

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 12 September 2012

(Extract from book 15)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

Premier and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. E. N. Baillieu, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Bushfire Response, and Minister for Regional and Rural Development	The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, and Minister for Tourism and Major Events.	The Hon. Louise Asher, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Finance	The Hon. R. W. Clark, MP
Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, and Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade	The Hon. R. A. G. Dalla-Riva, MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing	The Hon. D. M. Davis, MLC
Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. H. F. Delahunty, MP
Minister for Education	The Hon. M. F. Dixon, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. M. J. Guy, MLC
Minister for Higher Education and Skills, and Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession	The Hon. P. R. Hall, MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship	The Hon. N. Kotsiras, MP
Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development	The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister responsible for the establishment of an anti-corruption commission	The Hon. A. J. McIntosh, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads	The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP
Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing	The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs, and Minister for Energy and Resources.	The Hon. M. A. O'Brien, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.	The Hon. E. J. Powell, MP
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 Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water.	The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Community Services.	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr D. J. Hodgett, MP

Legislative Council committees

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

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

Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participating member

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr O'Brien and Mr O'Donohue. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella 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 Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Mr O'Brien, 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. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

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

CONTENTS

WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2012

PETITIONS

- National Centre for Farmer Health: funding*4175
- Planning: green wedge development*4175

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

- Reports 2011–12*4176

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

- Budget estimates 2012–13 (part 2)*4176

PAPERS

NOTICES OF MOTION

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

- Dementia: awareness*4179
- Homelessness: national conference*4179
- Neil Blake*4179
- St Kilda Triangle: development*4179
- Paralympic Games: Australian athletes*4180
- Azem Elmaz*4180
- Point Nepean: infrastructure upgrade*4180
- Rail: Lardners Track level crossing*4180
- Eid festival: Heidelberg West*4181
- Carlton Italian Festa*4181
- Dandenong Park: regional playground*4181
- Noble Park: civic space opening*4181
- Pride of Australia: medal recipients*4182
- Western Metropolitan Region: multicultural events*4182
- Rail: protective services officers*4182
- Blue Ribbon Day*4182
- Member for Lyndhurst: comments*4182
- Kyneton Daffodil and Arts Festival*4183
- Victorian College of the Arts: Threepenny Opera*4183
- Paralympic Games: Victorian athletes*4183
- Jacob Mibus*4183

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

- Reference*4183, 4206

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

- Places Victoria: chairperson*4197, 4198
- Teachers: enterprise bargaining*4198
- Places Victoria: board of directors*4198, 4199
- Carbon tax: health sector*4199
- Planning: green wedge development*4200
- Industrial relations: economic impact*4201
- Early childhood services: local government funding*4202
- Schools: Fishermans Bend*4202
- Nursing and midwifery health program: funding*4204
- Technology sector: government initiatives*4205

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

- Answers*4206

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

PUBLIC SECTOR: JOB LOSSES

LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES REFERENCES COMMITTEE

- Reference*4228

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

- Department of Primary Industries: report 2010–11*4238, 4244
- Family and Community Development Committee: opportunities for participation of Victorian seniors*4239
- Adult Multicultural Education Services: report 2011*4240
- Environment and Planning References Committee: environmental design and public health in Victoria*4241
- Regional Development Victoria: report 2011–12*4242, 4245
- Cancer Council Victoria: report 2011*4243
- Auditor-General: Fare Evasion on Public Transport*4243, 4247
- Sustainability Victoria: report 2010–11*4246

ADJOURNMENT

- Department of Primary Industries: Cobram office*4248
- Planning: Williamstown*4248
- Hampton Park: botanic garden proposal*4249
- Calder Highway: maintenance*4249
- Seaspray: caravan park*4250
- Ambulance services: Mooroolbark*4250
- East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival*4251
- Dementia: age-specific care*4251
- Responses*4252

Wednesday, 12 September 2012

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

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

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, members of the committee received notice of this meeting only yesterday, which is very short notice. It is reasonable for members when they are coming to Parliament to expect to know what is going on and what will be occurring during that week. If members only receive notice on the Tuesday of a committee meeting for that week, it gives them very little time to prepare for the meeting, given that they obviously have responsibilities relating to the operation of the parliamentary sitting. President, I seek your guidance in terms of whether or not it is appropriate that that committee should be meeting tonight with such little notice.

Mr O'Donohue — On the point of order, President, it is clearly scheduled in the parliamentary business day for Wednesdays that committees will or may meet, so this situation is not unusual. It should not be unexpected if a committee meeting is called. The practice of advising members on the Tuesday of a sitting week is consistent with the practice adopted by Mr Viney in his role as chair of the Legal and Social Issues References Committee when he calls meetings. I believe the practice I have adopted is consistent with the practice adopted by Mr Viney.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, President, I note that the standing orders make provision for committees to meet on Wednesday night as required. There is also a longstanding practice of meeting on a 24-hour notice cycle, and I understand from what Mr O'Donohue is indicating that he has adopted that consistent practice. I note also that there are three weeks until the next sitting week, and given the hiatus it would be appropriate in many circumstances for committees to consider business this week.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In terms of the point of order raised by Mr Viney, it is not strictly a point of order for the house and therefore the President to deal with in the context that in my view the committees have their destinies in their own hands rather than being subject to my directions or indeed commentary on their activities. The standing orders provide that notice of

meetings be given to members of committees, and as I understand it the standing orders provide for a 24-hour minimum notification; certainly this notification meets that provision. In that context I do not think there is any transgression of the standing orders, and while members may consider that from a courtesy point of view a longer period of notice might be appropriate, the fact is that it does meet the criteria, and to that extent I do not see a problem with the meeting proceeding.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

National Centre for Farmer Health: funding

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the state government's decision to cease funding for the National Centre for Farmer Health. In particular, we note:

1. the likely closure of the National Centre for Farmer Health due to the Baillieu government's decision to cut its \$1 million annual state government contribution;
2. the detrimental impact this funding cut will have on the health, safety and wellbeing of farm men and women, farm workers, their families and communities across Australia;
3. that the Baillieu government's decision to cut funding for the National Centre for Farmer Health will mean that the centre will no longer be able to carry out its important work such as research, service delivery and community for farming communities across regional Victoria.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council urges the Baillieu state government to immediately reinstate funding for the National Centre for Farmer Health and guarantee no further cuts will be made.

For Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) by Mr Leane (41 signatures).

Laid on table.

Planning: green wedge development

This petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the current review seeking to turn green wedge land into commercial and housing developments.

The protection, nurturing and enhancement of green wedge land has been supported by both political parties for over 30 years in recognition of the important role that open space plays in improving the mental and physical health of the community and maintaining the livability of Melbourne. They are the lungs of our city.

We are concerned that once gone the green wedges are gone forever and that future generations will regret the destruction of the green wedges.

We are concerned that the current review of the green wedge promotes housing and commercial development without any commitment or funding for additional schools, roads, health centres and public transport.

The petitioners therefore request that the Baillieu government stops the current review and agrees to strengthen and grow rather than reduce green wedge space.

By Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) (11 signatures).

Laid on table.

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

Reports 2011–12

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria), by leave, presented reports of Department of the Legislative Council and Department of Parliamentary Services.

Laid on table.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2012–13 (part 2)

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) presented report, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

In so moving I wish to make some brief remarks. First, I am pleased to present the second part of the committee's report on the 2012–13 budget estimates. This is the 12th report by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in the 57th Parliament. The report analyses the plans and estimates set out by the government in the 2012–13 budget papers and aims to explain the government's plans, put them in context and ensure that there is an appropriate level of transparency. Making sure there is sufficient transparency in the budget papers is a key function of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. This transparency is essential for fully understanding the government's plans at the start of the financial year. It is also essential in understanding how the government's performance compares to its intentions at the end of the year.

The inquiry into the budget estimates is a major undertaking. Work on the inquiry lasted from March to September and included extensive questionnaires sent to departments, over 54 hours of hearings with Victoria's ministers and the Parliament's presiding officers and a detailed analysis of the information in the budget papers. As a result of this work the committee has been able to identify a number of areas where improvements could be made. In some areas there is scope for additional disclosures — savings measures, department-based funding, reprioritising funding and expenditure on public-private partnerships are some examples. In other areas, such as asset investment and election commitment funding, the committee has noted that the disclosure in the budget papers is unclear and differs from one place to another. The report also identifies some concerns about the Department of Treasury and Finance in its role of overseeing quality assurance performance measurement and responses to the committee's previous recommendations. Similar concerns have been noted by the committee in a number of reports recently.

Regarding revenue from GST, the inquiry has revealed that there is a \$1 billion difference between the state government's estimates and the commonwealth government's estimates for the next four years. The committee is unable to understand or explain this anomaly. This may indicate a serious risk. If the government's plans are premised on inaccurate data, their practicability may be called into question. It is evident that the data provided by the commonwealth Treasury must be timely and accurate to afford the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance a high level of assurance in forecasting. I highlight this as an issue requiring urgent attention.

This year's report marks a shift in how the committee's reports are presented. Previous reports have often contained a lot of detail and have been quite technical in their analysis. I believe that this has limited their usefulness to the Parliament and the community. We have put a lot of effort this year into making the report more concise and into expressing the analysis in more straightforward terms. I therefore commend this report to all members of Parliament, as I believe they will all find something of value in it and find it a great deal more accessible.

Mrs Coote — I'm sure I will.

Mr P. DAVIS — I am looking forward to Mrs Coote's response. I would like to thank the many people who have contributed their time and effort to helping this inquiry — the presiding officers, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, the

Assistant Treasurer, the Attorney-General, ministers, departmental secretaries and many of their staff, who have provided essential information in response to our questionnaires, in person and at public hearings, and provided further detail in answering questions on notice.

I would like to also acknowledge and thank the members of the secretariat, who make not only a great professional contribution but also a significant commitment of their time, energy and integrity to a process which is essential to the good governance of the state. As always, they have performed at a high level with challenging time constraints, and I am very grateful for the high quality of their work. Further, this report would not be possible without the active cooperation of all members of the committee, who make reasonable endeavours to achieve consensus findings and recommendations and support for the report.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make a contribution on this Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) report, and in doing so I indicate that I reflect the views of the other opposition members on the committee. We support the report, but, as alluded to by the chair, Mr Philip Davis, a comparison between the part 2 report and reports from the last few years shows that much of the micro-level analysis of departmental variations, which has been a feature of previous reports, is gone.

A detailed examination of the 2011–12 report demonstrates that the information that was provided last year and which is not provided this year includes: changes in commonwealth funding broken down by category; the impact of one-off grants from the commonwealth; the competitiveness of Victoria's taxation system; non-financial public sector net debt; strategies to reduce debt; tax expenditure and concessions; a breakdown of expenditure by departments and a comparison of departments' mix of expense types; employee expenses and staff numbers by department; savings through not increasing initiative funding in real terms over time; details of contentious initiatives identified in the budget estimates hearings; productivity growth — Victoria versus Australia; and details of Council of Australian Governments deliberations.

It is true that the more detailed style of report typical of the recent past is resource intensive and puts a strain on the committee's secretariat and on its budget. This problem has been exacerbated by the reference PAEC has received and by the cuts to the budgets of parliamentary committees imposed by the government.

All committees have been required to compromise their output as a result of the government's budget cuts, but we do not see it as being appropriate for those cuts to impact on the core function — that is, the rigorous scrutiny of the budget estimates.

Unfortunately the structure of this report is a tangible example of the way in which the Parliament's ability to scrutinise the government of the day can be frustrated by budgetary decisions made by the very same government. Having said that, allow me to thank the chair, other members of the committee and the secretariat for all the work that went into the compilation of this report.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — As a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee I would like to briefly endorse the remarks of its chair, Mr Philip Davis, on the report. I believe he has summarised well the benefits of these reports for members of Parliament in terms of the important transparency and accountability roles of PAEC, the great assistance that is provided to the committee by the secretariat and by the relevant ministers and their departments, and the work of the committee members themselves.

In response to Mr Pakula's contribution I would like to briefly point out that the report was unanimous, and in so doing say that it reflects the difficult role that PAEC sometimes has in being a parliamentary committee that looks at accountability and at budgets across all government departments, including the Parliament, in an independent, bipartisan way. I am very proud to be a member of the committee. There are some interesting issues emerging. Accountability, disclosure and information around public-private partnerships is an emerging issue across the committee and in other places in relation to the tensions between commercial confidentiality and the public's desire to know details of various projects and the consistency of accountability across estimates year to year. The recommendations and findings as set out on page 136 and the following pages of the report are clear.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General — Report on Energy Efficiency in the Health Sector, September 2012.

Fisheries Act 1995 — Report on the Disbursement of Recreational Fishing Licence

Revenue from the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account, 2011–12.

Heritage Council of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2011–12 report.

Mental Health Review Board incorporating the Psychosurgery Review Board — Report, 2011–12.

Phytogene Pty Ltd — Minister's report of receipt of 2011–12 report.

Plumbing Industry Commission — Report, 2011–12.

Premier and Cabinet Department — Report, 2011–12.

Primary Industries Department — Report, 2011–12.

PrimeSafe — Minister's report of receipt of 2011–12 report.

Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994 — Nomination order, application order and a statement of reasons for making a nomination order, 4 September 2012.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 93 and 98.

Treasury Corporation of Victoria — Report, 2011–12.

Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2011–12 report.

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority — Report, 2011–12, together with 2011–12 Financial Statement for Domestic Buildings (HIH) Indemnity Fund.

Victorian Strawberry Industry Development Committee — Minister's report of receipt of 2011–12 report.

Youth Parole and Youth Residential Boards — Report, 2011–12.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In response to Mr Viney's point of order earlier this morning I indicated that 24 hours notice for meetings was included in the standing orders. That is not correct, but I have a source that is almost as impeccable, and that is a ruling I gave back in February when I was asked about notifications of meetings. I indicated that, consistent with what happens in the house, motions are often moved that a matter be considered on the next day of meeting. In other words, there is essentially around 24 hours notice that a matter may well be debated on the following day. The ruling I made on 29 February — Sadie Hawkins Day — is the basis for a convention that could well apply in terms of consistency to committee notice periods.

If members wish to consult the ruling, it is on page 1009 of *Hansard* of 29 February. As I said, the 24 hours is not specified in standing orders, but there is consistency with the practices of the house. I wanted to draw that to the attention of the house and correct myself.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices of motion given.

Mrs PEULICH having given notice of motion:

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am really not happy about motions that call on parties to apologise. In the context of government people have many priorities, but the caravan of government moves on. In my view when an apology is called for it diminishes the house and establishes a basis for motions that I do not think is appropriate. Mrs Peulich and I may have a chat about this particular notice of motion, but I caution members about calling for apologies in motions. There is another notice of motion on the notice paper, notice of motion 427, which I am also having a look at. I am advised that it is Mrs Petrovich's notice of motion. We spoke about that last week, and I indicated a concern on that occasion about a call for an apology in relation to that. I am not sure the call for an apology advances the motion, which is essentially to congratulate the government on an initiative.

Mrs Peulich — An overdue initiative.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It may well be an overdue initiative, but that is a matter for debate rather than for a notice. At any rate I will have a look at both of those and have a discussion with the member.

Mrs PEULICH — On a point of order, President, I am happy to have a discussion with you, but I believe that would be an unfair and inappropriate intrusion and veto from the Presiding Officer, irrespective of who it is. I have made that point because I think it is an important part of the debate. The President's considerations will follow him long into the future.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The problem I have is that every other motion now going forward is going to call on somebody to apologise for something. We will end up with a whole lot of motions that start positively and then say, 'So and so should apologise for this'. As I have said, I believe it diminishes the status of the house to get into that tit-for-tat situation. That is what concerns me about where we go in the future with these notices of motion. I believe Mrs Peulich has another notice of motion.

Mrs PEULICH — I do. Fortunately it does not call for an apology, although I note that federal Parliament frequently uses that form.

Further notice of motion given.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Dementia: awareness

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — This morning I was very pleased to attend the launch of the Victorian Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, which was co-convened by Wade Noonan, the member for Williamstown in the Assembly, and Nick Wakeling, the member for Ferntree Gully in the Assembly. I congratulate both of them for this initiative.

Dementia is a growing problem in the community, with 72 000 Victorians currently living with dementia. This is expected to double by 2030. This year the highest prevalence of dementia is found in the Department of Health's north and west metropolitan region, which also takes in my electorate. In the lead-up to Dementia Awareness Week from 21 to 28 September, it is important to remember that dementia does not just affect the elderly.

The breakfast this morning focused on younger onset dementia. There are an estimated 2500 people under the age of 65 living with dementia in Victoria. This presents unique challenges in relation to their different needs. Garry Lovell, who attended the breakfast, spoke about his personal challenges of facing dementia whilst in his 40s, particularly in relation to his fear of ending up in an unsuitable aged-care facility. I thank Garry for his courage.

I was proud of the former Labor government's support of people with dementia, which included new funding in 2008–09 to specifically target young people with dementia and their families and carers. I believe more needs to be done in this particular area. I am pleased that the federal Gillard government's aged-care package, Living Longer. Living Better, has a significant focus on dementia, with \$238 million to be invested to tackle the illness. As well as making dementia a national health priority, I congratulate everyone involved today on raising great awareness of dementia. I also encourage members to download the free Brainy App program.

Homelessness: national conference

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — The house will be delighted to know that Victoria hosted the 7th National Homelessness Conference last week in Melbourne. I am also pleased to report that the Victorian government, as well as other governments in Australia, including the federal government, sponsored this important conference. The conference brought together hundreds of service providers and experts from

around Australia who work on the issue of homelessness. Some of those who have experienced homelessness were there to share their experiences and talk about what is of assistance to them.

Some of the world's leading homelessness experts were also present, including Alison Cunningham of the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System in Canada, Nan Roman from the National Alliance to End Homelessness in the United States and Mark McGreevy from Depaul International in the United Kingdom. The conference heard from many providers about effective ways to address homelessness.

I was particularly proud to be able to outline to the conference the Baillieu government's initiatives in this area, including more than \$90 million in additional funding we have allocated to address homelessness since our election. Our homelessness strategy has won praise from many experts for its focus on innovation, and it is pleasing that we are now seeing practical outcomes from our homelessness innovation action projects. The Baillieu government is committed to reducing homelessness in Victoria, unlike those opposite, who failed vulnerable Victorians for 11 long years.

Neil Blake

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to congratulate Mr Neil Blake on winning the Dame Phyllis Frost Clean Beaches award. Neil Blake is the Port Phillip baykeeper and the director of the Port Phillip EcoCentre. He has been a major organiser and a participant in the 2011 clean beaches initiative put forward by the Port Phillip Clean Beach Coalition to clean up the beaches in the Port Phillip municipality. Neil has been involved for many years in community-based projects and programs around the city of Port Phillip. He is a worthy recipient of that award, and I congratulate him on that.

I also congratulate the Port Phillip EcoCentre on its adoption of a new strategic plan at its annual general meeting of 2 September, which I attended.

St Kilda Triangle: development

Ms PENNICUIK — On another matter, I would like to congratulate the councillors and staff of the City of Port Phillip on the adoption of the St Kilda Triangle 2012 framework. This document is the culmination of more than two and a half years work which included community feedback from four ideas forums, extensive community engagement and a series of technical studies that investigated the future requirements of the

Palais Theatre et cetera. The framework envisages giving back appeal rights and separating the Palais Theatre from the development of the St Kilda Triangle. I urge the state government to contribute to the refurbishment of the Palais Theatre.

Paralympic Games: Australian athletes

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — Like many people in this chamber, I watched with enormous pride Australia's Paralympic team compete in this year's Paralympic Games. I have to say it was uplifting and the entire team was extraordinary. Their feats of courage were amazing. I personally enjoyed it far more than the able-bodied Olympic Games, although they too were remarkable.

I have such admiration for every one of the participants in the Paralympics. It is pleasing to know we came fifth in the overall tally of medals. We had 32 gold, 23 silver and 30 bronze medals, and 23 per cent of the team of 161 athletes were Victorians, which is absolutely super.

An editorial in yesterday's *Australian* states:

As London Olympics chief Sebastian Coe said, 'We will never think of sport the same way and we will never think of disability the same way' after a Paralympic Games that set new records for sporting achievement, crowds, television audiences and sheer spirit.

Australians have discovered a new group of sporting heroes and new ways to enjoy sport through the ABC's television coverage. The speed and skill of the competitors has been enthralling and their stories uplifting, demonstrating the power of the human spirit to overcome obstacles.

I say congratulations to every one of them. They were inspirational.

Azem Elmaz

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to congratulate Mr Azem Elmaz from Shepparton on recently receiving the Pride of Australia Fair Go medal. Mr Elmaz was born in Macedonia, and he arrived in Melbourne in 1983 with \$2.40 in his pocket and a job lined up working alongside his brother as a cleaner.

Mr Elmaz owns and runs Lutfiyes Shish Kebab in Shepparton with his wife Jehain and the People Supporting People charity that runs soup kitchens throughout the region.

Mr Elmaz is a devout Muslim who has a strong belief that charity and reaching out to others is an essential part of life. He provides advice to prisoners at HM Prison Dhurringile on finding their feet once they are released back into the community. The People

Supporting People group, under Mr Elmaz's guidance, also provides free breakfasts at the Anzac Day dawn services and coffee at community Christmas carols. During the May 2012 floods Mr Elmaz and his group provided over 15 000 meals for flood victims and volunteers. They are always there when an event needs a hand, volunteering and offering enormous support, and they are a real example of intercultural community harmony.

Mr Elmaz is an inspiration and a highly respected and valued member of the Goulburn Valley community, and I pay tribute to him and his wonderful family. Once again I congratulate him on receiving this prestigious award.

Point Nepean: infrastructure upgrade

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Point Nepean is a wonderful asset for the Victorian community. It is a great part of the Mornington Peninsula and indeed a great part of Australia. Its proximity to Melbourne reinforces the tourism potential for Point Nepean, and this will be further enhanced after Peninsula Link is opened early next year.

In that context I congratulate the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, on the \$13.8 million works package that the government is investing in roads, car parks and essential services upgrades at Point Nepean.

It is very pleasing to see that the new communications tower at Monash Light within the park has now been completed and is accessible. The new tower offers park visitors an amazing opportunity to take in a 360-degree view of the spectacular landscape from Point Nepean.

Rail: Lardners Track level crossing

Mr O'DONOHUE — On a second matter, I was very pleased to see the completion of the Lardners Track level crossing in Warragul — delivery of yet another pre-election commitment from the Baillieu coalition government.

Lardners Track in Warragul was Victoria's no. 1 country level crossing black spot — a level crossing that the previous government failed to upgrade and failed to fix despite being in power for 11 years. I am very pleased that because of the advocacy of my colleague and friend the member for Narracan in the other place, Gary Blackwood, and the work of the Minister for Public Transport, Minister Mulder, this is now a much safer level crossing for the people of Warragul and the people of West Gippsland.

Eid festival: Heidelberg West

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — On Saturday, 25 August, I was delighted to attend the celebration feast to mark the occasion of the end of Ramadan in my electorate. The festival is called Eid.

My parliamentary colleague Anthony Carbine, the member for Ivanhoe in the other place, was also present. The celebration included a reading hour for the children, and a free book was given to every child who participated.

The event included many festive activities for children and was held in the mall in West Heidelberg. Its sponsors included the Somali Council of Victoria, Banyule City Council and the Bell Street Mall Traders Association.

I thank all the organisers and volunteers for their very well-organised and special occasion.

Carlton Italian Festa

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — Signore e signori — ladies and gentlemen — last night I had the absolute pleasure of joining the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, Nicholas Kotsiras, to launch the Carlton Italian Festa with the Carlton Italian Festa committee and present to it a government grant of \$88 000 to help launch this festa, which will be held in the Piazza Italia on Lygon Street on 14 October 2012.

It is going to be a great celebration of Italy at the Carlton Italian Festa. There will be live performances by local and Italian artists, including Melbourne's own Anthony Callea, who will be singing there. There will be cooking demonstrations, an Italian-inspired kids corner, soccer clinics run by Melbourne Heart, bocce games, Italian car and motorcycle displays and an amazing selection of Italian cuisine, including of course great coffee. This is a wonderful celebration of what is great about Italy, which will be brought to Lygon Street on 14 October. La festa sara una magnifica celebrazione, which means the festival will be a magnificent celebration. I encourage all Victorians to attend, and I congratulate the wonderful organising committee for bringing Italian culture to our wonderful multicultural Victoria.

I thank Italy for all the great things it has brought us: pasta, vino, the arts, architecture, building and the extra carbohydrates. I thank it for the wonderful things it has brought to Victoria, including teaching me to play great card games like scopa and briscola. I thank Italy from

the bottom of my heart for the most magnificent thing there is: my beautiful wife, Gina.

Dandenong Park: regional playground

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Last month I had the pleasure of attending the city of Greater Dandenong's opening of stage 1 of the Dandenong Park regional playground, located in the Riverside precinct next to Dandenong Creek. The new playground transforms — —

Mrs Peulich — With?

Mr TARLAMIS — Mrs Peulich and a number of other colleagues.

The new playground transforms the area into a highly usable and fun space for the community and one that caters for children of a broad range of ages and abilities. It features swings, a lookout tower, sandpits with built-in play equipment, spinners, a slide, landscaping and soft paving areas for play, which combine sensory, imaginative and exploratory play concepts. The playground forms part of the Dandenong Park master plan, which includes long-term plans for major improvements to the park and which was funded thanks to a strong and effective partnership between the City of Greater Dandenong and the state and commonwealth governments. I look forward to the plans for future stages of the riverside precinct coming to fruition.

Noble Park: civic space opening

Mr TARLAMIS — On another matter, I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Noble Park civic space in Douglas Street, Noble Park. The development of the civic space next to the Noble Park railway station car park is a concept that was first manifested during the Noble Park centenary celebrations held in 2009. I commend the City of Greater Dandenong, which undertook extensive community consultation and which remained committed to this project despite having to overcome a great many challenges due to the proximity of a substation and the railway line.

The space offers ample seating and performance space and provides residents and visitors with a functional outdoor area to meet, relax and mingle in a friendly and safe environment. It is also well lit for evening activities. A series of events and activities have already been planned for the space, including the unveiling of the new permanent neon art work by artist Fiona Hillary, featuring words that describe local people's feelings and thoughts, as well as visual and performance art and three art workshops for children as part of the Greater Dandenong Children's Festival. I

look forward to seeing this space well utilised into the future.

Pride of Australia: medal recipients

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — I wish to pay tribute to the many volunteers who work hard behind the scenes lending a hand to help others. While these people do not look for accolades, it is important that their contributions are recognised. I offer my congratulations to the three recipients from the Geelong region who were awarded 2012 Victorian Pride of Australia medals last week. These people are now eligible for the national Pride of Australia medal in their category, to be awarded in October.

Wildlife carers Tehree and Hamish Gordon received the Pride of Australia environment medal for their dedicated work looking after animals at their Barwon Heads koala and wildlife sanctuary, while Col Hastings of Geelong received the Pride of Australia medal for his community spirit. Col has been volunteering for over 40 years, from organising bottle drives for Bell Post Hill Kindergarten to working with the Christ Church community meals program for the last 22 years. Volunteers under Col's leadership and with the support of his wife, Pam, serve free meals to those in need. Breakfast is provided seven days a week, with over 100 meals being served each Monday and Wednesday evening. The Baillieu government has provided \$30 000 to upgrade power facilities in the kitchen, and two further grants of \$15 000 each will help keep the program viable. The Geelong community is grateful to Col Hastings, the Gordons and the other Geelong nominees for their selfless acts of kindness and compassion.

Western Metropolitan Region: multicultural events

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — We have a great multicultural society in Melbourne's west. This was on display last Sunday when I attended the Konkan community feast of the nativity in Hoppers Crossing, then the Kresy-Siberia exhibition *Fragments of Sibirak Memory* by the Polish community in Footscray, and following that the 20th anniversary of the Asian Television Association of Australia in Ascot Vale. Each of these organisations has done their bit to help our multicultural communities over the years, and it is great that we are able to join together in celebrations.

Rail: protective services officers

Mr ELSBURY — I also thank the boys and girls in blue and yellow, our protective services officers, who

are now deployed to patrol railway stations at Werribee, Laverton and Yarraville. Last night I went to Werribee and Laverton, and I thank Sergeant Groves for the time he took in taking me through exactly what had gone on during the night. I remember catching the train late at night from Laverton station, but last night there was a marked difference: not one local yokel was there, nor was there anyone at Werribee railway station shouting or throwing things around.

Blue Ribbon Day

Mr ELSBURY — I encourage everyone in our community to support Blue Ribbon Day, to be held on 29 September, and remember police officers who paid the ultimate price in protecting us all and serving our community.

Member for Lyndhurst: comments

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — It was with great interest that I read in *Hansard* a speech made last week at the regional sitting of the Legislative Assembly in Ballarat by the member for Lyndhurst, Mr Holding, on a motion regarding the Regional Growth Fund. The member adopted the usual deceitful Labor accounting practice of comparing every dollar the former government spent in regional Victoria — even funding for the core areas of law and order, and education and health, which members of the former government then bundle up with what they put into the former Regional Infrastructure Development Fund — with the total funding the present government is investing in the Regional Growth Fund.

Mr Holding then trotted out another Labor lie that the Regional Growth Fund will somehow be spent in the suburbs of Melbourne, when he knows that simply is not the case. Mr Holding and Labor know that when comparing like for like, the Regional Growth Fund will invest just under double what the Labor Party was prepared to commit to regional development in Victoria before the last election. Mr Holding and Labor also know that the 48 regional local government authorities around the state are ecstatic about having the Local Government Infrastructure Fund and that the Putting Locals First program is seeing local champions prioritising local projects and helping create jobs.

In typical gutless fashion Mr Holding started his speech by saying that opposition members could not and would not support the motion in favour of the Regional Growth Fund. He finished by again stating that he would reject the motion and would not support it, but once the motion was put to the vote, little Mr Holding did not have the courage to vote against it. I do not

know what this says about Mr Holding, other than that he is all talk and when the time comes to cast his vote he does not have the courage to vote as he says he is going to.

Kyneton Daffodil and Arts Festival

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — Although the annual Kyneton Daffodil and Arts Festival is held in Western Victoria Region, it is very close to my home. This event has connected members of the Macedon Ranges community since 1973 and is still going strong. The festival celebrates the rejuvenation of spring, and the daffodil symbolises all that is beautiful in the Macedon Ranges at this magical time of year. The festival showcases food, wine and culture in the Macedon Ranges, for which the area is renowned. The festival encompasses literary performances and art exhibitions presenting the artistic talent of various members of the community whose achievements were celebrated over the weekend. Big congratulations go to the 2012 King and Queen of Kyneton Daffodil Festival, Frank and Betty Jenner, and their loyal subjects Prince Josh Smith, Prince Max McLeish, Princess Lilly Nolte and Princess MacKenzie Cameron.

