K. DRUM** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank Mr Ramsay for his question. Whilst it may seem to be a question for another minister, it actually falls smack bang into my ministry in the way my ministry relates to the events market. We are building an events market to maintain our standing as the events and sporting capital of the world, and we are looking at investment in this state to maintain that reputation. Whilst we have — —

**Mr Lenders** — On a point of order, President, I am delighted to hear Mr Drum's answer, but I seek guidance from you and possibly him. Given that he is now taking a question on economic development that would normally relate to the portfolio of Ms Asher, the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, which I believe Mr Rich-Phillips answers for in this place, does this mean that we on this side can ask him general

questions on economic development and the tourism and major events portfolio in particular? You and other Presidents have previously ruled quite narrowly on questions that can be asked of a minister representing a minister in another place. I welcome this development, but I seek guidance from you.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On the point of order, President, the minister is about to make a contribution that is clearly within his portfolio. Sport and veterans affairs intersect closely with portfolios that attract people to the state. One of the major drivers that attracts people to this state is sporting events. The minister is closely focused on delivering key points about the portfolios he represents.

**Mr Ramsay** — On the point of order, President, I would like the opportunity to ask the question again because it relates directly to sport and recreation.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I will think about that. I thank Mr Lenders for the point of order. The Clerk and I were trying to establish which minister was being referred to as the minister in another place that Mr Drum was perhaps channelling in this place. I did have some discomfort with both the question and Mr Drum's initial remarks, which both indicated that the minister was running with an issue that would seem to be from another portfolio. It is my understanding that the portfolios that Mr Drum represents in this place, irrespective of his primary portfolio, are agriculture and food security, bushfire response, energy and resources, regional and rural development, and water. Water is the closest I can find to a sports event!

I am not sure where the minister is going and how his response fits with a portfolio from another place. I caution ministers, as Mr Lenders has rightly said in his point of order, that if a minister does venture there, they are open and exposed to other questions in respect of those other portfolios. They must be able to provide the house with responsive answers on matters that affect those portfolios if they have gone there.

It seems to me that Mr Drum is talking about events. Perhaps the question might have been better framed, which would have meant that neither Mr Drum nor Mr Ramsay would have confused us by suggesting that Mr Drum was trespassing on a portfolio responsibility of a minister in another place but that rather he was discussing events. Many of the sporting activities in this state are significant events as such, so Mr Drum could have been on safe ground sticking with an answer that responded in his own portfolio area without the other concession.

I do not think it is necessary for Mr Ramsay to pose a new question or revamp his question. In the context of the point of order by Mr Lenders and my remarks, the minister might well hone his answer to his specific portfolio and the events aspects of that portfolio, which I think is where he was going.

**Hon. D. K. DRUM** — I am delighted to be given instructions on how to handle my answer before I give it.

**Mr Tee** — Trying to be helpful.

**Hon. D. K. DRUM** — Always trying to help, and I am thankful that this chamber is trying to help.

This question goes to our events calendar and effectively the sporting events calendar. We, along with Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, have been able to announce further work to Melbourne Park. Money is coming from the Victorian government for stage 2 of the redevelopment at Melbourne Park. As we know, stage 1 of the redevelopment is there for everybody to see. The 6000-seat outdoor stadium that was Margaret Court Arena has been transformed into an amazing 7500-strong stadium with a retractable roof. It was not quite ready for the 2014 Australian Open Tennis Championships, but it will be ready in the coming months and will certainly be ready ahead of time. The vast majority of the stage 1 work has been completed ahead of time. We now have a world-class gymnasium, change rooms and treatment facilities. We have training facilities that are among the best in the world. This has all been done as part of stage 1.

Recently, as part of stage 2 of this development, we have announced a \$338 million investment for Melbourne Park, of which \$40 million has been sourced from the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust. That is a huge investment by the trust, which adds to the investment that the government has contributed. Some 1400 equivalent full-time jobs are associated with the Australian Open, and it generates \$239 million worth of economic activity each and every year. It has an amazing impact on our economy, and I imagine that is where the question was angling.

We also know that there are 300 other events, apart from the Australian Open, that are conducted at Melbourne Park each year, generating another \$180 million of economic activity. The announcement by the government of stage 2 will ensure that Australia's largest annual event, which is the Australian Open, remains in Melbourne until 2036. We have been able to conclude our commitment to do the deals

necessary to ensure that the Australian Open is retained in this great city.

I am old enough to remember when the Australian Open travelled around Australia on an annual basis, and we did not have the luxury of having this great event in our city every year. We now have that luxury and we have one of the greatest facilities in the world to host it, and we will ensure that the economic activity and the benefits associated with this event are retained for this great city.

### Health funding

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. As the minister would remember, when the Gillard federal government made adjustments in the midyear economic update — —

**Hon. W. A. Lovell** — Cuts — slash and burn.

**Mr JENNINGS** — I can say cuts. I can acknowledge the word 'cuts'. When this occurred in 2012, the minister's government actively encouraged CEOs and the boards of Western Health, the Royal Children's Hospital, Bendigo Hospital, the Alfred Hospital, Barwon Health and others to make public comments and in fact criticise that decision and call for that decision to be reversed. Has the minister encouraged those hospitals in the current climate, where the Abbott federal government has cut funding to Victorian hospitals, to take the same action?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — What occurred in 2012 is that the money was withdrawn from payments into the pool, and what has occurred this time is that additional payments have been made to the state to assist with that matter. But let me be very clear here. Boards, health services and communities were not in favour of the cuts made by former Prime Minister Gillard and former federal Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek. On this occasion there have not been those reductions because of the decision of the now federal Minister for Health, Mr Dutton, to help with these challenges.

I have also been very clear that there are matters to be debated around the future of the system including where the national partnership on improving hospital services money goes, and we are certainly prosecuting a very strong case on that matter. There have been significant issues about backcasting of changes, as well as some very significant debates about indexation, and I have been quite clear that there is a matrix of issues in operation here.

What we have discovered is that unlike Tanya Plibersek, who would not sensibly discuss these matters, the new minister will sensibly discuss these matters and has been prepared to recognise that changes in funding to health services is a challenge for states and territories. He has actually been prepared to put some money in to assist with this matter, which stands in stark contrast to what Mr Jennings and his Labor mates supported in December 2012. Federal and state Labor, as one, supported cuts to our health services across the state.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — You voted in favour of it. The cold hard facts are true.

**Mr Jennings** — It doesn't matter what you say, no matter how many times you say it, it is not true.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — It is. I know how Mr Jennings voted on 15 November 2012 because I have the result of the division on the motion here in front of me — the ayes and the noes. He voted with the noes. He would not hear of any revisiting of the issue. He actually supported the cuts. He was in favour of them. It was treacherous. It was outrageous. He should never have done it. It was a big mistake. He should not have supported the cuts in this way, and he should hang his head in shame.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Mr Jennings has no right to speak on health until he apologises for what he did — actively encouraging and supporting Tanya Plibersek with her cuts. He should actually just go away after what he did. It was shameful.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I note, within the significant contribution that the minister just made to the chamber, that he did not refer to whether he has mobilised those health services across Victoria to complain about the Abbott government cuts of \$277 million to Victorian hospitals. Can the minister give guarantees to the CEOs and the boards of those health services in Victoria that he will not seek any reprisals should they choose to embark upon a lobbying exercise to have those Abbott government cuts overturned?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I do not know which part of this the member does not understand. There have been no reductions. The money going through the health services now is as was planned

in the statement of priorities in the budget last year. It is actually going through as planned. The difference is that in December 2012 a sharp cut was made by Prime Minister Gillard and by health minister Plibersek, and the funding fell to all those health services. The money they had in their budgets in December, January and February was less than the money they had in November, so they did cut services. There is no question about that. But Mr Jennings voted in favour of it. He supported those cuts. Tragically, shamefully and shockingly he was actually in favour of those cuts, but the difference now is that there have not been any cuts, and he has to stop saying that there have been.

**Social housing**

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Wendy Lovell. I ask whether the minister can detail how the Victorian coalition government is providing better communities through the Victorian social housing framework.

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in the social housing framework. As I outlined yesterday, we inherited a public housing system that was in crisis. The Victorian Auditor-General said that 10 000 properties were about to reach the end of their usable lifespan and would be lost from the system. He said that the situation was critical, that the future of public housing was at risk and that there was a lack of a long-term vision. The former Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne, the member for Richmond in the Assembly, should hang his head in shame for the condition in which he left this portfolio.

We have worked hard to deliver a social housing framework that will deliver a sustainable future for public housing in this state. We released that framework on 28 March. As part of creating better communities we are strengthening our three strikes policy to address antisocial behaviour in social housing communities, and this is something that our tenants asked for. The vast majority of our tenants are good people who just need some assistance with their housing. They do not like the fact that a few tenants create an impression that all social housing and public housing estates are places where there is violence and antisocial behaviour, so we have strengthened the three strikes policy such that if you breach your tenancy agreement three times within 12 months, we will move to get the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to provide a notice of possession.

This is designed to modify people's behaviour so that they can sustain their tenancies. It is not designed to increase evictions. We have introduced new 12-month probationary leases for new tenants to ensure that they understand what their requirements are under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. We will also be issuing new neighbourly behaviour statements. I understand that not many people in Victoria read the Residential Tenancies Act or indeed are familiar with those laws, so this brings together all the requirements under the Residential Tenancies Act and a tenancy agreement in one easy document so that tenants know what is expected of them.

We are giving tenants a voice through a tenants engagement framework, and we are giving the sector a voice through housing innovation round tables. We are delivering more responsive services by strengthening management of public housing and trialling place management at three sites and improved models of maintenance and facilities management. Our work to date contributes to what is our future vision for public housing. Through our partnership with Victoria Police we have improved safety on the estates at Richmond, Fitzroy and Collingwood to reduce drug activity and other illegal activity on those estates.

We have also introduced five work and learning centres around Victoria to assist public housing tenants to get training so that they can gain employment and build a better life for themselves. We have a youth engagement strategy to engage with the youth in public housing to ensure that they have access to homework clubs and to other sporting activities so that they are not bored and do not get caught up in other antisocial activities. We are working hard to deliver better communities for public housing tenants and the broader community in Victoria.

### Health funding

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Health. In relation to the numbers that the minister asserts I have incorrectly stated in Parliament today, for the benefit of the minister and the house I indicate in the preface to my question that I believe the Abbott federal government cuts to health in the forward estimates will be \$27 million in the current financial year, \$51 million in the next financial year, \$79 million in the year after that and \$120 million in the last year of the forward estimates, making \$277 million in total. Is that amount not equivalent to funding the entire elective surgery waiting list in Victoria?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I have been quite clear in answering the member. He has not understood the complexity of the system. He has not understood that this in part goes to matters around backcasting and indexation. It is also about, particularly into the future period, the national partnership agreement (NPA) on improving hospital services. It does matter what happens with all those issues. Victoria has been advocating very hard around the indexation process with the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority. We have been advocating as hard as we can on the matters around the national partnership agreement on improving hospital services. We have been advocating very directly with the federal Treasury and with the health department nationally around the matters of indexation and backcasting. All will have a very significant effect on the final outcomes.

The matters raised by the member also fail to take account of additional payments that have been made in parallel with the national funding arrangements by the federal Minister for Health to ensure that those matters are dealt with more sensibly. What the member has not understood is that those matters stand in stark contrast to the behaviour of the previous federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, who not only cut \$2 billion out of private health insurance, who not only cut the \$1.6 billion in the midyear economic and fiscal outlook cuts, but who cut very widely across the system — more than \$5 billion. She was the biggest cutting health minister in Australia's history. That is why state and territory ministers were so concerned about what she had done and why they fought so hard to see the midyear economic and fiscal outlook changes reversed.

The contrast with the new health minister could not be greater. While there are points of disagreement, and I freely acknowledge that there are points of disagreement, and while I have been active in prosecuting the state's position on the NPA, on backcasting, on indexation and on the adjustments, on all those matters we are seeking a better outcome. As I have said repeatedly, many of those matters will be decided in the context of the commission of audit, decided in the context of the federal budget and other adjustments and other matters, including decisions by Independent Hospital Pricing Authority and decisions as to whether backcasting will be undertaken in a way that sees a better incorporation of key parts of the matrix.

The outcome that we achieve will depend on all those factors. I can indicate that the federal minister is prepared to talk and have sensible discussions. He has put additional money on the table, which has been helpful. He has indicated a preparedness to look at

changes that will help manage the system better and to look at the flow of money through the system. The minister and his department understand the difficulties that were caused to states and territories when Tanya Plibersek, with former federal Treasurer Wayne Swan, unilaterally cut funding to states and territories. Together they worked in harmony. Tragically, Tanya Plibersek would not even look at the working documents of the federal Treasurer. There is quite a different attitude now.

I do not think this is going to be an easy task. I do not know what will occur in the federal budget. Mr Jennings probably will not be the first person I call once I have heard what is in the federal budget, but I will certainly fight.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Unfortunately for the minister, *The Matrix* is a series of films about an unreal world, and I think that is the world in which he is living, because in the real world \$277 million has been taken out by the Abbott government in cuts in the midyear update. It equates to 50 000 elective surgeries, which is the same number on the elective surgery waiting list that the minister has created. Has the minister any strategy to account for the way the elective surgery waiting list will be reduced in his next budget and before his time may be up in this world as the Minister for Health?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — Talking about unreal worlds and movies, we have heard that from the thespian over there, so give us a break. The fact is we are working very hard on elective surgery. We have increased funding to our hospitals. We have increased funding to our health services. Over the whole health budget there is more than \$2 billion in extra funding in place now compared to previously.

It is true that the new national system has a number of serious problems. We have pointed those out to the federal minister, and he is prepared to listen and work to achieve a better system. I understand the challenges financially that the federal government faces in inheriting a terrible outcome from the Gillard government. We face cuts that were supported by Labor members opposite in the previous period, but we are advocating very hard to get a better outcome for Victoria and Victorian patients, including elective surgery.

**Defence pilot training**

**Mr RONALDS** (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to my good friend and colleague the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips in his capacity as Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, which is an industry he supports strongly, as we have seen from the announcements only this week. Could the minister update the house as to why Sale is the obvious and logical choice to be awarded the AIR 5428 pilot training system contract?

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry) — I thank Mr Ronalds for his question and his interest in what is a great opportunity for the aviation and defence sectors in Victoria and a great opportunity for Sale and Gippsland. AIR 5428 is the latest request for tender from the commonwealth for the provision of tri-service pilot training over the next 25 years to provide basic training for army, navy and air force pilots over a 25-year period from 2017. It is a contract which will be worth between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion and create between 550 and 700 jobs. The Victorian government believes that Sale is a very strong contender and has a very strong claim to be the home of the AIR 5428 project over the next 25 years.

Victoria has a very strong claim to this contract. At the beginning of March the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) celebrated the centenary of military aviation, which started in Victoria at Point Cook in 1914. Over the last 100 years we have seen Victoria's involvement in military aviation grow and strengthen. Sale is one of the contenders for AIR 5428 and is very well placed to deliver on the future needs of the Australian Defence Force in pilot training over the next 25 years. The Victorian government is very supportive of bids based around Gippsland, including RAAF East Sale base as well as the civilian airport at West Sale.

At RAAF East Sale base we currently have the central flying school, providing training for flying instructors; the officer training school, providing training for all RAAF officers; and the school of air traffic control, providing training for all RAAF air traffic controllers. We believe that adding pilot training to that mix is a logical and appropriate outcome that will deliver on the needs of defence as well as provide an enormous economic boost to the people of Gippsland. Importantly, bids based around Sale will ensure that training can take place in a military environment associated with RAAF East Sale base. It will provide an environment where there is benign weather and low air-space congestion surrounding East Sale and the

associated satellite airports at Bairnsdale, Yarram and West Sale, and it is in close proximity to Melbourne.

We believe there is a very strong case for bids around Sale, East Sale and West Sale to be supported, and the Victorian government, working with Wellington Shire Council and East Gippsland Shire Council, is very supportive of bids which were submitted earlier this week. We have indicated to the commonwealth, as we have indicated to bidders, that the Victorian government as part of the bid process will support infrastructure upgrades associated with the AIR 5428 project of between \$5 million and \$20 million, depending on proposals, associated with upgrades at the civilian airports surrounding Sale.

Bids for AIR 5428 close on Monday. The Victorian government is confident that, as these bids are evaluated over the course of the next 12 months, they will be evaluated in a way that reflects the merits of the bids and the operational needs of the Australian Defence Force. We are very confident that, in any process that reflects the merits of the bids and reflects the operational needs of the Australian Defence Force, we will see that Sale prevails as the future home of military flying training here in Australia.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Debate resumed.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — Not only are the state taxes highly regressive themselves, but it has been said that Victoria's particular mix of taxes is the most regressive of all states. I probably nominate taxes on insurance as the tax we would least like people to avoid, because insurance is a very valuable tool to spread risk across our homes and across our business enterprises. Using that as a means to collect what I believe to be about \$1 billion or so in tax encourages people to underinsure, and we all know what that means when an individual or a natural disaster strikes. I would love to hear some leadership from the government and from the Labor Party or even from the industry itself on the question of comprehensive state tax reform, but I am really straining my ears right now.

The other area I believe to be an essential underpinning to a productive economy is affordable energy for both our homes and our businesses. We have seen power prices rise anything from 30 per cent to 40 per cent, and that is in the five years prior to the introduction of the carbon tax. Our Minister for Energy and Resources here in Victoria does not have a plan to stop that stratospheric increase in power prices. Mr Finn says the carbon tax would be a good start. A carbon tax is about

2.5 cents a kilowatt hour, falling to 1.5 cents a kilowatt hour if Mr Finn's party is unsuccessful in repealing the carbon tax. We will find out on Saturday, with the Western Australian election, exactly which way the tide is flowing on that one.

Mr Finn's party has no plan to reduce the cost pressures that have driven up our energy bills so much, regardless of the carbon tax, and that will continue to be the case. In fact the actions this state government has been taking are making things worse. The government has been knocking back wind farms, it has been damaging the solar industry and just in the last sitting week it cut away one of the programs that had been highly successful in helping a whole range of businesses — many of them manufacturing businesses — to reduce their energy bills. These sorts of actions not only reduce energy costs for those who undertake them but also for all energy users across the grid as a whole.

There are different estimates of this, but by some measure power generators make 30 per cent of their revenue in just 30 hours of the year, typically in the hottest parts of the hottest days. It is at those times that we see the wholesale power price rocket from \$40 a megawatt hour to \$10 000 a megawatt hour, and now higher since the cap on that has been lifted. Recently we have seen some reduction in that, and we put it down to largely two factors. First of all is the increase in the amount of solar power in the grid. I believe it is now about 550 megawatts in Victoria, although it is growing so fast the figures are constantly out of date. The second factor is the benefits of energy efficiency. All we hear from the state government on that is led by groups such as the Victorian Farmers Federation — a plan to water down or even abolish the highly successful energy efficiency scheme and framework that is in place, which itself should be upgraded and expanded not wound down.

This is not something that an individual enterprise can do by itself. It is not something that an individual person can do by themselves. It is one of those collective efforts to take on a challenge that we need to address.

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

**Mr BARBER** — Last but not least among the key success factors for a productive economy is a healthy population. The Auditor-General has pointed to a crisis of obesity and poor nutrition in the Victorian population and has said in a recent report that no government in the last 10 years appears to have had any real success on this issue, despite the existence of a number of programs in this area. While we know that obesity and

poor nutrition have quite a deleterious effect on the life span and quality of life of an increasing number of us, it must also inevitably feed into the productivity of the workforce.

There you have it. The key factors for ensuring that we have continuous growth in jobs and the wealth and prosperity that goes with this growth, while protecting the environment and the livability we value so highly in Victoria, are energy costs, so we need to take control of our energy system; skills, so we need to put TAFE back at the centre of that system; public transport for the efficient mobility of people and goods; and excellent services that attract mobile industry and skilled managers, entrepreneurs and workers to Melbourne as a place to do business. We need a competitive tax system. The tax system is well overdue for reform and has for the most part, except for the fire services levy, been untouched by Liberal and before it Labor and before it Liberal and before it Labor.

Let us not go down the road of further privatising our publicly owned assets that are so essential to the delivery of services simply because right now the moneymaking industry, the merchant bankers or the moneychangers, as former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt referred to them, are looking for their next slice of the pie. If we have leadership and, dare I say it, even consensus across all political parties on these matters, Victoria will continue to be a very good place to live for a very long time.

**Mrs MILLAR** (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak on this motion today. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a serious issue. We need to ensure that young people who seek a job are gainfully employed, that they utilise and develop their skills and talents and are able to provide for themselves. This government never underestimates the importance of employment to individuals, to families and to growing the economy. Employment is always a focus for this government, and no Victorian could be in doubt of that.

I reflect on the focus of the Honourable Peter Costello over his long and outstanding career in federal Parliament. He frequently said that the best form of welfare support we can offer any Australian is to provide the conditions to grow employment and to provide individuals with a job. I have heard Mr Costello speak about this many times, and he is correct. No-one on this side of the house fails to understand this. We want people to be employed, to take pride in having a job and making a contribution, to harness their efforts usefully and to grow the economy, giving them pride, independence, wellbeing and wealth.