Victorian College of the Arts: *Threepenny Opera*

Mrs PETROVICH — Recently I was privileged to attend a fabulous performance of the *Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. This production is a celebration of the talents of students from the Victorian College of the Arts in the beautiful but very humble hall at Taradale. How lucky we were to see such a fabulous performance of the *Threepenny Opera* in an area which celebrates the Woodend Winter Arts Festival and now also a spring music festival. There are only two more seasons to go: summer and autumn. Just watch this space! We have a very good opportunity to expand this program.

Paralympic Games: Victorian athletes

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I join my colleague Mrs Coote in congratulating all our Paralympians, particularly the 23 per cent of them who are Victorians. Mrs Coote always displays great compassion and conviction in relation to the disability sector, and it is great to hear these athletes' tales of courage. I pay tribute to members of the Paralympics team from the Geelong area in particular: Richard Coleman, a wheelchair athlete who won a gold medal in the 800-metre race and a bronze in the 400-metre; Kelly Cartwright, who won gold in the long jump and

silver in the women's 100-metre category T42 sprint; Jess Gallagher, who came sixth in the javelin and competed in the long jump; and Drysdale's Sam McIntosh, who competed in the 100 and 200-metre wheelchair races.

Jacob Mibus

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — I would also like to pay particular tribute to Jacob Mibus, a young boy from Dunkeld who had his foot amputated after it was badly cut in a farm accident. He has recently shown great courage and inspiration in competing and indeed taking first place in the athletes with disability category at the Australian All Schools cross-country championships, which took place in Adelaide from 24 to 27 August. He stormed home in the 2-kilometre cross-country event and also took out the 1000-metre event.

I saw Jacob in the Royal Children's Hospital after his accident and saw the courage he displayed in facing what would be the loss of his foot. He still competes at football, and his family is an inspiration to the area. I commend him on his efforts.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Reference

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I move:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Education and Training Committee is required to inquire into, consider and report no later than 28 February 2013 on the impact in the Bendigo region of the Baillieu-Ryan government reforms to refocus TAFE to support a strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system.

I move this motion to make this reference to the Education and Training Committee of the Parliament, which I believe to be the most appropriate committee. I understand that the committee has completed one reference during the term of this Parliament, which was an inquiry into gifted and talented students. It is currently working on a second inquiry into agricultural education and training, which was due to be reported on by 31 January 2012, but that reporting date was extended to 16 November 2012 by the Legislative Assembly. I do not think the committee would be overworked in taking on the reference set out in the motion before the house today.

The Baillieu-Ryan government, the responsible minister and government MPs have all claimed that the government's reforms to refocus TAFE to support a

strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system — the government's words, not mine — will make TAFE stronger. If the government really believes that, it will have no reason to vote against this motion because it would expect the committee to report back in support of its claims. Presumably the TAFE transition plans, which have recently been received by the minister, will further support the government's claims about its so-called reforms.

The Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Peter Hall, wrote to me stating:

This is a great chance for TAFE institutions to consolidate their prime place in Victoria's training system, capitalise on the TAFE brand and make positive changes in the form of greater collaboration between providers, sharing of services and delivery, innovative delivery modes, greater productivity in employment conditions and closer alignment with higher education programs.

Clearly Minister Hall is backing these reforms and should have nothing to fear from a parliamentary inquiry into the impact of the reforms the government has embarked on.

I will focus on Bendigo, which is an important part of the proposed reference. Bendigo is an important regional city in the electorate of Northern Victoria Region, which I represent together with other members in this house. Last week the Parliament convened in Bendigo with great fanfare. The government's priorities were to propose a motion proclaiming gold as the mineral emblem for Victoria, something most Victorians presumed was already the case, and to congratulate itself on supporting regional Victoria, something people living in regional Victoria quite rightly expect as a given from their state government.

Meanwhile the government turned its face away from the inconvenient truth that it was in fact imposing the largest cuts in Victoria's history on TAFE — that is, on public sector delivery of vocational education and training. It was not entirely able to turn its face away from the community's rejection of its savage cuts to TAFE. In order to participate in the lunch hosted by the Parliament government members could not avoid walking through a demonstration at the front of the historic Bendigo School of Mines building, now Bendigo TAFE.

I should point out that Bendigo TAFE has announced that as a result of the government's funding cuts to TAFE it will vacate some of its heritage buildings on McCrae Street in central Bendigo in a bid to cut costs. That of course is where the Parliament hosted the lunch that members were very happy to go to last week. I am

sure that now government MPs are back in more familiar surroundings they think all of that is behind them and they can move on and forget all about TAFE cuts in Bendigo and the discomfort of viewing the community's rejection of those cuts up close and personal.

Let me outline what the government's cuts to TAFE in Bendigo, Castlemaine, Kyneton and Echuca — because that is where Bendigo TAFE has, or I should say had, campuses — mean for local communities. I say 'had' because Bendigo TAFE has now announced that as a result of the government's cutbacks it will close the Kyneton campus. First and foremost, these government cutbacks in relation to Bendigo TAFE mean a \$9 million cut to the budget of Bendigo TAFE. That is one-quarter of the government's funding to Bendigo TAFE. Twenty-five staff lost their jobs immediately and another 75 positions are expected to be slashed before the end of the year. Thirty-nine courses are being cut, with the hardest cut areas including business management, finance, graphic design, visual arts, hospitality and retail. These are areas that the government does not believe are priorities for vocational education and training.

Student fees are expected to increase by between 30 and 50 per cent. The government has trumpeted an increase in current student enrolments without being willing to admit that that is due to it having provided an undertaking after announcing the cutbacks that students who enrolled before 1 July this year would be able to undertake their courses on the old fee structures. That has led, very sensibly on the part of anyone planning to undertake vocational education and training at TAFE, to a distinct bulge in enrolments, a bulge which of course is going to actually make the problem the government has pointed to in terms of expenditure on TAFE worse than it otherwise would have been. The government has been entirely counterproductive, if its reasons for inflicting these cuts on TAFE are to be believed. Of course it is not only Bendigo TAFE that is affected. Across its three campuses in Bendigo and its remaining campuses in Castlemaine and Echuca these cutbacks to TAFE funding are being felt.

In referring particularly to TAFE institutes in northern Victoria, I indicate that Sunraysia TAFE has campuses in Mildura, Ouyen, Robinvale and Swan Hill; Goulburn Ovens TAFE has campuses in Shepparton, Wangaratta, Benalla and Seymour; and of course there is a very important large, regional TAFE in Wodonga. These are all feeling the impact of these TAFE funding cutbacks by the Baillieu-Ryan government, with resulting cuts to jobs and a reduction in opportunities for families living in rural and regional Victoria. What we will very surely

see following these cutbacks is a reduction in prosperity across regional Victoria resulting from a reduction in people with the skills and training that business needs.

I want to draw particular attention to a decision that Bendigo TAFE has made in response to these funding cutbacks, a decision I believe it is to be commended for. I know that other TAFEs, particularly in rural and regional Victoria, are also making decisions along these lines. These TAFEs believe they offer courses which are not provided by the private sector, courses which are not profitable but which are very important for the good of the students enrolled in them, who are the students who most need training. Bendigo TAFE has announced that a number of courses that will never meet their own running costs will be continued because it believes these courses are very important and represent what distinguishes TAFE from private training organisations. The courses Bendigo TAFE has decided to keep include courses in language, literacy and numeracy. To use the words of the chief executive officer of Bendigo TAFE, Maria Simpson, these are:

... the sorts of courses we wrap around students who will otherwise struggle with their trade studies or with their other areas of study, but are really fundamentally important to help them have success and to stay as students and not drop out of a course because it becomes too hard.

Bendigo TAFE should be commended for the decision it has made in the face of extreme adversity, with a quarter of its budget being cut by the Baillieu-Ryan government, to keep the courses which are so important for the most disadvantaged students, who rely the most on TAFE for opportunities in life.

I also want to make some remarks about the impacts on TAFE of these funding cutbacks by the Baillieu-Ryan government. Members of the government have claimed that their reforms to TAFE will make TAFE better and stronger. They have claimed that their reforms are necessary because private providers have rorted the system and that it is not possible to address those rorts because it might put people out of business. They have also said it is not the fault of TAFE that government is inflicting the most savage cuts in history. I think it is fair to say that most members of the community find the government's arguments entirely unconvincing. After all, if the government believes private providers have rorted the system, is it not the right thing to do to hold those providers accountable and to address those rorts? If the government believes TAFEs are not at fault, then why perpetrate the most savage cuts in their history?

Let us look at the rationale behind these arguments that the government has been advancing and why the

community has rejected that rationale. The community in Bendigo and indeed communities across regional Victoria are entitled to ask what else could possibly be motivating the government? After all, families in regional Victoria have already experienced the way that previous Liberal-Nationals governments have treated them; they have even been described as the toenails of the state. Families in Bendigo and regional Victoria are not cut off from the rest of the world. They see the TAFE cuts across Victoria, and they see Liberal-Nationals governments in New South Wales and Queensland doing exactly the same thing while nations that compete with Victoria's rural and regional producers are investing in education.

Just today they will have seen the announcement by Chisholm TAFE of a further 220 jobs being cut as a result of the Baillieu-Ryan government's savage cutbacks. They see government cutbacks in other public sector areas, like the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) program, home and community care services, Department of Primary Industries officers and staff, fire services, catchment management authorities — —

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President, given the narrow parameters of the motion I believe the member is now straying way outside the Bendigo region. I understand she is a local member, but she is commenting on other parts of Victoria and also on other portfolio areas. Clearly she is way outside the bounds on either measure.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! As lead speaker Ms Broad is allowed some latitude. I believe she is canvassing issues in relation to the motion, but I ask her to remain relevant to the motion.

Ms BROAD — It is interesting to see the sensitivity that government members display in relation to my remarks.

Families living in rural and regional Victoria see the government's refusal to keep its promise to Victorian teachers, including TAFE teachers, and its cuts to capital funding for schools and TAFE. In the last budget there was no capital funding for TAFE at Bendigo, in regional Victoria or indeed anywhere else. What this says to families is that this Liberal-Nationals government, like others before it, does not think it is necessary for government to support families in regional and rural Victoria with services or to assist with creating opportunities through TAFE or in other ways. The government certainly does not think it is necessary to have a jobs plan for rural and regional

Victoria, given we are seeing 2000 jobs cut from the public sector in TAFE alone.

What this says to families in regional and rural Victoria — and Bendigo — is that if they want to improve their circumstances and those of their families, they had better not count on any assistance from the Baillieu-Ryan government; they should expect to do it all by themselves. If they are a family on a low to middle income looking to education at TAFE or through VCAL to help them to improve their circumstances, then they should definitely not expect that they will be a priority for this government. After all, this is all about priorities. The government has not stopped spending or borrowing; it is just choosing to spend and borrow for other priorities.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President, the member is defying your ruling. She is clearly straying way beyond the parameters of the motion. No-one is shying away from the debate. If she wants to have a broader-ranging debate, she should have framed the right motion. I ask that you, Acting President, bring her back to the substance of the motion, which is actually quite narrow and specific.

Ms BROAD — On the point of order, Acting President, to be generous, the matter of the government's cutbacks to TAFE has affected education opportunities. Capital spending on TAFE is very directly in the purview of this motion, and it is clearly a matter of priority for the government to have cut TAFE and spent in other areas.

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

Ms BROAD — Perhaps the clearest indication of how the government has thought about priorities over the two years it has been in office is the recent announcement that resources will be diverted from areas like TAFE, VCAL and education, and instead used to hunt down a mythical great black cat.

In contrast to the Liberal Party and The Nationals, Labor believes vocational education and training is vital to provide opportunity, to create jobs, to create skilled jobs and to help businesses and families to get ahead not only in Bendigo but across rural and regional Victoria. I am sure that communities in metropolitan Melbourne feel exactly the same way. TAFEs are important institutions in Bendigo and regional Victoria. They are valued by their communities because they provide opportunities, they provide jobs and they make regional Victoria more prosperous than it would otherwise be. That is the reason why communities

across regional Victoria, together with their elected representatives in local government, have rallied to fight against the government's savage cutbacks to TAFE. At the last count at least 30 councils had passed resolutions condemning these savage government cutbacks to TAFE, including many in regional Victoria. However, TAFEs are strong and resilient institutions, and I know they will do their level best to serve their communities in spite of these savage cutbacks.

In conclusion, I say again to government members that if they really believe in their reforms to refocus TAFE and to support, in their words, 'a strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system', and they believe all of that will make TAFE stronger, then they will have no reason to vote against this motion, because they will have nothing to fear from an inquiry into the government's reforms to TAFE.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — It is my duty to respond to this motion on behalf of the government. I advise that the coalition will not be supporting the motion, and for some very good reasons. Ms Broad's very clinical and measured delivery of her contribution interested me. It was completely inconsistent with her motion, which was poorly drafted given the breadth of the arguments she wished to canvass. If we had wanted a more fulsome argument about Labor's failures during 11 years, its waste and mismanagement and the reason it was kicked out of office, then the motion should have been a broader one. I never resile from having a fulsome debate.

Victorians, certainly across South Eastern Metropolitan Region but also right around the state, were sick and tired of seeing their good, hard-earned money flushed down the gurgler, whether through poorly implemented ICT projects, the poorly implemented myki project, smart meters or the loss of \$3 billion in the mismanagement of the pokie licences process. All of this money could have been deployed to build the social and physical capital of Victoria.

Victorians can see that money and their opportunity for a brighter future slipping away while, like other members of the ALP, Ms Broad sits quietly there on the backbench — as quietly as a mouse. When she was a minister in the former Labor administration she had the seniority to make her voice count in terms of cutting that waste and making sure Victoria's future was not squandered by Labor's incompetence. Now she has the audacity to bring this motion and be more virtuous and more Catholic than the Pope. Does any government like making cuts or want to make cuts in order to fix up Labor's mess? We are forced into that position time and

again. Ms Broad spoke about coalition governments having to do this right around Australia. Yes — to clean up the mess Labor has left behind because of its total incompetence and inability to manage or administer.

Ms Tierney — Boring, worn-out rhetoric.

Mrs PEULICH — Ms Tierney says it is boring. That is what she thinks about the concerns of Victorians. She thinks their concerns about the waste and mismanagement her government presided over are not important. Most governments would like to be able to give money away, hand it out, invest in social and physical capital and do so with lower taxes and lower charges rather than do what we are having to do. Ms Broad, in standing there and speaking like that, shows she has missed her forte; she should have been a preacher. Listening to her, you would have thought she had no involvement whatsoever in the debacles of the last 11 years of the Labor government and the financial consequences we now have to address. These TAFE reforms are part of that.

Before going on to specifics, I note that Ms Broad spoke about how local government had got behind this motion. That would not have anything to do with the fact that there are local council elections this year, would it? Ineffective local councillors right across Victoria, inspired by the Greens and some members of the Labor left, have been misusing opportunities to try to trump up motions, often without having any more detail or information than that provided by the media. Councils in my region have done that too, and I have been able to learn that the councillors concerned had no knowledge of these things. It was only recently that the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, addressed a gathering of the Municipal Association of Victoria and its delegates to provide detailed information about the reasons for the TAFE reforms — and good on him; that was very well received. This issue is not only being used by Labor to try to define itself in the policy wilderness; it is also being used by desperate, left-leaning councillors who are trying to find an issue to compensate for the fact they have done no work to represent their electorates and are struggling to find support in the community.

Let us now come to the substance of this motion. Under repeated questioning and amidst lots of debate and media interviews Mr Hall has been up-front about the processes which exist and which will help TAFEs to manage the reforms and map a pathway for the future. That process is there; it is currently under way. To propose to throw this to a committee exposes Ms Broad and the Labor Party's sheer political opportunism. They do not really care about Bendigo TAFE or its future or

the damage this motion and such a committee process would do to Bendigo TAFE's reputation. Ms Broad does not give a hoot about that. This is just about finding some political mileage; she does not care what political bodies it would leave behind.

We have appropriate processes that the minister in conjunction with the department has put in place to address the challenges TAFEs might confront in relation to the implementation of reforms which regrettably were necessary as a result of Labor setting up a system that was unsustainable. Not only was it financially unsustainable; in many instances it was not delivering in terms of the skills shortage areas for this state and for Australia. It would have been reckless policy to ignore the fact that our education system — our TAFE or VET (vocational education and training) system — was not addressing the economic priorities of the state and the nation by generating more graduates in those critical skills shortage areas. Those opposite had ignored that for 11 years.

The changes the minister has spearheaded result from a tight financial situation and also from the poor implementation of reforms initiated under Labor which generated this unsustainable system. The Victorian coalition believes we need a strong, sustainable and effective VET system, and the minister has already been responsible for a number of reforms to make it more effective — and I will canvass some of those — and more sustainable.

Prior to 2010 the government purchased a fixed number of training places from a group of providers, and the great majority of training was delivered by the TAFEs. From June 2009 Victoria commenced implementation of an uncapped market-driven VET system, and from January 2011 there was a fully demand-driven system underpinned by the Victorian training guarantee. The number of training providers contracted to deliver government-subsidised training rose from 250 in 2008 to over 600 in 2011, largely as a result of the reforms pursued by the former Labor government at the state level as well as the Labor government at the federal level. No amount of posturing will conceal this fact.

Training enrolments as a result of that uncapped system have increased by 44 per cent — regrettably not in the areas of skill shortages. Investment in training has risen from what was funded and forecast at around \$800 million in 2008 to in excess of \$1.3 billion in 2011–12. That is a very substantial growth — regrettably not in the critical skill shortage areas.

This government needed to address a number of factors, some of which have been the subject of

legislation that has already passed through the house. They are to do with quality, an unsustainable financial position in the system and not delivering the outcomes that this community, Victorians and Australians need and deserve. To say that somehow we relish doing this is disingenuous and simply playing politics, especially with this motion.

What are some of the challenges? As I have said, the growth in training in some areas where there are just not the jobs in the marketplace will not contribute to productivity. Those areas include training for fitness instructors, where there was a growth of 1955 per cent in funding — a massive growth for low-level qualifications that did not lead to jobs. There has been opportunistic behaviour by some training providers and there have been some concerns about quality, which without foreshadowing debate, the minister will address when we come to the next motion. Actions have been taken by the minister to shore up quality and ensure that we have a system that can respond effectively to concerns.

The VET system needed these reforms, and it particularly needed to be made more flexible and responsive. As a result of that the minister is pursuing a new industry participation model which can hopefully better inform TAFEs and other training providers as to the courses that are needed to deliver jobs and implement outcomes. There are higher expectations of training providers, stronger powers of inspection and enforcement that have been put in place through VRQA — the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority — stronger entry standards for training providers wishing to deliver government-subsidised training and a new market monitoring unit to monitor how the market is functioning, including in the areas of quality, price and competitiveness. Obviously there is a continued investment in skills in areas where people can actually get jobs.

I note that all apprenticeship subsidies have actually increased, as they should, and I commend the minister for that. Twenty-one per cent of courses, or approximately 220 courses, have a higher subsidy than the previous small TAFE rate, and 150 courses are largely unchanged, with subsidy rates within 5 per cent of current levels. Separate payments to TAFEs have been redirected into high-value courses. The reforms include the removal of controls on fees — and this is really important — but continued support for low-income students, unqualified young people and Indigenous Victorians, and fee-free training for young people in state care and care leavers.

It is important to understand the impact of the reforms on specific TAFEs based on their profile and enrolments, which cannot be done via this motion but can be effectively done by the process the minister has established, and I will come to that in a moment. In addition to that there will be greater support to help people navigate through a very complex VET system, with a one-stop shop training website for employers and students so they have access to better information and understand what their choices are.

A range of reforms is being pursued, and I will go specifically to the matters of the motion in a moment. However, it is important to emphasise that Victorians aged under 20 can access training at any level, regardless of any qualifications already held. Those aged 20 and over can gain access to training for any qualification higher than they already hold; access to foundation-level skills is unlimited to all Victorians, regardless of age or qualifications already held; and access to training for an apprenticeship qualification is similarly unlimited, regardless of age or previous qualifications. That is a strong system of education provision that this government has continued to support, and it has done so even more effectively than the previous government has by some of the reforms that have been implemented and will be implemented into the future.

Who gets the additional loadings which will impact on the funding for individual TAFEs, depending on their enrolment profiles — that is, who qualifies for concessions? All health-care card holders and their dependents qualify for concessions. The minister has introduced a range of other loadings. There is a regional loading — a 5 per cent loading for any training undertaken in a regional location.

Ms Tierney interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — I will come to some examples to see how this is put into effect. There is an Indigenous loading of 50 per cent, which applies to all Indigenous students, and there is a youth loading of 30 per cent for any 15 to 19-year-old student from a low socioeconomic status background who does not have a senior secondary qualification. So there are many assurances that provision is there, and the impact is not fully understood because it will very much depend on the profile of enrolments and the capacity of TAFEs to refocus to those areas that are generating the higher subsidies. Nowhere will we read that the subsidies to 700 courses have increased. This is where this debate has been so one-sided. Ms Broad and the Labor Party are prepared to trash and shred the reputation of a

regional provider such as Bendigo TAFE in the course of playing opportunistic politics.

I now come specifically to the motion. I emphasise that a modern vocational training system requires a network of well-functioning and modern TAFE institutions alongside other providers. That is the model here in Victoria. It is different to that in New South Wales; there TAFE provides 80 per cent of the training, but down here — as a result of the reforms instigated by Labor — TAFEs now provide approximately 50 per cent of the training, alongside other providers. From next year all providers will receive the same amount for training, whether they are TAFEs, adult community education providers or private providers — or, as we commonly refer to them, registered training organisations (RTOs). TAFEs do, however, have significant advantages, and that will continue, with their exclusive right to the TAFE branding.

I was pleased to see that when the Premier led the delegation to India it included TAFE representation, because we recognise the importance of the overseas market as well. TAFEs also have a significant advantage in their long-established reputations and a very large asset base that is not enjoyed by other providers.

The reforms provide new challenges and opportunities, and that is why we have boards of TAFEs — to refocus the business plans and the strategies to take advantage of the changes in the funding. One would expect that this refocusing would occur with all providers, be they TAFEs, community providers or private RTOs.

A strong public training provider network will continue to be a vital feature of Victoria's vocational training system, making the system more sustainable and delivering better outcomes to Victoria and to the nation, especially in those areas of critical skill shortage. There are special arrangements in place for TAFEs to structurally adjust to changes, and the minister has answered questions at length as to what they are. He has tried to be open, up-front and transparent in outlining what this process is.

As part of the 2012–13 budget changes to vocational training funding, a number of supplementary payments that TAFEs receive will be redirected to the hourly subsidised rate. The new arrangements provide increased funding to courses of greater public value, such as trades training and delivery in specialised occupations and where there is a shortage. These courses are predominantly delivered by TAFEs; therefore the increased subsidies will be of greatest benefit to TAFEs rather than other providers. In 2011,

80 per cent of all training delivery in the highest subsidy level, band A, was delivered by TAFEs. The 2012–13 budget allocates up to \$25 million to high-priority regional TAFE capital works, contingent on the commonwealth government paying its way and matching that funding.

During the regional sitting of the Legislative Council in Bendigo this month Minister Hall was delighted to be able to have some really positive discussions with the good people at Bendigo TAFE about the way forward for their institute. The minister believes the future is bright for training delivery through TAFEs in the region. I understand that between July 2011 and July 2012 enrolment for the Loddon Mallee region grew by 40 per cent, compared with 35 per cent growth in enrolment in private registered training organisations. I understand this is the only region where growth in TAFE enrolments exceeded growth in enrolment with private providers. There was 29 per cent growth in enrolment between 2008 and 2011 but 35 per cent between July 2011 and July 2012.

Of the 2007 VET qualifications offered by Bendigo TAFE in 2012, 49 per cent are in subsidy bands A and B, which attract higher funding. Bendigo TAFE has announced 39 course closures in the areas of business management and finance, aged care and disability, health and wellbeing, community and children's services, hair and beauty, hospitality, arts, graphic design and multimedia, primary industries and retail. The list of government-subsidised enrolments in selected courses is extensive, and I will let Mr Hall go to that, but I will select a few generic examples. Certificate IV in agriculture attracted variable rates previously. The old rate in the non-TAFE sector was a contribution of \$9.24 per hour. The old rate for a large TAFE was \$10.1 and \$10.39 for a small TAFE. The new rate is \$10, and the regional loading takes that up to \$10.50. The new rate plus a youth multiplier of 1.3 takes it up to \$13. That is a substantial increase.

The old rates for certificate IV in children's services, outside school hours care, were \$6.93 for small TAFEs and \$6.74 for large TAFES. The old rate for non-TAFEs was \$6.16 and the new rate is \$8.00. The new rate plus regional loading is \$8.40. The new rate plus the youth multiplier of 1.3 is \$10.40. Compare that to the \$6.74 that would have been received by a TAFE such as Bendigo TAFE.

The old rates for certificate IV in aged care were \$9.53 for small TAFEs and \$9.26 for large TAFES. The old rate for non-TAFEs was \$8.47, and the new rate is \$10. The new rate plus regional loading is \$10.50, while the

new rate plus the youth multiplier is \$13, a very substantial increase.

The old rates for certificate III in hospitality were \$7.79 for small TAFEs and \$7.58 for large TAFEs. The old rate for non-TAFEs was \$6.93.

Ms Broad — On a point of order, Acting President, earlier today Mrs Peulich was concerned about relevance — I am on my feet and have the call for the point of order. We have now been listening to Mrs Peulich read from a document, which presumably goes on for a very long time, about rates of funding for individual TAFE courses. This is an enormous amount of detail, which the motion certainly does not address. I ask you to bring the member back to order and, as she referred to earlier, matters pertaining to Bendigo TAFE.

Mrs PEULICH — On the point of order, Acting President, I would have thought that giving some examples of the impact of the new system of TAFE funding goes to the heart of this motion and is a rebuttal of many of the arguments that were canvassed by Ms Broad. To rule my contribution out of order would make a laughing stock of the process.

Ms Broad — Further on the point of order, Acting President, I am very confident that I did not refer to individual funding rates in my contribution to the debate, so the claim that this is a rebuttal is not true.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Order! As Mrs Peulich is referring to rates as a consequence of the changes, I do not uphold the point of order.

Mrs PEULICH — My list is not that long. I just wanted to explain the process the minister has set up, which allows each TAFE to plan out and to understand what the effects of the changes will be. To be part of a transitional process and to enjoy the support of the department in doing so is important, because those profiles will be dependent on enrolments.

I am going to finish my very short list. I think I had started looking at certificate IV in aged care. The old rates were for small TAFEs \$9.53 and for large TAFEs \$9.26. The old rate for non-TAFEs was \$8.47, and the new rate is \$10.00. The new rate plus regional loading is \$10.50, while the new rate plus the youth multiplier is \$13.00. That is substantially higher than the \$9.26 that a large regional TAFE would have received under the previous funding arrangements.

Certificate III in hospitality — commercial cookery — is something that young people seem to be more inspired to take because of *MasterChef*. I do not know;

my mother was a chef, and it is a very hard way to earn a living. In relation to the subsidy for this course the old rate for small TAFEs was \$10.39 per student contact hour, the old rate for large TAFEs was \$10.10 and the old rate for non-TAFEs was \$9.24; the new rate is \$11.50, the new rate plus regional loading is \$12.08 and the new rate plus the youth multiplier is \$14.95, which is a very substantial increase.

In relation to this motion Ms Broad is, I think, more interested in political grandstanding than understanding and helping our TAFEs work through a transitional process to establish a sustainable and more effective system of course delivery. Ms Broad is not interested in that; it is just political grandstanding, and it does not matter how many reputations of good, decent TAFEs one trashes and leaves behind.

In closing, the TAFEs will remain a vital part of the system, and a strong public provider training network will continue to be part of that system. Our TAFEs and dual-sector universities are very highly valued by Victorian learners and businesses. They will continue to play a critical role in delivering training that meets the needs of their communities.

In particular the government will continue to provide for TAFEs to lead the development of high-quality and innovative curriculum, teaching practices and assessment for learners, including those with complex learning needs. We will continue to build on the strength of TAFEs to export education services interstate and overseas. We will foster participation in courses that enable learners to gain higher levels of qualification in higher education through clear pathways, through strong partnerships with universities and other higher education providers and through higher education delivery within the TAFE system. It will be a stronger system, because it will be more efficient and be able to effectively compete in a demand-driven contestable training system which is supported by the federal government and supported by the previous state Labor government. The system will include the application of technology to improve efficiency of education and training delivery.

The transition process is being overseen by an independent four-member body, the TAFE reform panel, chaired by Mr Ken Latta. The institutes are delivering business transition plans which the TAFE reform panel will assess and use to inform the development of the roadmap for the sector. The TAFE reform panel is supported by the TAFE reform task force, which is facilitating regular discussions with TAFE institutes on their plans in the appropriate forum

and in the appropriate way and holding monthly meetings with TAFE chief executive officers.

All councils have been provided with a briefing through the MAV and invited to provide ongoing submissions on key issues about taking the system into the future. No system can afford to stand still. It exists in the context of financial constraints and education needs. I believe these reforms are necessary. It is regrettable that the financial mismanagement of the former Labor government and the squandering of substantial amounts of public funds require these efficiencies, but people like Ms Broad were part and parcel of those losses. As a result we now have to clean up Labor's mess. Through the process we hope to see the higher education system become stronger, better and more effective in delivering better outcomes for the Victorian community.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — The Greens will support the motion moved by Ms Broad today, because we believe there needs to be parliamentary oversight of and inquiry and investigation into what is happening presently in the vocational education and training (VET) system and in fact what has been happening in it for the few last years.

Although I have said we will be supporting the motion, I have two queries about the motion which I have raised in conversation with Ms Broad. Firstly, the motion asks the Education and Training Committee to inquire into, consider and report by the end of February next year on the impact in the Bendigo region of the Baillieu-Ryan government's reforms to refocus TAFE to support a strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system. I query why this is so, even though I understand that the motion was put on the notice paper at the Bendigo sitting of Parliament. In my opinion it would be better if the motion focused more broadly than on just the Bendigo region. However, the inquiry into the impact on the Bendigo region can inform the impact of the Baillieu government's reforms to refocus TAFE around the state.

Secondly, there is the phrase 'reforms to refocus TAFE to support a strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system'. I would not want it to be construed that the Greens in any way think that the Baillieu government's reforms to refocus TAFE will support 'a strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system', because we, as the Greens, have questioned the whole idea of a market-driven

vocational education and training system ever since it was introduced by the previous government in 2009.

Mr Drum — What a mess.

Ms PENNICUIK — We support the motion because we strongly believe the changes to vocational education and training, and particularly the severe cuts that this government has made to the TAFE sector, need to be looked at by the Parliament on behalf of the community. The community continues to raise serious concerns about what is happening to the TAFE system.

By way of background, the fact is that in 2009 the previous state government opened up public funding to private registered training organisations (RTOs), forcing the public TAFE institutes to compete with them. At the same time it cut student numbers but gave students only one shot at a government-funded place unless they were moving to a higher qualification. Those reforms, which at the end of 2010 culminated in changes to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, were opposed by the Greens.

Like many stakeholders, the TAFE associations and the unions, at the time we pointed out that this would lead to a blow-out with the private RTOs, and that is exactly what happened. It led to an explosion of private registered training organisations, which rushed in to cherry pick popular, cheap-to-run courses. Student numbers soared but not in areas where there were skills shortages. The result has been a massive blow-out in Victoria's training budget, but the blow-out was not in the public TAFE sector. It occurred with the private providers.

In Parliament a couple of months ago I asked the Minister for Higher Education and Skills why ministers and government members of Parliament had been running around Victoria saying that there had been a blow-out in the TAFE sector when in fact that was not the case, and the minister agreed. In fact he said that he understood my question was about the injustice of the funding being removed from TAFE when in fact the blow-out almost exclusively and totally occurred with the private providers.

Mr Drum — That is not true.

Ms PENNICUIK — Mr Drum says that is not true. It is true; the government is not being honest when it says that it is not true.

The fact is that government funding delivered to TAFE providers grew by 4 per cent between 2008 and 2011 and was stagnant between 2010 and 2011. Government funding delivered by private RTOs grew by 310 per

cent between 2008 and 2011 and 122 per cent between 2010 and 2011. This comes from the quarterly reports put out by the department. It is not something I am making up.

Mr Drum interjected.

Ms PENNICUIK — I say to Mr Drum that these are the facts. The share of government funding enrolments by TAFE providers decreased from 66 per cent to 48 per cent by the end of 2011. As Mrs Peulich said, TAFE has less than 48 per cent of student enrolments or less than half of student enrolments. The share of government-funded enrolments to private RTOs increased from 14 per cent to 40 per cent by the end of 2011, and those organisations now have a share of 44 per cent of student enrolments. The number of private RTOs delivering government-funded training has increased from 201 to 430 organisations and has increased by 114 per cent between 2008 and 2011. Again, this comes from the quarterly report. These are the facts put out by the government department that collects these statistics. It is very clear that the blow-out in costs occurred with the private providers, and it occurred as a result of the introduction by the previous government of market contestability and uncapped student places.

The government's response to this has been to cut funding to 80 per cent of TAFE courses in the May budget, ripping \$290 million out of funding for TAFE from 2013. Of this, \$170 million was comprised of funding to TAFE institutes as school service providers — that is, the differential funding. This includes funding for community service obligations — for example, the full spectrum of student services and facilities, statutory obligations, specific requirements as public entities et cetera. Also, \$130 million has been lost by adjustments to the prices paid by the government for the delivery of accredited courses. This has resulted in the carnage that we see across the TAFE sector.

I want to speak about what has happened across the TAFE sector in Victoria, because I believe the motion should look beyond Bendigo. The committee can do that, and I think the government should accept this. I agree with what Ms Broad said, that the government should have nothing to fear from her reference to the Education and Training Committee, because we have a crisis in the TAFE sector and in the ability of students to access skills training that is occurring now and will continue to worsen into the future because of the policy of market contestability which was introduced by the previous government and which has been continued by this government. This government could have chosen

not to go down that path, but it has chosen to do so; it is ripping money out of TAFE when it was not TAFE that caused the problem.

We now know that around 2000 TAFE staff will lose their jobs as a result of the funding cuts; approximately 600 of those will be in regional Victoria and 1400 in metropolitan Melbourne. It is estimated that Bendigo TAFE will lose 100 staff, but there are also job losses in other regional TAFE institutes. Sunraysia Institute of TAFE will lose 26 of its staff; GippsTAFE will lose 70; and South West Institute of TAFE will lose 43, or 10 per cent of its staff. We also know that Bendigo TAFE has decided to close its Kyneton campus. This will result in the loss of 39 courses, including in the areas of business management, finance, graphic design, visual arts, hospitality and retail. The certificate II course in agriculture and shearing will also be lost at that institute. At Wodonga TAFE, 50 courses will be lost. At South West TAFE, up to 169 programs are at risk, leaving approximately 200 courses in 2013. From 1 July this year 30 courses were cut, including lower level certificates in business and hospitality. Courses in animal studies, events and tourism have also been cancelled at that institute. At the University of Ballarat, 57 courses in business, hospitality, sport and recreation, racing and the arts have been cut. Approximately 2200 students may be affected.

In my electorate, at the Swinburne Institute of Technology, the Prahran campus is under review and the Lilydale campus is to close in 2013. That campus services 900-plus students in TAFE programs. This will affect courses relating to automotive, building, cookery, forestry, government, food processing, hospitality, leisure, local government, massage, public safety, and recreation and tourism. These courses will no longer be offered at Lilydale. The Prahran TAFE has its own theatre, the David Williamson Theatre, where performance arts has been taught for years, and that is a well-renowned course. Prahran TAFE has its own restaurant that is used by its hospitality students. All these things will be lost. That public infrastructure has been paid for by the taxpayer, and the closure of the campus will mean that those facilities will be lost to the public.

In terms of funding cuts, Bendigo TAFE has lost \$9 million, or 25 per cent of its government-funded delivery; Sunraysia Institute of TAFE has lost \$6.5 million; GippsTAFE has lost \$10 million; South West TAFE has lost \$7 million; Wodonga TAFE has lost \$7 million; and the University of Ballarat has lost \$20 million. In the metropolitan region, Swinburne has lost \$35 million, leading to the drastic cuts that I have just mentioned; the William Angliss Institute has lost

\$5.8 million; the Chisholm Institute of TAFE has lost \$25 million, or a third of its government-funded delivery; Victoria University has lost \$32 million; Holmesglen TAFE has lost \$25 million; the Box Hill Institute has lost 30 per cent of its government funding; the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE has lost \$25 million; RMIT has lost \$20 million; the Kangan Institute has lost \$25 million; and the carnage goes on.

We know, as I have just mentioned, that this has resulted in courses being dropped, in staff losing their jobs and in the closing of campuses, particularly in regional areas with smaller campuses. How can Mrs Peulich say that TAFE institutes will remain a strong part of the system, espousing, as she did, a lot of rhetoric about strength and innovation and saying that the TAFE reform panel and task force will manage the challenges that the TAFE institutes, as she said, 'may' be facing? They are facing these challenges because of the funding cuts across the TAFE sector. It is difficult to understand how TAFE institutes can remain strong and vibrant when they are closing campuses. Campuses are being closed at Kyneton, Prahran and Lilydale, just as examples — but particularly Kyneton, as it is attached to Bendigo TAFE — and others that have been mentioned around the state. I do not see how this is good for the students in those areas. They will not have local campuses to attend and they will have to travel further.

Another problem is that those smaller campuses are hubs that create indirect employment in the local area, as of course do the larger campuses like Bendigo, Ballarat and Prahran. TAFE institutes provide students with a local place to study. They provide employment for local people in terms of ancillary and support staff, and they provide indirect employment in terms of small businesses around those TAFE campuses.

There will be an impact on all that. Facilities that have been built up over the years using taxpayers money are going to be lost. There was no need for the government to slash TAFE funding to deal with problems that have been caused by market contestability. The way to fix that was to wind back market contestability and keep TAFE institutes at the call of vocational education and training, and particularly apprenticeship training, which has been built up over decades in Victoria. That is what should have been done. Instead a problem that I say was caused by market contestability has been made 10 times worse, even 100 times worse, by the actions of this government with regard to TAFE.

TAFE is being punished for the excesses of the private sector, and under this system vocational education and training in Victoria has virtually been privatised.

Without anticipating the motion I will be moving later today, this has also involved widespread training rorts that people have been contacting me about for a long time. Those issues have been reported in the media, but they have not been adequately addressed in any way.

We know that around 30 local governments have passed motions in support of their TAFE institutes and that they are concerned about the cuts the government is making to TAFE. At a meeting of the City of Greater Bendigo Council on 23 May two motions were moved and carried that the council consider, as a matter of urgent business, funding cuts to the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and that the council write to the Premier and Minister for Education requesting a review of budget cuts to Bendigo TAFE and make personal representations to the Honourable Damian Drum.

Mrs Peulich said that Mr Hall had addressed, as indeed he has, a meeting of the Municipal Association of Victoria, and she asserted that that was well received. That is not the case. Councils with TAFE institutes in their local areas have not received this well.

It is now becoming clearer to the public that what the government has been running around saying since the start of this year — that is, that there has been a blowout in TAFE and that it has to fix it — is not correct. The blowout has not been in TAFE. It has been with the private providers and the explosion in the numbers of private providers, which I mentioned before, and the problems with quality in regard to that.

It is interesting to note an interview recorded just last week on the ABC's 7.30 Victoria program with the CEO of the Australian Industry Group, who was filmed sitting next to the Premier at a luncheon in Ballarat during the regional sitting. He had things to say, such as that he regarded the cuts to TAFE as unnecessary restructuring, that the government had gone too far. He said the cuts were unfortunate, that they go too far, too fast, and that they will result in shortages in skills training. He also said it was a myth that only non-core courses were being cut. Core courses have been cut in regional TAFEs, as we know, and that is because of the blanket savage cuts to core subsidies across VET, which has included TAFE. They have not taken into account the fact that TAFE institutes, with facilities that have been provided as a result of taxpayer funding, deliver the practical training that is needed by students. We are left with what Mrs Peulich referred to in her Orwellian way as TAFEs having to now manage the transition into the new world. Courses will be cut, leaving students with nowhere to go, staff losing their jobs and facilities being closed down. That is what adjusting to the new world of TAFE means for many

regional and metropolitan TAFEs, and that is not good for Victorians now or into the future.

TAFEs, as I mentioned, are a vital part of the social, economic and cultural infrastructure of the towns and suburbs in which they are located. They provide good jobs for local residents and training opportunities for local students and young people.

I do not believe in the government rhetoric of a strong, sustainable, efficient, market-driven vocational education and training system if it is not underpinned by preserving and building upon the TAFE infrastructure that we already have in Victoria. We are seeing that already being undermined, and in the next few years we will see a collapse in TAFE courses and in TAFE infrastructure around Victoria. This is highly regrettable, and that is why we need a parliamentary inquiry into what is happening in the TAFE sector in Victoria, but particularly in Bendigo. I am happy to support the motion with the qualification that I believe it should be looking at the impact of the Baillieu government's so-called reforms to TAFE on all regions of Victoria. I think of the word 'reform' as meaning something good. I do not see what the government is doing to the TAFE sector as anything good. It is difficult to see how such a loss of staff, facilities and courses could be good.

The so-called 'blow-out' in certain types of courses did not occur in the TAFE sector. It occurred in the explosion of new private registered training organisations; that is where it happened. They are the facts of the matter. It did not occur in TAFE, so the fact that such savage cuts are being visited upon TAFE is a concern. The government has maintained this rhetoric, but it is false and dishonest. That is why this matter needs to be looked at by a parliamentary inquiry. Everything that has happened since 2009 needs to be looked at before irreversible damage is done to the TAFE sector, which is and should remain the major provider of vocational education and training in Victoria. Handing that over to the private sector, along with changes to the availability of subsidised training and the related problems with registered training organisations, would mean that there is less equity in the provision of pathways for local students from secondary schools into the VET system. For example, VET in Schools is facilitated by TAFE, not by RTOs. All of these things will be lost, so Parliament needs to look very carefully at this issue. That is why we will support the motion, notwithstanding my queries and concerns about some of its wording.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — It is disappointing that a motion such as this is on the notice

paper today from a member for Northern Victoria Region, Candy Broad. Ms Broad purports to support regional Victoria and Northern Victoria Region, but she knows an inquiry such as the one called for by her notice of motion will have a negative impact on regional TAFE colleges, especially Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT).

It has been well known by TAFE administrators for the greater part of the last 18 months that the TAFE system put in place by the previous Labor government was running on a totally unsustainable basis. TAFE administrators openly say that significant changes needed to be made. The previous government put in place a regime with an open-ended government guarantee that students could stay in the system, without any monitoring whatsoever, provided they were moving up. Many TAFE institutes took advantage of recognition of prior learning and pushed through a ridiculous percentage of clients. That is what they were: clients, not students. They were given recognition of prior learning at an astonishing rate.

Also, at some TAFE colleges there were students enrolled in four, five, six or even seven certificate courses at the same level at the same time, which made them eligible for government subsidies. Labor put in place this system with an \$800 million budget in 2008 with the expectation that it would rise to \$850 million or maybe \$900 million by 2012. However, it got that figure wrong by about \$350 million. Yes, the vast majority of the blow-out did take place within the private sector, but there were still a whole range of inefficiencies rife within the TAFE sector that had to be addressed.

What has been lost is that the previous government was spending \$800 million in 2008, but the coalition government is providing funding to the TAFE sector to the tune of \$1.2 billion this year, with the capacity for further growth within the sector. This government will also provide increased subsidies for areas such as trades, aged care and working within the disability sector. In facing up to the previous Labor government's inability to manage anything, the current government has put the TAFE sector on a strong footing.

The Labor government presided over a deregulated system without one skerrick of monitoring. How stupid could the previous minister have been to put a new system in place without any monitoring of facts, statistics or the people who were applying to take advantage of this open-ended, government-funded model? The stupidity of ministers of the former government was staggering if they thought this system would somehow or other right itself, and now

Ms Broad thinks she is going to fix the whole system by having the Education and Training Committee conduct an inquiry.

The refocusing of the TAFE sector means that people are losing their jobs, which is always a horrible outcome. Nevertheless it is worth noting that having given birth to the RTOs (registered training organisations) it now hates, Labor will have to refocus the courses they offer because government subsidies have been changed across the board.

If an RTO delivers training courses for apprentices, then it will have an increased subsidy coming its way and increased incomes. If an RTO offers a certificate III in fitness training or certificate IV in outdoor education, it will have a diminished income, because those courses have had their government subsidies cut. This change to and refocusing of training is not just within the TAFE sector; it is across the board. The government has addressed problems in the entire training sector and is committing more than \$1.2 billion to the sector going forward. We are working closely with the entire sector. We are putting in a more onerous set of compliance standards for RTOs than were imposed by the previous government. RTOs now have to meet a stringent set of compliance standards in relation to their financial profitability whether or not they deliver courses. There is scrutiny of areas which Ms Pennicuik will talk about later in the day in another motion.

What this government is doing to ensure that the training sector raises its standards for delivery of service is head and shoulders above the performance of the previous government, whose members now think they can fix this situation by having a parliamentary committee hold an inquiry. In effect that is what we are debating today. We are debating whether it is in the best interests of the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and its potential students for the Education and Training Committee to conduct an inquiry. Ms Broad, the mover of this motion, would know that as we speak TAFE institutes, including BRIT, are all preparing business transition plans. She would also know that once those plans are completed they will be evaluated by the independent TAFE reform panel, which will inform and advise the government on the impacts of those transition plans, including access to training.

All this work is being done in the quickest possible time. Plans are being put in place that will best position BRIT and other TAFEs for the future so we can get this work done to ensure confidence among the students who are about to embark on TAFE courses. This process will ensure that consumer confidence remains at its highest possible level. Members of the

government will ensure that BRIT continues to operate in a sustainable manner into the future, and that all TAFEs will have greater control over their future, including flexibility in the delivery of the courses they offer. That is the system we are working on at the moment, and it is already in place, already going. Transition plans are on the verge of going to the independent TAFE reform panel. Once that happens, the government will be advised of the impacts on TAFEs and potential future actions the government could take to assist some of these colleges going forward.

While all that work is being done — and Ms Broad knows it is being done — this politically motivated motion is before us. The sole aim of this motion is to try and embarrass the government with some of the negative outcomes of TAFE reform and to further do so through the process of an inquiry by a parliamentary committee. The mover of this motion knows that the performance of this government is already head and shoulders above the proposals put forward in this motion. The government has already moved way beyond this process. We have moved into a situation where we are talking with TAFE colleges on a daily basis about the best way to position them.

Ms Darveniza interjected.

Mr DRUM — I have got a cockatoo in the house, and I would rather it be put out of its misery.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Ms Darveniza has been not so much constantly interjecting as heckling — I think that might be the apt description — since Mr Drum began his address. Most members of the house — and certainly the Chair — would enormously appreciate her keeping her own counsel for just a little while so we can hear the contribution Mr Drum continues to make.

Mr DRUM — I have nearly completed my contribution. The question is about whether it is in the TAFE sector's best interests for this issue to go before a parliamentary committee for an inquiry that will take a number of months, or whether it would be in the best interests of TAFE colleges that the work that is well and truly under way be completed so that all of these TAFE colleges can have a tremendous say in their futures? My thoughts are that this work is well and truly under way. Once these transition plans are in place they will be reviewed by the independent TAFE reform panel. Once the government has been informed of the panel's findings, the government will continue to work in conjunction with the TAFE sector on the best way to go forward so that those courses that provide the

greatest amount of productivity for this state will continue to be invested in by taxpayers funding.

Some of the courses which offer a lesser degree of productivity for the state will have their funding diminished. Once TAFE colleges, including Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, understand that they are going to be in greater control of their future going forward and that a model will be set up that will be sustainable into the future and will be outlined in their transition plans, this work will be done. We are not going to serve anyone's interests other than the politically motivated members of the Labor Party by agreeing to this motion. A parallel process is already occurring, so there is no need for the matter of TAFE funding to be referred to the Education and Training Committee.

From a local perspective, I have met with the board of BRIT a number of times in relation to the refocusing of training. I have met with people from various RTOs as well and talked to them about the courses they are likely to be able to offer into the future. As Ms Pennicuik said, I have met with the local council, the members of which were totally unaware of the mess the previous government had bestowed on the entire sector. However, they were glad to be enlightened about the other side of the story. It does not give me any pleasure to stand up and speak to this motion. It is politically motivated and against what I think Ms Broad would normally do. I would not expect this type of cheap stunt from Candy Broad; I would have thought she was a bit above this. I will be voting against this motion, because the work being put forward in the motion is work that is already being done by the government.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise and speak in support of this motion. I bet it does not give Mr Drum any pleasure to get up and make a contribution to the debate on this motion, because he is part of a government that has been responsible for bringing about the largest and the most devastating cuts that the TAFE sector has ever seen.

On the subject of the meetings Mr Drum has had with the various TAFEs across northern Victoria, I would love to know how well they took his assertion that the government is on a very strong footing and that TAFE is on a very strong footing, because I do not think any people in any TAFE institutes feel they are on a strong footing at the moment. They have had devastating cuts inflicted on each and every one of them and are struggling to deal with how they are going to be able to change their physical operations and infrastructure, the

courses they offer and their staffing levels in light of the huge budget cuts to the training sector.

I would also be interested in what the various TAFEs around northern Victoria would say to Mr Drum's claim that the TAFE courses which will be cut are those that offer lesser productivity. Lesser productivity is what is going to be cut, according to Mr Drum. I would like to know if Mr Drum has been to SuniTAFE (Sunraysia Institute of TAFE) in Mildura and spoken to any of the 26 people who have lost their jobs. Has he told them that the courses they teach will no longer be offered because they deliver lesser productivity? I wonder if those people at Sunraysia TAFE think they are on a strong footing as they deal with a \$3 million budget cut.

Has Mr Drum spoken to the two people at SuniTAFE in Swan Hill who have lost their positions? I wonder if he has had time to chat to the mayor of Swan Hill, who says the TAFE cuts are very detrimental to small towns like Robinvale which rely on education providers such as SuniTAFE. The cuts have affected not only SuniTAFE but those TAFEs right across rural and regional Victoria which local communities rely on as drivers of the economy and also as suppliers of trained and skilled staff to take the many jobs that are available in those areas.

I was on the Rural and Regional Committee with Mr Drum in the last Parliament, and I travelled around rural and regional Victoria and at many hearings I heard from employers, chambers of commerce and business associations that one of the biggest hurdles they faced in trying to establish, grow and maintain a business was finding trained and qualified staff to work for them. We heard over and over again that it is one of the biggest impediments to establishing, growing and maintaining businesses.

What is this strong footing that the government is on? It is only looking at 'lesser productivity'. I wonder what Mr Drum has been saying to the people around regional Victoria with whom he has spoken, particularly those in the electorate of Northern Victoria Region, who he represents along with me.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I note that before Mr Drum stepped out on an urgent matter he was talking about areas of skills shortages needing greater subsidy, and that was the basis of his argument. Ms Darveniza is misrepresenting him.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I think Mrs Peulich knows that she is in fact advancing

Mr Drum's argument at this point. There is no point of order.

Ms DARVENIZA — Wodonga Institute of TAFE is also situated in our electorate of Northern Victoria, and I wonder if Mr Drum has had an opportunity to chat to staff about getting rid of the 'lesser productivity' courses and those areas of 'lesser productivity' in which we no longer need training or skills. I wonder if he has talked about the impact it will have on the region of Wodonga when its TAFE loses \$7 million, a third of its annual budget. I wonder if Wodonga TAFE thinks it is on a stronger footing given that its bottom line is down by \$7 million.

Again, I do not think that the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE in Shepparton sees this as a great budget line delivered by the government; it is reeling from a \$6 million loss to its budget. I do not think it is seeing great opportunities in this; I think it is facing more challenges in the future as it looks at how it is going to be able to maintain staff, deliver courses and maintain the infrastructure needed to deliver educational services to a very broad community with \$6 million less in its budget.

In Mrs Peulich's contribution she stated that Labor members do not care and that this is all about opportune politics — —

Mrs Peulich — Opportunistic.

Ms DARVENIZA — Opportunistic; I thank Mrs Peulich. She said that bringing a motion like this is all about Labor's opportunistic politics. If I remember correctly, she also said in her contribution that the opposition is playing politics and that in some way this motion, which deals with the most savage cuts to the TAFE sector in living memory, is associated with council elections. Mrs Peulich did not elaborate on that particular point in her contribution, but somehow or other she thinks that it is associated with the council elections.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, Ms Broad was the one who actually canvassed the argument that it was in relation to a number of councils passing motions, so I do not want Ms Darveniza to misrepresent the argument.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I would very strongly urge Mrs Peulich not to try that one on again. It would be much appreciated by the Chair and, I am sure, by the house. There is no point of order.

Ms DARVENIZA — When the government talks about this motion being all about playing politics, I think it shows very clearly that the government has got its head in the sand on this issue. Government members are not listening. They are not out there listening to what people in the TAFE sector have to say, because if they were out there listening they would be hearing the same sorts of things that I am hearing: that the TAFEs are reeling, that they are devastated by these budget cuts and that they are really struggling with how they are going to be able to implement a budget that can deliver courses, employ staff and support the economy in their local communities.

The contributions made by government members so far simply demonstrate that they have no real answer to the cuts. I think the closest we got was Mrs Peulich saying — and I have to agree with her — the TAFE situation is the result of a tight financial situation that the government finds itself in. That is dead right. The government had to decide where it was going to slash, where it was going to make the cuts, and it decided it would make the cuts to TAFE. The government thought, where is the place with the line of least resistance? What area will not really matter so much? The impact of cuts will probably be felt most in rural and regional Victoria and, after all, that is the area of the Nats.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Places Victoria: chairperson

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to the minister's appointment of Mr Ken Fehily as a member of the board of directors of Places Victoria. After Mr Clarke stood down as chairperson of Places Victoria because of his involvement in the collapse of Prime Trust, Mr Fehily replaced Mr Clarke as the acting chairperson. It is now clear that Mr Fehily has also been involved in the collapse of Prime Trust in that he gave advice to the company that controlled Prime Trust. Has the minister asked Mr Fehily to stand down pending the outcome of proceedings in relation to the collapse of Prime Trust, and if not, why not?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — Mr Fehily has not been named by ASIC (Australian Securities and Investments Commission) in any investigation against the organisation, and it is scandalous for Mr Tee to walk in here under parliamentary privilege and make this allegation, trying to sully the reputation of an extremely good person and

someone who was the deputy chairperson and as such becomes the acting chairperson.

Supplementary question

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I say to the minister that Mr Fehily is part of proceedings that are under way, either through the Supreme Court or through federal proceedings that are afoot — and I ask him: has he conducted any investigations in relation to the conduct of Mr Fehily, and if so, what was the outcome of those investigations and why would the minister have confidence in his ability to continue in that role?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — That was three questions actually. Mr Tee just asked me three questions.

Mr Tee interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — You asked me three, Mr Tee. Go back and read your own question. I say very clearly: Mr Fehily is the deputy chairperson and as such has become the acting chairperson. Mr Fehily is not under investigation by ASIC; he is not under investigation by anybody. To make a scandalous claim under parliamentary privilege really shows how low the Labor Party has sunk.

Teachers: enterprise bargaining

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, the Honourable Peter Hall. Can the minister advise the house of any progress with the teachers enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — I welcome the fact that agreement has been reached between the government and the Australian Education Union (AEU) to resume discussions regarding the teachers enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA). The resumption of those discussions will start tomorrow, and I welcome that. I also put on the record that discussions with the Australian Principals Federation, the other prime body with which we have been negotiating, have been ongoing.

I want to remind members of what is required of me by law under the process once the EBA negotiations recommence — that is, I am bound by good faith provisions under the Fair Work Act 2009 which will prevent me from commenting on any particular matter or detail that is the subject of those discussions. I want to again remind members of that particular provision

and that the provision will apply again once the negotiations recommence.

Two of the AEU negotiating team members are Mary Bluett and Brian Henderson, the AEU state president and the AEU state secretary respectively. Members will be aware that they have both announced that they will step down from those positions at the end of the year. I just say in regard to that that I have enjoyed the relationship I share with both Mary and Brian, and I admire them for their staunch advocacy for their profession. While there are many points of disagreement between us, one can appreciate the robustness and sincerity and passion which each applies to their position. I look forward to negotiations with the Australian Education Union while Mary and Brian still form part of the negotiating team, and I am hopeful that we might be able to resolve matters before they enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Places Victoria: board of directors

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer the minister to his appointment of Ms Lorna Gelbert as a member of the board of directors of Places Victoria. She too has been implicated in the Prime Trust issue. She acted as a solicitor for both Prime Trust and its chief executive when the executive received some \$60 million for selling rights to manage Prime Trust properties. No benefits flowed to Prime Trust investors, and Prime Trust has now collapsed. She has submitted in the Supreme Court that she did not consider the interests of Prime Trust unit holders. Has the minister asked her to stand down pending the resolution of the Supreme Court proceedings, or the Federal Court proceedings, and if not, why not?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — The Labor Party is now saying, ‘Guilt before innocence’, so let us ask a couple of questions here. When we are talking about the AWU (Australian Workers Union) scandal and people who gave evidence, are they guilty before any trial? Ms Mikakos was involved in that scandal. Is she guilty before any trial?

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, I find that remark extremely offensive. The minister knows full well that I was a lawyer before becoming a member of Parliament. I find that comment extremely offensive, and I ask him to withdraw it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask the minister to withdraw the remark made with respect to Ms Mikakos.

Apart from anything else, if the minister had any reason to believe it was a point that could be substantiated, then it would need to be pursued by way of substantive motion and not by way of an accusation in an answer to a question. I ask the minister to withdraw that comment.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I withdraw, President.

Lorna Gelbert simply gave legal advice, just like some people sorting out an AWU bill; they just sorted out a bill. My point is that if they are innocent simply for sorting out a bill, and Ms Gelbert is now standing, under members of the Labor Party's lines, as having done something wrong simply by providing legal advice, they now know how she feels. Now Labor Party members know how Ms Gelbert feels about being unfairly maligned by this vicious bunch of Labor Party thugs, who walk in here to make an accusation. They do not like it when the accusation is made against them. They do not like it when an unsubstantiated allegation is made against them, and Ms Mikakos is absolute proof of that.

Mr Lenders — How's your dirt unit going?

Hon. M. J. GUY — No dirt unit, Mr Lenders. You were the one who funded it in the last government. You were the low life who funded it in the last government. You funded the dirt unit, Mr Lenders; it was all yours.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask the minister to withdraw the term 'low life', which is totally unparliamentary and unnecessary.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I withdraw, President.

I am passionate about the previous government's dirt unit and how bad it was, how it intruded on other people's families and how some people who ran it let it investigate other people's families. Of course, it is the same in Queensland Labor, the same in New South Wales Labor and the same in the Gillard government, so there is a pattern. What there is also a pattern of is the Labor Party walking into this chamber to make unsubstantiated allegations. It is similar to Mr Pakula in the last sitting week; he never repeated his allegations on the steps of Parliament House. He never repeated what was said in the chamber; he never repeated it on the steps of Parliament House. The Labor Party is great at throwing dirt, but when it comes to saying it outside the Parliament it is missing in action.

Supplementary question

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The issues I raise are matters for the public record. They are part of

the Supreme Court proceedings; they are public. There is nothing that I have raised that is not out there and public. I ask: has the minister investigated these allegations, which raise serious issues of a conflict, and what was the outcome of those investigations?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not sure that the supplementary question does not repeat the substantive question.

Mr TEE — My substantive question was in relation to whether or not the minister is going to ask her to step aside, and if not, why not? My supplementary question, following the minister's refusal to do so, asks whether or not the minister is aware of and has investigated this conduct and, if he has investigated the conduct, what is the outcome of his investigations?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I find it astounding again, from the substantive question to the supplementary question, that the Labor Party is asking me to investigate and stand down a board member simply for giving evidence. It is not that they have been accused of doing anything wrong; it is simply that they have given evidence. It is an incredible precedent, and it is one that I and this side of the house will be reminding Labor Party of for a long time to come.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health, and I ask: can the minister inform the house of challenges facing Victorian hospitals and health services regarding energy efficiency and the impact of the carbon tax?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question and for his interest in energy efficiency and the impact of the carbon tax on hospitals and health services in Victoria. I note the important report tabled by the Auditor-General today entitled *Energy Efficiency in the Health Sector* and welcome it. The report has been assisted by the Department of Health and a number of key health services and the Department of Treasury and Finance. There has been an acceptance of the findings and an acceptance of the recommendations. The reality is that we can do things better in our hospitals and health services. We can use energy more efficiently and thereby lower costs.

I am aware that the previous government began that process, and I am happy to note that and to indicate that this government has continued and expanded that. I pay tribute in the health sector to a number of health

services, particularly Austin Health which has been very successful in reducing energy consumption by 30 per cent in the period from 2005–06 to 2010–11. I note the cogeneration projects that are being undertaken and the governance structure the Department of Health has put over this. We will certainly be saying more about this area. Energy efficiency is important.

Mr Barber interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Barber and I have had this discussion before.

Mr Barber — Set a target.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Barber, we are working on this matter, and we will be making very clear efforts with individual health services. Under the government's green building program there will be a number of key steps at each health service level. There will be support provided to health services to make those steps.

This house will also know that the Gillard government has imposed a carbon tax across the economy that will be put on energy producers, both gas and electricity and others across the economy. That will impact on health services, public and private. That carbon tax has been applied without compensation by the commonwealth government. The agreement in February was signed before the carbon tax was applied. The carbon tax had not been legislated for, and we will seek compensation — as I have sought it — from the federal minister.