Addressing unemployment is complex; it is not just about statistics. Having completed studies in economics, I know that data about unemployment is always tainted with some inaccuracy. It is widely acknowledged that there is a natural level of unemployment which will always exist. It is not the case that every person listed in the unemployment numbers is actually a job seeker, but rather that some — not all — of those individuals will try to technically meet the requirements of being a job seeker but not have any real intention of accepting work if offered.

Economists differ in their estimates as to what this natural level of unemployment may be, but it is generally assumed that it may be as high as 4 per cent. In effect the natural level of unemployment equates to full employment. No discussion about unemployment rates can be valid without considering this impact.

I do not raise this point to make light of the difficulties faced by genuine job seekers, and I especially note that there are some sectors of our society that face greater barriers to gaining employment. These include more senior Victorians, those with disabilities, those with carer responsibilities, Indigenous Australians and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In my past professional life I have worked on a number of projects and teams to assist some groups who face barriers — especially programs to employ young Indigenous Victorians.

Ms Tierney's motion refers to statistics from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and I will reflect for a moment on that fine organisation and the truly amazing work it does. I specifically mention a dear friend of mine, Debra Saffrey Collins, and the outstanding work which she, as chaplain to the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and her colleagues in that organisation do. I know from my own association with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, both in a professional capacity from my background in human resources and in a personal capacity, that those at the Brotherhood of St Laurence know the complexity involved in tackling unemployment. They know that it is not a political football to be kicked about for political expediency.

If you have ever worked closely with a long-term unemployed person to assist them to gain employment, you do not underestimate the importance or the difficulty of so doing. I do not, and nor do those at the Brotherhood of St Laurence. I recognise those engaged in organisations assisting Victorians to gain employment. It is, as the Honourable Peter Costello always reminded us, the best thing we can do for any

individual to give them pride, wellbeing and independence.

Having reflected on the complexity of tackling unemployment, I now come to the record of this government — a record which far exceeds the performance of any other government in this country. This is a government which is creating jobs and building a better Victoria. There are now 64 200 more Victorians employed than when the coalition came to government. Importantly, our regional unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent is below the national average and is lower than when Labor left office in 2010.

Victoria's youth unemployment rate is steady. Victoria was the only state to record a decline in the youth unemployment rate over the year to February 2014. The number of youth unemployed fell by 3200 persons, or 4.9 per cent, in the 12 months to February 2014. Importantly only 4 per cent of these people were both unemployed and not engaged in full-time education.

I am particularly proud of the achievements of this government in shifting jobs to regional Victoria, and only a few days ago we had the fabulous announcement that VicRoads headquarters will be relocated to Ballarat. This is great news on many fronts. It is great news for regional employment and great news for Ballarat, but it is also great news from a service perspective that we are to shift jobs and services nearer to where they most need to be delivered. Similarly the announcement for Geelong, which Ms Tierney should note, that the Victorian WorkCover Authority will relocate its head office to Geelong is good news. There are lots of other initiatives, such as the \$22 million for SPC Ardmona to secure jobs in Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley. Importantly this announcement was not just about throwing money at a problem; it was tied to job security in the Goulburn Valley over a longer period, making the funds conditional upon meeting that goal.

Thousands of jobs have been created through investments funded by the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, and I will reflect on just one of those. I was very pleased to join my colleague Mr Damian Drum at Perrys Stockfeeds and Saddlery in Kyneton last Friday for the announcement of a small grant of some \$60 000 to be invested into an expanding business with a cost of more than \$700 000. Yes, it is a small grant, but it will be big for jobs in Kyneton. A minimum of six new jobs will be created at Perrys. That is not all, though; Perrys buys all of its grain and hay from local farmers within a 100 kilometre radius of Kyneton, and therefore the flow-through benefits from this small \$60 000 state government investment are great news for this whole

region. Thousands of jobs will be created by our major infrastructure investments such as the \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project, and 3000 construction jobs will be created by stage 1 of the east-west link. The list goes on.

I cannot conclude my contribution on unemployment without reflecting on the fact that the no 1 threat to job creation in Victoria is militant unionism perpetrated by rogue unions like the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. The shameful actions of unions, including the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union — as has been reflected on in a recent decision by the Supreme Court of Victoria which included a finding of criminal contempt — delay projects, drive up costs, increase investment risk and ultimately cost Victorians jobs. I know this because I talk to employers. It is the actions of these unions that scare employers away from Victoria. This is the real problem, and Victorians know it. Only by creating a climate in which businesses can thrive can you grow jobs. Mr Barber reflected on this in his contribution. We need to remove red tape and regulation, we need to reduce various forms of taxation and we need to take on militant unionism.

Unemployment, and tackling it, is a serious issue that deserves a strong focus, and this government is focussed on driving down unemployment. This government has outperformed every other government in Australia in this area and continues to do so. For these reasons I will be opposing this motion.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to support Ms Tierney's motion. It is a very important motion which covers what is probably the most important issue this state faces at present, with the closure of many manufacturing businesses, the limited opportunities in employment and the limited training opportunities for young people.

We all know this government's sad history in training. Members opposite voted for a budget that cut nearly \$1 billion from TAFE providers. That resulted in TAFEs closing and caused the sector to lose teachers to other states, perhaps forever. It resulted in young people having to relocate so they could continue with their training. Some young people had to catch public transport for round trips of well over 3 hours to attend their courses, and then work their shifts at Red Rooster or McDonald's to subsidise their living expenses. It is a complete outrage. I am glad that in recent days members of the opposition have shown some leadership out at Lilydale. Leadership has to come from somewhere. The Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and

the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Monbulk in the Assembly, James Merlino, have committed to do whatever it takes to reopen Swinburne's Lilydale campus.

Members of this pathetic, awful and probably worst government this state has ever had to endure voted to cut a billion dollars from TAFE. It is no wonder that TAFE providers have had to close campuses. Swinburne closed its campus at Lilydale, which meant that there was no provision of higher education in the whole of Melbourne's outer east. As I said, it is good that members of the opposition are prepared to show leadership if members of the government will not. It is good to see that Daniel Andrews and James Merlino have shown some leadership and committed to reopening Swinburne's Lilydale campus.

There is a long and sordid story behind the closure of that campus. Members of the government all voted for a budget that contained huge TAFE cuts to providers. As a result Swinburne had to move out of its Lilydale campus. At the same time conversations were had with the Shire of Yarra Ranges about the shire moving into the complex. Although purpose built for education, the proposal was to turn it into some fancy, dressed-up shire CEO's office with an improved view and better parking. The shire and this state government colluded to the point that even after it was revealed that members of the community were outraged, an announcement was made in the local papers that the shire wanted to move into the TAFE buildings. The minister even provided the Shire of Yarra Ranges with \$100 000 to conduct a feasibility study on the best future use of the buildings.

**Mr Koch** — Money well spent.

**Mr LEANE** — Money well spent? That is very interesting, because after my complaint to the Ombudsman about there being a huge conflict of interest, the council decided it did not want its money back. The government froze that payment, so the money was not spent. It was not money well spent; it was a disaster.

There has been a lot of talk from the government, but it has built nothing and has done anything to create jobs. A lot of jobs have been created for use in artist impressions of proposed projects, and a few jobs have been created for consultants at the Office of Living It Up on the Victorian Taxpayer. A few jobs have been created for that sector, and a few jobs created for consultants to conduct feasibility studies of projects that will never be realised — only stages 1, 2 and 3 of feasibility studies. But there are no real jobs.

We have heard a lot of moaning about the villains in the construction industry — those carpenters, tilers, steel fixers and painters — who have the audacity to be members of unions. We have heard about how those villains have held back the construction industry. When I speak to people in the sector, both employers and workers, they tell me that the biggest brake on the building industry in the last few decades has been the Baillieu and Napthine governments — this government. Maybe we could paint construction workers into artist impressions, but doing so would not create real jobs.

This government has put the brakes on the building industry and, along with its federal counterpart, has put the brakes on the manufacturing industry. This government and the federal Liberal-Nationals government dared the auto industry to leave — and what happened? The auto industry went. When it comes to creating jobs, to training and to creating a future for young Victorians, this government will go down as the worst government Victoria has ever had to endure. Members of the government can get up and blame the carpenters, the painters, the tilers and the villains in the building and construction industry as much as they want, but the blame squarely lands on members of this government. When the people of Victoria vote at the end of this year, they will know who the villains are and who to point their fingers at.

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — It is very interesting to speak on Ms Tierney's motion and particularly interesting to come after Mr Leane. One subject Mr Leane went on about is that this government is not looking forward and not thinking about promoting young people into jobs. I will give him some statistics, released only today, which I am certain he will be particularly pleased to hear. Mr Leane will be particularly pleased to hear that this government is looking to the long-term job sustainability of young people in this state, beyond manufacturing and beyond a whole range of traditional skills that have been available in the past. Members of this government are looking at what the future of young people in this state will be.

Today the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Wakeling, released the *Vocational Education and Training Market 2013 Highlights Report* in which he identifies, as Mr Hall did before him, what are going to be the industries of the future and where the jobs will be. When we look back and see some of the TAFE cuts that were made and which have been mentioned today, we see those cuts included courses for personal trainers. How many personal trainers does one state need? Personal trainers were very important at one stage, and there are enough of them in the community now.

What is going to happen into the future? What skills will be needed? I can remember that huge mining boom of the 1970s. All the universities across the state took in geology students, because everyone had to have geologists. Everyone was going off into — —

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mrs COOTE** — Mr Barber remembers as well. The reality is that all those students thought they would be entering the mining industry. There was then a decline in the industry — I think it started with Poseidon, which started the whole ball rolling downhill and into a spiral — and those geologists all came out of those universities totally overqualified for an industry that did not exist. No-one had bothered to look at what would be a sustainable number of geologists. When he was minister the Honourable Peter Hall had the courage to look at what was going to be needed into the future and what sectors were going to provide jobs for young Victorians jobs into the future.

An important aspect of the report released today is that Minister Wakeling has highlighted six industries that account for 60 per cent of all Victorian jobs, including health care, social assistance, manufacturing, professional services, scientific services and technical services. The Victorian government subsidised 645 000 job enrolments in these areas in 2013. Vocational training funding has increased to \$1.2 billion, which is 41 per cent more than Labor spent in its last budget. That is an enormous increase.

I would like to talk about the health-care industry for a moment. I would like to have a look and see where the jobs of the future are going to be. We have got the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) being rolled out in the Barwon region. What is transpiring from this rollout is that people with a disability are being asked for the very first time, ‘What is it that you need? What do you reasonably need to run your life as you want it to be?’. For the first time ever people are being asked, ‘What is it that you want?’, and a package is being developed around those people to enable them to lead the lives they want. Some people might have a limited package which just enables them to be in the community; others are going to need a more substantial package. Those who need a more substantial package are going to need some very real support.

What is that support going to look like and who is going to provide it? There is a huge opportunity for young people to get health-care training to join this service area. For example, someone who has cerebral palsy and is not able to take care of themselves in terms of their personal care needs is going to need someone,

perhaps three or four times a week, to come and assist them with their personal care. Somebody else who is more able bodied might wish to attend a particular course but needs an aide to go with them. They would also be able to have a young person to assist them who has come through one of these programs — perhaps a certificate III or IV in the disability sector.

There is a whole range of opportunities in personal care work, health-care work and allied areas. There is an enormous upside to new jobs, not just here in Victoria but Australia wide. People who train in these areas are going to have the flexibility to go across this nation to work within the NDIS. There are going to be a huge number of jobs in the disability sector — different jobs, albeit, from manufacturing or other more traditional jobs that have existed in this state, but that is what the future is going to look like. We do not need an oversupply of personal trainers. What we do need is to make certain that we have sustainable jobs in the areas that are emerging as our needs base. As I said, the national disability insurance scheme is being rolled out in the Barwon region through the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), and there are going to be a number of job opportunities in that area for young people and for other people as well.

That brings me to Geelong. Mr Leane was talking about jobs in the manufacturing industry, and I would just like to touch on the car industry as an example. Toyota’s head office is in my electorate in Port Melbourne. I recall that during the global financial crisis Toyota made an extraordinary offer to its workers to help them get through what was an exceedingly difficult time. It cut back hours so that people did not have to lose their jobs, and it worked constructively with workers to see how it could keep people employed, and that worked very well. It was most astonishing to Toyota, given its Japanese culture, that not much long afterwards — perhaps a year; maybe 18 months — those very same workers went back and kicked it in the teeth, putting completely outrageous expectations on the table. The unions screwed out deals that were completely and utterly outrageous. In the end it caught up with them.

**Ms Tierney** — That statement is outrageous. You know nothing about what you are talking about. Just talk about what you know, not what you don’t know.

**Mrs COOTE** — Even Ms Tierney, who is so passionate about the car manufacturing industry in Geelong, would have to admit that it has been not one government or another but progressive governments that have looked at helping the car industry and the manufacturing industry for a very long time. There has

been inquiry after inquiry from federal governments of all political persuasions.

What has happened to Geelong under the coalition? Let me just reiterate some of the jobs that have gone there. I was talking before about the national disability insurance scheme. When he was Premier, Ted Baillieu put \$25 million on the table to bring the national disability insurance scheme headquarters to Victoria. Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister at the time, to give her her due — in fact I give her her due about the NDIS altogether, I might add — agreed to have the NDIS headquarters in Victoria. The Victorian government put \$25 million on the table, and an additional 300 jobs will come as a consequence of that. They will not be manufacturing jobs, I agree, but there are certainly going to be job opportunities in Geelong as a consequence of the NDIS being located there. Together with the jobs at the coalface I was speaking about before — the opportunities for personal care workers and for a whole range of disability support agencies to hire younger and older people alike — there will be enormous opportunities through the NDIA in Geelong. That is just the NDIA.

Another announcement made in this chamber by the Assistant Treasurer, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, who is the minister responsible for WorkCover, was that the entire WorkCover organisation head office will go to Geelong. That is another 500 jobs going into Geelong. This is another very good benefit for Geelong. I am pleased to see what is starting to happen in Geelong. One of the reasons we as a state chose the Geelong region as a pilot for the NDIS was that the Transport Accident Commission is already there. Under the former Labor government the Transport Accident Commission headquarters were moved to Geelong, and that was a very good move; I think everyone would agree with that.

With the WorkCover and national disability insurance scheme headquarters moving to Geelong, we are starting to see a hub of excellence in Geelong that will generate jobs. It will be seen Australia-wide as best practice. This is something that should be lauded by Geelong. The members representing Geelong and all the people involved with Geelong should be saying, 'This is a great opportunity for us'. Just as in the past Geelong had been at the heart of the manufacturing industry, now it has an opportunity to be at the forefront of what is an emerging industry, and more jobs will come as a consequence. We have a fabulous opportunity to expand upon the jobs that we have in this state.

There are many other areas which I could touch on, but I will talk about some statistics around what this government has done and make certain that people understand what we have achieved since being elected to government.

Before I do that — and now that Ms Tierney is in the chamber I hope she will correct me through the Acting President if I am incorrect — I seem to recall that Timboon was highlighted by a former member for Western Victoria Region, Mr Vogels, who brought to the attention of this chamber, catching the imagination of the entire country, the penalty rates that young people were being paid at McDonald's.

**Ms Tierney** — Wrong place, wrong company.

**Mrs COOTE** — I stand corrected by Ms Tierney. Terang was the area, I beg your pardon.

It was brought to the attention of this chamber that penalty rates crippled the area. These young people could not work at McDonald's because McDonald's could not afford to pay them. You only have to go into my own electorate on a Sunday and look around to see this. I have seen cafes with signs saying, 'We are not open on Sundays because the rates are too expensive'. If these people want good employment rates, they should have a good look at this and see where they are going wrong.

I refer to what Victoria has done in the employment area. Victorian employment growth over the past year was driven by full-time employment, which increased by 18 900 jobs. There are now 64 200 more Victorians employed than when we came to government. Victoria continues to have the highest labour force participation rate of all the non-mining states. I remind this chamber that just this week we have seen some very interesting statistics on migration. People are leaving all the other states; it reminds you of Ireland in the 1940s. These people are not going to Queensland. They are leaving New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, and they are coming to Victoria. They see Victoria as the growth opportunity and the growth state.

Our regional unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent is below the national average, and is lower than when Labor left in 2010. The Victorian government has been working hard to secure jobs in Victoria. I heard my colleague Mrs Millar talk about the \$22 million coinvestment with SPC Ardmona to secure jobs in Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley, the thousands of jobs created through investment funded by the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund and the thousands of jobs that will be created by major infrastructure

investment, such as the \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor program. I remind the house again of the 3200 construction jobs that will be created by just stage 1 of the east-west link.

**Debate interrupted.**

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem)** — Order! I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a former President of the Legislative Council, the Honourable Bob Smith, and his wife, Margot, and guest. They are welcome.

### EMPLOYMENT

**Debate resumed.**

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — This is a government that is creating jobs and building a better Victoria. People are voting with their feet and moving to Victoria in greater numbers than ever before — as I said, from New South Wales, Western Australia and the other states. They see Victoria as the growth state.

The latest figures show Victoria's population increased by 110 500 people or 2 per cent over the year ending September 2013 and stands at 5.77 million people. This is significantly higher than the national population growth of 1.8 per cent, and much higher than growth in New South Wales, which is 1.5 per cent. The Victorian youth unemployment rate is steady — 12.4 per cent in February, 0.6 per cent lower than a year ago. Of the Victorian youth population, 57.7 per cent were in full-time education and a further 32.9 per cent were employed over the year to February. There are some very good statistics in this. There is some good news for young Victorians — hope, sustainable jobs and a future in Victoria. That is what the coalition government has been able to achieve. I vehemently oppose the motion brought by Ms Tierney today.

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Eastern Victoria) — Contrary to Mrs Coote, I absolutely support Ms Tierney's motion this afternoon. It provides an opportunity for members to give consideration to what can only be described as the tragic deterioration of jobs in Victoria that has resulted from the disastrous economic management of the state by this coalition government. I also support Ms Tierney's call for the house to require the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee to inquire into the current employment crisis.

Less than two weeks ago the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released data that showed that almost

12 000 full-time jobs were lost in regional Victoria during February, and that regional unemployment shot up from 1.1 per cent to 6.6 per cent. This percentage increase translates to around 8000 human beings without employment. A few weeks prior to that, in early March, we learnt from the ABS that Victoria's unemployment overall was at 6.4 per cent, much higher than the national average, and youth unemployment had increased to 21.4 per cent, the highest of all states except Tasmania.

The wider the perspective one takes, the worse it gets. The fact is that since Denis Naphthine took the reins from former Premier Ted Baillieu, more than 50 000 Victorians have lost their jobs. We know the Premier and members of the government say that there is always churn, and that jobs disappear here and new jobs are created there, as though nobody minds too much as there is always some other opportunity, if you just hang around long enough.

The problem here is that there are more jobs lost than there are jobs created — that is, there is a net loss, and that is increasing — and government members are doing nothing other than congratulating themselves whenever they go to some location or site where people will be employed. What we heard this morning from members of the government was nothing more than a list of projects and programs, largely funded by government, that are of course important infrastructure initiatives but also job creators. They are not jobs created by the private sector, and the government is always the first to say that the private sector is the job generator and the job creator. We heard very little evidence of that in the discussion this morning.

The sad fact is that for working people who live on wages they earn in factories or offices or in retail or the service industries losing a job is just about the worst thing that could happen. I am certain that one's background matters and that members of the current government do not know what it is to have to rely wholly and solely on the wages that come every week to pay the rent or the mortgage or for food or some modest extras for the family.

I am certain that members of the government are of a mindset that starts from the position that everyone should be an entrepreneur with a level of backing and financial flexibility. I am certain of this because, if they were truly aware of the day-to-day reality of working Victorians, they would be working themselves a lot harder than they are so as to work out ways of not losing jobs through industry shutdowns. They would be working in the way that the Bracks and Brumby governments worked to make Victoria the job creation

engine of this country, and those governments did that for almost a decade and during one of the worst global financial crises this generation has experienced. Those were exemplary governments that performed in a standout way in relation to jobs.

If members of the Victorian coalition understood or cared about the position of wage earners, they would, after over three years in government, have a jobs plan. They would not have been caught short when federal Treasurer Joe Hockey effectively goaded Holden into closing down, precipitating the wind-up of Toyota. Admittedly Mr Hockey's statements have been described variously as crazy, brave and also as an attack.

While it was plain for all to see that he was inexplicably spoiling for a fight with the auto manufacturers and determined not to make government investments in the manufacturing sector, the end came more suddenly than the Victorian government expected. The Victorian coalition government and its Minister for Manufacturing, David Hodgett, should have known, and they should have had a plan and response in place. They should have been able to, if not totally, insulate Victoria's manufacturing sector or at least support a meaningful and credible transition, but what we heard from the hapless minister was that in the days after Holden had announced its pullout, Mr Hodgett and Team Victoria were heading to Canberra to talk about the Productivity Commission inquiry that was supposed to be under way but was, frankly, at that point completely dead in the water.