I can inform the house that the government's modelling of the carbon tax impact indicates a substantial impost on the sector — a substantial impact. Concerningly, bills are coming in, and those bills are indicating that the costs may be even greater.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I have a bill, yes, an invoice — that is what I call it — from Bendigo Health, and I notice that the July bill for Bendigo Health shows a \$17 329 impost — —

Mr Finn — How much?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — It is \$17 000 — for one health service for just one month — of additional cost listed as 'Carbon charge'. This is a new impost that will land on hospitals. Bendigo Health has modelled this out over the year, and it suggests that at Bendigo Health it will cost \$570 000 across a full year. Obviously that is subject to actual usage, and actual usage will obviously vary, dependent on the temperature and the intensity of

energy use. But that modelling indicates that it is a more significant impost than the state government's modelling suggested. At whatever level the carbon tax is set and whatever level of energy efficiency health services are able to implement, for even a very efficient health service that is able to lower its energy cost there will be a higher impost with a carbon tax.

Planning: green wedge development

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to a *Herald Sun* article dated 7 September dealing with the fire risk associated with green wedge development under the minister's proposed new zones. In that article the minister is quoted as saying:

All applications would be referred to the CFA, which would have right of veto in the most at-risk areas covered by bushfire management overlays.

Most of the developable land in the green wedge is not covered by a BMO (bushfire management overlay), and there will be no role for the Country Fire Authority. I am concerned that the minister's statement is providing the community with a false sense that the CFA will have a role in determining what development occurs on the green wedge. My question is: will the minister take this opportunity to clarify his statement?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — Again we go from the bizarre to the ridiculous with Mr Tee.

Mr Lenders — You are so arrogant.

Hon. M. J. GUY — You are so boring, Mr Lenders. You bring it upon yourself, Mr Lenders. I could say you are bitter, you are sour or you are jealous; I could say a range of other things too. At the end of the day, however, I think I will just say you are yourself.

My comments in relation to bushfire management overlays were as a result of the question that was asked of me. If Mr Tee read the *Herald Sun* article differently or wished to have a conversation with the journalist who wrote the story, that is up to him, but the question to me was in relation to bushfire management overlay areas, and I answered it accordingly.

Supplementary question

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister, but it is not a ridiculous issue. One hundred thousand hectares of green wedge land was burnt during the Black Saturday fires. The concern is that there is an impression now that the CFA will have a role in development on the green wedges. Will the minister be able to confirm, then, that under the

minister's proposed new zones the CFA will not have a role in most of the applications for development on the green wedge?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — Let us get a couple of facts into this argument. Building regulations for bushfire safety extend much further than the BMO, so Mr Tee needs to be aware of that from the start. I will remind this house that Labor left Kinglake, an area which burnt during the Black Saturday fires, out of the BMO, so for Mr Tee to walk in here and start to say that I am treating this issue flippantly — —

Mr Tee — You said it was ridiculous.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I said your question was ridiculous.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — You are back again, are you? Foghorn's sour is back! I said very clearly that the fact was that Labor left Kinglake out of the BMO area. Bushfire planning regulations extend a lot further than the BMO. If Mr Tee wants a briefing to give him some education as to how the bushfire regulations go further than the BMO, I am happy to provide it, because he clearly does not understand it.

Industrial relations: economic impact

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations. Can the minister update the house on the impact of recent industrial disputes on Victoria's capacity to generate investment and jobs?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I thank the member for his question. I know of his interest in addressing industrial disputes and how they are impacting on the Victorian economy. We are obviously very conscious of the impact that industrial relations has on the productivity and competitiveness of our industries. We have said consistently that the international markets and conditions are very difficult, and that is why Victorian businesses must be working hard to improve and to innovate. They also need to compete not only globally but also domestically. Critical to that and to generating investments and jobs is the task of strengthening our reputation as a place to do business.

In that context the release last week of the World Economic Forum's annual global competitiveness rankings identified the most pressing policy reform challenge facing Australia today. Unfortunately it

comes as no surprise that the report states that the main area of concern in Australia is the rigidity of its labour markets. Indeed this respected international survey said the business community identified labour regulations as being 'the most problematic factor for doing business, ahead of red tape'.

As Victorians we are anxious about the reputational risks of a report that places this nation 42nd on an international league table when it comes to the efficient functioning of our workplaces. Failure to address this criticism has serious implications for Victoria's capacity to attract investment and generate jobs. We have seen it recently in Victoria. It is compounded with the fact that industrial disputes have now spiked to an eight-year high under Labor's Fair Work Act 2009. We have seen in Victoria that union officials are adopting a strike first, bargain later approach. We have seen in Victoria that illegal picketing has become the weapon of choice for militant union leaders.

What we are seeking is a system that will deliver flexibility and productivity so that the economy will continue to grow strongly and we will be able to generate jobs. In our submission to the commonwealth's Fair Work Act review we said there was ample scope for changes to Labor's fair work laws to lift productivity and competitiveness while still maintaining safety net guarantees of minimum wages and conditions.

Instead we have seen Labor's hand-picked review panel support stronger right of entry provisions for the unions. We have seen a whitewash of poor productivity performance, and issues we have raised in Victoria about pattern bargaining and illegal pickets — which are real issues in Victoria — have been swept under the carpet.

In the face of Labor's refusal to admit the failings of its industrial relations framework, we have been active where Labor has failed. That is why we have sought to join in the contempt proceedings against the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. I must say that this morning when I read the *Herald Sun* I thought there was an article about the Leader of the Opposition, Daniel Andrews, because it is headed 'CFMEU is my mate'. I was wrong; it was an article about federal Independent Bob Katter.

We know those opposite are very supportive of the CFMEU and its illegal and unlawful actions. All of a sudden it has gone quiet. Listen; there is no reaction. That just demonstrates that those opposite support the CFMEU. That is why we have been active in intervening in the CFMEU case and we were active in

the *Bendigo TAFE v. Barclay* case, the Australian National Retailers Association case and the Qantas case. We need to ensure that Victoria has a strong and viable economy that will generate investment and jobs into the future.

Early childhood services: local government funding

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. Why has the minister's government reduced the indexation payable to local councils in relation to their provision of early childhood services?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I would like the shadow minister to give me some examples, because I have no idea what she is talking about.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — I will answer that — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister is trying to help the house.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — What I think the shadow minister is referring to is that the indexation level for services was set at 2 per cent this year. It was a decision of Treasury to set that, and it is a decision of Treasury to set the indexation level each year. Given the circumstances of the current budget and the difficult economic times we are in, it was a responsible decision of the Treasurer to set that indexation level this year.

Supplementary question

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — Quite clearly the minister is totally oblivious of the impact the indexation cut is having on local government, as the Minister for Ageing was when I asked him about this same issue in relation to home and community care services in the previous sitting week. I know he has been inundated with local councils contacting him since. My supplementary question to the minister — and she will probably not know the answer to this — is: what assessment has the minister's department made as to the impact the 2 per cent reduction in indexation will have on Victorian early childhood services? The minister can take it on notice if she does not know.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — As we know, we are

all facing very difficult economic times. My department is working with local government and with services to ensure that efficiencies are made, that there is no impact on front-line services and that we can work through the tough economic times we face. If we had not had 11 years of waste and mismanagement by the former government, if there had been more investment in local government for infrastructure and services, we would not have these tough economic times. But the former government squandered money.

An honourable member — Myki!

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Myki is just one project that shows how the former government squandered money. Let us talk about the desalination plant, Mr Lenders. The desalination plant is costing this state \$2 million a day.

Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan).

Schools: Fishermans Bend

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy. Can the minister inform the house what action the Baillieu government is taking to facilitate educational facilities in the Fishermans Bend urban renewal precinct?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Ms Crozier for her fabulous question in relation to urban renewal in the government's Fishermans Bend urban renewal precinct. She and Mrs Coote have been exceedingly active in terms of advancing the urban renewal precinct at Fishermans Bend. Importantly, they have been outstanding in advocating for a new school in the Fishermans Bend urban renewal precinct.

I have much pleasure in informing the house that the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development have come to an agreement, where the department of planning will purchase a new site for a school in the urban renewal precinct, a new school that will be the backbone for education in what will be one of Melbourne's brand-new suburbs.

What I find astounding is that just a few minutes ago I heard some people yelling out, 'AAA surplus for 11 years'. I simply ask one question: why did they not build a school in this precinct? If it ran the economy as well as it said and had as much initiative as it claimed, why did the previous government do nothing for 11 years? This government has not even been in — —

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, Ms Crozier asked the minister a question on government administration, and he is now debating the question and discussing a previous government's rather than his government's administration. I ask you to bring him back to answering on the Baillieu government's administration.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Lenders's point of order is valid in the sense that a question was asked, and I think the minister is debating in his answer rather than addressing the question, which I would have thought was quite a positive announcement that the house would probably like to hear a bit more about.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I have only just begun. As you would be aware, President, this is a precinct of 240 hectares. There will be many thousands of people over the next 30 or 40 years who will call this precinct home. The importance of getting a school site in this area is absolutely paramount. Port Melbourne Primary School is, I think, the most overcrowded primary school in this state. It is not primary schools in growth areas, as some in the media and academia would have you believe, that are overcrowded. It is in fact the inner urban growth area — that is, Fishermans Bend precinct — that is the most overcrowded in this state.

My point that the previous government had 11 years to do something is valid, given that the former education minister and Treasurer, Mr Lenders, sat in this chamber for a good part of that 11 years and did nothing. My point is that Ms Crozier and Mrs Coote also sit in this chamber, and they have been successful in advocating for and getting a brand-new school in less than two years. The site has been chosen, the transfer is there and we have a brand-new school in an urban renewal precinct that was talked about for many years but never delivered. It is being delivered by the Baillieu government within two years of taking office.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I hear members opposite saying, 'When?'. You actually have to buy the site. What we are saying today is that the site is about to be bought, the money is there, and here it is. It is a lot better than what the member for Albert Park in the Assembly advocated for; it is a lot better than what has been achieved by members on that side of the chamber. We choose to find places to house students.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, the question was specifically about government administration. The minister is now debating what the policies of a member of the Legislative Assembly may

or may not be. This is a question to the minister from Ms Crozier about government administration; it is not about the policies of a member of the Legislative Assembly. I ask you to bring the minister back to the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Some of the references Mr Guy made to the past government in terms of offices held by members of this place were relevant to his answer in terms of explaining where the government is at now, but I tend to have the view that any further discussion about a member in another place is really debating the question rather than addressing the specifics of the answer. I call the minister back to the question.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Let me make no comment about past members or past office-holders; let me talk about the current position. Let me talk about the role that Ms Crozier and Mrs Coote have played in advocating for a school in inner urban Melbourne, which will be one of the first new schools in inner urban Melbourne for decades. It is an area where it is needed, an area Ms Crozier and Mrs Coote advocated for and in less than two years they have got a result. Let me talk about existing members and say that the role of these two members in finding a school for students contrasts with the member for Albert Park who spends his time abusing and criticising students. I am proud of Mrs Coote and Ms Crozier.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, the minister is flagrantly abusing your ruling and has gone back to debating the question. He is not just referring to the member for Albert Park's views on a school but is entering into a broader debate. I ask you to bring him back to the question of the school in Port Melbourne or to sit him down.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On the point of order, President, the minister was clearly talking about infrastructure and advocacy for infrastructure. He was contrasting the approach adopted by a number of members of this house with that of a member of the other house whose scandalous behaviour in relation to other matters set some unfortunate precedents.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In the first instance, if there are accusations about members, they need to be put by way of substantive motion and not by making accusations in the course of debate in answer to a question. I must say that I thought the minister's remarks referring to a member from another place were out of order. In terms of the point of order made by Mr Lenders, I have absolutely no intention of bringing Mr Guy back to the discussion of the school because it

is my view that he has completed his answer at this point in time. That means that I am sitting the minister down. Whether or not he thinks he has finished, I am sitting him down.

**Nursing and midwifery health program:
funding**

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am a bit sorry that I am going to get the Minister for Health to stand up again, but my question is for him. It relates to the nursing and midwifery health program in Victoria, a program that the minister when he was in opposition made commitments to support. He demanded that the program be fully funded on an ongoing basis and said he would seek a swift reversal of the unjustified and unexplained increases in registration fees paid by nurses and midwives. Now that there has been an extensive review of the program, will the minister guarantee that the program he so wholeheartedly supported will continue in Victoria beyond the current financial year?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Some members of the house will know the importance I attach to this program. The nursing and midwifery health program and the equivalent doctors health program are important, innovative programs which are unique to Victoria. They were developed over a number of years in the period before national registration began. It is true that in opposition I was critical of the fact that there was not secure funding for that program, which involved program funding that previously came from registration fees. The pity of this is that the then Minister for Health allowed national registration to occur without a secure long-term funding source.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — No, let me be quite clear. Mr Jennings may not know the history of this; I know the history very well. It is a history of failure by Daniel Andrews, now the Leader of the Opposition but then Minister for Health. Three years of funding were provided from the assets of the old nursing and midwifery board in Victoria. That is an insecure funding source for the future. I have strongly supported that program, and at the Standing Council on Health I moved that this be adopted as the national program and that we have a national approach. I can indicate to the house that I will continue to advocate at a national level. I have also requested a review of the national registration arrangements.

Mr Leane interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Leane is showing his ignorance here. It was previously funded from the registration fees provided to the Victorian board by nurses. Since the national registration has occurred nursing registration fees have increased massively, but there is no component of the national registration fee provided to the nurses health program. Similarly in relation to the massively increased medical registration fees no component of the national arrangements is provided to the doctors health program.

I believe this is a major oversight of the designers of the national scheme. Mr Jennings, as part of the former government that did this, should stand condemned. Daniel Andrews did not provide an important long-term funding stream for the nurses program or the doctors program. I have to say that this is an important workforce issue. It protects doctors and nurses who may have illnesses or other issues. It provides a creative way for employers and employees to work with the program to ensure that people get relevant treatment and relevant support. The care that is provided through that mechanism, as I have said, also protects the workforce.

Mr Jennings is quite right. I am a strong advocate for the nurses health program and the doctors health program. It is on the agenda nationally. I have also requested the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority to conduct a review of the national registration program. One key aspect of that that will be seen to be brought forward is the need to protect doctors and nurses health programs. I will continue to advocate very strongly. I will continue to work in relation to both the doctors program and the nurses program to get better health outcomes for doctors and nurses. It is a program that defends and protects the workforce and a program that does not add to the cost of registration.

The sad thing is that the previous registration arrangements were able to provide that wedge of financial support for the programs. The new registration arrangements have involved massive increases in registration fees but no additional component to support the health programs of doctors and nurses. That is Daniel Andrews's legacy. I am trying to remedy that. I will work with my colleagues at a national level to do so.

Supplementary question

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Despite the minister's confidence that he adequately acquitted his answer to my question, I asked him to take the opportunity to guarantee that the program would be

continued beyond this financial year, and he resisted the opportunity to give that guarantee. Can I provide the minister with an opportunity to tell us what actions he has taken to reduce fees when they went up from \$115 to \$260 per year and what actions he has taken to guarantee the program will continue rather than being an advocate for it? David Davis is a minister of the state. What action is he taking to determine that outcome?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — As Mr Jennings and the Leader of the Opposition in the other place well know, the national system requires movement by six states, two territories and the national minister to change the arrangements. We are seeking a review. I have put the nurses health program and the doctors health program on the agenda for all ministers. These are key steps that will have to be taken nationally. We need to make sure there is a strong funding source into the future. A half-baked solution, like the one left by the former Minister for Health, who is now the Leader of the Opposition —

Mr Jennings — He gave it three years, and you've given it nothing.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Three years of insecure funding is what he gave. He provided for a massive increase in registration fees. That was his responsibility; the design of the scheme was his failure. I pointed out at the time the concerns I had in opposition, but I tell members this: Mr Andrews should bear responsibility for the fact that the schemes will now have to go through a long process at a national level.

Technology sector: government initiatives

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My question is to Mr Rich-Phillips, the Minister for Technology. I ask: can the minister inform the house of how the government intends to drive the uptake of technology across the Victorian economy?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr O'Brien for his question and interest in technology in Victoria, whether it is in the technology sector generally or the aviation aerospace sector. Last year the government released Victoria's technology plan for the future, which is a \$150 million platform to harness the potential of convergence between Victoria's traditional strength in ICT and emerging industries in biotechnology and small technologies, because the government sees enormous potential across the three technology platforms.

The plan encompasses the traditional areas of government industry operation in terms of promoting investment attraction in technology areas, skills development and export development. But it also goes to a new area of government activity in the industry and technology areas in terms of driving productivity and competitiveness in our non-technology economy and the broader technology economy by encouraging the use of technology and innovation in products, processes and services in the broader economy.

Last week I was very pleased to be at RMIT University for the launch of the centrepiece of the technology plan, the new technology voucher program, which is an \$8 million commitment by government to encourage the adoption of ICT industrial biotechnology or nanotechnology in the broader economy. It is a voucher program which allows non-technology companies to seek a range of vouchers through the Department of Business and Innovation and to then partner with technology providers to improve processes, products and systems in the broader economy.

The first of those vouchers is for up to \$50 000 for technology development. This program has already opened, and the Department of Business and Innovation is taking applications for it. It is to support technology absorption and development by companies in the broader economy.

The second element of the program will be the provision of vouchers for up to \$250 000 for technology implementation. This round will open in October and will assist Victorian companies with substantial testing as well as applied development of technology integration in their products.

The third element of the program is provision of the Technology Student Accelerator Voucher, which will be a voucher of up to \$10 000. That will open in October and will allow Victorian companies to work with universities and in particular with students during university vacations to undertake ICT development projects.

This is very much directed at encouraging companies in the broader Victorian economy to harness the potential that is provided through Victorian technology companies. We have a great success story in technology across ICT, biotechnology and small technologies. We have great innovation and product development and enormous potential to drive productivity. The program aims to encourage the broader Victorian economy and harness the potential of our technology sector. It creates opportunities for Victorian technology companies and for the broader

Victorian economy and very much reflects the Baillieu government's commitment to using technology and innovation to drive productivity in the Victorian economy.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 342, 358, 402, 2741, 4034, 8207, 8241, 8246, 8266, 8343, 8344, 8347–9, 8354, 8360, 8363, 8366, 8368, 8371, 8374, 8376, 8378, 8382, 8384, 8385, 8401, 8470, 8472–5, 8485, 8512, 8513 and 8516.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Reference

Debate resumed.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to conclude my contribution on Ms Broad's motion, which I support. The Essential Services Commission has recommended that the government acknowledge the community services obligations of TAFE institutes in formal funding provisions, and the government has ignored this recommendation. As I said earlier, the Baillieu government has delivered the most savage cuts to TAFE that have ever been seen in Victoria. These cuts are having a devastating effect on each and every one of Victoria's TAFE institutes.

The cuts include the complete removal of the funds differential paid to TAFEs. This funding provides essential community services and support for the large infrastructure costs of TAFE institutes and provides essential training for thin markets in small rural communities. When it was in government, Labor recognised this and provided TAFEs with a higher rate of funding than that provided by the private sector. Also, TAFEs often pay higher wages and offer a range of student services and amenities that are not provided by registered training organisations. Funding has also been removed from all the service provisions for TAFEs. This funding has covered cost of living salary increases from enterprise bargaining agreements since 2004. There is absolutely no new capital investment for TAFE in this budget.

Mrs Peulich spoke about funding rates. The funding rates for all training providers have been slashed from between \$6.50 and \$8 to less than \$2 per student per hour in courses such as business, hospitality, retail,

customer service, event management and fitness. Maybe Mr Drum thinks these courses have a lesser degree of productivity and that therefore we do not need to have as many students and can afford to lose staff.

Finally, I turn to the Bendigo TAFE itself. This motion very much goes to the Bendigo TAFE. It is clear that this is a very important TAFE. It services a population of some 220 000 students and offers courses at three campuses in Bendigo and campuses in Echuca, Castlemaine, Maryborough and Kyneton. The 39 courses that have been slated for closure at Bendigo TAFE are in agriculture, media and community services, and there are the widely predicted losses in hospitality, accounting, human resources, business administration, fitness and retail courses.

I am not sure what Mr Drum has to say about this in terms of there being a supposedly lesser degree of productivity. I would like to know how closing courses and looking at closing courses in agriculture and community services is a good idea, particularly when northern Victoria serves as the food bowl of Victoria and we have an ageing population. I do not see how the loss of these courses could possibly be good for the community or good for Bendigo TAFE. The Bendigo TAFE has developed very strong partnerships with industry to support young people through apprenticeships and traineeships to enable them to live and train in their local communities, and this is vitally important.

In Bendigo we have heard a range of people come out to speak very strongly against the sorts of cuts that are being made to Bendigo TAFE, the courses that have to be cut and against the fact that Kyneton campus is closing. At Bendigo TAFE, 97 jobs will go, 30 courses will be slashed and there will be a \$9 million funding loss. That is a quarter of that institute's income. This is very significant. It would be worthwhile for the Education and Training Committee to have a look at these issues surrounding Bendigo TAFE.

It seems to me that there are no real plans for skills training under the Baillieu-Ryan government except to cut funding for training. A record number of TAFE staff and students have attended rallies, signed petitions and written letters to members of Parliament to demonstrate their anger at these savage cuts. You only have to speak to someone from the TAFE sector, councils or business to know how difficult they are finding it to deal with these cuts and the devastating consequences they are going to have in the TAFE sector not only now but into the future and for the provision of training and skills for future employees.

These cuts will impact on business, which means they will impact on the local economy as well. I certainly support this motion.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 18

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

Noes, 20

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

Pairs

Somyurek, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
--------------	--------------

Motion negatived.

Sitting suspended 1.01 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — By leave, I move:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 9 October 2012, all correspondence and lease agreements relating to VicTrack and the Maryborough Highland Society in relation to the Kennedy Street, Castlemaine, premises.

I believe that my request for documents relating to the lease agreement between VicTrack and the Maryborough Highland Society is a straightforward one, and I will be speaking to it only briefly. The house would understand that there has been a major campaign in Castlemaine against having pokies in a property owned by VicTrack. I have been in contact with Enough Pokies in Castlemaine (EPIC), and I believe it has every right to be concerned about the effect pokies will have on its community.

We need to take a step back and talk about what VicTrack is. It was formed in 1997 and is a state-owned enterprise with an independent board. The board has reporting responsibilities to both the Minister for Public

Transport and the Treasurer. Its role is first and foremost to support public transport and secondly to support broader government priorities by operating commercially.

It is my understanding that a lease was signed by the Maryborough Highland Society around 24 May 2011 but that lease negotiations had been taking place for some time before that. There is a sunset clause of 1 October 2011, which has passed. The sunset clause was extended to 1 April 2012, but that date has also passed. The Maryborough Highland Society was required to have its gaming and planning permits and any appeals finalised by the sunset date. This has not occurred. When the permits are in place the rent becomes payable, but because this has not happened no rent is being paid. The terms of the sunset clause state that if this does not occur, either party has the right to terminate the lease.

VicTrack has chosen not to terminate the lease but instead to extend it. This information was gained through a partially successful FOI request by EPIC in 2012. While EPIC and I have some information regarding the lease agreements, there are large gaps in the information we have. For this reason I believe that it is reasonable to ask for all documents relating to correspondence and lease agreements between the Maryborough Highland Society and VicTrack with regard to these premises. The fact that this is a piece of infrastructure owned by the state government via VicTrack also needs to be considered. Is it appropriate that a pokies venue be located at that site?

With those few words, I will wait to hear whether the government believes that transparency would be a good thing in this case and whether it will help supply those documents.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to advise Ms Hartland that the government does not oppose her motion. The motion has been amended with the consent of the house to change the date from 14 August to 9 October.

I wish to make a couple of points in relation to this motion. As Ms Hartland has said, VicTrack is a state-owned enterprise. It has an independent board, and whilst it is owned ultimately by the government, it is at arm's length from government. I understand that there is a lease agreement on foot. Ms Hartland described some of the particulars that she is aware of regarding the lease, but it is fair to say that there is a commercial lease that is on foot. The Maryborough Highland Society is a not-for-profit organisation.

The government is aware of the concerns of some in the Castlemaine community about this proposal and does not oppose Ms Hartland's motion. Whilst I appreciate the reporting date of 9 October, I note that that is almost four weeks away. I do not know what will be the volume or number of documents in relation to this; it may be one or two, or a substantial number. I make the point that there is a relatively short return date. I also make the usual qualifying statements about cabinet confidentiality et cetera in relation to documents motions. I do not know whether any of those matters apply in this matter, but I merely make that observation.

In conclusion, the government does not oppose the motion, but I could not have a motion before the house in relation to electronic gaming machines without mentioning the Auditor-General's report of June 2011, *Allocation of Electronic Gaming Machine Entitlements*, in which the Auditor-General pointed out that the previous government sold Victorian taxpayers down the drain by approximately \$3 billion. It is an absolute disgrace, and one of the biggest financial bumbles in this state's history — something for which members of the previous government should apologise.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I will start my contribution by reminding Mr O'Donohue of his Nationals colleagues' involvement in the sale of poker machine licences and how they effected that. However, to turn to the crux of the motion I indicate that opposition members are supportive of Ms Hartland's call for these documents. I understand that some stakeholders in that area may be keen to be able to peruse them.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise and speak briefly on Ms Hartland's motion:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on 9 October 2012 all correspondence and lease agreements relating to VicTrack and the Maryborough Highland Society in relation to the Kennedy Street, Castlemaine, premises.

I am sure Mr Drum, a local member who knows the area very well and understands the community, will have more to say in relation to various aspects that affect the community within that area.

As has been said, VicTrack was established in 1997 as a state-owned enterprise with an independent board reporting to both the Treasurer and the Minister for Public Transport, therefore having dual responsibilities. VicTrack is at arm's length from government and independent in relation to the commercial decisions it makes. Negotiations are taking place on the lease

agreement of a goods shed, and due process needs to take place in relation to the legal obligations for that lease. However, as Mr O'Donohue has said, the government will not oppose Ms Hartland's motion. I am aware that a number of community concerns have been raised, and I have seen a number of articles in the local press in support of and opposing this issue; indeed there has been heated debate about it.

On the pokies matter I am pleased to say the government takes the issue of gambling seriously, and that the Minister for Gaming, the Honourable Michael O'Brien, looked at this problem very seriously in 2011. In that year the government established the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. It was a very good initiative on the part of Mr O'Brien and the government, and the foundation will assist many people who have gambling problems. I am pleased to say the establishment of the foundation came to fruition in July. The government made a commitment to look at this problem and to tackle the issue of gambling. The minister should be commended for his foresight in taking that initiative and delivering it within the time we have been in government. With those few words I reiterate that the government will not oppose Ms Hartland's motion on this issue.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak on Ms Hartland's motion as I have been involved in this local issue in the Bendigo and Castlemaine region over the past couple of years. To give some background to the matter, local members would be aware that negotiations have been taking place between the Maryborough Highland Society and VicTrack about a lease agreement for an old goods shed in Castlemaine. The negotiations commenced while the Labor Party was still in government, and an agreement and arrangements were put in place between VicTrack and the society prior to the 2010 election. This situation came about for one reason — that is, the previous Labor government gave VicTrack the authority to act as an independent organisation in a commercial sense.

VicTrack can be directed by the minister to do certain things. However, the standard practice put in place by the previous government, and which has been adopted by the current government, is in effect to let VicTrack operate in a commercial environment. That is done for the primary reason that VicTrack leases all facilities on rail property around the state, and the proceeds VicTrack makes are reinjected and reinvested into the rail system. We all want to see as much money as possible that is generated through assets on rail property put back into our rail system; I think everybody would support that. Therefore the previous government and

this government have given VicTrack the authority to operate commercially.

As a result VicTrack negotiated a lease on an old goods shed with the Maryborough Highland Society, which has the intention of turning this disused shed into a gaming facility. This initiative has struck a raw nerve with a very strong proportion of the Castlemaine community, the members of which have banded together to form the group Enough Pokies in Castlemaine, and they are vehemently opposed to this project. Members of EPIC have been in touch with me on a continual basis, and I have been able to assist them with various details pertaining to the situation that currently exists with VicTrack on behalf of the government and the Maryborough Highland Society. I will continue to work with the EPIC group to the best of my ability, but all members of Parliament will be aware that we operate within constraints of privacy, commercial in confidence and the general restraints that we are all bound by. That said, many people still want to know all the details about everything, and sometimes we can assist them and sometimes we cannot.

There is one other issue we should be aware of, and that is that this government, along with any future government, is going to have a lot of gaming facilities operating on Crown land around the state of Victoria. We need to be mindful of all those future enterprises in trying to work out what is the best thing to do when a new venture wants to open a gaming facility on Crown land. If we were simply to knock back this proposal on the basis that the local community does not want it, the EPIC group does not want it and Mount Alexander Shire Council has put up a strong argument as to why it should not be allowed to operate in the region, we need to give very strong consideration, as any government should, to ensuring that we are not setting in place a precedent that is going to endanger the longevity and long-term viability of literally hundreds of gaming facilities which are located on Crown land around the state of Victoria.

Before we jump on any bandwagon we need to put in place a strong level of responsibility. There are literally hundreds and hundreds of these venues which generate thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of revenue for government, which is then spent on services. Although many of us in this chamber would like to simply get behind the EPIC group and do whatever we possibly can to squash this application, because it is purely and simply not wanted by the majority of the community, we need to be mindful of acting in a responsible manner for the betterment of all Victorians as opposed to acting for the benefit of one particular group. However, as I said to Ms Hartland, we will be treating

this motion on its merits, and if documents can be released, they will be released. However, if there are any confidentiality issues or commercial-in-confidence issues, they will have to be adhered to as well. We need to be mindful of the bigger picture in this particular area.

Certainly the EPIC group is a highly motivated local group and has acted in an outstanding way. It has generated huge local momentum in its push against this development. Its members have acted in a totally ethical way to date and have been very well mannered in their approach to doing whatever they can to secure their desired outcome.

The government will continue to work with EPIC, and, as the local member, I am hoping to continue to work with them as best as I possibly can. However, there are some constraints that we need to be aware of, and hopefully we will get the best outcome for Castlemaine and the entire region which will be affected by these decisions.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I will respond very briefly. I do appreciate that the government will be assisting in this matter. I think I would like to take up a few points that Mr Drum made because, like him, I have dealt with Enough Pokies in Castlemaine and it is an organisation that has not only thought through and presented the consequences for the community but has also come up with other models for sporting clubs to use to raise money, such as the People not Pokies concept. Having spoken with Jeremy Forbes last week during our time in Bendigo I was very impressed with his ideas about supporting local sporting clubs and giving them other fundraising options.

I do not think it is any surprise to people in this chamber that I am opposed to most pokies venues. Having lived in the western suburbs I see the absolute destruction of families wrought by pokies. But I do appreciate the fact that the government will release these documents.

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC SECTOR: JOB LOSSES

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I move:

That this house notes the sustainable government initiative of the Baillieu-Ryan government and calls on the government to define 'front-line service delivery'.

There has been much talk about front-line service delivery, and I thought today was an opportunity to

invite the government to clarify this, because Victorians might be confused. Over here on the opposition benches, members are confused about how the Premier could possibly reconcile the statement he made days before the state election, that there would be no reductions in the public service and that in some areas public service numbers would be enhanced, with what we have now — that beautiful Orwellian phrase — the ‘sustainable government initiative’. We are pretty keen to get to the bottom of this ‘front line’; where it is and what it is.