It was no consolation and certainly not a strategy for Minister Hodgett to tell Holden that, notwithstanding the taunting by and bad faith of his federal coalition partners and their refusal to offer any financial support, the Victorian vehicle industry was of great interest — I think those were his words — to the Naphthine coalition government. That is fantastic! Even if you agreed with the federal coalition's policy — even if you do not think there would be any advantage for the government to coinvest with large international manufacturers in restructuring the car industry — why would you do what the Abbott government did? The point is that Mr Hodgett and the Victorian coalition government could have responded much more constructively to the crazy goings-on in Canberra if they had had a jobs plan. As the adage goes, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. That is exactly what the Naphthine government has allowed to happen.

There are various views on the future viability of the vehicle-building industry. The debate is largely academic now that the industry has been killed off, but

this whole sad episode illustrates that a scorched earth approach — a rupture, a purge — was the least constructive way to go. The disruption to manufacturing that has sent shockwaves far beyond the car industry is bad enough, but the job losses will disrupt and harm the lives of many thousands of Victorians. Let us remember what those figures are: 2700 jobs will be lost at Toyota in 2017, 1200 at Ford, and 2900 at General Motors Holden. I saw one study that estimated that 65 400 workers could lose their jobs Australia wide and that some \$4 billion could be lost to the Australian economy. A large slice of that would be from Victoria. This has all been an exercise in madness in which the Victorian government is up to its neck, even though it remonstrates that it was all the fault of the federal coalition and the vehicle manufacturers.

Ms Tierney's motion mentions the *Brotherhood of St Laurence Australian Youth Unemployment 2014 — Snapshot*, which contains a wealth of information on the dramatic rise in unemployment among young people. The snapshot summarises some useful and, as Ms Tierney pointed out, alarming data, such as the fact that more than one in three young people aged between 15 and 24 is currently unemployed. In Victoria the Goulburn Valley, Wodonga and Wangaratta are included in what the snapshot calls a 'youth unemployment hot spot', where the youth unemployment rate is at 17.5 per cent. The snapshot encourages policy-makers to devise and support programs to invest in young people to enable them to be work ready by providing access to work experience and coaching, keeping them engaged and building relationships with employers.

Underlying the update I detect an unease that for many young people satisfactory employment will be hard if not impossible to get, and that will mean they could face a lifetime of disrupted employment and, much more importantly, dramatically reduced income. This is the point, after all. The nexus for the working class between a job and income makes a job instrumentally necessary, rather than an end in itself, because many jobs — let us be frank about it — are unstimulating and unfulfilling. Being rich and having steady income from perhaps investments or from some high-paying professional work that you do enriches and stimulates one personally and individually in a way that is just not available for the vast numbers of people on low incomes and working in low-skill occupations.

The larger question is whether the 21st century economies can provide the jobs necessary to more or less give employment to anyone who wants it. An interesting piece I came across in the *Economist* last January entitled 'The future of jobs — the onrushing

wave' makes a few salient points that are probably worth raising in the context of this debate. In the 1930s Maynard Keynes noted in his piece 'Economic possibilities for our grandchildren' that what he called technological unemployment was outrunning the pace at which new uses for labour could be found. Since then the reality seems to have been contrary to that; new technologies have brought new and better jobs, until today, when with the advent of computerised automation Keynes's prediction has begun to be realised. The so-called rich world is in the grip of a crisis where wages are stagnant, and this is because capital can now more easily be invested in automated production, cutting out labour. As a result, the onus of capital is capturing more of the world's income.

The evidence of rising long-term unemployment across rich countries is alarming because capital effectively substitutes for labour. The piece says:

A 2013 paper by Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael Osborne, of the University of Oxford, argued that jobs are at high risk of being automated in 47 per cent of the occupational categories into which work is customarily sorted. That includes accountancy, legal work, technical writing and a lot of other white-collar occupations.

Answering the question of whether such automation could lead to prolonged pain for workers means taking a close look at past experience, theory and technological trends. The picture suggested by this evidence is a complex one. It is also more worrying than many economists and politicians have been prepared to admit.

Workers in rich countries are increasingly competing with automation on the one hand and lower paid offshore workers on the other, and they have found themselves squeezed out of the manufacturing sector. The next few years will see an exponential growth in computer chip processing speeds, and this will have a phenomenal impact on the kinds of work that can be automated. The *Economist* article cites the Google automated driverless car as an example. Who knows what impact this will have, for example, on the taxi industry or the transport industry as a whole. The message is that this time of profound transition requires even more of governments and policy-makers to ensure that the general public — those dependent upon wages, who are being squeezed — are protected through strong policies and programs that support job creation on the one hand and the unemployed on the other.

There is a lot of novel and innovative thinking going on across the world. One idea that we should commence thinking about is the process of separating income from work — that is, wages — from income in general. The idea has been posited by various think tanks and academics in Europe, the United States and Canada that

we could work our way towards the provision of a guaranteed basic income which gives each citizen, on the basis of them being a citizen, a modest income, which is rather like the age pension but is for everyone.

There is not time today to go into detail, but this approach is based on the view that the problem we face today is not just one of production or wealth accumulation but is also one of wealth distribution among citizens. Governments must devise and implement job plans, and they must also devise ways to fairly redistribute wealth so that every citizen has access to the fruits of a nation's collective production.

On that basis, I absolutely support Ms Tierney's call for the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee to inquire into the crisis confronting Victorian families through unemployment. The terms of reference she has drafted in her motion are sufficiently comprehensive to take in a wide range of very important issues.

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon a little melancholy, having listened to the Chicken Littles on the other side of the chamber for a good part of today. A bloke is tempted to run away and not come back for a long time if things are as bad as the Labor Party tell us they are. However, I do not believe that to be the case — not at all.

Mr Scheffer in particular has outdone himself this time. That is a big call because Comrade Scheffer has explained the joys of socialism to us for a number of years now, but today he took class warfare to another level, talking about the dreadful Liberals and the way they support the entrepreneurs and suppress the workers. I thought I was down at the Victorian Trades Hall listening to Norm Gallagher back in the 1970s. I mean, really, where do these blokes get their lines from?

**Mr D. R. J. O'Brien** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — The whole box and dice. Where do they get their lines from? They have come up with nothing new since 1917. Nothing has changed with this crowd since the Russian Revolution in 1917. They are still running out the same old tired lines that mean nothing to anybody. I happen to believe that meaningful employment is a basic right. I believe that every human being — —

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — If I had known it would have that effect on Mr Barber, I would have said it a long time ago. I believe employment is a basic right of every human being. It gives us dignity, it gives us self-esteem

and it obviously gives us money with which we can support ourselves and quite often our families as well. Whichever way you look at it, employment is a basic right. I have not always been in a position where I have enjoyed that basic right. Many years ago I was unemployed for a period of time, and I know from a personal level just how soul destroying unemployment is.

Some might say that given my previous occupation unemployment was an occupational hazard. It was to a degree, because when one leaves a radio station there might not necessarily be another opening immediately. I have a lot of friends who have been in a similar situation. They too have felt the misfortune of unemployment for an extended period. It is soul destroying, and you get to the point where working does not seem natural or normal. When people get to that point they need intervention, help and assistance. We would all hope wherever we sit in this chamber that nobody would get to that low level.

However, I am aware of people who are caught up in generational poverty and unemployment. I know of families who have not had a job in their ranks for two or three generations, and that to me is absolutely tragic. In these families son, father and grandfather have never worked. They do not know the self-esteem and dignity that work brings, and of course I see that quite often in the western suburbs.

One chap whom I mention from time to time is 'Sir' Les Twentyman, who works with people who find themselves in this situation, particularly young people, and has been doing a mighty and powerful job for a very long time. I am acutely aware of what unemployment can do to the human condition and to human beings themselves, so for Mr Scheffer to get up there and start reciting quotations from Mao's *Little Red Book*, or whatever it was that he was quoting from, telling us that the Liberals are all about the rich and stomping on the working class, is just pure absolute nonsense. It is an example of why the people of Victoria and Australia have left the Labor Party behind. They have looked at them and said, 'This mob is just not in the real world'.

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — It could be from the Chicago school. I do not know which school it is from. It is certainly from the Footscray school, Mr Barber, and if you want to go to Werribee, Sunbury, Gladstone Park or Craigieburn, they are all saying the same thing: these people in the ALP are not representing us. In fact I have had people say to me that the ALP has a vested interest in ensuring

that people remain unemployed, and in ensuring that people remain in poverty. That is true, because once people feel that they have the ability to stand on their own two feet, once they have the self-esteem to go out there and fight for themselves, they are far more inclined to vote for the other side of politics, for our side of politics. I have seen it, but it is not something the ALP wants to see.

I do not say that every member opposite feels that way, but there is no doubt that a large section of the ALP subscribes to that view — that the more downtrodden people are, the better the ALP's prospects will be. I fear that what we have heard today from Mr Scheffer and Mr Leane are just two more examples of that. Once people are strong enough to stand on their own two feet and think for themselves, they are less inclined to vote Labor. That is a fact.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — That is something that Mr Leane clearly has not caught onto yet. If Mr Leane were to study the years of the Howard prime ministership, he would understand that Prime Minister Howard knew exactly who he was tapping into — the aspirational voter. You have probably heard that expression. These are people who used to be traditional Labor voters but now they see a way out of their misery and they are more inclined to vote Liberal and get out of the slump that they have experienced.

Former Prime Minister John Howard knew what he was doing in that regard, and Premier Denis Napthine knows exactly what is going on as well. I have to say that he has proven to be the most friendly Premier to the western suburbs that I have ever seen on either side of politics. He is proving to be a Premier who really cares and understands and is providing for the western suburbs, and the people of the western suburbs are responding in kind. I am looking forward to November because we are going to see, not just in this house but in the other house as well, representatives of the Liberal Party coming from the western suburbs.

**Mr Leane** — Yeah, right.

**Mr FINN** — Yeah, right! Absolutely right, and you had better get used to it.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Through the Chair, Mr Finn.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Leane had better prepare himself because he might have that heart condition that Mr Barber had just a short period ago when I mentioned my belief in the basic rights of employment.

Mr Leane stood up in this house today — and not for the first time — and said that this government is the worst government in Victoria's history. I am not sure where Mr Leane was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but I was here in Victoria. I remember the hundreds of thousands of people who marched on this building, calling for the Kirner government to resign. I remember the Tricontinental disaster, I remember the loss of the State Bank, I remember the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, the Melbourne international tram festival that we had out the front of Parliament House, with all the trams parked as far as the eye could see and around the corner as well, I remember all that, so do not come in here and — —

**Ms Tierney** — What about Kennett?

**Mr FINN** — Kennett actually saved the state. Ms Tierney, as she scampered from the chamber, screeched at me, 'What about Kennett?'. I can say without any fear of contradiction that if it were not for former Premier Jeff Kennett, this state would have gone under. So I thank the Lord for Jeff. Jeff Kennett and I have not always seen eye to eye on every issue, but I have to say that he was the leader for the times, he was a great Premier, and every Victorian should give thanks — —

**Mr D. R. J. O'Brien** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — As Mr O'Brien points out, we should all give thanks for the fact that he replaced former Premier Joan Kirner in October 1992. If Mr Leane wants to go back a few decades, he will see the worst government in this state's history, and I can tell him that it was not this one. This government is rebuilding the state once again. It is amazing how history repeats itself. In the 1980s and the early 1990s Victoria was a rust-bucket state. Unemployment was rife, large parts of Victoria were literally falling to pieces as a result of the policies of the then Labor government. We were heading the same way under the Bracks and Brumby governments. If there had not — —

**Mr Scheffer** — No, not true.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Scheffer shakes his head over there, like a nodding dog at the back of a car, but let me tell him that what happened under the Bracks and Brumby governments was heading exactly the same way as the Cain and Kirner years had done. After all these years, two decades later, these people refuse to accept what happened in the 1980s and the 1990s, much less what happened under their own government for 10 years. I am very happy to talk about what is happening under our government.

I have to say that there are some days — and I am probably going to get into some strife for saying this — when I wish Premier Denis Naphthine would go away because, frankly, he is in the western suburbs so often, announcing new industry, new business, new jobs that I think to myself, 'Not again! Where does this bloke get the energy?'. I cannot keep up with him, and I wonder how he does that. How can he bounce out of bed every morning, head out to the western suburbs and announce yet another project and yet another company that has come in from overseas that brings high-quality, high-paying jobs into the western suburbs? It is something that is transforming the west.

We will find out in November about the new west and the way the people in the new west think, and I have to say that the old west is changing at a pretty rapid rate as well. This government has a firm commitment to providing a strong environment for the establishment and growth of small business. There, I said it — small business.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Leane might not understand what I am talking about. I am talking about people who are prepared to stick out their necks, put their necks on the chopping block and put everything they have on the line to start a business and employ people. Without business, and particularly without small business, you do not have jobs. In fact without business and without small business you do not have any jobs at all. Mr Scheffer, the nodding dog over there, is going great guns, but he just does not accept the reality of life. He is not so much a nodding dog — —

**Mr Scheffer** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — He is agreeing with me; that is a marvellous thing. We have had a major breakthrough here today. I feel like doing a lap of honour. This is a joyful thing to hear that Mr Scheffer has broken away from the comrades of the Kremlin and is giving small business the credit it is due.

I have said this in the chamber before, but it is worth saying again: the real heroes of the Australian economy are small business people. They are the people who are prepared to take the risk. They stay awake at night wondering how they are going to pay their mortgages, whether they will lose their homes, how they are going to put their kids through school and whether they can actually put food on the table. They risk everything they have got to establish a business — to pursue a dream in many instances — and those are the people who provide the jobs.

Not that they will ever get any credit from the Australian Labor Party, because most of those small businesses in particular are not union sites. If they are not union sites and if they are not union shops, the Labor Party does not want to know about them, because all the Labor Party is interested in is serving its union bosses, whether they be in the Electrical Trades Union or the Australian Workers Union. I understand that the Health Services Union has changed its name since the incident with Mr Williamson, who is now a prisoner. I am not sure what his number is, but Mr Thomson will probably be in an adjoining cell at some stage. It is no longer called the Health Services Union; it is now called the Health Workers Union. We should be very wary because leopards may change their spots but shysters do not, and in this instance they are the same breed.

I point out once again that I admire enormously those people in the small business sector who take the risks and do the hard yards and the hard yakka to provide the jobs we are talking about in this motion. I hear Mr Scheffer and Mr Leane talking about the workers, and that is all well and good, but let me tell members that those people who own the fish and chip shop or the cake shop and are working seven days a week for 12 or 15 hours a day are workers too. Just because you do not have a union card does not make you a non-worker. In fact without the effort they put in there would be, as I said, no employment at all.

Sitting here earlier I was listening to Ms Tierney, as is my wont from time to time, and I thought to myself: if the Labor Party in this state really wants employment to boom to get Victoria moving again, quite literally, then why is it opposed to the east–west link? Why would it not want the variety of vans, trucks and other vehicles that are carrying goods and produce around the state to get there quicker? Why would it not want greater productivity in this state as a result of the east–west link being built? Having thought about it, I have to say that I do not know. I have no idea at all.

Anybody who wants business to be strong, anybody who wants jobs and anybody who wants strong employment will be backing the east–west link, and that is a fact. If you want to get business efficiency and employment moving, the east–west link is a great way of doing it. I cannot begin to understand why those who sit opposite and proclaim their concerns about employment in this state would be opposed to a project that in itself will create thousands of jobs just to build, with a flow-through effect to business and industry right across Victoria. It will make business and industry more efficient and more profitable and

put them in a better position to employ people and create jobs.

I do not understand why the Labor Party feels the way it does, but I suggest most respectfully — as respectfully as I have ever suggested anything to the Labor Party — that it might like to rethink its position on this because it is hurting Victoria. It would be good to know right across the board that, whatever the result come November, Victoria will have the east–west link. It is a vital piece of infrastructure that will be of huge benefit right across all aspects of Victoria. I include employment most certainly in that.

I then got to thinking once again as this debate moved on — it might have been during Mr Leane's contribution; I had to leave briefly — —

**Mr Tarlamis** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — I am not sure it was great, as Mr Tarlamis says. 'Great' is not a word that has ever been used to describe Mr Leane; I will go along with 'grate', but not the other one. The speech Mr Leane made was very grating; there are no two ways about that. It was not up to his usual standard. Normally he gets up my snout and gets me fired up, but I think he is off his game today. It is a bit hot in here today, and he just did not seem to have the same degree of energy that he normally shows in his contributions.

However, I got to thinking which party in this state or in this country supposedly supports employment, supposedly supports jobs growth, supposedly wants to see people in meaningful employment and supposedly supports working families. Remember working families? They were like a shooting star back in 2007. The Labor Party talked about working families back in 2007, and then working families crashed and burnt and the Labor Party walked away. There is nothing new there. I ask the question: why would a party that is so concerned about all the things that I have mentioned — jobs, employment growth and all these things — support a carbon tax? Why would it support a tax which is — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — No, we are not talking about the silly party; we are talking about the Labor Party, which is silly to a degree, but at least it does not want to destroy the world. The Labor Party will destroy the world, but at least it does not set out to do that.

I am a bit bemused to hear the federal opposition leader, Bill Shorten, referred to by a number of names out my way, but I will not divulge them just at the

moment. He frequently gets up to talk about how we need to have a stronger economy, stronger jobs and all that sort of thing, and then he goes into the federal Parliament or sends his comrades into the federal Parliament — Comrade Conroy and all that crowd — and they vote to keep the carbon tax. The carbon tax is a tax on jobs, pure and simple. I wish I had a blackboard and a pointer; I would take members of the opposition through a few lessons, because there is no industry in this country that I am aware of that does not use electricity — —

**Mr Barber** — What about wind farms?

**Mr FINN** — They are not an industry. Is there any industry in this country that does not use electricity?

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Barber should have a lie down. He needs a Bex and a lie down. Any tax on electricity, as the carbon tax is, is a tax on employment. If you charge businesses an extra \$1 million, \$2 million, \$10 million or \$20 million a year as a result of the carbon tax on their electricity bills, they will have to make cuts somewhere, and those cuts will almost inevitably result in job losses. We have seen that. Unfortunately many of the predictions I made in the lead-up to the introduction of the carbon tax have come true and we are seeing a lot of businesses and a lot of industries cut back on their staff. We have seen some just close up altogether, and we have seen some go overseas, all resulting in job losses.

It is the same with the mining tax. There is a big discussion going on in Western Australia at the moment over whether the Labor Party really cares about jobs. It is interesting to note that there is apparently a glimmer of hope — just a glimmer — for the Labor Party at the election on Saturday that they might get their second senator elected. After all the debate and all the discussion about the mining tax, the people of Western Australia are telling the Labor Party what they think of it by sending just one Labor senator to Canberra, as it would seem at this time. And it is all very much related to employment and to the motion before the house.

We do not need to shove this off to a committee, because it is very obvious what is happening here. All the matters I am raising today are adding up to a loss of jobs. They are adding up to unemployment in this state, and it is something the Labor Party and the Greens can do something about. Mr Barber's federal colleagues, Mr Scheffer's federal colleagues and Ms Tierney's federal colleagues can all go into the Senate and overturn the carbon tax and the mining tax in the blink

of an eye. That would see a tax and a huge impost off industry and off jobs in this state, and I urge them very strongly to do that.

There was another question that crossed my mind as I sat listening to this debate and pondering what it might all mean, and that question was: which developer or which builder would invest in Victoria if the planning minister were a member of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU)? Which investor would put their hand in their pocket and pull out \$100 million, \$200 million or \$300 million and say, 'There you go. You play with that'. Which developer would do that if the bloke running the show was in the CFMEU? The answer to that question is zilch, zero, none. There is one sure way of destroying the construction industry in this state, and that is to vote Labor in November.

Labor members get up in here and talk about jobs, employment and all these sorts of things. They are very nice words, but the reality is their shadow Minister for Planning, the man who would be planning minister in this state, is a member of the most militant union in this country, a union that was fined yesterday or the day before in the Supreme Court of Victoria. There is no doubt in my mind that only a lunatic would invest in Victoria if Brian Tee were the Minister for Planning. Who would trust him? Which investor, which businessman, which developer or which builder would invest in Victoria if Brian Tee, as a member of the CFMEU, were the planning minister of this state?

Every building site in this state would close down. They would be no more. All the people I see now holding signs saying 'Stop' and 'Go', with hard hats on and bright vests — and we see many of them, particularly around Melbourne, although it is happening in Geelong and in other places as well — could be out of work by Christmas if the Labor Party is elected at the November election. That is a very distinct possibility, and people should not dismiss that threat. They should be very much aware of what is lurking behind a government led by Daniel Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly. We know that just in the last couple of days Mr Andrews has stood up and said, 'No, we are with the CFMEU and we are going to stay with them'. He was asked straight out, 'Will you cut links with the CFMEU?'. He has never been so decisive in his life; he said, 'No — no way known'. He remains with the CFMEU — —

**Hon. D. K. Drum** — He loves them.

**Mr FINN** — As Mr Drum points out, he loves them. You would have to ask how much he loves them

to appoint one of them as his shadow Minister for Planning. That is quite extraordinary.

I am proud of the work that this government is doing and has done over the past three years to rebuild this state. We have faced a lot of difficulties — there is no question about that. We were kicking against a very strong breeze after such an extended period of Labor government, but we have taken the bull by the horns and reinvigorated the economy. There is nobody in this country who does not look at the Victorian economy with envy. It is only a matter of time before we see hordes of refugees coming across the border as they flee the final Labor government — crookedly elected, as it turns out — in South Australia. There is nobody in this country who does not admire the strength of the Victorian economy and the job that the coalition government has done in rebuilding and strengthening it. A strong economy means strong business and strong employment. That is what we are on about, and that is why I will not be supporting this motion today.

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Ms Tierney's motion. Mr Finn has given us a very animated, vocal and enthusiastic contribution to this debate. While it was animated, enthusiastic and loud, it lacked in content. He did not give us much in the way of content and he did not give us much in the way of facts. He did not provide a lot of content about what jobs his government is creating. He said nothing about the Liberal-Nationals coalition government's plan to create jobs. He told us nothing at all about which jobs it created or planned to create. In fact I think he told us two things that in any way related to jobs creation by the Liberal-Nationals government. One was to do with creating some kind of environment that would encourage small business, although Mr Finn did not give us any facts or detail about what that environment was going to look like or what the government had done to create it, and he gave us no information whatsoever about how many new small businesses had been set up under his government or how many people are being employed in those small businesses.

In his closing comments Mr Finn said the Liberal-Nationals coalition government found Victoria in a terrible state when it took over after 11 years of Labor, but what he failed to mention is that when it took over from the former government the state had a AAA rating and I think we had the fastest job growth of any state across the country apart from Western Australia. Our government did create jobs, and I think I am right in saying that 67 per cent of them were full-time jobs.

Mr Finn's contribution lacked any substance at all. What he chose to do in his contribution was play politics, call people on this side of the house names and make a lot of noise. There was a lot of colour and movement, but there was no substance. He talked about his understanding of what it meant to be unemployed and his personal experience of being unemployed for a period of time. He also talked about the impact that unemployment can have on a family and about the curse that generational unemployment — where a family goes from one generation to the next and often to the next again without the expectation that anyone in the family will ever hold a job, and certainly without anyone in the family currently holding a job — is on a family.

But even though Mr Finn said he had some understanding and experience of unemployment, it did not lead him to tell us what his government will do and what he is doing as part of that government to make sure that it is creating jobs, that there is education and training and that there is a jobs plan so that those people who are unemployed, including those people who are caught up in the cycle of generational unemployment, have the prospect of gaining employment in the future.

If you listened to Mr Finn, if you saw through the colour and movement, you would have seen that he offered nothing in the way of explaining what his government, or what he personally was doing as part of the government, to ensure there is a plan to create jobs for these people. He offered nothing on what he was doing to ensure that we had in this state an education and training system that would make sure that we were able to keep kids in school or in training so they have the skills available to get the jobs that his government, if they ever got around to creating a jobs plan, might be able to create. There was zip, zilch, nothing. What he wants to talk about is reds under the bed. What he wants to do is call us comrades and think he is insulting us. What he wants to do is talk about our connection with unions. That is all he has to offer.

Who does not know that the Labor Party has connections with unions? Who does not know that? Mr Finn is not telling anybody anything new. The Labor Party grew out of the union movement. Mr Finn attacked Mr Scheffer's contribution and said that we did not have any interest in small business and had no understanding or acknowledgement that those businesses had employees. That is simply not the case at all. The Labor Party does support small businesses. We understand that they are real drivers in our economy. If you come from a rural or regional area you understand that small businesses are the backbone of

rural and regional economies, that they are big employers and that they are necessary employers.

When we were in government we did all we could to ensure that small businesses were supported, that they were able to grow and that new businesses were able to be created. We did this at a time, particularly throughout regional and rural Victoria, when those businesses were going through some of the toughest times. We experienced one of the worst droughts and some of the most extensive flooding in recent years. Natural disasters were happening in rural and regional Victoria. They were impacting on our farming community and on the ability of our primary producers to be able to grow a crop, to be able to sell a crop and to be able to make a bob.

We put an enormous amount of support into local communities, not only to mop up after the disasters and to help those communities through the drought but also to support small business. Therefore when Mr Finn attacks Mr Scheffer and other speakers on this side of the chamber by saying that they do not have an understanding of the importance of small business, the number of people they employ and what an important part they play in the economy, he again shows no understanding of members on this side of the chamber and of the many policies and programs they put in place when they were in government.

Mrs Coote in her contribution talked about — and I fully support Mrs Coote's contribution she made in this regard — the job creation that is occurring in the health and community services sector. Mrs Coote is absolutely correct; there is huge growth in this industry. This growth has been going on for some years now and it is in part due to the creation of new classifications, defining new areas of work and making sure that the right sort of training is put in place and the right sort of skills are given to those people to be able to work in the health and community sector.

In the main that growth is around aged care. It is not entirely in aged care, but it is more prevalent in the aged-care sector. We are an ageing community. We are all getting older and we are all living longer and therefore we are at some stage of our lives probably going to need some sort of support and care. That is not necessarily going to be in an aged-care facility or a hospital — hopefully if it is in hospital it is only for a short period of time during an acute episode — but it may well be that we need more support in our home or access to more support services in the community whilst we are living more independently. There is huge growth in this particular sector. But it is not enough to say that because we are an ageing community, because

we are on the right path — and I believe we are in terms of training and skills for the workforce that is needed to support this growth industry — and because this is an area that is growing, that that is enough or that that is a good excuse for not having a growth plan. The Liberal-Nationals coalition government needs to develop a plan for jobs growth in this state, particularly for rural and regional Victoria.

**Hon. D. K. Drum** — Like SPC?

**Ms DARVENIZA** — We need to know what its plan is. Mr Drum says, 'Like SPC'.

**Hon. D. K. Drum** interjected.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — There was no plan. I am very pleased, as is Mr Drum, a fellow member for Northern Victoria Region — together we are very pleased — that the government made the necessary funds available. I know that Mr Drum is very pleased, as I am, that funds were put into SPC Ardmona, that jobs have been saved, that a range of other changes have been made and that other contracts have been granted to support that investment. I am sure that Mr Drum, like me, is extremely disappointed that the federal government did not come to the party and that its members were not prepared to put their hands in their pockets and come up with some funds to support SPC and the workers who had worked there for many years. I am sure that Mr Drum, like me, is very disappointed in his federal Liberal-Nationals colleagues, who failed to come to the party.

The fact that the Liberal-Nationals coalition government made funds available in this instance for this project does not replace having a plan for growing jobs in this state — for setting out a process and a plan for how to create jobs. Where are those jobs going to be? What sorts of jobs will they be? Will they be full-time, casual or part-time jobs? Victorians want to see a plan for the creation of jobs in this state. Whilst I welcome the funding that went to SPC, providing funding is not a plan, which is one of the main things this government is failing to provide for the state.

The other job creation program, if we can call it that, was mentioned by Mr Finn during his contribution — that is, the east-west tunnel. Mr Finn did not elaborate, except to say that the project was going to create jobs. The fact is that we on this side of the house believe, as do many Victorians, that there are any number of ways in which those funds could be spent on creating jobs other than building this tunnel, on which a huge amount of money is focused. It is the only big infrastructure project this government has on the go, and most people

do not want it. If anyone spoke to members of the community and listened to what they had to say, they would hear that Victorians do not want the tunnel and do not think it is a good idea. The fact is that most people think the tunnel project is a bit dodgy and that there are better ways to spend money. Instead of developing a jobs plan for the whole of the state, particularly for rural and regional Victoria, the Liberal-Nationals coalition government has decided to put all of this money into a metropolitan major project to develop a tunnel.

My electorate of Northern Victoria Region has seen many job losses, which are indeed keenly felt. Job losses have occurred at places like the Murray Goulburn Co-operative, which has lost manufacturing jobs. The former Department of Primary Industries has lost jobs which were designed to help and support primary producers. The loss of all these jobs has created a ripple effect. As an opposition, we need to ensure that the Liberal-Nationals government is held to account and that its members are reminded that they have no plan for creating jobs in Victoria. Victoria is losing jobs, and there needs to be a focus on rural and regional jobs. I fully support the motion put forward by Ms Tierney that this matter be referred to a committee.

**Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the motion put forward by Ms Tierney. I have listened to the contributions of most of the speakers, particularly the initial lead speaker for the opposition, Ms Tierney, who moved the motion, and the various other contributions that have been made since. On this very rare occasion I agree with the suggestion of my colleague Mr Barber — although he is from the Greens — that the main problem with Ms Tierney's speech and the way her motion has been put is that it is another instance of the Labor Party talking down jobs, talking down the economy and failing to appreciate the importance of jobs and growth and the measures this government has taken.

I am possibly the last speaker on this motion, at least on the government side, and in my remarks I urge members of the Labor Party to stick up for their party name and support jobs. Perhaps the biggest contribution members of the Labor Party could make from a national perspective would be, as Mr Finn and all members on this side of the house have urged — and as members of other parliaments and businesses across the country have urged — to repeal the godforsaken and ill-conceived carbon tax. Voters at the recent federal election gave a very clear mandate, built up over a couple of elections of broken promises, to the federal government to repeal the carbon tax. Labor promised

not to bring in a carbon tax and then did a deal with the Greens and brought it in. We all know the history, but there is still some time left for the ALP to regain some notion of credibility by getting on board on this very important issue.

It is an extremely important issue. I have visited manufacturers, hospitals and businesses affected by cost of living pressures and by electricity price increases brought on by the carbon tax. If for no other reason, the carbon tax should be repealed because, in my view, it has nothing to do with the merits of climate change. In my inaugural speech I said that wherever we can we should give the environment the benefit of the doubt, and that is why moving people to regional areas is the best way to reduce Victoria's carbon emissions, as has been found by the firm Essential Economics. I refer members to the research I mentioned in my inaugural speech. This argument is not about the issue of climate change and whether or not it is happening; the issue is about creating a tax on jobs, a tax on electricity, a tax on power and a tax that affects every single business that relies upon the previous competitive advantage that this state enjoyed. The argument is also about the high level of the tax. The level of Australia's carbon tax is the highest in the world in comparison to those of other countries. The fact is the carbon tax acts as a reverse tariff. Such has been said, and the ball remains firmly in the court of the Labor Party. I note that Labor speakers continue to avoid that issue.

Turning to the issue of the Victorian economy in its own right, I place on the record something Mr Ondarchie and other government members referred to in their speeches — that is, contrary to the assertions in the motion, Ms Tierney has again got it wrong. That is, in comparison to the economies of other states, Victoria is going extremely well in relation to jobs and has been the best performing economy of the Australian states, including Tasmania. This fact has been confirmed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which has shown that Victoria's annual employment growth is the strongest of the non-mining states and that Victoria's growth in employment over the past year has been driven by full-time employment, which has increased by 18 900 jobs.

We have heard many ALP members continue the misguided cry for a so-called jobs plan. Every time they have done this the government has responded very clearly that it does have a jobs plan. In fact, every single budgetary decision that this government has made is very much in furtherance of the jobs plan. The best source of a jobs plan is the Victorian budget.

The best thing this government has done in relation to jobs — and this is in stark contrast to the performance of Labor governments all across the country and throughout the history of this state — is to maintain Victoria's fiscal responsibility, its AAA credit rating, its budget surpluses, its job-creating programs and policies, and the confidence that Victoria is the place for jobs and small business. This confidence has been supported not only by the number of people who are coming from overseas to reside in Victoria but also by the important measure that former Premier Brumby used to cite in the middle of the Howard government's boom — that is, the number of people moving to Victoria from other states.

**Ms Crozier** — How many are there?

**Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN** — They are voting with their feet, and the numbers are increasing every day, Ms Crozier. This situation is an example of the importance of fiscal responsibility. I give credit to treasurers Kim Wells and Michael O'Brien for keeping the state's AAA credit rating stable with credit ratings agencies and for resisting what Labor members do, which is to put the fiscal credibility of the state on the never-never, put it on the credit card and clock up debt. The Abbott government has been elected with a mandate to make some tough decisions, decisions Labor never made, and then Labor has the cheek to call them Abbott government cuts. People need to remember that if there is a need for fiscal tightening as a result of Labor's failures, that it is Labor's fault.

In Victoria we have had to deal with numerous botched projects and unnecessary infrastructure investments in white elephants such as the north-south pipeline. When was the last time John Lenders talked about the north-south pipeline? He occasionally mentions the desalination plant when he looks at water bills and tries to do some muckraking, but we would have to trawl through *Hansard* to find the last time Mr Lenders extolled the virtues of the north-south pipeline. That is a significant \$1 billion white elephant. That money could have been well spent on other valuable projects — as could the \$3 billion Labor wasted on pokie machine sales — if it were not a fact, as has been proven time and again, that no matter how you cut the cloth, Labor cannot manage money.

At this point I refer to some of the policies that this government has put in place, particularly in the regional areas that I represent with my colleagues Mr Ramsay and Mr Koch on behalf of the coalition — and also,

ironically, with the mover of the motion, Ms Tierney. The centrepiece is without a doubt the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, which has been absolutely essential to the delivery of infrastructure that had been lacking in regional areas. That in a sense is a result of Victoria's history as much as anything, but it was particularly lacking after Labor governments did things like take water from regional areas to give it to metropolitan Melbourne under their \$1 billion white elephant north-south pipeline.

Initiatives such as that initiated by Mr Drum when he was Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development to locate True Foods in Maryborough are significant examples of this government listening to business needs and responding with funding, not just from the Regional Growth Fund, to support jobs and regional communities. These are win-win situations, benefitting regional areas and also dealing with the infrastructure burden in Melbourne. As parliamentary secretary, Mr Drum acted decisively to secure True Foods in Maryborough, and that has been a great success and has the support of the Central Goldfields Shire.

There have been other significant announcements by the coalition government in relation to the relocation of government departments. The most significant and recent announcement, of course, was in Ballarat. Mr Ramsay and I, amongst many others — including the absolutely fantastic Nationals candidate for the new Assembly electoral district of Buninyong, Sonia Smith, and Liberal Party candidates — as well as other members of Parliament, were there on the weekend to witness the Premier's announcement that if the government is re-elected, VicRoads will be relocated to this regional centre, bringing 400 jobs to Ballarat. That is a terrific announcement and the sort of initiative that we again call on Labor to get on board and support.

We note that when the Napthine government announced in December — and I was also pleased to be part of this announcement — that the WorkCover offices would move to Geelong, delivering 550 workers to the region, within eight days there was a photograph of Mr John Eren, the member for Lara in the Assembly, in the paper leading an article saying that the Labor government would support this move. The opposition has decided to support the initiative of the Napthine coalition government to move the WorkCover offices to Geelong. We call on Labor to get on board in relation to every announcement that this government makes for regional employment.

I have just been to another meeting with regional councils where I again witnessed firsthand their significant praise for the Country Roads and Bridges

program, which is part of the Regional Growth Fund, that was announced by the coalition government coming into the election. This policy is supported by Terry Mulder, the Minister for Roads, and the rural and regional development portfolio of the Deputy Premier. The councils love this project because it delivers money into their pockets to fix these very important local roads that we are all aware of, particularly in the far west of the state. The local roads need significant attention in Casterton, Peshurst, Hamilton or wherever you want to go in that area. This government has provided resources to councils to start the process of repairing those roads after many years of neglect. That is why Victorian employment has grown by approximately 64 200 workers since December 2010, which as I said earlier, is the strongest jobs growth in non-mining states.

In regional Victoria the unemployment rate is 6.1 per cent. We would like to get that down, but as it stands it is the lowest of all the states. This in a sense is the killer point in Labor's desire to compare its record with ours. The unemployment rate is now below the rate of 6.2 per cent when Labor left office. That means there are now approximately 28 800 more people employed in regional Victoria than when Labor left office. In the year to February Victoria generated approximately 25 000 new jobs, with 3800 in western Victoria, particularly in the Wimmera and the north-west of Victoria.

This employment growth is not an accident. It is the result of our jobs plan and our fiscal management, which are contained in every budget policy that has been carefully put together by this government. This has resulted in the investment of \$7.54 billion in new projects since December 2010, creating over 15 000 new jobs. One such new project, by way of example, is the carbon fibre initiative, providing 150 new jobs at Deakin University.

I have been pleased in recent months, as we head into election mode, to look forward to the election of Mr Scott Turner to the Assembly seat of Ripon. Many people would know Scott Turner as a footballer; he was renowned as a player for Richmond and also as a coach. But he also has a significant history in job creation and employment management in his employment at Gason and his work with disadvantaged people and people who have found it difficult to find jobs. Spending recent weeks with Mr Turner on the campaign trail, I have experienced firsthand his care for individual job creation. Hopefully I can look forward to his election to Parliament, which would be a significant boon for areas that have not been very well served by Labor. That is not necessarily through any fault of

Mr Helper, the current member for Ripon in the Assembly, who is a nice individual to speak to; regrettably he has for many years been part of a failed Labor government.

I would like to conclude in the spirit of the Peter Hall legacy — if it is to be his legacy — of reaching out to the other side whenever we can. In this regard there has been reference to the need for a parliamentary committee to inquire into these matters. Mr Drum's elevation to the cabinet, which has been a significant achievement for regional Victoria and represents a great testament to his career, has opened up a place on the Rural and Regional Committee of the Parliament, on which Mr Drum served with great distinction, as did the previous chair, Paul Weller, who will regrettably lose his Assembly seat of Rodney as a result of a redistribution but is standing for Parliament in the electorate of Northern Victoria Region. I trust the good burghers of Northern Victoria Region could do a lot worse than vote Mr Weller into this fine chamber, but we will see. In the meantime I have become chair of the Rural and Regional Committee, a position to which I was elected on Monday. I take this opportunity to reach across the political divide and let members of Parliament know that a bipartisan committee — the Rural and Regional Committee — has already got an inquiry under way that will look at many of the issues that are perhaps at the heart of the matters raised by Ms Tierney and other speakers.

This important inquiry will conduct its first public hearings in Hamilton and also undertake inspections of businesses and infrastructure facilities in Portland and Warrnambool next week, and there will be other public hearings announced all across regional Victoria over the coming weeks as we consider this inquiry. The committee's terms of reference are to inquire into and report by 4 September:

... on the opportunities for increasing exports of goods and services from regional Victoria, and the committee is asked to do this through an examination of:

- (a) the identification and volume of Victorian agricultural, resource, manufacturing and service industry exports to overseas markets originating in regional Victoria ...

That is a significant topic and of a significant level of importance to many Victorians, particularly regional Victorians. The committee is also asked to examine:

- (b) regional Victoria's competitive advantages in meeting the demands of world markets;
- (c) innovative approaches to exporting and lessons to be shared from successful exporters —

which is why we are encouraging all successful exporters to make submissions to this important parliamentary inquiry. Again, these are the good news stories that we need to hear about in challenging economic times, so that we can learn in a bipartisan sense and make recommendations for the Parliament to consider, hopefully of a lasting nature. That is the good work of parliamentary committees and has been part of the call for this motion to be referred to a committee, so that we can seek to put in place lasting policies across all sides of politics to help our exporters. We will also be looking into:

- (d) impediments and barriers creating difficulties for regional exporters ...

An example might be tariff issues or comparative trade and regulatory policies, or the example I mentioned earlier — without wishing to pre-empt or politicise the inquiry — of a policy such as the carbon tax. But looking at our comparative regulatory regime, there is talk of the need to cut our red tape, compared to systems that operate for our competitors. I can think of many businesses in my electorate of Western Victoria Region such as AME Systems and Action Steel Industries that have identified this as a critical issue, which this Parliament will look at. It is important that the Victorian Parliament looks at it rather than it being left simply to our federal colleagues to consider.

The last aspect of the terms of reference is an examination of:

- (e) the current and future roles of government in supporting regional businesses in their export endeavours.

I do not wish to say any more as the inquiry is just commencing. I would not wish to pre-empt it, apart from to urge all Victorian businesses with an interest in those terms of reference to recognise that it will be a committee of the Parliament conducting this inquiry. Hopefully it will be able to conduct itself in a bipartisan manner, in the tradition of the Rural and Regional Committee. With those words, picking up the spirit of Mr Hall's legacy, I reach out to the other parties in this house to ask them to get on board and support regional jobs.

#### House divided on motion:

##### *Ayes, 18*

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

Lenders, Mr

Tierney, Ms

##### *Noes, 20*

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

##### *Pairs*

Viney, Mr

Atkinson, Mr

#### Motion negatived.

## ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE REPORT

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

That this house:

- (1) notes the final report of the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee on the inquiry into the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 tabled in this house on 12 June 2013;
- (2) notes that the committee was asked to report on measures aimed at addressing any constitutional impediment to the bill's introduction into the Legislative Council;
- (3) notes the committee's finding that there are differing views as to how section 62(1) of the Constitution Act 1975 should be interpreted;
- (4) notes the longstanding practice of the Legislative Council, based on a convention of the house, is for the President to order the withdrawal of a bill if he or she believes that the bill may infringe section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975, but that the committee does not support a continuation of this practice; and
- (5) endorses the committee's recommendation that 'in future when bills that potentially infringe section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975 are introduced into the Legislative Council, the President should report his concerns to the house and the house should then determine whether to allow the bill to proceed'.

I start by saying that in respect of this constitutional issue I believe the President has acted in accordance with current practice, and I respect his decisions and his authority. That said, I believe — and I suspect other members of this house would agree — that there are opportunities for change and modernisation of the practices of the Parliament over time, and this is one of

those opportunities. Section 62(1) of the Constitution Act 1975 states:

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

It is this section of the Constitution Act that creates a barrier to bills being introduced into the Legislative Council when bills may — or, then again, may not — have direct or flow-on financial costs to the government's Consolidated Fund or to community members. There has been significant debate on how this section of the Constitution Act should be interpreted. Arguments have primarily been in respect of whether a bill should be judged by what its purpose is or what its effects are in terms of flow-on costs and the scale of costs permissible under this section. Debate has also gone to the ongoing relevance of this section.