At a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing this year, the Premier said that the state government architect is ‘front line’, and I am sure everybody is rapt about that. That is good to know if you are sick or you need an education or you are running a farm! Let us find out what this is all about.

I asked some questions on notice of a number of ministers in the government, and I have received some responses, including from Jeanette Powell, the Minister for Local Government, who indicated no front-line service delivery roles would be affected, and Mary Wooldridge, the Minister for Mental Health, who said non-service delivery and back-office roles would be reduced. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, also indicated to me that no front-line service delivery roles would be affected. Martin Dixon, the Minister for Education, again said that no front-line service delivery roles would be affected, and Ryan Smith, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, said no front-line service delivery roles would be affected. Of course in all portfolios there are members of the public service who have interactions with the public — perhaps not all of them, but probably plenty of them.

There was a response from Minister Wooldridge, with another of her hats on, as Minister for Community Services, saying no front-line service delivery roles would be lost as part of this sustainable government initiative. The Attorney-General, Robert Clark, said no front-line service delivery roles would be affected. The answer from Peter Walsh, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, was slightly different to everybody else’s. It said:

The contribution of the Department of Primary Industries towards the government’s sustainable government initiative will be achieved by departmental managers consistent with the objectives of the policy.

That is at least a little bit more up-front, I suppose. I will come back to the areas that Minister Walsh is responsible for.

Mr Mulder, the Minister for Public Transport, said in answer to a specific question about staffing in Ballarat that there was no plan to reduce employment numbers in Ballarat. Ms Asher, the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business and Minister for Tourism and Major Events — there would be no front-line interaction with anyone in those portfolios, would there? — said there were no planned changes to the level of Department of Business and Innovation staff in government offices. Her answer was also specific to Ballarat. There is a strong theme here. Everyone is spectacularly on message. So we ask: what is front-line service delivery?

Mrs Peulich — As long as it is not a picket line.

Ms PULFORD — No, it is certainly not.

The information provided to the Australian Taxation Office by the government to assist it with the tax rulings for redundancy eligibility clearly exclude police officers, school teachers, nurses and child protection workers. Those roles are excluded time and again through those documents. Then department by department there are further details of who is affected. We have had media reports indicating that the government’s Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission will not be excluded. This is the IBAC that was to be up and running last year, from 1 July; this is the IBAC that is still on its way. This is a government agency that has yet to finish employing people, and already it is in the gun for staffing reductions.

The *Herald Sun* of 10 September reported that designated firefighters within the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department of Primary Industries are not immune from job losses. Just last week the *Weekly Times* detailed the extraordinary impact that public sector employment cuts was having on DPI operational jobs. These are people in animal health and flood recovery, emergency response and agricultural extension workers who might have perhaps assumed they were front line. But again, front line is a line that seems to go deeper and deeper into the public service. Museum Victoria, with the educational role that it provides to schoolchildren, is in the government’s sights as well.

This is such a massive reduction in the size of the state’s public service — a reduction of 4200 positions — that there are very few areas of government service delivery that are not affected by the government’s decisions. It is quite something to consider in light of the Premier’s specific commitment just prior to the election that this would not happen. Of

course this is the same Premier who, with his Treasurer, within a day or two of being sworn in fronted the media — they do not do much of that any more, but this is back in the early days — to say, ‘We have been briefed, we have met with the Treasury people; there are no surprises; the state’s finances are in good nick and there are no surprises’. They fronted the cameras and reported that that was what they had found on being handed the levers of government. This was of course after 11 successive surplus budgets and a AAA credit-rated budget.

The government has now sought to completely rewrite history, and there is such an ideological basis to that. This is a government that in opposition presented something quite different to the public in terms of what it would be like. We probably only need to look to other conservative governments to see where the inspiration comes from. The big society initiatives of the Cameron government in the United Kingdom have been widely reported. This is a government that is into the business of outsourcing government entirely. This is not something that Ted Baillieu said Victoria could expect if he were elected Premier; quite the contrary.

Of course similar goings-on can be found in New South Wales and in Queensland. In Queensland Premier Campbell Newman has just brought down his first budget, and the Queensland government will be reducing its public service by 15 000 people. Up to 10 000 public sector jobs are to be shed in New South Wales. In New South Wales 900 people in the Department of Family and Community Services will go. An internal email from a New South Wales Treasury official in June said there was no floor or cap on redundancies and that government departments should look to privatising more services. Schoolteachers, nurses and police have been quarantined, but the memo does not guarantee job security for front-line workers, including in New South Wales child protection, disability services staff, national parks officers, firefighters, paramedics, teachers aides and TAFE teachers.

In Queensland legislation has been pushed through the Parliament that seriously undermines job security for public servants, including health workers, by removing contracting-out clauses and job security clauses. There is certainly a pattern to be observed here. The role of government is what this is really about, and it would have been nice if the Premier had been up-front about it before the election.

We have a government that says one thing and does another, and we have thousands of examples of that. In a media statement in June the Premier and the Treasurer

provided a sustainable government initiative update — and you have got to love the name — which details the reduction targets. In the Department of Business and Innovation it is 100; the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 400; the Department of Health, 200; the Department of Human Services, 500; the Department of Justice, 480; the Department of Planning and Community Development, 140; the Department of Premier and Cabinet, 50 — and that is where the state government architect is holding the front-line banner; the Department of Primary Industries, 200; the Department of Sustainability and Environment, 400; the Department of Transport, 175; the Department of Treasury and Finance, 170; Victoria Police, 350; and VicRoads, 450.

Mr Lenders — Victoria Police?

Ms PULFORD — Yes, Mr Lenders. And just on Victoria Police — —

Mr Lenders — You are joking!

Ms PULFORD — I know. The government tells this story about all these people who sit around in back offices doing nothing. They might do nothing like organise, say, leave rosters. Leave rosters for something like Victoria Police would be complicated, because of shifts and rosters — —

Ms Crozier — Have you organised a leave roster in an organisation?

Ms PULFORD — Yes, I have, actually. I have certainly seen plenty, although not anything as complicated as in Victoria Police. I can only imagine that in Victoria Police it is an incredibly complicated thing. I have no doubt that Ms Crozier would have more experience than me — in fact probably more than almost anybody in this house in organising leave rosters, given her background, particularly in health.

Ms Crozier — On the front line.

Ms PULFORD — On the front line, yes. I would not want to verbal Ms Crozier, who looks like she might join the debate at some point a bit later in the afternoon. I suggest that the challenges in organising leave rosters in a health setting are similar to the challenges in organising leave rosters in Victoria Police. They would certainly be far more complicated than any leave roster I have ever had anything to do with.

Juggling shifts and juggling lots of people in complex organisations where you need different bands and different types of experience to be covered would not

be a straightforward thing, so of course if the people who sit in the back offices and do stuff like that are not there anymore, then somebody has to come from the front line to do the work. It is not like the work is no longer being done.

I have certainly been told of instances in my electorate of Western Victoria Region of this occurring in the police force where the public servants who enable sworn police officers to be on the front line and in the community responding to crime and to the community's needs for policing have to be redeployed to run leave rosters. It is not as if the work disappears; it is just assigned differently. The front line-back line issue is incredibly murky. That is where the cuts are occurring. These are the cuts that were not going to occur at all. There are very few areas of the Victorian public service that are unaffected.

I want to talk briefly about the Department of Primary Industries. To the absolute horror of people right across regional Victoria the government is closing a whole lot of DPI offices. DPI is a department that has no staff who are declared front line — —

Mr Lenders — The minister's driver is front line.

Ms PULFORD — That is good. Does he know anything much about locusts or flood recovery? In DPI there are many specialised skills, and the communities I represent are deeply concerned that these skills will be lost. Fisheries officers are not front line, and in the Department of Sustainability and Environment only firefighters have been declared front line. Before the election the government said that DPI would become the lead government agency responsible for management of issues on private land. This is going to be a challenge when so many of the critical roles are being undermined by the staffing cuts.

I will go briefly to the Australian Taxation Office rulings for each department, and I will just speak to a couple because I know there are plenty of other people who wish to join this debate. In the Department of Primary Industries the scheme applies to all ongoing staff employed by DPI in the following categories: effective staff located at a site that has been designated for closure or relocation — and there are no shortage of those — —

Mr Lenders — There are only 26 of them!

Ms PULFORD — Only 26? That is right. I am sure Mr Lenders is going to have his turn in this debate. The tax office rulings also apply to people employed in the Victorian public service (VPS) at levels 1, 2 and 3; VPS levels 4, 5 and 6; fisheries research roles; business and

corporate services staff; biosecurity staff who have more than 25 years service; Farm Services Victoria staff if not already included in categories I have mentioned; the farm forestry unit; the agricultural communities unit, which sounds front line to me; the catchment planning and capability unit; the service design branch of Farm Services Victoria; horticulture biosecurity and emergency services; agribusiness value chain projects and training; and horticulture, dairy, meat and wool and grains productivity services. These are the people who I expect have important roles to play in the government's aspirations around greater productivity in agriculture.

Mr Lenders — Are there any feline-finding services listed?

Ms PULFORD — They are not actually listed, but this is just a desktop search. Again, it goes to the question of the things that this government values and the things it prioritises. While horticultural, biosecurity and emergency services are out — —

Mr Lenders interjected.

Ms PULFORD — It could mean things like fruit fly protection are out, Mr Lenders, yet there will be plenty of resources to go looking for mythical cats. That is good; I am sure Victorian farmers are sleeping better at night knowing someone is out there hunting that big cat.

On-farm irrigation and environmental services are out — and on-farm sounds reasonably front line. There is also land use capability and regional planning; farmhands at Ellinbank; policy officers, legislation officers and economists — and I will come back to the economists; staff involved in earth resources development and energy sector development activities; and staff at principal scientist and senior technical specialist levels. It goes on and on.

Within the Growth Areas Authority and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) — the department that among other things is responsible for administering the government's Regional Growth Fund and the regional development programs and where Regional Development Victoria has been placed by this government — are a few categories of staff who are not eligible to participate in this scheme. These are fixed term staff, staff employed under an executive contract, senior technical specialists, senior regulatory analysts, principal scientists, casual employees, staff on probation, people receiving WorkCover weekly payments and graduate recruitment staff. The people who are not in the scheme, therefore, are the people

who lawfully could not be anyway. The scheme covers almost everybody else except the principal scientists. It is good to know that DPCD has been able to protect its scientists, but it is regrettable that DPI has not. I just wonder about that. Maybe they could job share.

There are pages and pages of tax rulings that detail the classes of employees that will be affected by this government's mad ideological obsession with contracting out the public service. I invite government members who will be speaking on this motion to clearly articulate where the front line is. The state government architect and big cat hunters are in, while people supporting student learning in our schools seem to be out. The people who process payments for disability services, enabling those services to have good cash flows so they can continue to do their work — this is an example from my electorate that I am familiar with — are out and not to be replaced. If they are on leave, therefore, the work will just back up and up, creating cash flow problems for small non-profit disability service providers. Sworn police officers involved in leave rosters will also be affected.

It would be nice, given that the government was so loose with the truth about its intentions in this area prior to the election, if government members could take the opportunity today to draw the line for us, to tell us where the front line is — who is in, who is out — and whether there is any rational basis or logic to this. Scientists in one department are in; scientists in another department are out; economists in one department are in; economists in another department are out.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, Mr Lenders. Ministerial drivers will be fine — all 22 — and that is comforting. With those comments I invite government members to respond, and I urge the house to support the motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to respond to Ms Pulford's motion this afternoon, no. 434 on the notice paper:

That this house notes the sustainable government initiative of the Baillieu-Ryan government and calls on the government to define 'front-line service delivery'.

Mr Lenders — You're not really pleased.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am pleased to be speaking on this motion, because it gives me an opportunity to respond to some of the assertions made erroneously by Ms Pulford. I am pleased to advise Ms Pulford that the government does not oppose her motion.

In her contribution Ms Pulford said that the Baillieu-Ryan government somehow had a mad ideological obsession with this issue, and she cited other coalition jurisdictions in Australia. I quote from an article by Mr Markus Mannheim reported in the *Age* of 9 May which says:

The budget revealed government agencies are expected to shed more than 4200 full-time equivalent jobs in 2012–13, with further losses expected in the two following years.

...

The spending cuts will affect most portfolios and most agencies are expected to lose employees.

...

Most of the projected job losses are due to the rising 'efficiency dividend', an annual cut to agencies' administrative budgets that will increase from 1.5 per cent to a record 4 per cent.

The article goes on to cite Community and Public Sector Union national secretary Nadie Flood describing this as a short-term budget fix.

There is another article on a similar topic which I found on the 'adelaidenow' website from 8 May, which says:

Under cuts already announced, human services is shedding 470 positions, health and ageing 370, regional Australia 220, climate change and energy efficiency 300, Treasury 217 and Attorney-General 130.

Which ideological, terrible, conservative government is proposing to cut 4200 jobs in the 2012–13 financial year, with further losses expected in the following two years? Is it the terrible Baillieu-Ryan government? No! Is it Queensland's Newman government? No! Is it Mr O'Farrell's government in New South Wales? No, it is not. Lo and behold, this is the mad ideological obsession, to use Ms Pulford's term, of the Gillard Labor government, which is cutting 4200 full-time equivalent jobs in 2012–13.

Ms Pulford interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I take it from Ms Pulford's interjection and her earlier statements that she has the exact view about the federal government's cutting of the public service. Is it not interesting that Ms Pulford did not mention the commonwealth or the Gillard government once in her speech of 25 minutes or so. I refer to the fact that the commonwealth government is cutting jobs and is foreshadowed to cut more jobs. I know Mr Lenders will be pleased with that, given his constant attacking of the federal department of education in the previous Parliament.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — No, opposition members have not mentioned Molonglo for some time, Mr Finn; but that is an aside. Ms Pulford's silence on the federal government's cuts to the federal public service says a lot about the probity of her argument and her selective reading in taking a position on this issue. As the former Treasurer, Mr Lenders would well know that this government has had to make some challenging and difficult decisions as a result of the financial legacy left by the previous government and by the cutting of GST and other revenues by the federal government. Overnight we heard about the challenges all jurisdictions are facing. Last night the South Australian Labor government had its credit rating downgraded. While some commentators may say that the wish to retain a AAA credit rating is something we should not be pursuing — —

Mr Barber — A mad ideological obsession.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Mr Barber by interjection says it is 'a mad ideological obsession'. The reality is that the downgrading of a credit rating increases borrowing costs and servicing costs. I am advised that a downgrading of Victoria's AAA credit rating would have a significant impact on cost to government. This is not some mad ideological obsession; retaining sound finances and a secure budgetary position is important. The position that we inherited from the previous government was unsustainable. Mr Lenders, as the former Treasurer, was overseeing spending growth of 7.3 per cent over the course of the Brumby and Bracks governments compared to revenue growth of 6.9 per cent. We know from the last budget that Mr Lenders presented to the other place and to this place — —

Mr Lenders — It was actually half the debt of Mr Wells's second budget. Mr Wells has doubled debt. What a clever man!

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am very pleased that the former Treasurer and now Leader of the Opposition is in the house to be part of this debate. I look forward to his contribution, and I hope his apology, for the financial mess. He was anything but a safe pair of hands, as he purported to be.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Indeed, Mr Finn. The gift from Mr Lenders in his last budget was to see the ramping up of state debt. It was there in the budget papers he presented to the Victorian Parliament, and he should apologise. There are many things — —

Mr Lenders interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!

Mr Lenders! Mr O'Donohue to continue, without any further assistance.

Mr O'DONOHUE — We have canvassed in this house some of the financial legacies this government has inherited — from the desalination plant, to the myki ticketing system and to some ICT projects. My colleague Mr Ondarchie has summarised those blunders in a notice of motion that I believe is still on the notice paper. I hope at some stage we will have an opportunity to debate those.

The one that has the biggest impact on the ongoing revenue base of Victoria is the auction of electronic gaming machines. Allow me to take members to the Victorian Auditor-General's report of June 2011 and the conclusion — —

Ms Pulford interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Pulford is not in her place, and interjections are disorderly.

Mr O'DONOHUE — The conclusion reached by the Auditor-General on page viii is:

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

and I want to highlight this because it is a disgrace —

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

On page ix it further states:

There was a lack of decision review points, particularly when significant unplanned changes occurred.

I wish to draw Mr Lenders's attention to the point made by the Auditor-General:

DPC and DTF appropriately raised concerns on the merits of proceeding with the auction with their respective ministers. However, no formal review was undertaken.

Through you, Deputy President, I invite Mr Lenders, who was the Treasurer at the time, to respond to the comments of the Auditor-General on page ix of the report that:

DPC and DTF appropriately raised concerns on the merits of proceeding with the auction with their respective ministers. However, no formal review was undertaken.

Mr Lenders is mute on this point and he is mute on this \$3 billion that has been lost from revenue and from Victorian taxpayers. As the Auditor-General found, the beneficiaries of Mr Lenders's complete incompetence, despite his own department raising these issues with him, were the large venue operators rather than the community; they were the beneficiaries of this windfall gain.

Ms Pulford has come in here and raised concerns about the sustainable government initiative (SGI) process. Ms Pulford should ask Mr Lenders, to whom she is now speaking, why did he not heed the advice of his department, the Department of Treasury and Finance, about this \$3 billion blunder?

Mr Ondarchie — How much?

Mr O'DONOHUE — It is \$3 billion, Mr Ondarchie. Mr Lenders should apologise to the house. His performance in this matter is an absolute disgrace. I regret that he is now leaving the chamber and does not have the courage to stay and be part of the debate. Ms Pulford asked why the SGI process was happening. She asked why the government has gone down this path. It is not some mad ideological obsession, as has been demonstrated. The federal Labor government is cutting — —

Ms Pulford — On a point of order, Deputy President, I seek your guidance for Mr O'Donohue. On the electronic gaming machine licence matter and the report that found the legislative framework was a significant factor — the one that the Minister for Gaming was boasting about having delivered to small clubs — I just wonder if that is particularly relevant to the debate.

Mr O'DONOHUE — On the point of order, Deputy President, I would submit to you that the failure of the previous government to maximise revenue from the auction of the electronic gaming machines is right on the point of order, because Ms Pulford alleged in her contribution that the government is reducing the number of public servants for some ideological obsession. I am responding to that direct point by saying the financial position of the government has been compromised through the negligence of the previous government as well as a range of other factors.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I have sufficient on the point of order. Mr O'Donohue managed to draw the link in the latter part of his contribution on this subject to the motion, but I would have shared Ms Pulford's concern about where he was going with his contribution until he drew that link. I

will allow Mr O'Donohue to continue, but he should remain cognisant of the motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I have nearly finished on this point; I just want to refer to one further part of the Auditor-General's report. On page x, under the heading 'Findings' and the subheading 'Financial outcomes', the report says:

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

It also says:

The industry paid \$980 million for the right to operate EGMs over a 10-year period.

That point and that point alone — and this is not some political assertion or some attempt by me to raise a political point — is a fact found by the Auditor-General — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! I cannot hear what the member is saying. I ask Mr David Davis and Ms Pulford to desist from interjecting so that I can hear the speaker.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am merely making that point about electronic gaming machines in concluding my contribution to the debate. I do not wish to occupy the time of the house all afternoon, but I use this example to highlight but one of the fiscal challenges the previous government left for this government to resolve. This government is responsible and prudent, and it does not have any ideological obsession, as Ms Pulford asserts.

As I said, the federal Labor government is cutting 4200 public service jobs this financial year, but we will be responsible and prudent. Retaining its AAA credit rating is important to this government, which has had to arrest the ongoing 7.3 per cent growth in spending which occurred during the life of the previous government when we saw the budget deficit grow from roughly \$19 billion to \$46 billion. The budgetary position we inherited was unsustainable.

I draw the attention of the house to a press release from the Premier dated 3 September which outlines the current position with regard to sustainable government initiatives. It is quite clear from that what the government's intentions are and the fiscal mess it has inherited. This is coupled with the slowing economy and a Prime Minister who is turning her back on Victoria by cutting spending on Victorian projects.

The government does not oppose Ms Pulford's motion. I conclude by asking Ms Pulford: what will she come up with if the Labor Party is re-elected to power in November 2014? We know that at the Labor Party state conference a motion was passed to re-establish the 4200 jobs identified as part of the SGI process. I quote from an article by Josh Gordon in the *Age* of 28 May which says:

If adopted in full, Labor could be left with an annual bill of up to \$400 million.

I ask Ms Pulford: which police stations will she close? Which hospitals will have services cut back? Which schools will she not build? Which trains will she not buy? Which train lines will not get additional services? This government has already delivered over 900 additional rail services a week since coming into power. Where will Ms Pulford find that extra \$400 million, or will Labor return to form and run massive budget deficits as Labor in Canberra is doing? That is a question that I hope Ms Pulford will address in her concluding remarks.

I note that Mr Lenders, who showed plenty of vigour in entering the debate while Ms Pulford was speaking, has now left the chamber. I hope he comes back and explains why, after being advised by his department when he was Treasurer on the problems associated with the auction of the electronic gaming machines, he decided to proceed with that auction at a cost to Victorian taxpayers of \$3 billion, or maybe \$3.5 billion. That single issue has compromised the state budget for a decade; it is the biggest financial bungle by a Victorian government in living memory. It is a decision he should be called upon to explain and for which he should apologise.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I am not sure when Mr Baillieu made the statement that the government would be protecting front-line public servants from these cuts, but clearly it was an attempt to set out a statement of the values this government held. Unfortunately it achieved exactly the opposite effect. It put the spotlight on what the government's priorities are, and that is the purpose of this motion today. It was bad enough to be delivering the bad news about sacking some thousands of public servants, but by drawing a distinction between front-line and back-line the Premier slurred all public servants. It was not good to be announcing job cuts, but he made it immeasurably worse by slurring all public servants.

If there is a mad ideological obsession here, it is the belief by members of the Liberal Party that somewhere, if you just open the right door in the right government department, you will find a whole bunch of public

servants bouncing around on pogo sticks, representing a great windfall to the government that can cut them. Which minister in this current government wants to stand up and say they have too many public servants, they do not need any more and things would run better in their department with fewer helpers? It looks very different once you are in government.

The government has failed dismally in explaining its priorities. We only need to refer to the most recent budget to read that there is no increase in city or V/Line bus, train or tram services. It is just like last year. There is a kick in the teeth for public dental care. There are plans for waiting lists to actually increase under Premier Baillieu's forward vision. It is right there in the budget papers. It is not something that Mr Finn would put on a billboard and say, 'Here is what we are planning to do next year: we will actually increase waiting lists for dental care'.

While there was only \$2 million in the budget for new school upgrades, there was \$672 million for a prison upgrade. At the same time as the government is withdrawing funding from TAFE, it is allocating hundreds of millions of dollars to a new prison. That is the direct result of the government's own changes in relation to taking away non-custodial sentencing options from the courts. At the same time it is clawing in an extra \$90 million from pokie taxes and from some of our most vulnerable citizens.

It is very hard to find the new public transport project that has been put forward by this government. But it has slung another \$100 million to the myki contractor so the contractor will shut up and go away and get one more political problem out of Mr Baillieu's in-tray. That is a pretty expensive way to deal with the last government's legacies. If the government is going to continue to show that lack of fortitude, it will wonder why it has no money left. In relation to a lack of fortitude, the Treasurer clawed back money from the energy bill concessions, which he said represented a double dipping in relation to the federal carbon tax compensation, but in the process he got an extra \$11 million in his pocket, which is a pretty mean way to simply make a political point.

Closer to home — and this is a subject that comes up time and again in the Parliament when we discuss the freight problem and the declining share of rail freight — the government ripped out the money allocated to the truck action plan in the inner west and decided to put all of that on hold until it can get its dirty, great polluting east-west road tunnel going, which will cost further billions of dollars and probably drag down the state's ability to fund some of these

essential projects we are now discussing. I am sure Mr Finn will not be taking out any billboard advertisements about that.

We knew all of that in May, and we are still waiting for an honest, up-front statement from the government as to which public servants it will cut from which departments. We have a long, long list of reports and rumours, but nothing definitive. Like most governments, as is the fashion these days, it brought in a group of deficit daleks under the leadership of Dr Vertigan to tell them how to permanently debase the public sector in Victoria. We are not going to see that report and we are not going to see proper accounting either from the Premier, who said he would not cut those who work in front-line services, but he has done so. We know those cuts are rolling through as we speak; we know that offers for redundancies were made across many departments about 10 days ago. Members will not get any information from the government on that issue.

The government faces an extraordinary set of difficulties that are not just financial. It cannot even state what its own set of priorities are. In transport the government is cutting more than a dozen different bus services across the state, including the service that runs on Hope Street in Brunswick West. I will make a declaration of interest: I live in Hope Street. The bus provides an absolutely essential service — I observe this every day — in getting senior citizens and others with limited mobility from their homes in Brunswick West to Sydney Road for their essential daily needs. It is one of Melbourne's busiest bus lines. The government has used the excuse that it is underutilised. I can say that it is as highly utilised as the SmartBus service in terms of passenger boardings per serviced kilometre, yet it is being cut because it is apparently able to be cut.

Members will not see the government setting priorities in relation to the environment and protecting or bringing back from the brink species and ecosystems. Victoria is the most ecologically damaged state in Australia. I constantly hear barking in my left ear from Simon Ramsay that the government needs to, in his words 'reform the native vegetation framework', which is also known as cutting down more trees. That, along with many of the government's other actions, contributes to an increase in carbon emissions. This government has cut back on every measure and plan that was in place to reduce Victoria's emissions. It is the same money being shovelled relentlessly in the direction of the coal industry to try to prop that up, even though the tide of technology and global action is running against it.

We are coming to the annual report season. A few reports have been tabled in the chamber today. We expect the big data dump during next sitting week. It will be interesting to go through the annual reports and reflect on what exactly departments did last year that they are not going to be doing next year. Unfortunately we cannot get honest accounting from the government in this Parliament in the same way as to where its cuts are falling. It is as big a problem for the government as it is for the state of Victoria and its citizens.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on Ms Pulford's motion, which she has moved in the house this afternoon. I have listened with great interest to members opposite — Mr Barber and Ms Pulford — and their contributions to the debate on this motion. I will come back to Ms Pulford's contribution in a moment, because she made some interesting comments throughout her contribution in relation to front-line service delivery. She wants to know the definition of that and how the government is responding to crime and community needs. She feels Victorians are confused, and she wants to know how any changes to front-line services will affect those who are sick or running a farm. I was fascinated by her contribution, because as somebody who has worked on the front line, so to speak, for 16 or 17 years, I am very familiar with what front-line service delivery is all about.

In her contribution Ms Pulford spoke about police having to do leave rosters in her electorate of Western Victoria Region. I interjected and asked if she had created leave rosters. I am wondering if she did that when she worked for the National Union of Workers. Perhaps she created leave rosters when she was working on the union's ongoing campaigns or its celebration of industrial action or whatever. I am sure she has had some experience. I can say she conceded that I had probably had a little bit more experience than that, and I thank her for acknowledging that, because front-line services are a priority for this government. Front-line services in the areas of policing, nursing and teaching are very important.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Ms CROZIER — I take up Mr Pakula's interjection. I am very aware of the backroom offices of organisations that require more than just the people on the front line, and I think the government has been very clear. As Mr O'Donohue pointed out, it is not only this jurisdiction that is reviewing the public sector. The federal government is undertaking a review of the public sector and is making substantial cuts. As has been noted by a number of speakers, these are

challenging times for governments of all persuasions. I have to say I do not like anybody losing jobs. However, we have to live within our means, and the coalition government makes no apology for being able to do that. The government has been very consistent in arguing that point. The Treasurer has said that time and again.

In the previous decade, when the former Labor government was in power, state government expenditure had been growing on average by 7.3 per cent per annum compared to revenue growth of only 6.9 per cent. There has to be some reconciliation of those figures, and, as I said, the Treasurer and the government make no apology for their position in regard to our living within our means. We have said time and again that we want to improve community safety by looking at front-line services and putting more police on our streets and protective services officers (PSOs) at our railway stations.

Mr Finn — Do they support that or not?

Ms CROZIER — I am not sure if the opposition supports the PSOs, but I think it was pretty clear last year that it certainly did not support the initiative. However, the PSO initiative has been very successful. Those people who are seeing the PSOs feel a greater degree of safety than they did previously. To go back to the point I was making earlier, the coalition government is making record investment to improve community safety, local schools and hospitals and deliver services to the Victorian community. The government is investing in record funding in some of those areas within public transport and assessing and addressing Victoria's infrastructure backlog. I also ask the question: does the opposition support projects like the east-west link or the port of Melbourne development? These projects will be good news for the Victorian economy, Victorian jobs and the Victorian bottom line overall.

It is true to say that last December in the budget update the government announced the sustainable government initiative. That included the reform of a reduction of the public service workforce by 3600 staff. A further 600 positions were cut in the 2012–13 budget. The sustainable government initiative will be achieved over two years and, as has been highlighted, the departments will assess each expression of interest for a voluntary departure package to ensure that overall service delivery is not affected.

Those opposite have made interjections about these matters. Some examples were given by Mr Lenders and Ms Pulford. I have to say that this government is committed to continuing with front-line service

delivery, and it is focused on ensuring that the Victorian community has sufficient personnel to deliver those necessary services.

In his contribution Mr O'Donohue pointed out that when the coalition government came to power it inherited an enormous financial legacy of cost blow-outs and various projects that had significant financial overruns. They are projects like myki, as Mr Barber raised in his contribution, Melbourne Markets and the desalination plant. We all know about the legacy of Labor and what it left the Victorian taxpayer. It is up to this government to work within its means, take into consideration these enormous cost blow-outs and provide for the Victorian community.

Mr O'Donohue also mentioned the cut to South Australia's credit rating.

Mr Finn — It lost its AAA rating.

Ms CROZIER — Yes, it has lost its AAA credit rating. Victoria, under the stewardship of the Treasurer and the Premier, has been able to maintain a minimum \$100 million surplus and Victoria's AAA credit rating. That is very important. As Mr O'Donohue pointed out, that gives us an untold advantage over those states that have lost their AAA credit rating, and it gives confidence to business and the overall Victorian community.

I was watching the news this morning, which outlined the details of the budget handed down by the Queensland government yesterday. We have seen any number of difficulties within the public sector and governments having to make very difficult decisions to bring into line a responsible financial position. The Queensland government has decided to cut around 14 000 public service jobs. New South Wales is looking at cutting around 10 000 government jobs. These numbers are by no means insignificant, and they are by no means easy decisions for any government. As I said, it is extremely important that we be in a sustainable and responsible fiscal position to be able to deliver those important front-line services that we are debating this afternoon.

Mr Lenders made some interjections in relation to TAFE and his analysis of the big cat versus TAFE. The government had to act to reform the TAFE and vocational education and training (VET) sectors. Back in 2009 the previous Labor government uncapped demand for places at TAFE institutes and private sector training courses. We have heard the Minister for Higher Education and Skills clearly and succinctly enunciate why those reforms had to be made. In its management

of this issue the previous government enabled or brought about an almost 50 per cent increase in enrolments in only two years, and the costs for VET blew out from \$850 million a year to \$1.3 billion a year. This was clearly an unsustainable position, as the minister has enunciated on a number of occasions, as I said. To review that is a responsible position to take.