This issue came to the fore when I introduced the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 into the Parliament in February 2013. At that time the President immediately raised concerns about the constitutionality of introducing the bill into the upper house, as he considered it might offend section 62(1) of the Constitution Act 1975 by imposing an impost. In the following sitting week he ordered that the bill be withdrawn from Parliament on that basis. I then successfully moved that the bill be sent to the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee for consideration and report on measures aimed at addressing any constitutional impediment to the bill's introduction into the Legislative Council.

The committee's final report, released in June 2013, made a series of findings. What is important in the context of this motion is that it examined issues of enforcement of section 62 and, upon consideration, made the following recommendation:

That in future when bills that potentially infringe section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975 are introduced into the Legislative Council, the President should report his concerns to the house and the house should then determine whether to allow the bill to proceed.

The Greens strongly support this recommendation. The committee lent heavily on the argument of constitutional expert Dr Greg Taylor regarding the practices of the Senate and indeed the practices of the Victorian Legislative Assembly in developing this recommendation. The basis of this recommendation is sound and, I believe, should be respected. I will lay down a rationale in short today; however, I refer members to the relevant section of the report — pages 23 to 25 — for a more detailed explanation.

The current practice and convention of the house is that the President intervene and order bills to be withdrawn when he or she considers there may be a constitutional concern, as was the case with the commonwealth Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill 2011. The committee found that the problem with this is that this section of the constitution is contested with respect to how it should be interpreted. The committee was concerned that in some cases an early intervention by the President may constrain the powers of the Legislative Council by ruling bills out that may not later be rejected by the Assembly. Further it found that given the complexity of determining complicated constitutional questions the President should not be placed in a difficult position of having to make a determination.

Dr Taylor has pointed out that this section of the constitution relates to the relationship of the houses to each other, and thus the non-justifiable compliance with section 62 is the concern of the houses themselves. The convention of the President intervening when there is the possibility, depending on interpretation, of a constitutional impediment is not specifically provided for under the standing orders. Thus there is ample scope for changing this practice. Indeed changing this practice has been recommended by constitutional expert Dr Greg Taylor. Given the difficulties of interpreting section 62 of the convention, this has also been recommended by the multiparty Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee. Today the Greens are calling on the house to agree to this change in practice.

As an alternative to our current practice, the committee found strong merit in the Senate's approach where, if a financial question involves the issues of implementation and judgement, the President leans towards an interpretation that would enhance the rights of senators or allow the house itself to make the determination. The committee stated:

The committee believes it is more important to uphold the rights of the Legislative Council and the rights of its members to initiate legislation than to protect the financial privileges of the Assembly.

This is deeply logical. We are elected to the Legislative Council by people. We must make every effort to best represent those who elect us. Critical to that representation is doing what we can to uphold the rights and powers of the office to which we are elected. It is up to members of the Assembly to enforce, should they choose to, their own rights and privileges in respect of financial matters. It is very important to note that it is also a practice of the Legislative Assembly that it is left to the house and not the Presiding Officer to determine the constitutionality of bills where there is an issue of

interpretation such as that which occurs in relation to section 62. No such unilateral decision making is tolerated by that house. It is only our house that acts to limit its own power. I believe that must end now. Added to this is the significant point that section 62 has less relevance now than when it was originally written. Dr Greg Taylor states:

The predecessor of 62 was intended as a sort of hint to the new upper house — which was to be elective, even if on a very narrow franchise, and might get ideas above its station — that the lower house was meant to be the house with primacy in financial proposals on roughly the same basis as the House of Commons ... This purpose is now completely redundant as far as the appropriation side is concerned, as section 65 denies the Council the power to block the budget ... As far as the taxation side is concerned, which is in issue here, section 62 is nowadays of at best questionable utility: it assumes that the Parliament of Victoria is made up of one more and one less democratic house, as it was in 1856 when the upper house was elected on a very restricted franchise. On that assumption, its aim is to give financial primacy to the lower, the more democratic house. Nowadays the distinction between the houses is, without putting too fine a point on it, not so sharp; and anyway, it is not as if the lower house can be bypassed — its consent is still required!

This is very important. If you recognise that this is a democratically elected house and not the house that existed in 1856, or even before 2003, when reforms were made to the electoral system and the composition of the house, then you must recognise that section 62 of the Constitution Act is out of date. This understanding that the section is out of date adds even more weight to the argument that we must move away from this convention which reduces the rights and power of the Legislative Council. It is the approach of the Australian Senate and it is the approach of the Victorian Legislative Assembly that the house determines the constitutionality of the bill at hand where there is an issue of interpretation. Given that the Legislative Council has been guided by the practices of the Senate in the past, we must also, I believe, adopt the Senate practice here. It is the approach of the Senate that it leans towards the interpretation that enhances the rights of members of that house, and so should we. Neither of the jurisdictions I have mentioned allows the presiding officer to make unilateral decisions, and nor should we.

It is quite astonishing that we have allowed this practice to continue for so long. It is an area in need of urgent reform. I think we must shift gears and create a new practice whereby this house determines the constitutionality of bills in respect of section 62, as was recommended by the committee following its inquiry. In conclusion I would like to say that I think the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee did an extraordinary job with what was an extremely

complicated bill, and I greatly appreciate the work of that committee. With those words, I commend this motion to the house.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak on behalf of the government to the motion by Ms Hartland that is before the chamber. Firstly I indicate that the government's view is that it is sympathetic to the motion moved by Ms Hartland. I listened intently to the arguments that were put forward for why this matter ought to be dealt with in accordance with the motion moved by Ms Hartland. I am conscious of the fact, as a member of the Procedure Committee, of which Ms Pennicuik from the Greens is also a member, that there are constitutional issues that arise within the context of the motion before the chamber.

I say to Ms Hartland that whilst I note that there are always recommendations put forward in committee reports — and we always do that; some committees put forward a lot of recommendations and some put moderately few forward — I know from my own experience and from government experience that it is not always that one accepts the recommendations in whole without some further review of the considerations that formed part of the committee's recommendations. Notwithstanding those words, there is an argument that this recommendation is certainly within the purview of this chamber to look at. But in the government's view there is a need to perhaps have a more fulsome review of the way section 62 of the Constitution Act is potentially infringing upon the practices of this house.

We of course have the Procedure Committee. In the last Parliament I was involved with that committee, as were Mr David Davis, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney, and I note that the current Procedure Committee comprises pretty much the same people. I am not speaking outside that committee in terms of what was discussed within it, but there is a view held by that committee that the standing orders that were brought in at the end of the last Parliament to be applicable upon the commencement of this Parliament were formulated through a process of looking at various procedures, various sessional orders and various standing orders. There is an opportunity within the context of Ms Hartland's request, following on from the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee, for this matter to be considered. I understand that Mrs Coote will flesh that out a bit more.

The government is sympathetic to what Ms Hartland is suggesting in terms of this matter being considered by the Legislative Council; however, as is the course with

all similar types of recommendations, it believes that it should be explored further and a more bipartisan approach taken. That is not to say that that has not been done here, but the approach could be for the Procedure Committee to look at the particular issues that Ms Hartland raised very eloquently in her speech. As I said, I was listening to it intently.

In the context of the motion as it has been presented, the government thinks it is an area that is fraught with some concern without a further and more detailed examination. On that basis, the government considers that it ought to be considered by the Procedure Committee, of which one of the Greens is a member. I look forward to this being considered with some consideration by Ms Hartland, perhaps in the course of the debate. This debate is not clear-cut, and there are some opportunities for the negotiation that you would expect to see within the Procedure Committee, as Ms Pennicuik and others would know, to get to some resolution so that the outcomes — perhaps not immediately but into the future — can be examined in more detail and any other further issues like this that come up can be resolved in a more appropriate area.

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — The Labor Party will support Ms Hartland's motion. I indicate that it has been a project of many months, and indeed a couple of years now, to seek to advance the policy debate around compensation for firefighters who have developed cancer as a consequence of exposure to certain chemicals in the course of their firefighting work. We believe it is important for the Victorian Parliament to address this issue and to ensure that firefighters are adequately compensated. We would all be hard pressed to think of another group of employees in Victoria that takes quite the degree of personal risk in protecting others. Firefighters protect Victorians day in and day out. We have a significant firefighting workforce and an extraordinary volunteer organisation that would be the envy of many jurisdictions in the world.

These firefighters are covered by different sets of arrangements in relation to accessing workers compensation. These are some of the issues that have been canvassed in previous debates in this place on many occasions and that indeed have formed part of the consideration of the committee that undertook the inquiry that Ms Hartland's motion relates to.

The debate around adequate resourcing of and support for firefighters so they can do their job endures. Just today a newspaper article appeared in the *Wyndham Weekly* under the heading 'Give us more firefighters before someone dies'. The article describes the

experience of a veteran firefighter and refers to people on 24-hour shifts in Hoppers Crossing who are endeavouring to keep the station staffed around the clock.

These are serious issues of resourcing, and I note the government's \$66 million in cuts from the Country Fire Authority and Metropolitan Fire Brigade budgets since 2010. Similarly, in the Premier's own local paper today, the *Warrnambool Standard*, there is an article under the heading 'Our fire trucks are too old'. It concerns the challenge of Country Fire Authority firefighters in the south-west of Victoria operating with 25-year old equipment and endeavouring to provide a modern world-class fire response, again with limited capacity to do so. I wanted to briefly contextualise the discussion we are having, which is motivated by a desire to improve circumstances for firefighters.

Ms Hartland's motion is largely a procedural matter, and I note that the government intends to conduct a debate soon in this place around section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975 and issues engaged therein. I will briefly refer to the inquiry into the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011. Ms Hartland indicated in her contribution how it came to pass that we were discussing access to compensation by firefighters with cancer in the context of a clause of the constitution, so I will not labour that point. It is a brief report, and it engages some important issues about the operation of this house that would be of interest to every member of this place.

The committee made a number of findings. It noted that it is probable that the total amount of compensation paid to firefighters would increase under the bill, and in undertaking this inquiry members of the committee learnt, if they did not already know, about the provisions of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 that mirror for volunteers the workers compensation provisions for the non-volunteer firefighting workforce. Finding 6 of the report refers to the range of ways in which section 62(1) of the Constitution Act 1975 can be interpreted. As part of the committee's consideration of the issue we heard evidence about what does and does not constitute a money bill, which is how we have come to refer to them. It is very hard to know where to draw the line. There are very few pieces of legislation that can be put into effect without incurring, at taxpayers expense, one single cent. If it is a matter of degree, then it is probably for this house to consider where that line is drawn.

The recommendations of the committee were simple and twofold. One was around opening up Legislative

Council committee hearings, which is not particularly germane to this question of firefighters compensation or section 62 of the act. Recommendation 2 is very much the point of this debate today. It concerns the role of the President in determining what does and does not offend that section of the constitution, and I am in no way reflecting on our current President.

On the question of compensation for firefighters, we would assert that there is a clear link and that the science is fairly clear. There are numerous other jurisdictions overseas and in Australia where this issue has been advanced. In the commonwealth Parliament that change was advanced through the work of an all-party group of federal MPs.

Ms Hartland's motion is an expression of the frustration that a number of members of this place have felt at our shared inability to get the issue debated in Parliament. It gives rise to other questions. These are serious constitutional issues, and they are worthy of serious discussion. The Labor Party is more than willing to be involved in these discussions. I note that this debate is occurring in the context where, because of issues the government has with its unstable majority in the other place, the government is now increasingly introducing its legislation in the Legislative Council before it has been debated in the Legislative Assembly.

I note Mr Dalla-Riva's comments around the need for a wholesome review of section 62, and it is a discussion we look forward to, but we also very much look forward to some advance on this issue of workers compensation rights for firefighters who have cancer. In the spirit of that issue, we support Ms Hartland's motion.

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — The government opposes Ms Hartland's motion. I listened to the contributions from both Ms Hartland and Ms Pulford, and it is clear that there is confusion around section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975. At the outset I commend Ms Hartland for introducing this issue and for acknowledging firefighter Brian Potter, who has since passed away, as someone who was at the forefront of the debate. He attended all those early meetings. The difficulty for people attending the meetings of the firefighters is that they do not understand the procedures involved. This is heartbreaking in many ways. This is a procedural motion and not a motion that can be fixed as we fix other provisions in this place. It was always going to be contentious, difficult and procedural.

There is no doubt that we all feel this needs to be clarified. It started out as an investigation that appeared

to be fairly clear cut, with all members of the committee learning an enormous amount, particularly through Rowena Armstrong — a former chief parliamentary counsel who largely wrote the constitution — and Dr Greg Taylor. That information was particularly uplifting. It brought into focus what this place is about, what our charter is and what we are chartered to do in this place. The further we got into it, the more we realised there was contention between the experts. As Ms Hartland said, things have changed since this matter was first raised.

Mr David Davis gave notice of a motion earlier today — it will be on the notice paper tomorrow — about referring this matter to the Procedure Committee for inquiry, consideration and report. I was going to propose an amendment to Ms Hartland's motion which goes to the same end.

It reads:

That paragraph (5) be omitted and that the following be inserted:

“(5) refers to the Procedure Committee for inquiry, consideration and report whether recommendation no. 2 on page 25 of the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee's final report on the inquiry into the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 should be adopted and formalised in the standing orders.

That reinforces what will be listed on tomorrow's notice paper under Mr Davis's name.

Much has been said by Ms Hartland and Ms Pulford on what the contentious issues are relating to section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975. Ms Pulford summed it up by asking whether we could somehow, somehow get to some resolution on the issue of cancer as it relates to firefighters. If we go back to what Ms Hartland proposed initially, in many ways it has opened a Pandora's box for us in this Parliament on section 62. It is interesting to look at the report and the bills that were omitted, bills impacted by the operation of section 62(1) of the Constitution Act 1975. Some of the bills are quite old, which brings us back to the reason for having a deeper investigation by the Procedure Committee into how section 62 relates to this day and age in this Parliament at this time.

Bills listed in the report that were ruled out of order by the President under section 62(1) of the Constitution Act were the Legislative Council (Abolition) Bill 1959, the Environment Protection (Licence Fees) Bill 1981, the Coroners Bill 1985, the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill 1987 and the Victorian Water Substitution Target Bill 2007. The bills that were

refused by the Assembly were the Tobacco (Control of Tobacco Effects on Minors) Bill 2007 and the Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009. Amendments to the House Contracts Guarantee (HIH Further Amendment) Bill 2001 were refused to be entertained by the Assembly. The bill allowed to proceed in the Assembly was the Legal Profession Practice (Guarantee Fund) Bill 1993.

In relation to bills allowed to proceed in the Council, in evidence to the committee the sponsor of the bill, Ms Hartland, argued that there may have been many bills that have been allowed to proceed in the Legislative Council that have cost impacts. In evidence to the committee Liz Ingham, an adviser to Ms Hartland, listed a number of bills which she believed arguably also infringed section 62 but were allowed to proceed in the Council and were not objected to by the Assembly. The committee also discussed what does and does not constitute an impost with Miss Rowena Armstrong, QC, at a public hearing. The committee is not in a position to determine the constitutionality of previous bills introduced and passed by the Legislative Council but notes it is a very technical area and open to differences of opinion.

My point, which Ms Ingham, Ms Hartland, Ms Pulford, Miss Armstrong and Greg Taylor also raised, is that this is very contentious. There is no consensus on this issue; therefore, it is beyond this debate. It is beyond the issue. I have said before to Ms Hartland — she is probably getting sick of it, but I hope she knows it is heartfelt — that the notion behind the bill is worthy. The issue is that this is a Pandora’s box. It has opened up the examination of section 62 of our constitution to a wider examination, and, as Mr Dalla-Riva has suggested, taking it to the Procedure Committee for inquiry is the best way to do it. That puts it into its right context; it gives clarity for the next Parliament and beyond. It is something that is a timely examination of what is a complex issue. We are opposing Ms Hartland’s motion, and I have set down what our intended amendment would be. We have a motion by Mr Davis recommending taking it to the Procedure Committee, and that will be on the notice paper tomorrow.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I start by thanking all the speakers in the debate on this motion for giving such thoughtful and measured responses to what is an extraordinarily difficult situation, especially in relation to a bill that has such a profound effect on firefighters. The reason I did not go into any of the backwards and forwards about the bill was that I felt I needed to concentrate on those

particular issues, but while I understand some of the arguments, I still believe we have the ability and the right in this house to debate this bill. A bigger concern for me, though, is that the government could resolve this issue by bringing in its own bill in the lower house. This bill does not have to have my name or the Greens’ name on it.

I have always wanted — and I have been somewhat surprised about not being able to get tripartisan support or even discussion about this bill — to be able to ask to use the processes that Adam Bandt used in the federal Parliament, where he had The Nationals, the Liberals, the ALP and the Greens supporting this bill. It went through a very rigorous Senate process and came up with an extraordinarily good bill that is able to be used for federal firefighters. That is what I would like to see coming out of this, and it will be unfortunate if the government decides not to do that, because, let us be realistic, there are a lot of firefighters out there, both career and volunteer firefighters, who absolutely need the protection of this legislation.

**House divided on motion:**

*Ayes, 18*

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

*Noes, 20*

Atkinson, Mr	Kronberg, Mrs
Coote, Mrs	Lovell, Ms
Crozier, Ms	Millar, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )	O’Brien, Mr D. D. ( <i>Teller</i> )
Davis, Mr D.	O’Brien, Mr D. R. J.
Drum, Mr	O’Donohue, Mr
Elsbury, Mr	Ondarchie, Mr
Finn, Mr	Ramsay, Mr
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Koch, Mr	Ronalds, Mr

*Pairs*

Viney, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
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**Motion negatived.**

**PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS**

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

That this house notes —

- (1) the resolution of the Council of 30 October 2013 requiring the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 26 November 2013 a copy of documents detailing the Country Fire Authority and the Victorian WorkCover Authority actuarial assessment and cost estimates to provide compensation for Victoria's firefighters injured or deceased as a result of exposure to carcinogens on the job;
- (2) the letter of the Assistant Treasurer, dated 22 November 2013, stating that the government is not able to respond within the time period requested by the Council and would endeavour to respond by 10 December 2013; and
- (3) that, as at 12 December 2013, the documents sought have not been provided;

and calls on the Leader of the Government or the Assistant Treasurer to explain why the documents have not been tabled and when they will be produced.

I put this motion on the notice paper in December last year because it had taken an extraordinary amount of time for the government to respond to this issue. Following the giving of that notice of this motion, I received a letter on 31 January that I find quite extraordinary. It says:

I refer to the Legislative Council's resolution of 30 October 2013 seeking the production of:

a copy of documents detailing the Country Fire Authority and the Victorian WorkCover Authority actuarial assessment and cost estimates to provide compensation for Victoria's firefighters injured or deceased as a result of exposure to carcinogens on the job.

I also refer to my letter to you of late November 2013, advising that the government required additional time to respond to the resolution.

The government has conducted a thorough and diligent search to identify documents relevant to the Council's resolution. All of the relevant documents identified by the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department of Justice, the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the Country Fire Authority have been withheld on the basis that releasing them would be prejudicial to the public interest. This is because release of those documents would reveal the deliberations of cabinet or high-level deliberations of government.

In order to facilitate public discussion, I have attached a summary of the information provided to government in relation to the VWA scheme and the CFA scheme.

I respectfully request that the Council not insist on the production of the documents.

I am quite astounded by this letter. The government has said quite publicly that this will be an extremely costly scheme. In other notes that I have been sent it has been said that the cost of adding the 12 deemed cancers to the volunteer compensation scheme for volunteer firefighters arising from future funding payments in respect of past exposures — outstanding claims

liability — is estimated to be in the range of \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion, with a central estimate of \$1.5 billion. If the government is going to put out figures like that, the only reasonable thing it can do is show how it arrived at them. Why is it that this government is so unprepared to be transparent on what are incredibly important matters?

The other documents I received go to some of the things that PricewaterhouseCoopers prepared — cost estimates at the request of the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) based on internal modelling information provided by the VWA for career firefighters. PricewaterhouseCoopers considered that the modelling used by the VWA was reasonable. This model is based on estimating an exposed population for a new injury year, estimating the rate of incidence for each cancer and estimating an average cost per claim by each cancer. The cost estimate relates to a scheme of 12 deemed cancers as proposed under the bill.

A central cost estimate is provided as well as a lower and upper range, as is standard in the provision of actuarial assessments. The annual cost of the bill is estimated in the range of \$7 million to \$13 million, with \$10 million provided as the central estimate. The cost of the bill arising from funding future payments in respect of past exposures is estimated in the range of \$83 million to \$161 million, with a central estimate of \$119 million. PricewaterhouseCoopers notes that some of the assumptions underpinning the assessment are based on limited data. I would like to see that limited data. How is it that even the people who are assessing what this will cost are asking: how can you do this with limited data? PricewaterhouseCoopers also notes that the ultimate cost impact is heavily dependent on behavioural factors such as propensity to claim, and therefore the range of possible outcomes is wide.

This is an issue I have been talking about in this Parliament for quite some time. We introduced a bill on it; we have just had a motion rejected, meaning we cannot proceed with the bill. We all know that firefighters — either volunteer or career — are at risk of cancer because of their work. Currently there is a barrier to them being able to receive WorkCover payments. If we want to push forward on this debate, one of the things we need to know from the government is how it assesses the costs. These costs seem outrageously high, and it is up to the government to prove how it came to those estimates. I do not think it is an unreasonable thing to ask for. If, as this government claims, it is transparent and it wants to engage in this debate, it would assist by handing over these documents.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak on behalf of the government to Ms Hartland’s motion. In Ms Hartland’s contribution she noted that she gave notice of this motion on 12 December last year; it is now 2 April, and in the meantime there has been some level of movement, as was correctly pointed out by Ms Hartland in her contribution — —

**Ms Hartland** — To say no.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — Ms Hartland interjected, ‘To say no’; that is not quite correct. In terms of the request — —

**Ms Hartland** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I will get to Ms Hartland’s interjections. On 30 October 2013 Ms Hartland sought from the Legislative Council by 26 November a copy of the documents detailing the actuarial assessment and cost estimates to provide compensation for Victoria’s firefighters. If you read the literal resolution of the Council of 30 October, you will see it uses the same words as in Ms Hartland’s motion today at paragraph (1), which refers to Ms Hartland’s request for:

... a copy of documents detailing the Country Fire Authority and the Victorian WorkCover Authority actuarial assessment and cost estimates to provide compensation for Victoria’s firefighters injured or deceased as a result of exposure to carcinogens on the job ...

There is also a notation in paragraph (2) about the Assistant Treasurer saying the government is not able to respond.

Let us look at the context of the initial request, which Ms Hartland herself addressed by providing the letter that was tabled in this chamber in February. The Clerk announced that he had received a letter dated 31 January 2014 from the Assistant Treasurer headed ‘Order for documents — cost estimates for firefighter compensation’, together with attachments. The letter and attachments are on pages 52 to 54 of *Hansard* of Tuesday, 4 February. I have a copy of the letter, and Ms Hartland correctly read out parts of it. It said the release of the documents would reveal the deliberations of cabinet or high-level deliberations of government.

As Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips, the Assistant Treasurer, wrote in the letter — and I reiterate what Ms Hartland went to:

In order to facilitate public discussion, I have attached a summary of the information provided to government in relation to the VWA scheme and the CFA scheme.

Ms Hartland read into the record the central cost estimate from one of the summaries of actuarial assessment — the one prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the Victorian WorkCover Authority, which is attachment 1. It says:

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) prepared cost estimates at the request of the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA), based on internal modelling information provided by the VWA for career firefighters ... This modelling is based on:

- estimating the exposed population for a new injury year;
- estimating the rate of incidence for each cancer;
- estimating an average cost per claim by each cancer.

The cost estimate relates to a scheme of 12 deemed cancers as proposed under the bill.

Ms Hartland also read this, and I will read it as well:

A central cost estimate is provided as well as a lower and upper range — as is standard in the provision of actuarial assessments. The annual cost of the bill is estimated to be in the range of \$7 million to \$13 million, with \$10 million provided as the central estimate.

The cost of the bill arising from funding future payments in respect of past exposures is estimated to be in the range of \$83 million to \$161 million with a central estimate of \$119 million.

I turn to attachment 2, headed ‘Summary of actuarial assessment prepared by Bateup Actuarial and Consulting Services for the Country Fire Authority’. It says:

This modelling is based on:

- an assumption that there is no restriction on claims by date of injury or diagnosis;
- estimating the rate of incidence for each cancer;
- estimating an average cost per claim by each cancer.

The cost estimate relates to the scheme of 12 deemed cancers as set out under the Commonwealth Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Act 2011.

Again it refers to a central cost estimate as well as a lower and upper range. It says:

The annual cost of adding the 12 deemed cancers to the volunteer compensation scheme (VCS) administered by the CFA for volunteer firefighters is estimated to be in the range of \$90 million to \$170 million, with \$130 million provided as the central estimate.

The cost of adding the 12 deemed cancers to the VCS for volunteer firefighters arising from funding future payments in respect of past exposures (outstanding claims liability) is estimated to be in the range of \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion, with a central estimate of \$1.5 billion.

I put that on the record because the request was for an actuarial assessment, and I have just read out two actuarial assessments — one provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the other provided by Bateup Actuarial and Consulting Services for the Country Fire Authority.

The second part was a request by Ms Hartland regarding the Council's resolution on 30 October 2013, and it was for the cost estimates. I have just read in some detail the cost estimates outlined in the actuarial assessment in terms of providing compensation for Victoria's firefighters who have been injured or who have been exposed to carcinogens while on the job.

The government's view is that it has dealt with the matters as requested. It is also important to note that a question on notice, no. 9829, was included in matters considered by the Council on 5 February 2014. It was headed 'Assistant Treasurer: Firefighters Assessment Panel'. Ms Hartland asked the Assistant Treasurer:

In relation to the Firefighters Assessment Panel which, on 20 August 2013, the government announced will be established to assist in the management and assessment of career and volunteer firefighter cancer-related claims, and will comprise expert medical, technical and claims specialists:

(1) When will this panel be established ...

I do not propose to read out the whole question because Ms Hartland asks 16 subquestions about the panel and its structure et cetera. I think it is fair to say that the response provided by Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips, the Assistant Treasurer, was quite detailed. If one were to look at the notes — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — Nothing has changed in terms of the writing. I thank Mr Davis.

Ms Hartland says that is a different issue, but I think it is about the assessment panel. It is about the amount of detail the government has provided, in particular the Assistant Treasurer, to a level requested by Ms Hartland, in response to not only previous motions but also the motion before the chamber. While I understand the importance of the motion, and Ms Hartland has continued to provide assistance in trying to achieve a resolution, the fact is that the Assistant Treasurer has provided the documents as I have outlined, and it is fair to say that an adequate amount of detail has been provided.

It is also worth noting that on 13 August 2013 Ms Hartland requested that the freedom of information commissioner review her FOI request to the Victorian

WorkCover Authority, which denied her access to part of the documents she sought. I think it is fair to say that the government has been very open about providing as much information as possible. Having made that point, I do not believe Ms Hartland's motion has merit as it stands today.

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — The Labor Party will be supporting Ms Hartland's motion seeking these documents, and as indicated in the debate immediately preceding this one, it also supports the endeavours of firefighters, both career and volunteer, across the length and breadth of Victoria who seek a resolution of the issue around access to workers compensation for firefighters who have been exposed to carcinogens in the work they do keeping Victorians safe.

I would like to refer briefly to the final report of the Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee's inquiry into the Accident Compensation Legislation (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011. There were elements of this report that we spoke to in the debate preceding this one, but on this occasion I will refer to the evidence the committee heard from the Assistant Treasurer, Mr Rich-Phillips. He indicated in making a case about Ms Hartland's bill not being an appropriate bill to proceed in the Legislative Council that on the question of cost — I am quoting from the report:

... in relation to the VWA scheme, some actuarial work has been done by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the preliminary figures suggest the cost to the scheme would be in the order of a \$10 million annual cost and a liability impact on the scheme ... the whole of life cost ... calculated in terms of the future liabilities against the scheme. That has been assessed at around \$120 million impact on the liability.

Ms Hartland's endeavour to get this information for a public discussion around the cost and benefits associated with providing presumptive rights to workers compensation for firefighters with cancer has some of its origins in the information that was presented to the committee quite some time ago. This was evidence taken by that committee on 29 May 2013 — not quite a year ago, but almost — in which it was revealed that the government has actually crunched the numbers on this.

I note the correspondence to the Clerk from Minister Rich-Phillips and the attached summaries that Mr Dalla-Riva referred to extensively in his contribution. What is clear is that the government has looked into and considered this issue. As I have said on behalf of my colleagues in the Labor Party on many occasions, this is an issue that is not going away; it is an issue that Parliament needs to consider. The motion that

Ms Hartland brought to the house today seeks to make public the information that will enable that debate to occur.

Victorians are incredibly well served by our firefighters; they undertake extraordinary risks on behalf of all of us. As members of Parliament we have a responsibility to properly explore the question of presumptive rights to workers compensation for firefighters, as has occurred in other jurisdictions overseas and in other states of Australia and indeed the commonwealth. The Baillieu and Napthine governments have continued to drag their heels on this issue. Members of the opposition believe this issue is important for Victorian firefighters and that it is an important issue for the Parliament to consider, and the release of this information will enable that debate to occur.

I am sure that sooner or later the Parliament will be able to have a debate on this matter, but this government's continual efforts to frustrate the advance of this issue does it no credit. The government has clearly considered the issue and provided some very brief summaries of the information it has received. It is appropriate that this information be released so that the Parliament, and indeed the Victorian community, can consider at what cost it is reasonable to provide the type of compensation rights that exist for firefighters in other jurisdictions where the relationship between their firefighting work and the incidence of cancer is able to be demonstrated.

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on Ms Hartland's motion. I have been listening to the contributions to the debate made by other members, and clearly we have had an earlier debate in relation to firefighters. I know that Ms Hartland has a longstanding interest in the welfare of firefighters, and I believe all members have a very strong interest in the work that firefighters do for the community. Many of us have personal connections with people who are members of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), and we are very concerned about the work that firefighters perform on behalf of the Victorian community on a regular basis. I commend firefighters for their work.

Turning to Ms Hartland's motion, it asks the house to note:

- (1) the resolution of the Council of 30 October 2013 requiring the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 26 November 2013 a copy of documents detailing the Country Fire Authority and the Victorian WorkCover Authority actuarial assessment and cost estimates to provide compensation for

Victoria's firefighters injured or deceased as a result of exposure to carcinogens on the job;

- (2) the letter of the Assistant Treasurer, dated 22 November 2013, stating that the government is not able to respond within the time period requested by the Council and would endeavour to respond by 10 December 2013; and
- (3) that, as at 12 December 2013, the documents sought have not been provided ...

and calls on the Leader of the Government to assist and to explain why the documents have not been tabled and when they will be produced.

Clearly some time has elapsed between the time when this motion was placed on the notice paper and the current debate. I will make a few points about the information that has been provided, because members opposite have said that the government has not been transparent. I believe there is a degree of confusion around this motion exactly because other members who have preceded me in the debate have misunderstood the detailed response given to this house by the Assistant Treasurer, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips. I remind members that Mr Rich-Phillips did provide information to the Council dated 31 January, which was within the time frames stated in the letter. I note that on 4 February the Clerk said:

I have received a letter dated 31 January 2014 from the Assistant Treasurer headed 'Order for documents — cost estimates for firefighter compensation', together with attachments.

Obviously that letter, which has been referred to in the course of this debate, highlights the fact that the government has conducted a thorough and diligent search to identify the documents relevant to the Council's resolution. That is very relevant to what we are speaking about today, because in this letter the Assistant Treasurer also stated:

In order to facilitate public discussion, I have attached a summary of the information provided to government in relation to the VWA scheme and the CFA scheme.

That goes to the attachments that were discussed in relation to the cost estimates prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC). The summary states:

PWC considered that the modelling used by the VWA was reasonable. This modelling is based on:

- estimating the exposed population for a new injury year;
- estimating the rate of incidence for each cancer;
- estimating an average cost per claim by each cancer.

The actuarial and consulting service went on to say that it was providing its information based on internal modelling information provided by the VWA, which

was based on an assumption that there is no restriction on claims by date of injury or diagnosis and an estimation of the rate of incidence for each cancer and an average cost per claim by each cancer.

Turning again to Ms Hartland's motion, which asks for the cost estimates and actuarial assessment, in this instance the Assistant Treasurer has been very forthcoming and very transparent and has provided the information to the house, which was tabled on 31 January. The Assistant Treasurer should be commended for the work he has done. He stated that obviously some time would be required to undertake a thorough and diligent search to identify those documents, and he spelt that out very clearly in his letter and then provided additional information, which I will not restate to members because Mr Dalla-Riva stated that information very clearly. Ms Hartland also referred to those attachments in relation to cost estimates.

It is also relevant to say of the documents identified that some of them have been withheld on the basis that releasing them would be prejudicial to the public interest. We all know that it is the case that these documents would reveal cabinet deliberations or high-level deliberations of government, and it is normal cabinet practice to withhold such information.

Mr Dalla-Riva also mentioned in his contribution to the debate that last year Ms Hartland requested the FOI commissioner to review her original FOI request to the Victorian WorkCover Authority, which denied her access to part of the documents that she sought. I am led to believe that at this stage the commissioner is yet to make a decision on Ms Hartland's application, and the government does not want to pre-empt any decision that the commissioner might make based on those issues.

As I said, it is pretty clear that the Assistant Treasurer has provided the information asked for by Ms Hartland's motion. As I said at the outset, some time has elapsed since this request was made, and it has become clear as time has progressed through the past few months that Mr Rich-Phillips, in his capacity as Assistant Treasurer, has provided the necessary information requested.

I should also point out that the Assistant Treasurer points out in his letter to Mr Tunnecliffe, the Clerk of the Council, the very fact that I have just stated in relation to the relevant documentation identified by the Department of Treasury of Finance, the Department of Justice, the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the Country Fire Authority — that is, that the documents

have been withheld on the basis that releasing them would be prejudicial to the public interest. Release of these documents would reveal deliberations of cabinet and high-level deliberations of government, as I previously stated. I think the Assistant Treasurer has explained clearly his decision to take that stance.

In terms of the attachments he provided to his letter, he points out in his letter very clearly what the estimates requested by the VWA were based upon, and it is pretty clear, as others have said, that the cost of the bill arising from funding future payments in respect of past exposures is estimated to be in the range of \$83 million to \$160 million, with a central estimate of \$119 million.

PWC also goes on in its assessment to say that:

...the assumptions ... are based on limited data and significant judgement is required.

I think it has been able to do that in its modelling. The actuary also stated:

The cost estimate relates to the scheme of 12 deemed cancers as set out under the commonwealth Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Act 2011.

In the document provided it says:

A central cost estimate is provided as well as a lower and upper range — as is standard in the provision of actuarial assessments. The annual cost of adding the 12 deemed cancers to the Volunteer Compensation Scheme (VCS) administered by the CFA for volunteer firefighters is estimated to be in the range of \$90 million–\$170 million, with \$130 million provided as the central estimate.

The cost of adding the 12 deemed cancers to the VCS for volunteer firefighters arising from funding future payments in respect of past exposures (outstanding claims liability) is estimated to be in the range of \$1.3 billion–\$1.6 billion, with a central estimate of \$1.5 billion.

It goes on to note:

... that the ultimate cost impact is heavily dependent on behavioural factors such as propensity to claim and therefore the range of possible outcomes is wide. Bateup also notes that some of the assumptions underpinning the assessment are based on limited data, which increased the uncertainty of the cost estimates.

Nevertheless, Bateup is very forthcoming in how it has come to those figures, being open and transparent in relation to the estimates that it has provided based on the data it has gained. I think it is clear that that information has been provided to the house, giving members the information they sought. I think that should be noted for Ms Hartland's information in relation to the openness of the Assistant Treasurer. I said, if the time had not lapsed and this motion had

been debated sooner, some time frames might not have been excluded from this but, as the motion states, as the time has lapsed these documents have been provided, and the Assistant Treasurer has responded within the time requested by the Council.

**Ms Hartland** — The documents haven't been provided; that is why the motion is happening today. Talk it out; don't let it go to a vote.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie)** — Order! Ms Hartland!

**Ms CROZIER** — As I said, the Assistant Treasurer has responded.

**Ms Hartland** — He has not responded. We do not have the documents.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ondarchie)** — Order! Ms Hartland!

**Ms CROZIER** — Through you, Acting President, the Assistant Treasurer has explained that the government has conducted a thorough and diligent search to identify the documents relevant to the Council's resolution, and that is exactly what we have been discussing in this debate — the information that he has provided to the Clerk outlining the modelling from PricewaterhouseCoopers and from the Bateup actuary. They have explained the estimates and the modelling that were provided, and they have provided the figures in the attachments that have been provided to the house. I think that goes to the position of the Assistant Treasurer, who has been able to look at this issue in a genuine manner and provide the information as requested. As I said, it is unfortunate that we are debating this motion in April when it refers to dates from last year — 12 December 2013, as paragraph (3) of the motion states — but I again make the point that the Assistant Treasurer needed to conduct —

**Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

## STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

### **Auditor-General: Residential Care Services for Children**

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Auditor-General's report on residential care services for children. The release of this report is timely and relates to the treatment of children in residential care. The fundamental issue set out in the report is the lack of appropriate funding. About 500 new placements per year are expected to be housed in residential child-care units. There is no forward

planning for funding or resources to meet this need. Instead, money is taken from already established programs, so in the end everybody loses. While this lack of financial planning may appear to be short sighted and ad hoc, the real dangers and the real casualties are the children. This is a sad state of affairs that must be addressed, and addressed quickly.

I believe that in every case these children, who come from backgrounds of abuse and trauma, are rightly taken into care. However, the government has a duty of care and a responsibility to ensure proper and adequate funding. Albert Einstein once said that a society is judged by how it treats its weakest members. If that maxim were applied to this government, our society would rank pretty low.

The Department of Human Services has a responsibility, once it has taken the action required by the department, to become the guardian or custodian of these kids and to provide all the necessities of life to these unfortunate young people. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is never a good way to organise finances, and I sympathise with departmental child-care staff who know they must cut already funded programs to accommodate the new batch of residents. The children's advocacy program is a case in point. This program is critical for the child's development and for families who need professional advice. Current child placements are at capacity, and a decline in the number of families willing to undertake foster care has placed an even greater strain on the system.

The underlying problem of why these kids are in state residential care needs to be looked at, and strategies must be put in place to obviate the necessity for them to come into the state system in the first place — but I suppose that is in the too-hard basket. The Auditor-General has come up with six recommendations, and I would like to see them all implemented for the sake of the children and our society.

### **Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure: report 2012–13**

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — I have a lot of pleasure in speaking on the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure annual report for 2012–13. It says on the front cover 'Formerly Department of Transport', so it is important to remember as I am speaking to this report that the department has indeed had a name change.

In his foreword to the report the secretary of the department, Dean Yates, mentions 13 major milestones from the department in this time frame, and I would

like to mention but a few. One is the fact that this has been a landmark year, with a major reform package for the taxi industry. Although there continue to be some issues around this point, on the whole it has been very well received, particularly by the taxi users. They are the people who are going to be using it and they are very happy with the changes. It has been a big step forward. It was a contentious step forward, but an important decision was made.

Another major milestone is:

Improving the public transport network to cater for growing patronage and connecting people with jobs, education and social opportunities ...

This was the goal of the public transport network development plan. The report lays out the high-capacity signalling and new stabling and maintenance facilities for the evolution of the metropolitan train system to meet the needs of Victorians in the short, medium and long term.

The report speaks about the regional rail link, which has been one of the most successful projects in this state since the coalition government came to power. It states that:

Construction works on the rail bridge over the Maribymong River and two rail-road grade separations at Anderson Road, Sunshine, advanced and major upgrade works at Footscray, West Footscray and Sunshine railway stations commenced.

I know Mr Finn is particularly pleased to see that major boost for the west, which was neglected in all those dark years of Labor. The foreword continues:

Work also commenced on the two new railway stations at Wyndham Vale and Tarnait.

That is again in the west. Other transport achievements included:

... the Sunbury electrification project and Williams Landing railway station —

**Mr Finn** — Again in the west.

**Mrs COOTE** — Once again in the west —

progress on rolling stock programs for Yarra Trams, Metro Trains and ...

Important planning work also continued on the Melbourne Metro project and the Avalon Airport rail link ...

Planning work continued for the very important east-west link program. This project is going to help the economy of this state, increasing the opportunities for people who drive and benefiting

the whole of Victoria. It is going to be a very important economic link for us.

You cannot talk about transport in this state at this time without mentioning the most fantastic policy recently announced by the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder. The media release headline screams 'Free CBD trams, cheaper trains and buses for Melbourne'. It is a boost and a boon; how absolutely terrific that will be. The media release says visitors to Melbourne will benefit from free CBD trams, and I know the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, who is an excellent minister, is particularly pleased to see these advances. People come to Melbourne — the most livable city in the world, let me remind you — to look at our trams. It is the largest tramway network. People want to come to Melbourne to see what we have. Our major events are a very important part of this state and our economy. The tourists flock to this state, and this new free transport in the CBD is going to be a great boost for them. Tourists have expressed confusion at trying to obtain myki cards, and this eliminates all of that. It is going to be a very big and important step forward.

Visitors, including those from regional and rural areas, will be able to take advantage of the free travel, as will all of us who work here in the city. These free CBD trams and lower fares for trains and buses in Melbourne are going to make a significant difference. There will be zone 1 and 2 travel for the price of a zone 1 fare. This is a huge benefit to many parts of my electorate, including Bentleigh. In some instances it is going to save people up to \$1200 a year.

### **Auditor-General: *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion***

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise to make a contribution to debate on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion*. The report is comprehensive and sets out a list of 10 recommendations. As the report states, apprenticeships and traineeships are a central part of vocational education and training and have a long history here in Victoria.