As the minister has explained, there were somewhere in the vicinity of 9000 people doing personal fitness courses when there were only 800 jobs available. It is clearly not a good use of taxpayers money to be putting it into that line of TAFE course. Those shortages in skills that are needed for the state to be more productive in the future should be clearly looked at, and I think the minister should be commended for the work he is undertaking in this area. It is very difficult, but again the cost of the VET sector has blown out from \$850 million to \$1.3 billion a year. These are significant financial blow-outs.

The government's reforms focus on quality outcomes, and an additional \$1 billion in funding has been provided for the VET sector. Again the minister has highlighted that and enunciated the government's plan very clearly in relation to the VET sector. He is working through those issues that have been raised in the house on a number of occasions for various areas within the sector, and he should be congratulated on the work he is doing.

It is another hard decision that has had to be taken in that particular portfolio area, and it has been taken. These have been difficult decisions across government, but they needed to be made. It is imperative that our state financial position gets back to a sustainable footing and that our state finances are back under control. It is very clear what the government is doing. It is very supportive of front-line services in the areas of police, PSOs and nurses, as I have said, despite the fact that there has been significant whipped-up industrial action amongst some unions.

I am pleased that just last week an announcement was made by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, in a media release. It states:

An additional 350 front-line police officers will be allocated across Victoria by the end of June next year ...

It goes on to say that there is a huge investment in this area and one that is making a real difference in supporting Victoria and the Victorian community.

I would like to conclude by saying that it is disappointing that the previous Labor government left

us with the financial position that we came to office and found ourselves dealing with.

Mr Finn — As it always does.

Ms CROZIER — As it invariably always does. It is unfortunate that difficult decisions by the government have had to be taken. However, I am pleased to say that under the stewardship of the Treasurer and the Premier and others in government, we are getting the state back into a responsible financial position. This is exactly the right course for this state at this time.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I will speak in support of Ms Pulford's motion on the coalition's sustainable government initiative and its unhappy consequences for Victoria. I am delighted that the government supports the motion even though Mr O'Donohue, unfortunately, in his contribution did not help us to define what front-line service delivery is. I also note that Ms Crozier started off very well in her contribution and was able to formulate what the nature of the motion is and what the question was that was contained in the motion, but unfortunately she did not follow through, so we are at the end of the second speaker on the government side no wiser about how the government would go about defining front-line service delivery.

This sustainable government initiative has had a very murky gestation. Ms Pulford noted in her contribution that in December 2010 the then new Premier Baillieu said that his government was able to honour all its election commitments because he had received advice that there were no surprises in the financial position of the state. We all know exactly what that meant. It meant that the advice to the Premier was that the former Brumby Labor government had left the state in good financial order. There was no fiscal mess, as Mr O'Donohue alleges. Mr Koch in an interjection said, 'The cupboard was bare when we' — meaning the new Liberal-Nationals government — 'got there'. That is not true.

But the Premier of course gave himself an out by saying that the new government was committed to conducting an audit into the state's finances. Once elected Liberal-Nationals governments always revert to type. They always accuse the Labor government they replace of blowing the budget, and they use this trumped-up fiction as a cover for their real ideological agenda, which is to privatise public assets and services, and in the end, despite the initial assurances, this government reverted to form.

This sustainable government initiative emerged out of the Baillieu government's budget update of December last year and materialised in a series of devastating budget cuts to some of the state's most needed services. The most recent episode, which came out as a leak to the *Australian* newspaper, was of course the Vertigan report, which, if implemented, will trash the public sector in this state.

As we all know, the Baillieu-Ryan government is like the Kennett government, only slower. If you want to see a real ideological cost-cutting frenzy, go to Queensland where Campbell Newman is sacking 14 000 public servants as we speak. Up and down the eastern states, the story is the same: a savage destruction of services, privatisations, outsourcing, asset sales and job losses conducted by a bogus and ideologically motivated set of audits. And of course we know that the audit in Queensland, which I think has quadrupled the debt, was brought courtesy of Peter Costello.

Premier Ted Baillieu's government moves slowly because it is uncertain. A one-seat margin and internal polling that shows it could lose four seats in southern Melbourne electorates makes it unsure of itself, and there is nothing like political mortality to temper conviction. However, this sustainable government initiative will have effects that are just as bad as those under the Kennett government, Queensland's Newman government and those we will see under an Abbott government. Of course budgets should balance and expenditure should be in proportion to revenue. That is unarguable. However, governments still have a key and indispensable role in driving investment, creating jobs and delivering services.

In February and March this year the *Age* revealed that the Department of Premier and Cabinet had set up a special team called the better services task force to help slash 3600 jobs from the public service. We learnt that the Baillieu government had advised the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) that for its redundancies the government would target workers who are not involved in front-line service delivery. The *Age* said the term 'sustainable government' is seen as a euphemism for job losses. I think that is right. It is a euphemism for job losses — for massive job losses that Victoria cannot afford.

The government said that the loss of 3600 public sector jobs would not affect front-line services and would have no impact on teachers, police, nurses and child protection workers. In June this year, in very bad taste, the government described these massive job losses — now at 4200, up from 3600 — as 'improvements'. The

government has tried to reassure Victorians that we are already seeing what it calls a 'managed reduction' in back-office and administrative positions and that this is not impacting front-line service delivery. Not many of us are reassured.

Ms Pulford's motion asks the government to define 'front-line service delivery'. Already, two speakers from the government side have been unable to grapple with this definition. The government must have a definition because the way in which it referred to job losses in the Australian Taxation Office presumes a clear distinction between front-line positions and back-office or administrative positions. Unfortunately ATO documentation does not help because it does not include the kinds of definitions that we are debating today.

However, let us look at how these sustainable initiatives might work in an electorate office. Let us assume that MPs, in this example, are front-line workers and that electorate officers are back office and occupy the administrative positions. If I made the significant savings and implemented the managed reduction that the government is visiting upon the public service, just leaving me as the front-line worker, my work would definitely be adversely affected. I have worked as an electorate officer and I can do that job, but I would have to take time out from my front-line work, no matter how efficiently I did the backup work. Supporting our electorate officers are the many people who provide the services to us through the Department of Parliamentary Services: finance, facilities, IT support and so on. While it can always be argued that we can all work more efficiently, there is only so much that can be gained from such attempts, after which performance standards are compromised. It must be the same for the thousands of front-line public servants who will be forced to take time out from their so-called 'front-line' tasks to keep the backup support functioning.

When people say that this government and this Premier do not understand and do not care — and they are saying that more and more stridently — this is what they mean. The government does not understand what it is like to work as part of a complex team in the Victorian public service, whether it is in health and ambulance services, in children's services and schools, in police stations or just in the larger public sector departments such as Justice, Primary Industries, Transport and Human Services.

The question is: what does the government mean by 'front-line service delivery'? What does this functional division actually mean? Going back to the electorate office example, is the staffer in my office who answers

the phone call from a constituent front line or back office? Is the staffer who sits in the office and works through a constituent's public housing issues front line or back office? If I am sitting in my office reading a parliamentary committee report, am I front line or back office? This dilemma confronts us in considering any of the units within government departments that deliver services.

The fact is that the dichotomy the government has drawn between front line and back office is false and it does not reflect the day-to-day realities of modern workplaces, where almost everything is done in teams — from the operating theatre in a major public hospital to the suburban or country police station, which I alluded to before, and to local health, ambulance and aged-care services. These services are delivered by teams, and as such, these artificial distinctions between front-line and back-office administrative positions cannot be made. In my view this is simply an elaborate rationalisation for reducing public control of the services that are most important to most Victorians.

One of the key differences between the Liberal-Nationals and the Labor Party is that we on this side stand unequivocally for strong, efficient services delivered by an accountable public service. This government has been in office for 20 months. It has been slow to act and directionless, and the negative impact on jobs has been devastating both because of the public sector sackings and because the government has failed to invest in job-creating infrastructure. No-one in this state doubts this except for the government.

Unfortunately things are about to get worse. Back in May, Fair Work Australia found in favour of the Community and Public Sector Union's FOI application and ordered the Baillieu government to make public its secret review of the state's finances that had been prepared by Mr Mike Vertigan. We knew of the existence of Mr Vertigan's report back in March, or maybe before that, because it was widely reported in the media, as it was commissioned by the government as input into the better services task force I referred to earlier.

We know the Vertigan report recommends massive public sector budget cuts, asset sales, privatisations and the outsourcing of services. In fact the report's recommendations are so severe that the government lost its nerve and did everything it could to fight Fair Work Australia's direction to release the document, claiming it was cabinet in confidence and therefore exempt from freedom of information applications.

By the end of last month all was revealed in a stinging piece by David Uren in the *Australian*. Mr Uren describes the Vertigan report as a secret audit that calls for a revolution — I think those are his words — in the way government services are delivered. Basically Michael Vertigan recommends to the Baillieu government that public services be delivered by charities and private businesses and that budget cuts could be two and a half times the size of those already announced.

According to David Uren, the report says that wherever possible the government should get out of directly delivering services and that rather than just outsourcing, charities and private businesses should bid for government contracts. I thought to myself, my goodness! Here we are, right back to Jeff Kennett's compulsory competitive tendering that destroyed and devastated the cooperative relationships between not-for-profit organisations that were at that time delivering and picking up some of the essential services. Cooperation amongst organisations that deliver these kinds of services is absolutely essential, and we learnt from the Kennett experience of compulsory competitive tendering that it divided these services. It was an appalling model for doing the kind of important work that these organisations are expected to undertake.

I will not run through everything David Uren includes in his article, because I am sure that every member of this chamber has read the piece he wrote, but if even half of what he reports is true, then we are in for a very rough time, and the sad reality is that Victorians will be the losers.

Ms Pulford's motion is set against this background, and I reiterate that it asks a very simple question that thus far we have not had anyone on the government side come to the table on. That question is: what does the government mean by 'front-line service delivery'? I have grappled with the problem. I cannot make the distinction. I would be delighted to hear from anyone on the government side who can clearly spell out to us how the government is going to make that separation so that its redundancies will only be in the so-called backroom and administrative sections of any particular work unit. It beggars belief how you can do it, but if the government reckons it can make the distinction, for heaven's sake let us hear it today.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Having listened to Ms Pulford, Mr Barber and Mr Scheffer, there is one thing I have to say about the Labor Party and the Greens: that is, they have more front than Myer, and that is with or without the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union out the front. They have

more front than Myer and more gall than all of France. They are absolutely staggering when they come into this house and whinge and complain about what is happening in the state and in the country, when they are the ones who caused it. They are the ones who are responsible for the situation that Victoria finds itself in now. It is staggering. It has to be said there are three things that Labor is particularly good at — three things. I have had to work hard to find three things that Labor is particularly good at, but I have.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Viney should listen to this, because he will learn something. Firstly, members of the Labor Party are very good at slapping taxes on people. If it gets a bit warm, they will slap a tax on it. If somebody digs a hole in the ground, they will slap a tax on it. Whatever you want to do, Labor will find a reason to slap a tax on it. One of the things members of the Labor Party love to do is take people's hard-earned money from them and put it God only knows where.

Mr Scheffer — On a point of order, Acting President, I know at this early stage Mr Finn is only 1½ minutes into his contribution, but the motion before us is very precise. It asks the government to define the difference between front-line and backroom administrative services. I ask you, Acting President, to remind Mr Finn to return to that point.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, I think I was less than 1 minute and 30 seconds into my contribution on this matter. I suggest to you very strongly that Mr Scheffer is taking this opportunity to have a lend of you, to have a lend of this house and to continue the promotion of the point that he was trying to make in his contribution.

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

Mr FINN — As I was saying, one thing members of the Labor Party are particularly good at is slugging people with taxation. Another thing they are really good at is what we have just heard from Mr Scheffer and what we heard from Ms Pulford earlier. They are very good at whingeing. They are prize whingers. Nobody can whinge quite like members of the Labor Party, except when it comes to their coalition colleagues, who I reckon have probably been to university and studied the subject. They have come out with honours degrees in whingeing. Between the two groups, they come in here and bleat to us until we cannot take any more.

Mrs Peulich — Carp.

Mr FINN — Carp is another word, Mrs Peulich; there is no doubt about that. They love to tax us, and they love to whinge. What is the third thing and the crux of this motion that is before the house this afternoon? The third thing that the Labor Party excels at is stuffing up. It will make a mess of anything and has shown that time and again. In 1992, when I first came to this Parliament, almost 20 years ago, this state was a basket case — a disaster area — and that situation had been created by none other than members of the Labor Party. It is members of the same Labor Party who sit in this house today and refuse to accept what they did all those years ago. They refuse to accept what they did for 11 years.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — You're a liar!

Mr FINN — Acting President, I think Mr Pakula is letting his union thuggish tendencies get the better of him at this particular point.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — You've given the same speech every week for six years.

Mr FINN — Why don't you face up to what you did? Why don't you face up to what — —

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think Mr Finn is referring to Mr Pakula's commentary in calling him a liar. I would ask you to ask Mr Pakula to withdraw.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I actually heard Mr Pakula say that and, in the rush of blood I experienced from Mr Finn's contribution, I let it go to the keeper and waited for him to raise a point of order. However, given that that has not happened, I caution Mr Pakula that that was a particularly unparliamentary term directed at Mr Finn. I ask him to not do that again.

Mr FINN — We had a Mexican stand-off because you were waiting for me to do something and indeed I was waiting for you to do something. That is just the way it goes. Today we had a senior member of the Labor Party — the leader-in-waiting of the Labor Party in this house — come into this house and deny that the Cain and Kirner governments destroyed this state.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, Mr Finn seems to be embracing what a lot of ministers did in question time today. Rather than addressing his contribution through the Chair he is aggressively pointing towards this side of the chamber, which we find quite intimidating.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I advise Mr Leane that that is not a point of order. However, I ask Mr Finn to direct his contribution through the Chair.

Mr FINN — Acting President, I think if you listen to the audio or indeed read *Hansard*, you will find that I was doing that. I was referring to Mr Pakula in the third person, as I so often do.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — There is only one of me.

Mr FINN — Mr Pakula is so good that perhaps there are three of him. I do not know. Is there anybody in this house who reckons he is as good as Mr Pakula thinks he is?

Mrs Peulich — He refers to himself in the third person.

Mr FINN — Mr Pakula does refer to himself in the third person, and then he leaves the chamber. But here we have Labor members coming into this chamber today, 20 years later, and they still refuse to accept responsibility for what Labor did to the state. They still refuse to accept responsibility for the fact that Labor bankrupted Victoria. They refuse still, 20 years later, to accept responsibility for Tricontinental, for losing the State Bank of Victoria, for the Victorian Economic Development Corporation (VEDC) and for so many other disasters. Here we are, 20 years later, and it is the same old story. Members opposite say, 'It wasn't us. You're a liar'. Let me tell you, Acting President, it was them, 20 years ago, and Labor did the same thing for 11 years up until the last election.

One has got to wonder. I mentioned some of the disasters that occurred under the Cain and Kirner governments, and we have heard today of some of the many disasters that occurred under the Bracks and Brumby governments. One has to compare them. Was myki comparable to the VEDC debacle? Was the State Bank of Victoria disaster comparable to the desalination plant blow-out? Where exactly does that fit in with the electronic gaming machine option, which cost Victorian taxpayers billions of dollars thanks to the Labor Party? When you add up those losses and those Labor disasters, something has got to give.

We were elected on a platform of economic responsibility, just as Barry O'Farrell was elected on a platform of economic responsibility in New South Wales, and just as Campbell Newman was elected on a platform of economic responsibility in Queensland after 16 years in which Labor absolutely ravaged that state. I agree with what Mr Pakula and Ms Pulford had to say. We are doing in Victoria what the Liberal-National

Party government is doing in New South Wales and what the Liberal National Party is doing in Queensland. We are doing what we were elected to do. We are getting this state back on a proper footing. We are returning the state to responsible economic management, which is something that members on the other side of this house have no understanding of. They know how to tax, they know how to spend, but they do not know anything about responsibility. Mr Pakula can work himself into a frenzy as much as he likes.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On a point of order, Acting President — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I ask Mr Pakula to refrain from debating with Mr Finn during his contribution. The acoustics in this chamber are quite good without Mr Finn's amplified volume. I ask him to speak a little quieter into the microphone.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — On a point of order, Acting President, I was wondering whether Mr Finn is aware that the 2012–13 tax takings were the highest in the state's history.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr FINN — Mr Pakula is again showing his fondness for being a goose, and that is a fact of life.

I do not intend to speak for very long today and I understand I may have already exceeded my limit; in fact Mr Koch is making that very clear to me right now. I wanted to make the point that when members of the Labor Party and the Greens get up here and talk about how dreadful the coalition is for making all of these tough decisions, they are the ones who are responsible for it. We do not like sacking people; we do not like moving people on. But you have got to do what you have got to do, and when the state, and indeed the nation, is facing the sort of financial situation that we are in, you have got to make some tough decisions.

I remember just how tough those decisions were in 1992 and 1993, and I am now going through it again. You would not read about it, would you? To have to cop it twice in a lifetime — the legacy of a Labor government — is more than one would expect. I listen to what members of the Labor Party have to say. I hear their bleating and I hear their whingeing. But I ask them to do one thing. I ask them to go into the room of mirrors and take a good hard look at themselves, because they are the ones who have put Victoria where we are today. They are the ones who have endangered the economic future of Victorians. Labor did the same

thing in New South Wales, in Queensland and in South Australia. God knows what it will do in Tasmania when it gets the opportunity. And of course, as we know, the federal debt goes on and on forever.

I say to members of the Labor Party that they should not waste the time of Victorians bleating about what their party has done. They should go away and have a think about what they can do to ensure that when they get the opportunity they never do it again, because frankly we Victorians have had more than enough.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak in support of Ms Pulford's motion, and I commend her for bringing the motion to the house. I listened with interest to Mr Finn's contribution, although it was not clear exactly what the motion was that he was speaking to.

I remind members that Ms Pulford's motion relates to noting the sustainable government initiative of the Baillieu-Ryan government and calling on the government to define front-line service delivery, because the details of this initiative have been very sketchy to date. I remind the house that the government announced very soon after taking office that it was going to get rid of 3600 public servants, and then in the 2012–13 budget it announced a reduction of a further 600 positions — so a total of 4200 public servants, who were apparently twiddling their thumbs and did not have anything to do. The suggestion that those people working in back rooms do not provide services to the public and do not provide any value to the Victorian people is quite offensive to the Victorian public service. We know that it is far from the truth.

Very little detail has been announced about the sustainable government initiative. A number of questions have been asked by the Labor opposition over a period of time now relating to the Vertigan report, which the government says is a secret report. Very little information is being given to the Victorian community and to the workers themselves. The details of these public service cuts and exactly how many jobs were going to be lost in each department were made public even before those workers had been notified by email late on a Friday afternoon that their jobs were under threat.

According to the government's own figures an anticipated 100 jobs will be lost in the Department of Business and Industry; 400 jobs in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development — a department that only has 1500 workers, so that is a very significant number; 200 jobs in the Department of Health; 500 in the Department of Human Services; 480

in the Department of Justice; 140 jobs in the Department of Planning and Community Development; 50 jobs in the Department of Premier and Cabinet; 200 from the Department of Primary Industries; 400 from the Department of Sustainable Energy; 175 from the Department of Transport; 170 from the Department of Treasury and Finance; 350 from Victoria Police; and 450 jobs from VicRoads. This is a very significant number that will no doubt have an impact on front-line service delivery. That is why it is so important to debate this motion today.

There is no way that these job losses will not impact on front-line service delivery. Looking just at the 350 white-collar jobs to go from Victoria Police, these are roles which provide support to Victoria Police. The people doing those jobs help prepare the paperwork for matters going before the courts, and what will happen is that 350 sworn officers will need to replace those people. They will be sworn officers who will not be out on the streets uncovering crime and arresting criminals because they will be caught up doing paperwork associated with bringing matters before the courts. It is a bit of a joke and a lie to the Victorian people to say that the loss of those backroom jobs will not impact on front-line service delivery.

I remind Mr Finn, who says that the government has been elected to implement its promises, that the government itself made a promise not to sack any public service workers. I refer Mr Finn and members of the government to the transcript of an ABC 7:30 Victoria program interview conducted on 27 November 2010 by Ms Josephine Cafagna — who I am sure government members know very well — with the then Victorian opposition leader Ted Baillieu. The question Ms Cafagna asked the then opposition leader was:

So will you be cutting the public service?

Ted Baillieu replied:

No way, and we've made that very clear.

Quite clearly the Liberal-Nationals coalition went to the 2010 election promising it would not cut jobs from the Victorian public service, and what has it done at the very first opportunity? When the coalition was elected it put out a budget update that found the budget to be in surplus and found the Victorian economy to be in a very positive state. In fact I remember Premier Baillieu saying at the time that he was surprised at how good the state's finances were. Then the coalition announced 4200 public servants were to go. Why is the government doing this? It is doing it because those opposite are right-wing ideologues in the same mould as former Premier Jeff Kennett. They are putting out

documents such as the public housing discussion paper that the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, is responsible for which refers to and talks up Big Society. They say the Big Society policies of the Cameron government in Great Britain are something that need to be looked at further.

This is a government that wants to dismantle the welfare state. This is a government that wants to dismantle support that working-class families and lower middle class families get from government. That is why we are seeing a systematic dismantling of the public TAFE system. That is why we have seen cuts to the education maintenance allowance, the support that struggling families get through the public school system. That is why we have seen the scrapping of the School Start bonus and many other supports that families rely on.

We are seeing a very clear agenda being spelt out here. The sustainable government initiative is part of an initiative that is about dismantling and winding back government in the same mould as we are hearing from Mitt Romney and the Republicans in America and that we are hearing from the Tea Party — —

Mr Finn — President Romney, if you don't mind!

Ms MIKAKOS — Let us hope that never happens. We are seeing the same kind of right-wing ideological rhetoric coming from the Cameron government in the United Kingdom and from the Republicans in the United States of America. We are seeing the Campbell Newman government in Queensland slashing and burning government services, and now we are seeing the same practices being adopted by the Baillieu-Ryan government of winding back government services and cutting back on public sector positions. These are public servants who provide a valuable service to the community in Victoria.

I want to come to the details that Ms Pulford alluded to in her contribution. We have recently seen Australian Taxation Office rulings issued in relation to the so-called departure packages. In the area of youth justice I received a response from the Minister for Community Services, Minister Wooldridge, on 17 April in regard to my query about which categories of workers in the Department of Human Services were going to be regarded as front line and therefore excluded from these job cuts. She responded that:

The reduction of 500 positions in the Department of Human Services workforce to which your question refers is part of the sustainable government initiative announced in December 2011.

I can assure you that no front-line roles will be lost as part of this initiative.

She went on to list a range of excluded categories and specifically mentioned youth justice workers.

Paragraph 17 of the Australian Taxation Office ruling CR 2012/72, which relates to the Department of Human Services Victoria voluntary departure program 2012–13 early retirement scheme, categorises the classes of employees to which the departure scheme applies. Under 'Area' it says, 'Youth justice centres', and under 'Location' it says, 'Youth justice'. That seems to be quite inconsistent with the response that I received from Minister Wooldridge in response to my question on notice when she said that youth justice workers would be regarded as front-line workers and therefore would be excluded.

The taxation office ruling then goes on to say in paragraph 26 that juvenile justice workers are exempt categories, and there is a list of other categories. This taxation ruling is very unclear as to which youth justice workers will be exempt and which will be the subject of the voluntary departure package. It seems to be inconsistent with the response I received from the minister in response to my question on notice in April.

The motion brought to the house by Ms Pulford is a very good one because it enables us to seek some clarification from the government as to which categories of employment are going to be cut and which will be regarded as being front-line services.

There are many other areas that I am concerned about. In the time I have I want to mention, for example, a similar ruling from the Australian Taxation Office that applies to Department of Health staff — ruling CR 2012/71 — because each department has been issued with a separate ATO ruling. It is very clear from this ruling, and in particular from paragraph 28, that staff who were previously in the Office of Senior Victorians and who were absorbed into the Department of Health and work in supporting seniors and supposedly developing a whole-of-government strategy around the needs of seniors are also not exempt and protected as front-line staff.

I am concerned that while we have already seen the disbanding of the Office of Senior Victorians in the Department of Health, the staff who work in the aged-care unit in the department will also not be protected through the exclusions applicable under this taxation office ruling and therefore will be fair game under the jobs to go in that department.

Similarly there are many important staff in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) who work closely with early childhood services across the state. They are also not exempt from the scheme that applies to the department. I refer members to Australian Taxation Office ruling CR 2012/70, which is the ruling that applies to staff working in DEECD. There are many public servants who provide an important role to the community and who have very close direct and what has been described as front-line job descriptions in supporting members of the community who I believe are vulnerable under this initiative that has been given the euphemism of 'sustainable government'.

By way of conclusion I want to remind Mr Finn, who in his contribution made a series of claims that the government is being forced to do this, that when the Labor Party was in office Victoria enjoyed a AAA credit rating and a budget surplus in every year that it was in office. In fact under Labor net debt as a percentage of the state economy fell from 2.9 per cent when it came to office to 2.5 per cent when it left office. We also cut a number of taxes, including payroll tax. We made six WorkCover premium rate reductions, and we were a government that delivered very strongly in terms of support for jobs and infrastructure. By contrast, under the coalition government net debt will be higher than it was forecast to be under Labor; under the coalition it has more than doubled. We also see that the operating surplus is lower than it ever was under Labor.

The facts stand in stark contrast to the very wild claims that Mr Finn made in his contribution. He can come in here and bellow as much as he likes, but the facts speak for themselves, and they show quite clearly that this Baillieu-Ryan government inherited a budget with a strong position.

The government has failed to make investments in infrastructure, and that is slowing this economy down. It is not planning for the future. It is not investing in jobs in this state. This is why we are seeing a downturn in revenue. It is of the government's own making. Because it is not investing in infrastructure, people are not buying and selling homes, and we are seeing declines in stamp duty revenue. This is a budget position of this government's own making.

Again I commend Ms Pulford for putting this motion to the house. It is time this government's members came in here and explained to the people of Victoria why the government is putting the sustainable government initiative into place. The reality is, as I said earlier, that this is about ideology. It is about right-wing ideology,

small government and dismantling government services. Those opposite are damaging our economy, and they have themselves to blame for that.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — What a pity Mr Finn is scuttling from the chamber! I am glad he is back. I ask Mr Finn to please take his seat, because I am happy to respond to what he had to say.

Hon. D. M. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, the member indicated that another member had 'scuttled off', but he was standing there. I think he needs to improve his eyesight.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! That is not a point of order, but I would like to acknowledge Mr Finn in the chamber.

Mr VINEY — Well done, Acting President! I think I got in in front of you. I welcome Mr Finn back, because I am very pleased to respond to the loud contribution he made in the chamber that frightened the children who were up in the gallery and who had to leave. I say to Mr Finn that he has been delivering the same speech for 20 years — I have heard it so many times — and his repetition of untruths will not make them accurate.

Here are the facts for Mr Finn. There are three simple facts — and I might add a fourth and maybe a fifth — that dispute what he had to say about the last government.

The first fact is that in the 11 years — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — Those opposite clearly do not want to hear the facts; the amount of yelling going on means they do not want to listen. For those who do want to listen, let me remind the house of the three simple facts. The 11 years of Labor government in Victoria, from 1999 to 2010, were 11 years of AAA credit ratings. They were 11 years of a budget surplus of the order of \$600 million to \$800 million.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — Those opposite are shouting again, because they do not want to hear the facts. In those 11 years there were budget surpluses of \$600 million to \$800 million every year, and we had 11 years of jobs growth in Victoria. The most fundamental thing any state government can do for the community in its state is to make sure that people have a job. There were 11 years of jobs growth, month by month and quarter by quarter. No amount of spin from government

members trying to redefine the performance of the last government is going to make those facts go away. Those opposite may not be comfortable with those facts, but they are indisputable.

I might say the period of the budget surplus, the AAA credit rating and the jobs growth — those 11 years — included the period of the global financial crisis. Those sorts of outcomes did not occur in many places in the world. Those things could not be said of many governments anywhere around the world, but they could be said of one government: the Victorian Labor government. In the period of the global financial crisis — —

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr VINEY — You might talk about borrowing, and let us get to borrowing; that will be the fifth point I will make. But let us just be clear. There were 11 years of jobs growth, 11 years of budget surplus and 11 years of a AAA credit rating, and those opposite do not like that. They do not like it, because Victoria had a government that not only delivered those things financially and economically for the state but managed to grow the service delivery of the state as well. Staying within the budget surplus, we managed to rebuild every single ambulance station in the state. We started a program of rebuilding every school in Victoria, which the people opposite ended. We managed to maintain TAFE education to a very good level in Victoria — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — And you people have cut it. We did not sack 2000 TAFE teachers; we grew the system. We did not sack the nurses, as the Kennett government did; we grew that system. We put in place nurse-patient ratios. We put in place student-teacher ratios in the early years of school, and we grew the education system. These are the things this Labor government did.

I heard Mr Elsbury talk about regional rail. We restarted regional rail in Victoria after the Kennett government had attempted to privatise and close it. The Kennett government privatised and closed regional rail, and we rebuilt it. The Kennett government tried to cut regional rail apart.

Mr Elsbury interjected.

Mr VINEY — I hear Mr Elsbury bleating about the blow-out in the budget. That was because what we inherited in the regional rail system had been ignored throughout Victoria's history — by all governments of all persuasions. It was in an absolutely appalling state.

When we made the commitment to upgrade regional rail and the process started, the project became much bigger. It was not a blow-out; it was a bigger project, because we decided to do the job properly, to do the job that had been ignored for so many years. As a result of that we managed, just in my area, on the Gippsland line to cut fares and increase patronage and service delivery. That was a terrible government record, was it not, to cut fares, increase the number of services and increase patronage by 40 per cent! We got V/LOCITY trains running on every rail line.

When government members get up and start attacking the performance of the previous government, we should have a little bit of honesty. Let us stop this nonsense and spin. Government members must take responsibility for what they have done. We take responsibility for what we did. Of course the last government made mistakes; every government does. But it is a balance. I will tell you this: that government did not mess up the books; that government did not see jobs growth decline, as this government has done. The government that is now in power has doubled state debt in just two years; in two years it has doubled the debt. Government members come in here and talk about the financial performance of the last government, but they have managed to double the debt by doing nothing. They have done nothing; all they are doing is sacking public servants.

The motion before us today is simple. It asks the government to define what it means by front-line services, and not a single government member has been able to do that in their contribution — not one. Are they telling me that the 900 jobs that will be cut out of regional education in Victoria are not front-line services or that the people who provide direct support in schools to kids with disabilities and their families are not performing front-line services? Are they saying that the loss of jobs of speech pathologists and therapists who help children with learning difficulties is not a loss of front-line services?