In my electorate of Northern Victoria Region apprenticeships and traineeships are very popular choices for young people wanting to remain in the region and learn a trade. They are able to combine training with their employment. Young people need training schemes that provide skills that translate into jobs and career paths. We need plumbers, electricians, builders, hairdressers, mechanics, chefs and various other trades to build a vibrant community.

It is disappointing that the report found that the rate at which people are enrolling in and completing apprenticeships and traineeships has stagnated, even though investment in the apprenticeship and training sector has significantly increased over the past 10 years. Of concern in this report is that there has not been an increase in people starting apprenticeships or traineeships since 2004. It is depressing that over the past decade we have seen no increase in this very important area.

Breece Stephens of the Australian Apprenticeships Centre in Mildura, which is in my electorate, said his organisation has noticed the trend locally over the years. Mr Stephens said apprenticeships have slowed down due to funding cuts by state and federal governments for things like the first home owner grant and the government stimulus package, which means there has not been as much work for businesses, and therefore they are not employing apprentices.

We also know from this report that approximately one-third of people in this state who commence an apprenticeship or traineeship do not complete it. It is particularly disturbing that Victoria's completion rate is lower than the national average, so we are not doing as well as we could be. The report found that the biggest factor influencing whether apprentices and trainees complete their training is their experience in the workplace itself and problems with the workplace or employer. We have all heard of traineeship or apprenticeship horror stories, of unethical and bullying practices that have taken place in workplaces throughout Victoria. The following is just one example of how underhanded the state government has been in supporting the industry.

Lorraine Green, who has 20 years experience in working with apprentices, trainees and employers, lost her job in November 2013. The state government outsourced her position to a private Queensland company. Ms Green worked with employers, training organisations and a network of contacts she had built up over years. The state government cuts meant that the Mildura region lost two decades worth of experience from a passionate local who enjoyed placing candidates in their job of choice.

The report goes on to talk about the need for the collection of data, not just the figures. The Auditor-General recommended that the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority database, DELTA, be replaced with a new database and that the new database measure factors such as motivation and commencement and completion of training. It is not just about the number of people who are doing or undertaking

apprenticeships; we also want to know why they are leaving.

In summary, it is essential that we increase support for trainees and apprentices so that we can build the robust workforce we need for the future.

### **Electoral Matters Committee: future of Victoria's electoral administration**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I thank Mr David O'Brien for allowing me to speak before him; that is exceedingly decent. The report I am speaking on this afternoon is the Electoral Matters Committee report on its inquiry into the future of Victoria's electoral administration. As chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee I am particularly proud of this report. It is the report of the most comprehensive inquiry of its kind by any electoral matters committee in Australia's history, so far as we know, and we have come up with what I believe to be a set of proposals which will bring the Victorian electoral system into the 21st century and engage the Victorian electorate in a way it has not been engaged before.

One of the issues and major problems we discovered with engaging people is their lack of understanding of what goes on up here in Spring Street. We found that very few people understand what the Legislative Council is or what it does. It is very hard to enthuse people in the electorate about the electoral process or the parliamentary process when they do not understand what we are on about. For that reason, we have proposed that this body, the Legislative Council, change its name to the State Senate. That immediately explains to people in the electorate exactly who we are and what we are. After 160 years nobody quite understands what the Legislative Council is. The test of time has shown that name to be a failure, and it is time to move on.

This is not a new idea, because this was put forward in a bill to the New South Wales Parliament not so long ago. Reverend Fred Nile, MLC, put forward a bill to do exactly the same thing in New South Wales. The report says:

In his second-reading speech, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, MLC, advised that 'state senator' 'is more contemporary and relevant than the term "the Honourable", which is regarded as archaic'.

In New South Wales MLCs still carry the title 'the Honourable'. Antony Green, the ABC election analyst, has said:

I think more and more people know what the Senate is; I think fewer and fewer people know what the Legislative

Council is. If it helps people know that there is a state upper house, it would help raise understanding.

That is what we are on about. This is not about titles or the advancement of members of this house. This is about engaging and educating the people in the electorate. It is interesting to note that on the weekend the New South Wales Greens came out on this issue as well. It is very rare, I am sure members would agree, for me to quote the Greens in any way, shape or form, but on this occasion the Greens have come out and supported the proposal in New South Wales to change the name of the Legislative Council to the State Senate, the same proposal we have put forward in Victoria. We now have a situation where this proposal is being supported by everybody from Fred Nile to Liberal members to Labor members to the Greens. That spans just about all possibilities, it has to be said. It is very rare for us all to agree, but this is such a common-sense and logical move that it is hard to see how anybody could actually be opposed to it.

Some have suggested that this could cause confusion between the state and the federal Senate. In the United States, as we discovered last year, there are 49 US state legislatures that have either a state senate or a senate — 49 out of the 50. That does not create any confusion at all in the United States between those state bodies and the federal Senate. As we know, Australians are far cleverer than Americans, so if they are not confused over there, we most certainly will not be confused here. That should not be an argument at all. This is a common-sense proposal that was warmly welcomed and strongly supported by the committee. I hope we will see this legislative body become the State Senate very soon for the benefit of the understanding of Victorians.

### **Auditor-General: *Residential Care Services for Children***

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a contribution on the Victorian Auditor-General's report entitled *Residential Care Services for Children*, which was tabled in this Parliament last sitting week. This is a damning report. In his opening remarks the Auditor-General is critical of what he terms 'a fundamental failure to oversee and ensure the safety of children in residential care'. He also found 'significant shortcomings' in Victoria's residential care services. There are poor outcomes for children across a range of indicators, including in health and education.

The report also outlines that those leaving care have poor outcomes for school attendance, health and preparedness for independent living. The report

highlights how overstretched and strained the system is and how the insufficient capacity in the system is affecting the quality of care that children receive. In 2012–13 the Department of Human Services planned for 459 placements when there were actually 508 children in residential care placements. The Auditor-General noted that this was leading to situations where:

... placement decisions are often based on bed availability, rather than on matching the needs of highly vulnerable children with the needs and behavioural characteristics of the children who are already in residential care units. Poor placement can lead to an incompatible mix of children in a residential unit, with implications for safety and children's ability to achieve positive outcomes.

The report also shows on page 10 a 49 per cent increase in the number of category 1 incidents reported in residential care from 2011–12 to 2012–13. This is mainly attributed to an increase in absent or missing person reports, but the Auditor-General goes on to say:

Missing children are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation.

This is a critical finding by the Auditor-General. The minister has been busy talking up her five-year out-of-home care plan, despite the fact that it came out two years after it was first recommended by Justice Philip Cummins in the *Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry*. The important thing to note is that there is nothing in the minister's plan to address the underlying causes of this issue — that is, the understaffing of residential care. This plan followed media reports that revealed the disgraceful sexual exploitation of children in the state's care. It was a damning revelation of organised gangs and paedophiles preying on children as young as 12 and of teenagers grooming younger children on behalf of sexual predators in return for drugs or money. Inadequate resourcing of child protection agencies has resulted in the understaffing of residential care so that only one staff member is rostered on in many of these units, including overnight. The inadequate level of supervision is leading to these children being preyed upon in the worst possible ways.

It is incumbent on this minister to address these issues because she is the minister responsible for the care of these children. The Auditor-General also warns that up to 29 per cent more children are expected to enter residential care over the next four years, which is the equivalent of at least 150 additional placements. However, the government's plan, as announced last sitting week, only outlines an additional 48 placements in residential care. The report also shows that the number of children in foster care is declining because there are fewer foster carers available. I note that the

government's plan seeks to recruit more foster carers but does not provide any detailed strategy to address this issue. The minister's own plan does not address the failings identified in this damning Auditor-General's report and will not do enough to protect Victoria's most vulnerable children.

There are many other issues contained in the report. I was particularly alarmed to read about the failures in respect of both education and health outcomes as they relate to children. It is important that children in out-of-home and residential care receive access to educational opportunities as well as health services. I was also concerned about the lack of stability for children in residential care. The Auditor-General found that more than one-third of children and young people in residential care have experienced over 10 out-of-home care placements. The number of critical incidents such as death and severe trauma is also disproportionately high for children in residential care, compared to other forms of out-of-home care. This is a damning report. It has identified the issues that need to be addressed, and sadly the minister's five-year plan fails to address many of them.

### **Auditor-General: *Managing Emergency Services Volunteers***

**Mr RONALDS** (Eastern Victoria) — I will talk this afternoon on the report of the Auditor-General entitled *Managing Emergency Services Volunteers*. My electorate of Eastern Victoria Region takes in much of our state's beautiful coastline and, with that, shoulders the responsibility for keeping our boating public safe. In particular I will talk about the Victorian volunteer coastguard and Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR). In recent times we have seen a surge in the popularity of boating, which has also resulted in an increase in incidents on the water. Fortunately this has been met with a very big increase in volunteerism in Victoria. There are now 700 active members helping to keep people on our waters safe.

Membership of the Victorian volunteer coastguard has increased by 63 per cent since 2008. It is doing an incredible job. In 2012 more than 77 500 hours of work were donated by volunteers. The value of this volunteer labour provided is estimated at between \$2.2 million and \$2.5 million. Although the economic value of these volunteers is an indicator of their enormous work, it is impossible to measure the true value of their contribution with a dollar amount.

This sentiment is particularly true of VMR, which operates out of Mornington and Hastings. It only has three vessels and 30 volunteers, but VMR was the

busiest volunteer marine search and rescue service in Victoria over the last financial year, responding to more than 200 call-outs. VMR runs an operation second to none. Staffed and managed solely by volunteers, its average response time is 10 minutes after activation by Victorian water police. The service takes care of Port Phillip, Western Port and Bass Strait. In 34 years of operation, it has never failed to attend a call-out and has saved countless lives.

This exemplary marine search and rescue service was established as a result of the community response to the tragic death of a man in 1980. A boating incident happened within sight of land, but there were no local units to rescue this person. Police watched helplessly from a cliff as the occupant of this boat, Paul Darbyshire, tried to reach the shore. By the time a boat had reached the overturned vessel, he had drowned. A strong turnout to a public meeting resulted in the formation of a ready-reaction rescue unit for Mornington run by volunteers. The service named its first rescue craft the *Darbyshire* in memory of this man who lost his life.

Community-driven services such as these deserve our full support. Often their work goes unrecognised. Volunteerism comes at a huge cost to personal time and resources. The harsh reality is that these crews must leave their jobs, families and other commitments to attend a call-out, often putting themselves in harm's way to secure the safety of others. Behind them are those working in the background who commit to fundraising, attending meetings, organising events, acquiring equipment, promoting public awareness and of course organising sausage sizzles, all of which take a lot of time and dedication.

I am proud that in our state of Victoria volunteer and community-driven organisations can deliver the most efficient and professional level of marine search and rescue possible. These organisations work together with the water police, local police, Ambulance Victoria, the Country Fire Authority, the State Emergency Service and a host of other professional and volunteer emergency services to keep the boating public safe.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge also that the coalition government is currently undertaking an inquiry into marine rescue services in Victoria through the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee. I look forward to the outcome of that inquiry.

### **Auditor-General: *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion***

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's recently tabled report entitled *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion*.

Youth unemployment in this state is at an all-time high. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data of January 2014, Victoria has a youth unemployment rate of 12.4 per cent. That is the third highest youth unemployment level of the mainland states, above New South Wales, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia. The region of Hume features in the top 10 hotspots for youth unemployment in Australia, with a rate of 17.5 per cent. Melbourne's west features a youth unemployment rate of 13.6 per cent, yet despite these figures the Napthine government has done nothing to address youth unemployment in our state.

The Auditor-General notes that apprenticeship commencements increased slightly in 2009 and 2010 on the back of the former Brumby government reforms — namely, the Victorian Training Guarantee and funding reforms. In 2012 we saw commencement numbers dip below 2004 levels. The report notes the decision by this government to discontinue financial incentives to complete apprenticeships and traineeships. This flies in the face of the evidence, noted in the report.

A 2010 Victorian government survey identified the fact that 64 per cent of employers of apprentices and trainees agreed that financial incentives positively influenced their decision concerning their apprentices and trainees. A further 48 per cent agreed that financial incentives assisted them to help their apprentices and trainees to complete their courses. Further, apprentices and trainees are often undergoing their training on a low income. A financial incentive does a great deal to assist these young men and women in skilling themselves.

Unfortunately the TAFE system in Victoria is a mere skeleton of what it was under the former Labor government. This government has gutted the TAFE system in this state. The 2012 state budget ripped \$1.2 billion from the TAFE system. In 2010 the Brumby government pledged that if elected it would invest \$4.5 billion a year in new infrastructure. The infrastructure program would have employed 2000 Victorian apprentices a year. Further, the jobs building guarantee provided that 10 per cent of

employees on large government projects would be apprentices.

What did the Baillieu Government do to deliver this level investment? Not much. What is the Napthine government's contribution to encouraging apprentices in this state? I will tell you. In December 2012 an anti-growth construction code saw the compliance unit warned that clauses contained in a workplace agreement reached voluntarily between contractor UGL and the Electrical Trades Union and which agreed 'to maintain a ratio of at least one apprentice to three tradespeople' was considered to be in breach of the code. That is the priority of the Napthine government — union and worker bashing, not jobs growth and not increasing skills supply in this state.

I can understand why you might want to enforce a code of practice in the construction industry in many areas, but this was basically saying that you cannot have a clause in an enterprise agreement that stipulates a ratio of apprentices, be it one to three or one to five or whatever. This impacts on our kids' opportunities to be employed. In fact the government should encourage agreements like this and should encourage employers to employ more apprentices on these projects. The former Brumby government said, in reference to major projects in Victoria, that it would mandate on Victorian major projects that apprentices must be employed as part of them, and I think that is a good thing to do. I do not think we should be playing politics on this issue.

The report also made a number of recommendations. Recommendation 2 talks about a new, structured process around data collection, and recommendation 3 directs the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to identify strategies to improve the completion rate. Recommendation 4 concerns developing or engendering mechanisms to provide support for all apprentices and trainees, pending evaluation of the apprenticeship support officer program, and there are many other recommendations. I call on the minister to have a really hard look at the Auditor-General's report and to look at implementing the intent and content of that report as soon as possible, because our kids deserve heaps better than they are getting today.

### **Electoral Matters Committee: future of Victoria's electoral administration**

**Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a contribution to debate on the Electoral Matters Committee's inquiry into the future of Victoria's electoral administration. It is an important issue and this is a very important committee, chaired by

a wonderful contributor to this Parliament whose presence I have enjoyed. In virtually every respect I have found myself in general agreement with him, and I am referring to my colleague Mr Finn.

The question of whether or not he can be ‘lawfully’ described as State Senator Finn — in terms of what is consistent with the standing orders — is an interesting question which is raised in chapter 8 of the report. Having read recommendation 8.1, I find I am in many respects a constitutional conservative. I would not say I am a conservative in every respect and certainly not on all social matters, but on constitutional matters I am on the record as saying we should have minimal changes to our constitution, and we should respect what we have.

I have sought advice from the Clerk of this place at very short notice about the procedures that presently operate as to the naming of members in this house, and it is a very interesting proposition that the committee puts forward as to the naming of people in this chamber. There is confusion surrounding the term MLC as to whether it is referring to an insurance company, a wonderful girls school in the eastern suburbs or Legislative Councillors. That is the essence of that part of the report. In many respects if this chamber were being named again it may well be called the State Senate, but that is not the history, and I am reluctant to endorse any motion as an MP or an MLC that would undo any of the great traditions that continue to operate in this house.

Therefore I have sought the informal advice of the Clerk, and for the purpose of this speech the question is whether I, as a member of Parliament, and other members of Parliament, the community, and indeed the chair of this committee, Mr Finn, could formally in this chamber be referred to as state senators — for example, State Senator Finn — as a way of considering the sorts of recommendations that the committee seeks without breaching either the standing orders, the constitution or the practices and procedures of the house.

I will leave that advice for the clerks — and I formally put forward that that is the advice I seek — that persons desirous of being known as state senators — MLCs — could be given that title, just like a trading name. For example, the Melbourne Football Club is known as the Demons, the Richmond Football Club is known as the Tigers, the former Victorian National Party was once known as VicNats — and we are still, very proudly, the best party to represent country Victoria. With no disrespect to our coalition colleagues I stand before you as a proud member of The Nationals.

The second matter I wish to go to is that the member for Morwell in the other place, Mr Northe, who was also on the committee and who is a Nationals member, produced a minority report. The report speaks for itself. It is against recommendation 3.1 regarding optional preferential voting, and I know the Labor members of the committee have filed a similar report. In this regard it is with some pains that I find myself in disagreement with Mr Finn — or State Senator Finn, if he can be so called — and in agreement wholeheartedly with Mr Northe.

The big problem with optional preferential voting as opposed to our present system of compulsory preferential voting is that, for example, in a two-party preferred electorate — say, a regional electorate where the Liberals and The Nationals and other parties, including parties such as Country Alliance and Independents, run opposed to the Labor Party and perhaps the Greens — you have a situation where there is a two-party preferred vote.

In the time available I will give a quick example. Say the Labor Party got 42 votes, the Greens got 6, the Independents and minors got 2, the Liberal Party got 20 and The Nationals delivered 30; that would be a two-party preferred result amongst the coalition and conservative voters of 52 per cent and to the Labor Party and Greens of 48 per cent. The far left, being the Greens with 6 per cent, would be added to the Labor Party on 42 per cent, which would total 48 per cent for the left parties. Under the compulsory preferential system that would result in a victory for one of the coalition parties, in that case The Nationals, but under another hypothetical scenario it could equally be the Liberal Party. If it went to optional preferential voting and 50 per cent of those Liberal votes were distributed by the ‘1’ only being marked on the ballot paper, which would be permissible under the option preferential voting, you would, regretfully, elect a Labor Party member on 42 votes over the conservative Nationals member on 40 preference votes, assuming that the minor parties preferences were exhausted. That would be a disaster, and for that reason I oppose the recommendation.

### **Victorian Multicultural Commission: report 2012–13**

**Mr EIDEH** (Western Metropolitan) — I am delighted to rise and speak on the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) annual report 2012–13. Firstly, I thank all those who contributed to this report, in particular chairperson Chin Tan, deputy chairperson Spiro Alatsas and the Victorian Multicultural Commission’s 12 commissioners who

actively advocate for the many goals and beliefs of the VMC. They also act as a voice for the vast multicultural community in Victoria. Throughout the last financial year, the commissioners contributed to many discussions and debates on all levels and at various forums on behalf of the community. In addition to those individuals, I also extend my congratulations to the staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the year for the commission.

The commission operates under the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, which outlines the state of Victoria's commitment to understand and support religious, culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Victoria. The Victorian Multicultural Commission had many highlights during the 2012–13 period and one of those was the reintroduction of the community grants program, which was provided to 2400 applicants at a total of \$5.6 million. Cultural Diversity Week was held from 16 to 24 March 2013, which focused on connecting youth and schools.

The VMC oversees eight regional advisory councils, which identify areas of need and issues that may be a direct result of location. As a result of that engagement, officers have a better opportunity to support and understand the needs of those living as part of a culturally and linguistically diverse community. That organisation is one of great importance to Victoria as it represents our commitment to harmony as a community. Unfortunately we do not live in a world where people live in peace, free from racial vilification. I know we would all agree that the world would be a much better place if we did.

As I have mentioned in my previous contributions to debates, we value the importance of harmony and the respect for tradition, which is why we on this side of the house believe wholeheartedly in section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and why we do not support its repeal. Unfortunately those in federal government do not feel the same way, but to the VMC it is important. Ethnicity and tradition play a pivotal role within our society and the VMC nurtures it. Each culture within Victoria represents another thread in the fabric of what makes Victoria the multicultural capital of Australia. I am sure that those in the VMC would agree, that it is the support of the community and its contribution that raises the awareness and symbolises the importance of diversity.

I note the chairperson, Mr Finn, indicated in his contribution to the debate that the main reason Cultural Diversity Week was so successful was due to the engagement and contributions of community members. Close to 300 community groups, schools and

workplaces across the state hosted their own events to mark the celebration. I congratulate each and every one on showing support not only to the VMC but also to the importance of cultural diversity. I commend the report to the house.

### **Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee: Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency performance**

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to rise to speak to report no. 2 entitled *Inquiry into the Performance of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency*, dated March 2014, which was tabled in the chamber only last month. The inquiry was undertaken by the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee, and a number of members of this house participated. The inquiry was conducted over about 16 months, and it exposed some very real concerns held by the Victorian public that were raised in submissions. Some aspects were raised by well-respected health professionals and a number of other interested stakeholders who had input into this report. I was very pleased to table the report and highlight some of the issues.

During the inquiry the major focus of the evidence related to the complaints system. In my contribution I raise an important issue surrounding the future support of health programs for doctors, nurses and midwives. The very important programs were well known among those health professionals and were established under the previous state-based health practitioner regulation system. The Victorian doctors health program was established in 2000 by the Australian Medical Association and the previous medical board, and the nurses and midwives health program was established in 2006.

The programs were established to support doctors, nurses, midwives and students who may have had health problems such as drug-and-alcohol related problems or mental health issues. It was noted that in doing so their purpose was not only to further enhance the productivity of our health services but also to give those people the support they require, which is sometimes in very short supply for practitioners who deal with very serious issues, and try to maintain the numbers in those particular areas.