What nonsense. You cannot cut at that level across the state public service without affecting front-line services. Everyone knows that. Government members know it. To say that they are not going to cut non-front-line services is spin and nonsense. It defies logic that a government could come in and in two years double state debt and deliver less to Victorians. How can it do that? Government members cannot come in here during this debate and answer the simple question: please define front-line services. It is pretty straightforward. Those speakers included Mr Finn. I am trying to remember who else got up.

Ms Pulford — Ms Crozier.

Mr VINEY — Ms Crozier, and there was Mr O'Donohue. Not one of them has been able to define front-line services. What is of interest is that not a single minister has been prepared to get up and defend this policy. Not one single minister has got up and defended this policy, which is affecting all Victorians through the loss of public services. We do not mind that government members come into the chamber and attack the previous government. We expect it; that is politics. But they should not do that and not expect a response, because our response is that what they are saying is not correct. Labor had 11 years of a AAA credit rating, 11 years of jobs growth and 11 years of budget surpluses.

In that environment, including during the global financial crisis, we managed to increase services in Victoria. We managed to rebuild our hospitals, which were in a complete mess after the Kennett government's period of privatisation. We were able to rebuild our ambulance system, we were able to invest back into our education system, we were able to improve nurse-patient ratios, and we were able to improve student-teacher ratios in early year education. We were able to do all those things and maintain a good financial performance and good economic record in this state.

We are not going to sit here and allow those opposite to misrepresent what happened before. It is time for them to stop thinking about what happened under the last government. Those members are part of the government now; it is time for them to start delivering. Their delivery so far has been to cut services and cut some of the programs, like the program to rebuild every school in the state that was started by Labor. That is their record. Despite their inability to do any of that — despite their cuts and their lack of ability to deliver anything for Victorians, and all Victorians are waiting for them to do something — they have managed to double state debt. All they had to do today on this motion was define front-line services, but instead they chose to have a full-on debate about the last government. That is fine; we are more than happy to respond to that.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I thank all members for their contributions. It has been a very passionate debate, which has been a good thing. It has been interesting to hear the shrill defence by government members. I agree with Mr Viney's comment that it is regrettable that the government has been unable to take this opportunity to provide some clarity and certainty for the Victorian community and

for people working in the public service about what is and what is not front line. That remains a mystery, which is a shame. From government members we have heard, 'It's the feds', or about the old pokie machine revenue furphy. The usual response from this government to any difficult question is, 'It's all someone else's fault'.

This government has difficulties with its priorities. Debt has risen considerably. This financial year will have the highest tax take in Victorian history. The government can provide resources to look for the mythical big cat, and I am sure that the state government architect sleeps very well at night on the front line. This is another example of the choices the Baillieu-Ryan government makes, and they are not choices that we agree with.

I refer to people working in Victoria's public service sector and those who rely on the work they do to support them just in their daily activities, with their interaction with government service delivery agencies in health, in education, in aged care and in disability; the list is extensive. In the debate I spoke about people working with our agricultural communities and about the Department of Primary Industries being the one department where there is no front line anywhere, despite the expectations of people who deal with DPI officers in a very direct way in supporting the work they do.

I urge the government to at some time provide clarity and certainty around what front-line employment is, because we have a situation where the Victorian public was sold a massive untruth. We were told that there would be no cuts to the public service, and then we were told that there would be no cuts to the front line. These things are both spectacularly untrue. It is important for the government to realise that these are real people in real jobs who are members of real families. They have been told a whopping untruth by this government, and it is a source of some regret to me that the government is not taking the opportunity today to provide some clarity to those people.

Motion agreed to.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Legal and Social Issues References Committee to inquire, consider and report no later than 12 December 2012 on —

- (1) allegations aired on the ABC's 7.30 report in August and September 2012 regarding the misuse of government training subsidies and the provision of substandard apprenticeship training by Skill Training Victoria;
- (2) any other allegations or reports of substandard training and/or misuse of government training subsidies by private registered training organisations in Victoria; and
- (3) the adequacy of the resources provided to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and the level and effectiveness of auditing and oversight of the financial accountability and standard of training provided by private registered training organisations in Victoria since 2008;

and calls on the committee to request submissions from the public and conduct public hearings in the completion of its inquiries.

The Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues References Committee has no reference before it at the moment, similar to other upper house standing committees. They all stand ready to receive references that involve issues of public interest and concern, as this one does.

I draw the chamber's attention to the reporting date, which is 12 December this year. That gives the committee some time, although not an inordinate time, to look into the issues, to receive submissions from the public and to conduct hearings in a fashion that would allow a report to be tabled in the Parliament before the house rises at the end of the year. I ask that the committee investigate the allegations aired on 7.30 because this is a current and serious issue that has been raised in the media.

Because my motion refers to issues raised by 7.30 in August and early this month, I will refer to the transcripts of those programs to alert the chamber to the kind of issues raised. I will not go through the whole transcript but just highlight some of the issues raised. The program reports:

7.30 has been investigating the booming industry of private apprenticeship training. Companies offer cheap and speedy qualifications to young trainees for a price.

Reporter Caro Meldrum-Hanna said:

In Victoria, TAFE administrators are protesting against crippling government funding cuts and a new wave of unbeatable competition. The drama began four years ago, when in 2008 the Victorian government decided to deregulate vocational training.

Members know that I have been raising this issue for a long time as well as the consequences of the unregulated market contestability that has been brought

into the vocational education and training system over the last three to four years.

Michael Callahan of Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE is quoted as saying:

Millions, absolutely millions and millions of dollars will have been wasted on no training effectively. A lot of people just fleecing the system.

He went on to say:

The problem is that it's a free-for-all. Anybody can open up a private RTO. The government is not adjudicating appropriately over the system, and the auditing system is simply a paper trail, and it's really easy to fabricate a paper trail.

The program went on to feature a couple of apprentices, their employer and some former trainers. The reporter says that an apprentice said no training was provided by Skill Training Victoria, the Bendigo-based training company that was featured in this show. She goes on to report:

Instead he says the visits consisted of a series of staged photo shoots that would give the appearance of on-site training.

The apprentice went on to say:

After he got in the shot of E-sheet and me nailing it in, it was kind of like, 'OK, what else can I get here?'. So I jumped down, he said, 'You want to jump down from there and can you just try and move some of these blocks from that pile to that pile'. And it would be like, we didn't need to move those blocks or anything like that, we didn't need to. It was just for the shot.

The reporter says that after the photo shoot the apprentice and his employer were asked to sign a form saying that the modules of training had been completed on-site. The employer said he was shocked by what he was being asked to do for his apprentice. He is reported as saying:

It was going to teach him how to be deceitful and lie and not to be honest to us, and I think that was a big part of it when I put Jay on — I said, 'You be straight with me I'll be straight with you'. But having people coming around and stage things I don't think that's being direct or honest.

The transcript goes on to report that another young apprentice said:

They'd rock up and they'd give us a call and say, 'Look, we're in the car park', and you'd go down and they'd have their paperwork with the stack of Xs next to it and you'd sign. They'd say, 'Sign here, sign here, sign here, sign here.'

A former trainer is reported as saying:

The concreting module, simple forms of concrete, we had to use sand instead of actually using concrete — and with the photos being black and white you couldn't actually tell

whether they were sand or concrete. So the kids were supposed to be using concrete but they weren't.

The reporter then asked:

Why were you using sand?

To which the former trainer replied:

It was readily available, it was cheaper and easier.

The reporter asked:

Is sand the same as concrete?

The former trainer said:

No, you wouldn't build a house on sand.

Another former apprentice is reported as saying he was very disappointed and disheartened by the whole thing. The transcript goes on about the staged photos, but it also says, with regard to the theory side of things:

There would be a question, you'd pretty much have to go through the book to find the answer, and you pretty much word for word it. If you had a problem, you've pretty much got the team, they'd show you half the answers half the time anyway. It's not really training. It's just more like a scam.

Another former trainer said:

Depending on the module, I can only ... one particular one would be conventional roofing. Here at TAFE it's a five-day process. The private RTO I was at, that would be done in 4 hours. So the hours that are on the paperwork, they were not correct hours.

The statement from the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) when it had this issue put to it was:

VRQA will not tolerate a training organisation risking lives and cheating students who are paying for quality training. Fraud is insidious and deceptive and will not be detected through routine audit activity. Unless a student or their parents come forward to complain, this activity will not be exposed.

That is of concern to me, and I raised it with the Minister for Higher Education and Skills in a question following this particular series of shows that were aired in that week in August. I want to say now that part of my motion goes to the adequacy of the resources provided to VRQA. I know the minister mentioned today and on other occasions that the market monitoring unit puts quality control measures in place, as he says, to oversee the market-driven system. The fact is that VRQA also said on air that it was shocked and did not know this was happening. I am not casting any aspersions on the people at VRQA; my concern is whether VRQA and the market monitoring unit are

resourced to be able to audit and oversee what is going on with the RTOs (registered training organisations).

Mr Hall has said many times in this chamber that there are 1000 RTOs around Victoria and that 500 of them are regulated by VRQA. But the level of substandard training and misuse of government subsidies going on under the nose of VRQA is a concern. I think the public needs to be assured that VRQA has the resources to be able to be proactive. I know the minister has tried to reassure me by way of answering questions, but that is really not enough. I am concerned about the statement given by VRQA that this would not be detected unless students or their parents came forward to complain. They are not able to uncover this level of deceit and fraud. That was exposed on this particular episode of the 7.30 report. That level of deceit and fraud was not actually uncovered by VRQA.

On the following day, 8 August, the presenter of the 7.30 program, Leigh Sales, said:

As a result of that story there's now an investigation under way —

by them —

and 7.30 has received dozens of emails suggesting dodgy training schemes are rife across the country.

Reporter Caro Meldrum-Hanner said:

It could be the biggest crisis in education that this country has ever seen — the demise of traditional trade schools or TAFEs and the rise of private training companies.

She also stated:

Across Australia hundreds of young apprentices say they are being ripped off and left unemployable with a worthless qualification.

On that day, 8 August, after the item had aired on 7.30 the previous day, a former trainer reportedly said:

I understand that private RTOs, you know, have to make money so to speak, but the shortcuts they were taking were ... unbelievable.

On that particular 7.30 program the VRQA spokesperson said:

I was shocked at the nature of the allegations. We're very concerned if any apprentice or any member of the public is put at risk through poor-quality training, and as a result we've commenced an immediate investigation.

That is not a public investigation; it is an investigation by VRQA after the fact — after it had already happened.

Peter Jacobson from Victoria University TAFE was quoted as saying on that program:

A bricklaying student here yesterday in fact who got his qualification at a private RTO, he's got a certificate III in bricklaying but he can't lay a brick.

He actually came here looking to retrain. The trouble is we can't re-enrol him because he's already got a certificate III in bricklaying.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms PENNICUIK — Mrs Peulich might like to interject, but this is a serious issue.

Mrs Peulich — I was not interjecting. I will have my say, thank you.

Ms PENNICUIK — Have your say when it is your turn.

That is a tragedy for that student. He has used his share of the government funding, but he has not learnt anything. The reporter said:

7.30 has learnt of similar accusations against another leading private vocational training provider, Trade Institute of Victoria.

The reporter said one of the former trainers had stated that:

... he was asked to stage photos of apprentices completing modules of practical work, so that the company could then bill the government for what appeared to be legitimate training.

Neither of those companies responded to this report. The reporter then went on to say:

7.30 continues to be inundated with nationwide claims that robbing and misappropriation of government funding is rife across almost all vocational training sectors.

The former trainer reportedly stated:

In years to come the government are going to say we've skilled our workforce, we've got all this in place, but these people will be out working in the workforce with no idea on what they're doing.

A former apprentice reportedly said:

We're going to end up with an unskilled workforce, which makes it dangerous not only for the people that work with them but also the public. I mean you will have houses falling down because they don't know what they're doing.

These are serious issues. Mr Hall has said to me the government is looking into it and VRQA is following up these accusations, and so it should be, but it should have been on top of these accusations in the first place. Following the airing of these allegations, which are

serious — I am sure anyone in the community would be concerned about them — I wrote to Mr O'Donohue, who is the chair of the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues References Committee. Standing order 23.02(3) says:

The Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues will inquire into and report on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with community services, education, gaming, health, and law and justice.

I asked him to write to the Secretary of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the deputy secretary of the higher education and skills group, the Victorian Skills Commission and the chair of VRQA to request their attendance at public hearings of the committee in regard to the allegations so committee members could ask those representatives questions. Mr O'Donohue responded to me by saying the committee would look into the issue, but the committee has had an opportunity to meet since I wrote to him on 10 August, and the committee has not met. That opportunity has passed by.

There was footage of the Premier aired on the ABC last week. I am not quite sure where the footage was taken. The Premier spoke to an audience and said:

When we have young people coming to us and saying, 'I was paid cash to do a personal training course. I did it online, I did it in bed and the government was subsidising it', you think there is a bit of a problem there and we have got to get to the bottom of that.

I agree with the Premier. I am sure he was not referring to a TAFE institute when he said that.

Many people have written to me about this issue. I can read out an email I received from Janice on 5 September, which states:

I would like to express to you my great concern about the 'training rorts' and what I have seen over the last four years with businesses facilitating of training courses at the many areas of skills. This is rather than TAFE-taught programs.

I work in the disability and allied health-type of area, and the businesses that are 'running' courses and the substandard content of those courses over a very short course length and getting certificate at the end of it is disgusting. It is a great concern to professionals in the area I work in, as the standard had reduced markedly over the last four years and this had great impact on the sector and prolonged outcomes. I know that TAFE school professionals have been very concerned about this for a long time.

I wish for once that government would think about 'standards and quality' and long-term foresight instead of 'quick fix' financial decisions.

I have had others like that.

In debate on an earlier motion today and on many occasions in the past I have spoken about my concern that by taking money out of the TAFE sector the government is causing thousands of people to lose their jobs, hundreds of courses to close down and the closure of TAFE facilities that were built up by taxpayers. At the same time the government is not pulling funding out of the area where the problems lie, which is in the explosion of private providers. The fact is that the system has not been well regulated, and this has led to dodgy practices, particularly among many of the newer private providers.

There have always been private providers in this sector. I am not saying that they are all dodgy, but there certainly have been a lot of dodgy practices. It started out with many dodgy outfits that trained international students springing up, and we know that a lot of those outfits collapsed and left students high and dry. However, it is also happening with the domestic training of our young people who want to learn new skills and get certificates under the vocational education and training system, and these students have also been left high and dry. As I mentioned, we know that courses are being run in days instead of months, and that people are being offered cash and other incentives, such as iPads, to enrol. We know that community organisations such as sporting clubs have been offered kickbacks to sign up members. Some students do not even know that they are actually undertaking a qualification.

This is what has been called tick-and-flick training. It is not actually new; it has occurred before. What we are hearing is that there is now more of it than there was in the past and that VRQA has not been on top of it and has not been able to prevent it. The minister will say that since the government has come to power some organisations have been deregistered and others have not been able to be registered. Perhaps that is true, but the fact is that we are still hearing of this type of substandard training occurring, and that is a concern because it is public money and people are saying —

Mrs Peulich — So it does not happen at TAFE institutes?

Ms PENNICUIK — That is not what I am hearing.

Mrs Peulich — Any substandard training should be of concern.

Ms PENNICUIK — Absolutely. This motion is about having the Legal and Social Issues References Committee, which has been set up under standing orders, to look at this sort of issue. It is appropriate that the committee look at it. I am sure that the minister

would say that VRQA is looking at it, but what I would like to see is the committee considering this issue and receiving submissions from the public, which would include students, trainers, employers et cetera who have had this happen to them, so that we can get a full public picture of what is going on and hold hearings so that the committee can hear from those people who want to make submissions. I believe the time has come for this to be more of a public discussion about what is happening with vocational education and training. There are thousands of people across Victoria who are concerned about the closure of TAFE institutes and that particular aspect of it, and therefore they are also concerned about the quality of training provided by private RTOs, particularly the ones highlighted by the 7.30 program.

I hope the government will support the setting up of this inquiry. I am predicting that it will not, but I think it would be a good idea for the people of Victoria if the inquiry were to happen. If I am wrong and there is no problem, then that will be shown by the inquiry. If the problem is wider, that would also be shown by the inquiry, because it would be open to submissions from the public and remedies could be put in place to make sure that no more students have the same experience as that of the students in these reports.

That is why I believe the Legal and Social Issues References Committee should look into the issues raised by the story that appeared on the 7.30 program and call for other submissions to see whether there are any other allegations that support these reports that people want to bring to the attention of the committee. The committee would report by the end of the year so that members of the public would have a chance to participate in this debate, find out what has arisen and what is occurring with the private providers and find out whether the system that has been put in place by the government to oversee them and audit them is in fact working, whether there are enough resources, and whether the system can actually work with the level of resources it has. These are important issues. I commend my motion to the house.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I welcome the opportunity to comment on this particular motion. Ms Pennicuik, towards the latter part of her contribution, said that her motion, in part at least, aimed to generate a public discussion about training reforms. Let me say at the outset that I welcome any sort of public discussion. Indeed that is why I am here participating in this debate: to have a public discussion about aspects of our training system. I have made myself available for numerous opportunities

to discuss these matters publicly whenever I can and whenever my diary allows.

Let me say, first of all, very clearly that I welcome a public discussion, particularly around this issue of quality, which generally surrounds the way in which this motion has been expressed. I have said before in this house that quality is the no. 1 priority and that the quality control measures and the architecture involved with the training system in Victoria are totally inadequate. We need to improve upon those. In part the measures that have been introduced in refocusing vocational training in Victoria go to that very point, to strengthening quality control mechanisms for training activity in Victoria.

I welcome a public discussion, particularly in regard to this issue of quality. However, I do not think the terms of reference we have before us are the right ones to have a fair, honest, frank, open and unbiased discussion on this particular matter. I will explain why. The first part of this motion cites an example of a private training provider named Skill Training Victoria. It has been suggested that the genesis of this motion is a story on the ABC television program, 7.30 program, that aired on the dates that Ms Pennicuik mentioned in her contribution, and that this story is the reason why we should have a public inquiry. I will come back to that point. The first part of the motion mentions one training provider.

The second part of the motion refers to 'any other' allegations about private registered training organisations (RTOs). Why is it limited to private registered training organisations? The third part of the motion refers to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), and again, to use the words in the motion, to private registered training organisations in Victoria. As I said, I do not mind a wholesome, balanced and unbiased discussion of these matters, but by saying that these terms of reference are only going to apply to private registered training organisations immediately limits this inquiry to 40 per cent of the training market in Victoria.

Moreover, the third part of the motion talks about the adequacy of the resources provided to the Victorian Registration Qualifications Authority. VRQA is the registrar of less than half of the registered training organisations in Victoria. I have put it on the record before that the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is the official regulating body for somewhere of the order of 593 RTOs in Victoria, whereas VRQA is the official regulatory body for around 507. There are 1100 RTOs in Victoria. Again, ASQA is the regulating body for the majority of those. If you were setting up

this inquiry, why would you limit it to just VRQA? Why not also consider ASQA? Why is it that the terms of reference are limited to just 40 per cent of the training market in Victoria?

That is why I say these terms of reference are totally inadequate. They will not give a fair, balanced and unbiased debate on this important topic about quality. Moreover, by naming the subject of a commentary on the television, I think again Ms Pennicuik is singling out one provider as the reason for such an investigation. I want to come back to that because Skill Training Victoria was the subject of an investigation after a report on the 7.30 program on 2 August or thereabouts. In respect of that particular matter I know for a fact that the first time VRQA heard of these allegations being made, it initiated an extensive inquiry into this matter, which continues today, I might add. If the house particularly wanted it — and I do not think it would be helpful to do so — I could document every meeting that has taken place and the names of the people who have been called before VRQA to investigate this matter in thorough detail.

All I want to say is there are always two sides to a story, and to mention this in terms of a motion which is a catalyst for a term of reference given to a parliamentary committee provides unfair prejudgement on that particular provider. At the very least the provider deserves a right to be heard. It is inappropriate to name just 1 single provider of 1100 in Victoria in the terms of this particular motion.

I might add also that, as I said, the investigation by VRQA is ongoing and at the end of the day there is a possibility that some legal action might arise out of this. Therefore it is a very dangerous precedent to have the Parliament of Victoria pre-empting an outcome of an inquiry or embarking on a new inquiry while the official regulator is still undertaking an inquiry of its own.

I want to make some comments further about some of the claims made by Ms Pennicuik. First of all, she quotes somebody from the 7.30 program suggesting that anyone can open up a private RTO. The fact of the matter is that they cannot. They cannot just walk in and say, 'Sign the papers and from here on in I am an RTO'. They have to satisfy certain conditions and standards. They must employ people with appropriate qualifications. They must have facilities to deliver those programs. They must reach a whole range of standards set by VRQA or indeed set by the Australian Skills Quality Authority, and indeed it is a national framework that regulates these bodies, so the standards being used by VRQA are not different from those being

applied by ASQA as well. People cannot just walk in and immediately sign up to become a registered training organisation. They must meet those standards.

In addition, if one of those RTOs that has official registration with one of the regulatory bodies expresses interest and is successful in gaining a contract with the higher education skills group to deliver subsidised training in Victoria, there are further hurdles that it needs to prove to government before it can become the recipient of government-subsidised training.

As I have mentioned in this house before, whereas in 2011 there were about 600 RTOs that had contracts with the Victorian government to deliver subsidised training, that number is now more in the order of about 500, and that is because of the increased standards that have been applied. It is part of the quality control measures that we are putting in place. Moreover — and I have also made this comment in the house before — in the 2011–12 financial year, 75 providers were deregistered by VRQA, so again to suggest that VRQA is not on the ball and is not taking action where appropriate is extending a pretty long bow in regard to the evidence of activity that it has already undertaken.

I also want to go the point made by Ms Pennicuik in some of her other contributions in this area, and I think her words were something like, 'It is not good enough to rely on complaints by students or employers. The regulator needs to be more proactive and out there. It is not good enough to rely on complaints coming forward'. If you make a logical extension of that, that would require an inspector in every classroom in Victoria and in every trade training area all of the time to ensure that they are on the ball and can make that judgement as to whether or not the training being delivered is appropriate and to standard. That is ludicrous; that simply cannot happen.

What is an appropriate level, and is it appropriate that regulators rely on complaints being given? If you look at the way in which other things occur or how other complaints or matters might be drawn to the attention of regulatory authorities, invariably it is through somebody who complains, a regulatory body noting some fluctuations or inconsistencies in the returns of that organisation if money is involved, or sometimes these matters are found after the regular audits undertaken by the regulatory body. Each of those three measures is appropriate, and the higher education and skills group monitors the returns on training effort. If somebody suddenly has lodged an inconsistent or an inordinate number of claims for payment, it immediately triggers a red light and so you make the

appropriate investigations. If somebody complains, immediately you make the appropriate investigations.

I would claim there is a whole range of areas, and it is not just a simple matter of saying that we have to have more inspections out there, whether that is going to resolve all of this or not. But notwithstanding that, because of the importance of quality, since the budget measures of 1 May we have put in place a market monitoring unit which involves a team from the higher education and skills group that can go out and make an on-the-spot check of a training provider if it has any inkling or if there is any evidence that the quality of training that the higher education and skills group has paid for is not being delivered. Those groups have the ability to go out there and physically monitor, so the government is addressing that issue.

I want to also give an example of how VRQA, because that is the regulatory body for which I have responsibility, deals with a complaint. One day I rang Lynn Glover, the chief executive of VRQA — it is certainly not my role to intervene in anything — and I said to her, 'I had this complaint from somebody who believes they are not getting the appropriate training in an automotive area. How does VRQA investigate that particular matter?'. She said, 'Probably the first thing we would do is make our own inquiries, but if we had any suspicion that there was an element of truth in these complaints, we would get in some expertise to assist in our pursuit of this matter — somebody who understands the training quality that ought to apply in the automotive industry'.

In that example she brought in expertise from Kangan Institute to pursue that complaint — someone who is a leader in automotive training in Victoria and who has vast experience and knowledge of training in that sector. To me that was an appropriate way of doing it. I was satisfied that VRQA had mechanisms and practices in place that could adequately investigate such matters.

Ms Pennicuik raised a number of matters in her contribution. I could talk about other matters that she raised, but I want to give other people a chance to contribute to this debate because we do not have a lot of time this afternoon. We are not going to support these terms of reference going to a committee. That is not because I have always been against referring matters to committees for their consideration, but because I do not believe the terms of reference presented here will give the committee an opportunity to look at this important matter of training quality in a balanced and unbiased way. I think it is a poor selection of terms of reference.

While I was in opposition I referred terms of reference to parliamentary and backbench committees for inquiry. I found that when doing so it was not a bad idea to talk to others about it first of all and to say, for example, 'I'm genuinely serious about the issue of quality. What are your thoughts about getting some terms of reference together? Maybe we can come to some sort of an agreement about the terms of reference that could well be applied'.

As I said, I think this motion is biased against private providers in the Victorian training system. They comprise about 40 per cent of training providers. The motion is also deficient in that it only looks at VRQA when more than half of training providers in Victoria come under the regulatory powers of ASQA, which means this will not lead to a comprehensive or balanced inquiry. That is why we will oppose the terms of reference being sent to the committee on this occasion.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The opposition will support referring these terms of reference to an upper house committee. As we have mentioned a number of times in this house, we think these committees are underutilised, given the purposes for which they were initially formed. Having been a board member of a large group training company for about seven years before being elected to Parliament, I am aware that people in these organisations felt a degree of frustration. They would bend over backwards to train apprentices and trainees to a high level; in fact they would actually give them training over and above what was legally required. However, some providers did not even meet the minimum levels of training they were required to provide to young people. Therefore I understand that there is frustration around this issue. As I said, the opposition will support the terms of reference going to the committee.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I have pleasure in rising to support the compelling argument of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, against agreeing to this motion. Clearly this a flawed and myopic motion that is a reflection of the obsession of the Greens with and vilification of anything to do with the private sector. Deep down the Greens members do not want to see any public funding directed to the private sector. We know from the debate that deep down they do not believe that government funds should go towards the support of our independent and Catholic schools. They have been fudging it and they have been hiding that sentiment, but that is really what they believe.

This motion is just an extension of a left-wing philosophy which states that only things run by the state

can be done well. If Ms Pennicuik were herself a teacher — and no doubt if she were, she would be a dedicated one — and if the quality of teaching or training were at the core of her argument, the motion that she brought to this house would have been a very different one. Poor teaching and failure to fulfil one's responsibilities to students can occur in any setting, whether it be in the skills sector, higher education, apprenticeships, secondary schools or primary schools, and it does. There are always methods by which these matters can be investigated and prevented. That is why Minister Hall has focused on improving the governance of the skills sector through oversight of the private providers such as registered training organisations (RTOs) as well as the TAFE sector, and that is how it should be.

Some time ago I had the misfortune of having to raise a matter here in Parliament that had been brought to me by a local councillor. She had gone to a local TAFE to seek information on a diploma of community development but was confronted with a tirade by a one-eyed unionist masquerading as a careers advisor to prospective students. That is unacceptable. It is unacceptable in any setting, including TAFEs. As I said, if Ms Pennicuik were genuinely concerned about training and quality of education, she would not be trying to vilify and target the private sector, as this motion does.

Mr Hall pointed out two pertinent facts that go to the heart of the reason that this motion is flawed. First of all, private providers pretty much provide an equal share — 50 to 60 per cent — of the training, and TAFEs provide the remainder, so Ms Pennicuik is focusing on only one side of the equation.

The second important fact is that the motion calls for an investigation of those training organisations under the oversight of VRQA (Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority), which oversees only the registration of those organisations that provide training in Victoria — some 507 of them — as opposed to the Australian Skills Quality Authority, which takes a much bigger lead. I imagine that over time more and more training providers will be registered by ASQA — it currently has 593 — because more and more providers are providing training across state borders, especially in the case of distance education and online learning, and it is appropriate that these opportunities be available to people irrespective of which state they reside in.

Ms Pennicuik's motion is certainly a myopic one, and I do not believe for one moment that it was generated only by a desire to improve the quality of learning and

training in our vocational education and training (VET) system. Indeed I believe the first part of the motion is probably a response to allegations aired on the ABC's 7.30 in August and September, reporting misuse of government training subsidies and the provision of substandard apprenticeship training by Skill Training Victoria (STV).

Of course we want our apprentices to be well trained and our year 12 students and primary school children to be educated. That is why the performance of teachers and improving the quality of learning and teaching go absolutely to the epicentre — the raw nerve — of what makes a good system. That is why Ministers Hall and Dixon have released a discussion paper entitled *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession*, although the discussion paper is not specifically about the vocational and educational training sector; it is more about school education and how to deal with such stubborn issues as accreditation and the performance of teachers.

Good teachers are worth their weight in gold. Having spent 15 years teaching in the secondary school system and having been a faculty head with 107 teachers in my faculty, I know good teachers were not easy to find in my time. Regrettably many were underperforming, and there was no easy system to deal with that. One of the worst ways in which this is played out is when students go to, say, a year 12 exam not having even read the text they are going to be tested on. No student or apprentice should be deprived of what is their right — that is, to learn and acquire the skills that the course in which they are enrolled is meant to teach them. Of course there is also the issue of the money provided out of the public purse, or the private purse for that matter, in terms of the service being provided. The ABC's 7.30 broadcast, which this motion is obviously a response to, identified Skill Training Victoria as allegedly delivering substandard training to apprentices and signing them off as competent.

I have also seen teachers who have graded essays they had not read, which is regrettable. If the students are lucky, the teacher might read the first paragraph. That is cheating; it is cutting corners, and it should not be acceptable, irrespective of the sector or the setting. The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority is obviously the body responsible for registering and monitoring the quality of registered training organisations, those that operate exclusively in Victoria.

Skill Training Victoria had been registered by VRQA to deliver building and construction qualifications. As has been mentioned, STV receives government funding. Clearly there will be an investigation, and Mr Hall believes there may even have been some legal

action being actively considered in relation to the report. I do not know the details. I do not believe this is an appropriate way to investigate these complaints. As was the case in the debate on another motion earlier today — motion 416 moved by Ms Broad — a process is under way. If no process was under way, then the committee system of the Parliament would be an appropriate resort. However, a process is under way, and should that process fail, then Ms Pennicuik would have the absolute moral obligation and right to come back and say, 'Your system is not addressing the issues; therefore we need the Parliament to undertake an inquiry', but that is not the case. For any persons who are concerned about this matter, obviously their very first point of contact must be with VRQA, directly or through the complaints hotline. That is appropriate, but you would hope it will not come to that.

In terms of the second part of the motion, which requires the Legal and Social Issues References Committee to inquire, consider and report no later than 12 December 2012 on:

any other allegations or reports of substandard training and/or misuse of government training subsidies by private registered training organisations in Victoria.

Again it is looking at only one side of the equation, which I think is just a reflection of the Greens obsession with and vilification of the private sector. That does not mean that any inappropriate sourcing of funds and cutting of corners should be ignored. There is a system of investigation, and I commend the minister for setting up some additional measures to be able to respond quickly.