The Victorian doctors health program and the nursing and midwifery health program are both considered to be vital to productivity and wellbeing if we are to maintain a productive and high-quality health service in Victoria. In turn, though the support given to health professionals by these programs is high, the standard of

quality in patient care needs to be maintained. It was highlighted by a number of witnesses who came before the committee that that was the case. Evidence to the committee suggested that there was concern from witnesses that the Victorian service would no longer be funded under the national scheme or that it might become nationally focused, losing the very important Victorian focus.

In its evidence to the inquiry the Victorian Department of Health considered that there is not the same impetus for continuing the health programs, including the nursing and midwifery health program, as there was under the previous state-based system. This statement appears at page 81 of the report. The former Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria highlighted the fact that it funded the Victorian Doctors Health Program through a levy of approximately \$25 per registered medical practitioner in Victoria. Evidence from the Australian Medical Association Victoria in relation to the doctors health program is quoted at page 80 of the report as follows:

The Victorian medical board was able to run the program on a budget of approximately \$25 per registered practitioner in Victoria; however, the implementation of the national registration scheme has meant that the state board can no longer continue to do so. Former Victorian health minister Daniel Andrews agreed to fund the program for the first three years of the national scheme; however, this funding is set to expire at June 2013. The Medical Board of Australia has allocated some interim funding of \$350 000 for its continuation over 2013–14 ...

I do not have time in my contribution to explore this further, but I want to make a further comment in relation to this because it is really important. It is the doctors health program I am talking about at this particular point, and the committee made recommendations that supported it. But there was some real and significant evidence from various witnesses who came before us in support of continuing a doctors health program. Indeed that was established as we went through the inquiry, and at the final public hearing on 11 December the chair of the Medical Board of Australia reaffirmed its commitment to a future national health program specific to the needs of doctors.

### **Electoral Matters Committee: future of Victoria's electoral administration**

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to make my contribution tonight looking at elements of what the Electoral Matters Committee put before us when it tabled its report last month on the inquiry into the future of Victoria's electoral administration. I am struck by the importance of some of the recommendations, and this is clear evidence of

the extensive research, the synthesis of inputs as a result of the research and the careful deliberation and crafting of recommendations by the committee.

It is easier to be a detractor in this life and a nay-sayer, but it is really important that people are at the leading edge of new thinking. Sometimes one has to be very courageous to be at the leading edge of new thinking, so I commend highly the proponents of the recommendations in this report. In time to come the proponents of these recommendations will be regarded as historic figures and celebrated for their vision, their pragmatism and their approach to addressing some of the realities of our electoral system. We all see and are so proud that our electoral system has served us so well. In many ways and in many forms it resonates throughout the world as an exemplary application of the Westminster system of government. The report is a commendable work.

I am not going to go into the area of optional preferential voting; we just do not have enough time to do that, and I have two other major points to make. One of the things I want to touch on first is the notion of the impact of early voting on Victorian elections. There has been a considerable amount of erudite input and the compilation of contributions through the research effort, through submissions and through the hearings process and so forth. One of the things in the report that struck me falls under the heading of 'Reasons for the growing popularity of early voting in person', and I think it is worth reading these things into the record. It states:

Many electors around Australia are choosing to vote early in person, and flexible voting methods are increasingly popular. While there is no hard data on this from the perspective of electors, the information the committee and other parliamentary committees, notably the commonwealth JSCEM —

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters —

have is convincing — early voting is popular and electors like it.

A survey of electors has been conducted, and it is clear from that survey that they favoured flexible voting methods. It is really interesting that in the submission from the Australian Labor Party the party discussed its concerns about the notion of early polling and introduced the term the 'true intent' of early voting and the importance of maintaining the primacy of election day. It is worth reading a quote from that submission, which is footnoted as no. 78. It states:

... the concern over what we would characterise as the 'mission creep' of what the true intent of early voting — in contrast to the primacy of election day — is. Whilst always in

favour of the greatest community franchise possible, the rapid expansion of the prepoll period ... demonstrates that there is a clear need for a vigorous and detailed examination in relation to the primacy of election day and how it relates to the prepoll process.

I find there is irony in that, because I understand from direct inputs and other forms of empirical evidence that the prepolling approaching the federal election on 7 September 2013 indicated that the people had suffered under the lash and the concrete overcoat of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd regime — we can barely call it a government — and they could not wait to get to prepolling to vote the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments out of existence. The rest is history. God bless Tony Abbott!

It is important in the time I have available to say that the notion of examining the calling of members of the Legislative Council of Victoria 'State Senators' is a very sensible one. From the very moment in 2005 when I was preselected by the Liberal Party to stand for election in this house I ran out of puff explaining to the average person that there is a Legislative Council in the Parliament of Victoria. When I used the word 'Council', people said, 'Oh, you mean like the municipality I live in'. For them there was no distinction between local councillors and us as members of the Legislative Council, the upper house of the Victorian Parliament. In other jurisdictions including, as was previously said, throughout 49 of the 50 states in the United States of America, it is an easy thing to call people state senators.

## FILMING APPROVAL BILL 2014

*Introduction and first reading*

**For Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer), Hon. E. J. O'Donohue introduced a bill for an act to establish film-friendly principles for the approval of film permits by public agencies, to provide for the making of film-friendly guidelines and to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.**

**Read first time.**

## GAMBLING AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MODERNISATION) BILL 2014

*Introduction and first reading*

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and the**

**Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.**

**Read first time.**

## ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CUSTOMER METERING PROTECTIONS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2014

*Introduction and first reading*

**For Hon. D. K. DRUM (Minister for Sport and Recreation), Hon. E. J. O'Donohue introduced a bill for an act to amend the Electricity Industry Act 2000, the Electricity Safety Act 1998 and the Gas Industry Act 2001 and for other purposes.**

**Read first time.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) — I move:**

That the house do now adjourn.

## Health funding

**Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter this evening is for the Minister for Health, David Davis. I express my deep concerns over the Abbott federal government's plan to slash \$277 million from Victorian hospitals and Minister Davis's lack of action to stop it. These cuts will heap more pressure onto a health system that is already in crisis and struggling to cope. It is expected that Melbourne Health will lose \$22 million, Austin Health will lose \$18 million and Northern Health will lose \$10 million. The Royal Children's Hospital will lose \$12 million, which could fund 2200 surgeries or 129 nurses.**

The Napthine government, through Minister Davis, has already ripped \$826 million from Victoria's hospitals. It has plunged Victorian hospitals into crisis, with clogged emergency departments, ambulances taking too long to reach people in emergencies and more patients waiting longer than ever for surgery. The shadow Minister for Health, Mr Jennings, asked the minister earlier today whether he would encourage the health network CEOs to speak out about the impact of these cuts. What did we hear from the minister? We heard deafening silence on this point. When it is his own federal coalition colleagues delivering cuts to Victoria — cuts that will see Victoria hit the hardest of any state or territory — he is quite happy to stand back and let his Premier write a letter.

The money that will be ripped out of Victoria could have gone instead to clearing the 52 000-patient elective surgery waiting list, employing 3000 nurses or opening 500 new hospital beds — and of course we are all still waiting for the 800 new hospital beds the coalition promised at the last election. I call on the Minister for Health to detail what these cuts will mean for my local hospitals across Northern Metropolitan Region and to patients who are already languishing on waiting lists blown out under the minister's watch as a result of his own cuts to the health budget and hospital funding to date.

### Scottish descendants

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, the Honourable Matthew Guy. Last Sunday I was delighted to attend the Ringwood Highland Games in Ringwood East. These annual games are an important element of the events calendar in the city of Maroondah. This marvellous event offers those of us of Scottish heritage plenty to be proud of and sentimental about. We saw massed pipe bands competing and taking the salute. The pipe bands represent many community organisations and colleges from across Melbourne and Victoria.

Another much-anticipated event is the march of the clans, where the clan crests are emblazoned on banners held high and the swirl of the kilts is a vision splendid. They are worn by young and old. It is a moving and special opportunity to reflect on the proud history of the Scots in this country and throughout Victoria and their contribution to the establishment and development of Melbourne and its many institutions. Other cultural delights included Highland and Celtic dancing, haggis hurling and caber tossing, among myriad displays and activities for all ages.

The president of Ringwood Highland Games Inc., Mrs Sue MacLeod, has toiled for 18 years now to organise this important part of Melbourne's multicultural events calendar. From discussions with Mrs MacLeod I have been convinced that the contribution to our society by Scottish settlers and their descendants could be acknowledged in many other ways that reflect the importance of Scottish heritage to this country. My request to the minister is to set aside time for an appropriate degree of dialogue with the stakeholders to explore ways that Scottish heritage can be enshrined for future generations.

### Castlemaine Secondary College

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the Napthine Liberal government provide funding for the next stage of development of Castlemaine Secondary College in the May 2014 budget. Labor understands that the old school facilities are well past their use-by date. A rebuilding of the whole school is required to deliver the world-class education that students deserve. When the rebuilding program is complete, staff and students will have all the facilities they need on one campus at Blakely Road. However, in the meantime the school has to operate on more than one site.

For these reasons the school community is keen to get on with stage 2 of the rebuilding program. That is why the school is seeking commitments from the Napthine government to fund stage 2 in the May state budget this year. So far this commitment has not been forthcoming. However, Victorian Labor has listened to the school community and promised that a Labor government would provide \$8 million for the next stage of rebuilding if elected in November. The Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and the Labor member for Bendigo West in the Assembly, Maree Edwards, recently visited the school to announce this commitment in person.

The Napthine government has spent only a statewide average of \$203 million a year on capital works to date compared to an average spend of \$469 million by Labor in its last term in office. The Napthine government needs to provide the required funding in the May 2014 budget not only for Castlemaine Secondary College but for many other schools, particularly across Northern Victoria Region, if it is even to get close to making the necessary commitment for vital capital works for our schools across the state.

### Sunbury municipality

**Mrs MILLAR** (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the new Minister for Local Government, the Honourable Tim Bull. Many will know that the call for Sunbury to be part of a separate shire has a very long history. The election promise by the coalition government to conduct a poll came after many calls from the local community over many decades. The voluntary poll, in which 51 per cent of Hume residents voted, was conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission in October 2013. The outcome demonstrated clear support in the community, with 61 per cent voting in favour of establishing a separate shire of Sunbury.

The previous Minister for Local Government, the Honourable Jeanette Powell, was committed to ensuring that locals be given a further and more detailed say on issues including possible boundaries, communities of interest, assets and liabilities which may transfer into a new shire and the transition process. I was very pleased to be invited by the former minister to chair the Sunbury Out of Hume community consultative committee formed to advise the local government panel on the implementation of the community's desire for a new municipality. There is but one role for this committee, and that is to listen to the views of locals.

The eight committee members were appointed by the minister following an expression of interest process, under which approximately 50 applications were received. The appointed committee is pleasingly diverse, including residents from across Hume and beyond with a range of ages and professional backgrounds, and it ensures gender balance. The panel includes committee members representing sporting clubs, health providers, retail traders, local government employees and professionals. I extend my thanks for the contribution of all committee members to date, including Catherine Borazio, Susan Duncan, John Hennessy, Elizabeth Kosanovic, Phillip Lithgow, Peter Ralph, Phillip Ripper and Lawrence Seyers.

The new minister will note that an extensive range of community consultation activities have been arranged by the committee to listen to locals. Throughout the month of April the committee will host a total of nine sessions, with five listening posts and four public forums, to be conducted at various times in a range of venues across the city of Hume. The committee has also designed a user-friendly feedback form called 'It's your move', making it quick, engaging and easy for locals to pop down to a listening post or to come to a public forum to complete this brief form or to talk to committee members. For those of you who cannot make any of the sessions or who prefer the more traditional form of lodging your views, there is also an option to provide a written submission to the department by 11 April.

I invite the minister to attend any of the Sunbury Out of Hume community consultation sessions. The communities of Sunbury and the wider Hume City Council would be delighted if he were able to join any of the sessions during this monumental process, giving locals a real say.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The matter will stand; the call to the minister was appropriate. However, I remind members to be careful about set-piece speeches.

In that speech the member used words like 'those of you' and the like. In other words, it is either a press release or it is some sort of speech that has been given to people in the community, as some of that adjournment item was actually addressed to the community as distinct from the minister. I draw on that by way of example in that we need to be careful that we do not get into set-piece speeches as part of the adjournment. That is not exactly what the adjournment is about. There was certainly a call to the minister to participate in some of the consultation process, and I am quite happy about that.

### Ambulance services

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Health. It relates to a lack of coverage by ambulance services in Geelong. On Friday, 14 March, Geelong did not have ambulance coverage, and this necessitated an ambulance being driven down from Sebastopol, near Ballarat, an hour away. On the following Sunday from 9.00 p.m. onwards we also had a situation where Geelong did not have ambulance coverage. On that occasion an ambulance that services the Lorne area had to be sent up to Geelong.

Mr Steve McGhie, state secretary of the Ambulance Employees Association, was quoted in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 18 March as saying:

It's just not good enough and this is a regular occurrence in Geelong. If something's not done sooner rather than later people will die, and I'm not being an alarmist, that is just the fact.

Journalist Mandy Squires explained in the article that on that Sunday night, when there was no ambulance cover for Geelong, a young girl from Barwon Heads had a suspected dislocated vertebra. A general practitioner had called for an ambulance to attend to the young girl at 7.30 p.m. However, it did not arrive until 10.30 p.m. The article goes on to say:

... Danny Hill from the Ambulance Employees Association told ABC radio Geelong had become one of the flashpoints of the state's ambulance crisis.

He went on to say that there had been:

... an extra 229 hours per month of crews ramped up at the Geelong Hospital —

meaning that there are times when there are literally no crews to service the area and respond to even the most serious cases. A recent *Geelong Advertiser* editorial says:

It is very clear that the ambulance service in Geelong is not good enough.

The editorial goes on to say:

What is the state government waiting for before committing to fixing this problem?

These sentiments are shared right across the community by many constituents, and it is a topic that is raised on a continuing basis. Therefore, I ask the minister to address the situation and provide the necessary resources, whether that be personnel, vehicles or other equipment, to make sure the ambulance crisis in Geelong comes to an end.

### Shepparton bypass

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Treasurer, Michael O'Brien. The matter concerns the Shepparton bypass. Shepparton is a major transport hub, largely as a result of the local economy, which relies heavily on the food processing and agricultural industries' needs to move their produce to Melbourne for local and export markets.

It is 19 years since a planning study began to determine the appropriate alignment for a future Goulburn Valley Highway bypass of Shepparton and 8 years since the boundaries were finalised and incorporated into the planning scheme. The Shepparton Bypass Action Group has heavily lobbied state and federal governments for the construction of the Shepparton bypass over many years. The group's chairman, Peter Johnson, told the *Shepparton News* that in previous statements to the bypass group the Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder, said the Shepparton bypass was a major project of high priority for the state government and was in a state of readiness to proceed, which set it apart from other state road projects.

However, in previous state government submissions to Infrastructure Australia, the Shepparton bypass is mentioned behind a whole range of other infrastructure projects which are not as far advanced and not in a state of readiness as is the Shepparton bypass. Minister Mulder led the Shepparton community to believe that the bypass was a high priority and that its extensive planning held it in good stead to go forward. I believe, as do members of the Shepparton community, that we have waited long enough for the Shepparton bypass. The specific action I seek from the minister is that he fund the Shepparton bypass in the 2014 May state budget.

RACV identified the bypass as a vital project in its budget submission of 2013 and has said that it is

determined to work along with VicRoads to ensure that a bypass is built in the Shepparton area. The bypass would keep heavy vehicles out of Shepparton's CBD, which is particularly important because that is where the shopping strip and mall are and it would create a range of congestion problems within that shopping precinct to have trucks going through the main street. The construction of the bypass would also complete the Goulburn Valley Highway link by bypassing Shepparton. The Shepparton Bypass Action Group wants to see this bypass put in place, and the people of Shepparton deserve to have it funded in the next state budget.

### Social housing

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Housing. The action I seek is for the minister to increase annual capital funding for new social housing in this year's state budget. The recently released Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services 2014* indicates that Victoria saw a drop in capital funding for social housing between 2012 and 2013. In fact the drop has been so dramatic that funding has almost been cut in half. In the 2011–12 financial year total nominal expenditure for social housing was \$904.2 million, which included \$408.5 million in net recurrent expenditure and \$495.8 million on capital. In 2012–13 total nominal funding dropped to \$673 million, with capital funding cut to \$256.8 million.

When compared to other states, the Victorian government is falling behind on funding for social housing. In New South Wales, for example, \$1.5 billion was spent in 2012–13 on social housing, and in Queensland \$910 million was spent. Even Western Australia spent more on social housing last year, with \$896.7 million of funding provided. Between 2012 and 2013 Victoria has also seen a drop in social housing dwellings, from 64 768 to 64 616. With a growing population, I believe this is unacceptable. These are concerning figures. It is particularly concerning for Melbourne's western suburbs, in which there are higher rates of unemployment and in regard to which a media report last month was headed 'Shocking public housing conditions'.

A report by the Footscray Community Legal Centre entitled *Home Sweet Home — Act for the House not the Tenant* revealed that low-income earners across the western suburbs had a poor standard of rental accommodation available in the private rental market, and 70 per cent of the tenants surveyed in the report indicated that repairs were needed to their homes, with

many afraid to take the issue of repairs up with their landlords.

Worse still, in the latest agreement between the states and the commonwealth on homelessness announced last week, Prime Minister Abbott has ripped \$44 million out of capital funding, which will mean less housing availability for those doing it tough. The state government says it is fighting hard to make sure that funding is reinstated, but I hope government members will fight hard, and not just use words, to make sure that the \$44 million is not cut out of this program.

We all want to live in a society that cares about those who are worse off than us. We want to be members of a society that ensures that there is a safety net for those who have fallen through the cracks, that there is support from government for people who are doing it tough and that there is enough housing available for everyone who lives in our great state of Victoria. That is why I call on the minister to increase capital funding for new social housing and increase the number of social housing dwellings in Victoria through this year's state budget.

### Eastern Freeway graffiti

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Roads. It concerns graffiti on the Eastern Freeway noise wall at Orion Street in Balwyn North. This noise wall is on a VicRoads road, and the graffiti is on a VicRoads asset, which is why my request is directed to the Minister for Roads. The graffiti is not only unsightly but also creates a perception of a community that does not care. There is a concern that it also creates a perception that there is crime in the area.

On 8 October last year the City of Boroondara wrote to VicRoads asking that the graffiti be removed from the location, and the request was made that the local council wanted to ensure a reduction to the long-term likelihood of repeated graffiti vandalism within the municipality. We all know that if graffiti is regularly removed, the people who draw and make the graffiti are less likely to put it on, because they want to see their graffiti last rather than have it removed.

On 6 December last year the council got a response from VicRoads which says:

... due to operational constraints, there will be a number of locations where VicRoads will not be able to remove graffiti from its assets.

As a result, in December last year VicRoads indicated that, due to operational constraints, it would not be able

to remove the graffiti, and the graffiti is there to this day.

My request of the minister is that he intervene and ensure that graffiti on VicRoads assets is removed because, as I said, it is unsightly, offensive and creates an impression of unsocial behaviour and crime. I ask the minister to intervene and to ensure that we have a VicRoads policy where it takes responsibility for the removal of graffiti on its assets.

### Responses

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** (Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation) — Ms Mikakos raised a matter for the Minister for Health about future health and hospital funding. I will pass that matter on to Mr Davis.

Mrs Kronberg raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship regarding an appropriate acknowledgement and enshrinement of the contribution of the Scottish community to Victoria's and Australia's heritage and development. I will pass that matter on to Mr Guy.

Ms Broad raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding capital funding for Castlemaine Secondary College. I will pass that matter on to Mr Dixon.

Mrs Millar raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government regarding the process for the removal Sunbury from the city Hume, noting the contribution and work of the Sunbury Out of Hume consultative committee and the breadth of the community its members represent. I join with Mrs Millar in congratulating members of that committee on their contribution to this process. Mrs Millar has extended an invitation to the minister to be part of one of the nine upcoming community sessions that will take place throughout April. I will pass that matter on to Mr Bull.

Ms Tierney raised a matter for the Minister for Health regarding ambulance services in Geelong. I will pass that matter on to Mr Davis.

Ms Darveniza raised a matter for the Treasurer — although I seek your guidance, President, as to whether it would be more appropriately referred to the Minister for Roads, Mr Mulder — regarding the funding of the Shepparton bypass project. Ms Darveniza noted the work of the Kennett government in setting the alignment for the Shepparton bypass. I also note that the member for Benalla in the Assembly, Dr Sykes, opened the Nagambie bypass less than a year ago. It is my belief, President —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I think the minister is correct; it should go to Mr Mulder.

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** — Thank you, President, for your guidance. I will pass the matter on to Minister Mulder.

Mr Melhem raised a matter for the Minister for Health regarding increased capital funding, and I will pass that matter on to Mr Davis.

Mr Tee raised a matter for the Minister for Roads.

**Ms Mikakos** — President, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

**Quorum formed.**

**Hon. E. J. O'DONOHUE** — Mr Tee raised a matter for the Minister for Roads. I will refer that matter to Mr Mulder.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The house stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 6.51 p.m.**