The third part of the motion is about the adequacy of the resources provided to VRQA and the level and effectiveness of auditing and oversight of the financial accountability and standard of training provided by private registered training organisations in Victoria since 2008. Obviously the quality of Victoria's VET is generally high across both TAFE and non-TAFE providers. More than 87 per cent of students say they are satisfied with the training they received, which is comparable to the performance in other states. There are always going to be exceptions in both private and public sector training. All training providers must be registered through either VRQA or ASQA. All vocational education and training in Victoria is regulated under either the Australian Quality Training Framework, for providers registered with VRQA, or standards for national registration, for providers registered with ASQA, the national body.

Over the past 12 months the minister has indicated we have strengthened requirements for training providers to provide up-front disclosure of their course fees and

performance-against-quality measures. This was necessary; we do not want fly-by-nighters or people enrolling in courses being denied their rightful service. As well as enhanced contract entry standards, the government is directing additional resources to support stronger investigative, monitoring and contractual action to address poor provider behaviour, and I commend the minister for that.

The government has undertaken to establish a new VET market monitoring unit. Assisted by independent advisers, the unit will monitor market trends, including levels of competition and trends in price and quality. The market monitoring unit will be able to refer examples of behaviour that undermine training quality to a new rapid response team. For the first time in the history of training there will be a rapid response team. This team will have the power to undertake audits of providers and report to government, which will consider whether any contractual or regulatory action should be taken. It is very important to make sure that we have a prompt response time and not a lengthy parliamentary inquiry that seeks to cut across a whole range of processes that are already in place and have been in place since the election of this government.

I was pleased to read that 75 providers have already been deregistered by VRQA in the 2011–12 financial year. In comparison, ASQA reports on its website that it has cancelled the registrations of only 12 providers in the past 12 months — 8 in New South Wales, 3 in Victoria and 1 in Western Australia. Obviously Victoria is more on the ball and has been more punitive with people who break the rules, and that is fine if we are focused on lifting the standards.

ASQA reports that it has not renewed registration for 22 providers in the past 12 months: 17 in New South Wales, 4 in Victoria and 1 in the Northern Territory. Some 83 per cent of Victorian funding is paid to RTOs which are regulated by ASQA. Some 50 per cent of all Victorian providers are regulated by VRQA; 246, or 44 per cent, of government-contracted providers are regulated by VRQA; and 308, or 56 per cent, are regulated by ASQA. The last point calls on the committee to request submissions from the public, conduct public hearings and submit its final report to Parliament by 12 December 2012. Obviously it is important where apprentices or students are concerned that if they have concerns about the quality of their training, they should report those concerns to VRQA as soon as possible.

A reference to an all-party inquiry is an appropriate measure when other systems have failed or where there has been no will on the part of the government or the minister concerned to address systemic flaws. If action

has been taken and it has been flawed or inadequate, Ms Pennicuik, who is passionate about education, has a responsibility, as a member of Parliament, to bring these motions to the house.

This one, however, is a flawed motion because it focuses solely on private providers, which is only part of the equation, as obviously a large part of training is provided by TAFEs. This smacks of vilification and of punishing the private sector. The former Labor government supported the removal of the differentials between private providers and TAFEs as a way of creating some sort of competition — a direction which, ultimately, the federal government also endorses. That does not mean that other measures for TAFEs should not be put in place, given that they are managing significant asset bases and that we have a responsibility for the governance and the oversight of their registration and their complaints system. All of those factors have to be effective and sensible. I believe this minister has made enormous headway and I look forward to him continuing to do so. This motion is badly conceived, flawed and, at best, premature.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I am well aware that Mrs Peulich has asked members to correctly pronounce her surname, and I completely respect that and think it is appropriate. I would ask that she have a conversation with Ms Pennicuik about the correct pronunciation of her name.

Mrs PEULICH — Deputy President, I appreciate and accept your point. It is one pronunciation that I have absolutely struggled with ever since I have met Ms Pennicuik. I will continue trying.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Thank you, Deputy President. I am sure you would understand that I have a history of people mispronouncing my name and I am pretty well used to it.

In response to the speakers on the motion — the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Leane and Mrs Peulich — I will go to the comments by the minister, which Mrs Peulich has echoed. The main objections the government has to supporting the motion is that, firstly, I mentioned Skill Training Victoria by name. It would have been difficult not to mention that company given they were the focus of the first full episode of 7.30. Mr Hall also said that it was unusual to mention a company in a motion referring a matter to a parliamentary committee. I think if he looked at references to parliamentary committees in other houses of Parliament, he would see that some of them are very narrow and actually mention the names of people as well as companies, so it is not unusual or out of line.

The second part of the motion expands it to beyond that particular company and is in keeping with the issues raised on 7.30; it goes to the point that more and more people are contacting the program. The minister also said the motion was unbalanced because it looked only at private registered training organisations (RTOs), but that is what has been alleged — that it is happening in the private RTOs. We have had TAFE with us for a long time and it does not have a history of these sorts of complaints. The complaints have only been coming out of the private sector. That is the issue, that is the crux of it and I do not apologise for it for one moment. That is what needs to be looked at.

Mrs Peulich said that I was only asking for a motion to look at those training organisations that were regulated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, but no, I am not. The motion is not limited to that in any way, but the motion does look at whether VRQA has enough resources. I cannot ask the committee to look at the Australian Skills Quality Authority because that is a federal organisation. I can only ask the committee to look at VRQA. I do not think there is anything wrong with the motion and I do not think it is premature; in fact I think it is urgent. I commend the motion to the house.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 17

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

Noes, 20

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

Pairs

Elasmar, Mr	Kronberg, Mrs
-------------	---------------

Motion negatived.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Department of Primary Industries: report 2010–11

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise and make some comments on the Department of Primary Industries annual report for 2010–11. Firstly, I congratulate DPI staff on their commitment in delivering programs and policies that promote sustainable development in Victoria's primary and energy industries. In 2010–11 major floods, major outbreaks of Australian plague locusts and outbreaks of Queensland fruit fly and of chestnut blight stretched DPI and its resources. In this report we see that DPI has been very busy and has had considerable achievements between 2010 and 2012, and I want to outline some of those achievements.

As a member who represents a rural and regional electorate, I am appreciative of the significant flood response and recovery work that DPI has undertaken across Victoria, including in Northern Victoria Region. The floods not only severely affected homes, businesses and communities but also caused large-scale damage to livestock, rural properties and the environment. Crops, livestock, equipment and infrastructure in the business and farming communities were heavily impacted upon, and DPI provided extensive support to farmers with livestock concerns and helped match volunteers with the needs of farmers for their repair and clean-up work. DPI enacted its new role in food supply security and continuity for the first time during the January 2011 floods, which affected one-third of Victoria.

DPI had to redirect significant efforts to respond to the major plague locust outbreak that occurred in Victoria during the reporting period. In the second half of 2010 more than 800 staff were deployed to work at incident control centres, while another 500 DPI staff were seconded or redirected to work on the locust response in DPI offices.

In terms of Queensland fruit fly, Victoria faced one of the worst seasons on record, with outbreaks in most of the state's key fruit-producing regions. Citrus, table grape and stone fruit industries in the greater Sunraysia pest-free area provided \$1.1 million through Horticulture Australia to assist DPI in maintaining the area's fruit fly-free status and boosting the area's potential to supply to Asia.

We had problems with chestnut blight in north-eastern Victoria and DPI removed and burnt 4068 chestnut trees on nine properties in the Ovens Valley in north-

eastern Victoria in September 2010 in a bid to eradicate the blight, which is an exotic plant disease with the potential to destroy Victoria's \$10 million chestnut industry.

Wild dog control is another area that DPI has been engaged with. We know that wild dogs cause a lot of damage and cost Victorians more than \$13 million annually in lost livestock.

DPI has also been supporting and creating export opportunities. It has been very involved in restocking our waterways with fish and protecting endangered fish species.

When you look at the report and at the work that has been done, you can only say that it is a huge body of work covering a broad area by dedicated Department of Primary Industries staff, and they are to be commended.

You have to ask yourself what it means when the Liberal-Nationals government decides to close DPI offices across rural and regional Victoria. Information obtained under freedom of information outlines that the Liberals and The Nationals have targeted DPI offices to close and that positions in farm services and biosecurity will be subject to reduction. Staff at these locations perform important front-line duties in the areas of agricultural management and animal health, flood recovery and emergency response services. If the Premier and the Minister for Regional and Rural Development do not consider these to be front-line jobs, then I think they need to get out and spend a bit more time in rural and regional Victoria to see the excellent work done by DPI staff.

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

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I have a great deal of pleasure in speaking on the *Inquiry into Opportunities for Participation of Victorian Seniors* report. I have spoken on this report before. It is a comprehensive report, and there is much in it that affects us all in this chamber. Many of us have constituents who can learn an enormous amount from it. Today I would like to talk about local government policy responsibilities for ageing communities. It is interesting to note the changes we have seen in our approach to ageing and in our approach to how we look at all of the facets of ageing. I hasten to say that it is not just about the frail aged, but about aged care across the spectrum. It is very important to understand and identify this, and a lot of work has been done in this area.

It is interesting to reflect that in 2004 the Australian Local Government Association's Australian local government population ageing action plan developed a policy to encourage local government action, foster partnerships, improve information access and monitor evaluation. That was a very big step at the time, because although 2004 does not seem that long ago in many ways, from the perspective of aged care it was quite a long way ahead of its time.

In 2005 we saw the positive ageing in local communities project in Victoria, which encouraged communities to plan for the needs of older people, involve older people in their communities and create better environments for positive ageing. We were starting to see some engagement and activity with the people who would be affected.

In 2009 the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Council on the Ageing participated in a review of the World Health Organisation's global age-friendly cities guide and checklist. It was a review of its use by local government, and once again it was a Victorian initiative. It assessed the value and use of the World Health Organisation's global age-friendly cities guide. This rolls off the tongue easily, and it is easy to talk about it as if it is something that was happening elsewhere, but it is interesting to see some of the issues that the World Health Organisation identified as areas for discussion in its age-friendly guide.

I would like to mention all of these areas, and I would speak about them in greater detail if I had time. They include outdoor spaces and public buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. We would expect to see many of these. We would expect to see better use of our outdoor spaces and public buildings, and in fact in this chamber we have spoken about modifying public buildings in this state to a national standard so they are both age friendly and disability friendly. Many of these areas cross over, because if you are non-ambulatory because of a disability or non-ambulatory because of your age, you are going to need wider paths and wider areas to enable you to get into buildings. You are going to need lift access and public access is imperative, so there is a crossover there, and no-one would believe otherwise.

It is similar with transportation. The report states:

Transportation, including accessible and affordable public transport, is a key factor influencing active ageing. In particular, being able to move about the city determines social

and civic participation and access to community and health services.

Recurring themes — infrastructure, equipment and services.

As I have said before, if you rely on a wheelchair or a walking frame and you want to catch a tram along Swanston Street to get out to the eastern suburbs, it is fine if you live in Burwood, because there is a super-stop where you can get off. But if you want to get off anywhere between those stops, it is extremely difficult. I know the Minister for Transport is addressing this issue, and it is very pleasing to see as many super-stops as possible being implemented. They will help the aged as well as people with a disability to have greater flexibility in their transport access.

Housing is essential not just for somewhere to live but also for wellbeing. Having a house is a very important part of a person's wellbeing, and there is a link between appropriate housing and access to community and social services. These are very important aspects. I would like at least another half an hour to speak on this report, but I know my time is up. I thank you, President, for your indulgence.

Adult Multicultural Education Services: report 2011

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) annual report for 2011. Adult Multicultural Education Services has provided services to refugees and newly arrived migrants for over 60 years, which is quite an achievement.

As outlined in the report, the vision of AMES is for full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society. To that end AMES provides a comprehensive range of settlement services for migrants and refugees. These settlement services include: on-arrival settlement support; English language and literacy training; vocational training; and employment services. Throughout Victoria approximately 40 000 people accessed AMES programs in 2011 primarily through the following services: its humanitarian settlement services; its adult migrant English program; its language, literacy and numeracy program; the Victorian training guarantee; and Job Services Australia. As well as the above-listed programs AMES provided specialist training at its Noble Park facility in hospitality and aged care, whilst its Coburg trade training centre focused on furniture making and automotive skills in 2011.

AMES centres in the South Eastern Metropolitan Region include offices at Springvale, Dandenong and Frankston, which provide employment and education

and training services, whilst the Noble Park office provides employment, education and training services as well as settlement services.

An increase of 57 per cent over 2010 figures saw the AMES humanitarian settlement services consortium settle 5216 humanitarian arrivals to Victoria in 2011. These settlement services include accommodation services and linking new arrivals with health, education, community and government programs, to name a few.

Another important program is the adult migrant English program, which assists refugees and migrants who arrive in Australia with low levels of English. Approximately 15 000 migrants and refugees accessed this program during 2011. As part of the Victorian training guarantee, 36 courses with 27 816 student contact hours were conducted. They included cooking, basic cleaning skills, basic and intermediate IT skills, English for parents, introduction to Australian culture, and road safety education.

AMES continues to provide employment participation and skills training services, averaging 500 placements a month for job seekers in 2011 in Victoria. We are all aware of the benefits of regular employment for the economy as well as for the mental and financial wellbeing of the employee and their family, and I am sure that no-one would underestimate the importance of work for newly arrived families starting over in a new country.

These vital services provided by AMES continue to ensure successful settlement outcomes for newly arrived migrants who have come to Australia for many different reasons. Many have had no choice but to flee their homeland to escape persecution and conflict, and they come to Australia to establish a safe and secure life in their adopted homeland for themselves and their family. I am saddened by the hostility and bigotry shown towards some refugees and migrants by a small minority of Australians. These narrow-minded people lack empathy and compassion, never taking the time to think how they would react if they too were forced to leave their country, in many cases also leaving family and friends, to face the prospect of starting a new life in another country. Refugees and migrants have many stories to tell, some sad, some inspiring. I know I have personally gained a better understanding of what they have gone through by taking the time to hear their stories firsthand, and I would encourage others to do the same.

It is important to acknowledge — although this is not covered in the report — that AMES is also heavily

involved in the local community with initiatives that assist newly emerging communities. For example, I am currently associated with a number of projects that involve Sam Navarria from AMES, including the development of a syringe information safety card that illustrates how to safely dispose of syringes or who to call to have them collected, using visuals and graphics so that language is not an issue. When finalised it will be rolled out as part of an education and awareness campaign. This is a joint project between the City of Greater Dandenong and the Noble Park Community Action Forum and involves the South East Alcohol and Drug Service and AMES.

In addition there is the Springvale multicultural men's shed, which will provide a supportive environment where males from all backgrounds can come together to learn and celebrate each other's diversity while developing their knowledge and confidence in meeting the challenges they may face in day-to-day life. This is an initiative of the Springvale Uniting Church working with United Voice, AMES, councillors and community representatives.

Other examples have been the 2009 Noble Park centenary celebrations, of which AMES played an integral part in organising and participating in on the day, as well as the Noble Park RSL forums run in conjunction with AMES, which were designed to break down the barriers within the community. I could go on with many more examples, but there is not sufficient time. It is important to acknowledge, however, that AMES is an organisation with strong links to its local community and which plays an active role in many aspects of community activities.

It is the staff and volunteers of organisations such as AMES who provide support and encouragement to our new residents and newly arrived communities. I congratulate the AMES board members, staff and volunteers, whose continued dedication and enthusiasm have led to another successful year. I wish them success in the future and look forward to continuing to work with them on many projects.

Environment and Planning References Committee: environmental design and public health in Victoria

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make a statement on the report entitled *Inquiry into Environmental Design and Public Health in Victoria — Final Report — May 2012*. I was very pleased to be associated with this inquiry, the reference for which came from the Leader of the Government last year and which looked into the impact of environmental

design on public health. It attracted a large number of submissions. We conducted public hearings and went on site visits. I think the recommendations of the report are excellent, and they have been well received by those who made submissions to the inquiry and by others in the community. Indeed I have been visited by the Heart Foundation and have received a letter from COTA (Council on the Ageing) Victoria regarding the excellence of the report and its recommendations.

I want to take the opportunity to pick up some comments made in the minority report of Mrs Peulich, Mr Elsbury, Mr Ondarchie and Mrs Kronberg where they refer to the composition of the committee having included the Labor shadow Minister for Planning, Mr Tee, and myself, and say that we adopted recommendations reflecting our policies and that Labor MPs, supported by me:

... were prepared to adopt and pursue, in an uncompromising fashion, specific recommendations which are neither costed and nor tested with key stakeholders on whom they would have a substantial negative impact.

I totally reject all that. I state that my approach to such an inquiry is to look at the evidence. The recommendations in the report were based on the evidence presented to us in submissions and by way of hearings. That is what I supported, and I object to the accusations made against me in the minority report.

I do not know whether the Leader of the Government, who moved the motion to establish the inquiry, wants to associate himself with the minority report or the negative comments that have been made by Mrs Kronberg on 2 and 20 June, Mrs Peulich on 6 June and Mr Elsbury on 6 and 20 June regarding a report that has been well received in the rest of the community and whose recommendations stakeholders such as the Heart Foundation, VicHealth, COTA and others are urging the government to get on with implementing. The letter from COTA mentions recommendations 12, 14, 22, 20, 21, 5, 10, 11, 28, 13 and 6 as recommendations it wishes to see moved on as a priority.

Recommendation 12, the lead recommendation of the report, recommends that the government amend section 4(1) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to include the promotion of environments that protect and encourage public health and wellbeing — or an objective similarly worded — as an objective of planning in Victoria. Now, who could argue with that? It is a groundbreaking recommendation the government should take up. It is there as a result of the government's own committee reference into which we have been looking.

I am presuming the government would not associate itself either with comments made by Mr Elsbury on 6 June when he took a swipe at two of the submitters, Professor Billie Giles-Corti and Dr Margaret Beavis. These are academics in the field who presented their evidence to the committee, yet Mr Elsbury had a swipe at them in his statement. He should apologise to them. A comment was also made by Mrs Peulich on 6 June. She said:

It is regrettable that the Kingston green wedge review, which is currently being undertaken ... has been left without any concrete recommendations and without any comment.

That is because looking at the green wedge was not in the terms of reference of this committee. In fact when we went to hear the councillors at the City of Kingston, who wanted to talk to us about the subject of the inquiry, and they started to go into that issue, I asked for the committee to go into camera so we could tell the members of the Kingston council that that was not part of our terms of reference and we were not there to make recommendations about the Kingston green wedge. Mrs Peulich well knows that and should not have raised that in her statement on the report.

I will have more to say about this report on another occasion, probably the next occasion we meet here. I am sure that having put forward this excellent reference the Leader of the Government would be disturbed at the comments that have been made by government members on the committee.

Regional Development Victoria: report 2011–12

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I wish to comment on the Regional Development Victoria (RDV) annual report for 2011–12. I start with my acknowledgement of the work done by not just the Department of Planning and Community Development — and I will talk about some of the members who are working very well in the department — but also the two ministers who oversee the department, the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Peter Ryan, and his team of Clay Manners and Garry Tepper, and the Minister for Regional Cities, Denis Napthine. There has to be a cohesive partnership between the government members and the people in Regional Development Victoria if we are to have cohesive and positive outcomes.

The department is headed by Lachlan Bruce as the chief executive. His role has certainly been substantial in bringing all the various players together to make sure that the many projects which I will get to in a second have been able to be rolled out. Lachlan Bruce is well

supported by regional programs and recovery executive director Rob Jones, policy and planning executive director Lill Healy and infrastructure executive director Brad Ostermeyer. The work those three officers have done in supporting Lachlan Bruce in RDV has been phenomenal; each of them are outstanding workers in their own right.

One of the many things RDV has done, which it makes many mentions of throughout the annual report, is effectively bring together the Regional Growth Fund. Those members who were in the chamber when we introduced the Regional Growth Fund Bill 2011 will know that a significant part of that was the introduction of the Regional Policy Advisory Committee to bring together all the chairs of the Regional Development Australia committees to sit on that committee. Offering advice to the minister and looking at some ways that larger projects of state significance could be prioritised are just a few of the roles that RPAC has effectively been given. It is also looking at areas in relation to rural proofing. That is something that governments in Australia have spoken about for a long time but very few have had the courage to introduce.

The annual report mentions many other partnerships. Firstly, it talks about the Regional Development Australia committees. This government has taken those on board from the previous government and run with them. We have given both RPAC and the Regional Development Australia committees increased powers because we have funded, for the first time ever, those committees to make decisions on and prioritise projects in regional areas.

We have also had a more significant partnership with Regional Cities Victoria, meeting with it on a regular basis and ensuring that its major projects get a good hearing. The work we have done with Rural Councils Victoria has also been significant. Regional Development Victoria has worked closely on the relationship between the government and some of these regional areas, whether it be the RDA committees or the smaller or larger councils, so they have a seamless transition and a seamless hearing of the government of the day.

The annual report describes the Regional Growth Fund as a fund that:

... demonstrates the Victorian government's commitment to create new prosperity, more opportunities and better quality of life for regional and rural Victorians.

It talks about the major streams of funding in the growth fund being \$221 million for the economic infrastructure program, \$100 million for the Putting

Locals First program and \$100 million for the Local Government Infrastructure Fund.

The Local Government Infrastructure Fund has been immensely popular with councils around Victoria. Effectively it advances to them in one collective lot the types of moneys they normally got in dribs and drabs under the previous government. It has given them the security that they will receive around the \$2 million mark over the four years of the first term of this government. They have been extremely supportive of that because it has given them an opportunity to plan in a way they have not been able to plan previously.

We are also proud of the fact that we are supporting leadership programs around the state to the tune of \$6 million. That is something that many governments talk about but very few are able to do. The annual report refers to investment in work on the Latrobe Valley Industry and Employment Roadmap. An enormous amount of work goes into supporting the Latrobe Valley because of the many challenges that are faced in that area. That is also listed in the annual report.

Cancer Council Victoria: report 2011

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Cancer Council Victoria annual review 2011. I doubt there would be anyone in Victoria, or in Australia for that matter, who would be unaware of the Cancer Council Victoria. That is because it has led the way in detecting and preventing cancer for years. In particular, in Victoria 2011 marked the organisation's 75th anniversary.

The perception of cancer has changed significantly over the last century from it being a virtual death sentence to now being a disease which, with early detection and treatment, can be easily treated. I am delighted to say that in Victoria cancer survival has reached a record high of 60 per cent, which is truly remarkable. Two decades ago the statistic was 47 per cent.

I would like to acknowledge president Professor Richard Fox, chief executive officer Todd Harper and members of the executive team who, through their strategic planning and management, have turned the organisation into what it is today. I cannot thank these people without thanking the dedicated nurses and doctors who have worked tirelessly to help those affected by the disease.

Unfortunately one in two people in Australia will suffer from cancer at some point in their life, and I am sure we all know someone who has had their life turned upside

down after their diagnosis. That is why the organisation is so important, like so many others, such as the Leukaemia Foundation, which gives support to those who need it most.

Over the past 75 years the cancer council has achieved so much, including its extremely successful public education and patient support programs. They include the Quit program, which has seen a decrease in smoking to a record low of 15.5 per cent.

Last year, 2011, marked 25 years of the cancer council's annual Daffodil Day. The organisation has also allocated \$200 million for further research to develop its understanding of the prevention and treatment of cancer. If that is not enough, one more important program the cancer council runs and which is close to my heart is the annual Relay For Life initiative. Last year nearly 40 000 people joined together in the relay for the survivors of cancer and those who have sadly lost their fight against this disease. A total of \$5 million was raised — a massive 28 per cent of the organisation's budget. However, this year I am determined to increase that amount, so I am getting a team together to join the relay for a better future in understanding cancer.

I urge all in this house, despite what side they may sit on, to take part in this very special event. It is truly amazing how far a donated dollar can go. In the annual report Lisa Westphal outlines that from a donation she received a wig, a phone counsellor, a researcher, a nurse to help her with the ever-changing symptoms her body experienced, a website with helpful information, and advice on how to apply her make-up and on skin care with changes in her skin.

In Brimbank alone 726 people will be diagnosed with cancer each year. That is a frightening statistic. What is even more frightening when you think about that statistic is that the Baillieu government did not want to fund the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre.

Thankfully the resistance has stopped so that more people will be able to look forward to a future that will be cancer free. I would like to congratulate Cancer Council Victoria on a great report and an outstanding 75 years and wish it another prosperous 75 years. I commend the report to the house.

Auditor-General: *Fare Evasion on Public Transport*

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's August

2012 report entitled *Fare Evasion on Public Transport*. We all realise that public transport services need to be heavily subsidised, but unfortunately the cost to government has risen more and more as further services are provided. Operating costs in 2010–11 were \$2.2 billion with 30 per cent coming from fares and 70 per cent from government subsidy. Over the next 20 to 30 years patronage is predicted to grow significantly and clearly services will need to be expanded to accommodate this growth. An expansion, however, presents many funding challenges and it is therefore essential that all members of the travelling public pay the correct fare, thereby meeting their share of the costs. However, many people seek not to share the costs but to evade them.

The Auditor-General defines fare evasion in Victoria as travelling on public transport without an appropriate, validated ticket. It also means not having a ticket at all or having a ticket and not validating it at the time of travel. Fare evasion also includes the use of a concession ticket if you cannot prove that you are entitled to that concession.

The Auditor-General reveals that since 2004, revenue protection has been a shared responsibility, with the Department of Transport having responsibility for a sound ticketing system through this period. This included the transition from Metcards to myki smartcards. The direction for the audit was based on an assessment of the effectiveness of the department's oversight. The questions posed were: did the department understand the scale, nature and drivers of fare evasion? Did the department put in place contractual arrangements to provide a framework for monitoring and controlling fare evasion? Did the department respond quickly and effectively enough to what the Victorian Auditor-General describes as adverse fare revenue trends.

From April this year Public Transport Victoria assumed the responsibility for public transport, replacing the Department of Transport. The Auditor-General concluded that the department's oversight was effective between 2005 and 2008, but unfortunately problems arose during the transition to myki, along with the new tram and Metro Trains Melbourne contracts which commenced in November 2009.

There are some lessons to be learnt from the fare evasion outcomes. The report states that between December 2009 and July 2011 the cost to the taxpayer from the department was \$98.5 million. This was to cover the shortfall between the transport operator's forecast and actual revenue. Between 2005 and 2011 fare evasion has cost an estimated \$355 million, or an

average of \$55 million a year. If everybody else's hair in this chamber has not stood up when hearing that fact, I think they might not be tuning in.

Melbourne's fare evasion rates are significantly higher than in other cities. It is important to recognise the lessons to be learnt from the problems with oversight and the role of the department and the fact that it was too slow to react to indicators that fare evasion was on the rise in 2009. The decline in effective enforcement can be attributed to the absence of an updated revenue protection plan, the government's requirement that inspectors use leniency when dealing with people using myki — we are talking here about the previous government — which inspectors interpreted as applying to Metcard holders as well, and the absence of any financial consequences for the operators as fare evasion rose. There is no motivation to stop fare evading if the government bails operators out. That is a no-brainer.

The decline in enforcement can also be attributed to a reduction in reports of fare evasion by inspectors owing to a government-sanctioned change in focus from enforcement to customer service while the service was haemorrhaging to death. It is probably worth recording some of the early problems with the myki system. They include problems with the myki readers — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis) — Time!

Department of Primary Industries: report 2010–11

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). The report is broken down into sections. There is a report on government policy objectives, a report on stakeholder relations and management and a report on accountability and transparency. I will focus on those things, but before I do I would like to focus on page 116 of the report, which is illustrative. It shows that in the past financial year three of the four divisions of the Department of Primary Industries were running in deficit.

We heard a lot today in the house about prudent financial management from those opposite who doubled the state debt, but we see in the Department of Primary Industries annual report that under the watch of the Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr O'Brien, and the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr Walsh, three of the four areas of the Department of Primary Industries have run into deficit, as well as the department as a whole. I find it quite incredible that

despite the slashing and burning in the department, it is still running in deficit. We have seen Minister Walsh boasting endlessly about all the things he is doing in the department, but we are seeing service after service cut.

I will focus on the government's policy objectives, which are presumably to deliver better agricultural and mining services. We know that mining is virtually at a standstill in Victoria partly because DPI does not have the resources to process the paperwork required. We also know that in the agricultural area, whether it be the doggers in the north-east or the fruit fly inspectors in the north and in Gippsland, resources are being cut, therefore less is being done by this department.

In the accountability and transparency area I would like to touch briefly on stakeholder relations. The relationship between the ministers and their stakeholders is turning toxic. We saw Minister O'Brien going on and on about the terrors of fracking and the irresponsibility of anyone questioning that, then doing a total backflip and suddenly coming on board with a moratorium. We have also seen the view of some of the Victorian Farmers Federation groups on the cuts in the department.

I will touch on accountability and transparency. I found it fascinating watching the Dutch leaders' debate last night. There is an election in the Netherlands today. On the leaders debate last night one of the Dutch leaders described their Prime Minister as having the vision of an ostrich, the backbone of a mollusc and the integrity of Pinocchio. When you look at the information about accountability and transparency in this document, or the lack thereof, you wonder whether that reference was being made to Premier Baillieu and Mr Walsh, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. I say that because the accountability and transparency in the minister's department is becoming a joke. We have seen funding slashed from the department, but ministers continue to say more is being delivered. It is like something out of the ministry of truth in a fictional book that many of us read at school.

You cut the department by tens of millions of dollars and say you are doing more. On the same day that \$8 million was cut from the fruit fly control program of DPI — and by any reckoning on my part, if half of that is about chemicals and rental costs and half of that is in relation to staff, that is 40 jobs that will be gone — a series of officials working in one of the tallest buildings at 1 Spring Street in Melbourne were given the task of googling big cats and, presumably, writing in-depth reports to the other officials about what they have found during their Google search.

The Department of Primary Industries outlined some good work being done by the department and officials in the department. There are a lot of very good programs in regional Victoria, but because three of four divisions are running in deficit under the administration of these ministers in this department, we find that the staff are not on the ground to process and approve mining applications and that core front-line services in agriculture are being cut on a daily basis.

Under the headings of 'accountability' and 'transparency', we find that the minister, firstly, said that no jobs were going and then 200 jobs went; then the minister said front-line jobs were not going and then front-line jobs went; then we kept hearing this constant mantra of 'more and more is being spent', when the actual departmental figures show that less is being spent. It means there are fewer front-line services and less service delivery, which results in fewer jobs in mining and a less secure agricultural future.

I return to referring to the Dutch leaders' debate and say if someone has their head in the sand like an ostrich, the backbone of a mollusc and the integrity of Pinocchio, it is little wonder that very few people have respect in relation to where this government is going on the path of primary industries.

Regional Development Victoria: report 2011–12

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the Regional Development Victoria annual report for 2011–12. I have to say the key statement at the front of the report says:

In accordance with the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002, Regional Development Victoria (RDV) works closely with various state government agencies to meet its key strategic objective of facilitating economic, infrastructure and community development to help ensure new prosperity, more opportunities and a better quality of life for regional Victorians.

I am very pleased to speak about the strategic direction of opportunities in relation to Regional Development Victoria. During this term of government we have worked to implement the Victorian government's commitment to the Regional Growth Fund, which has been a great boon to rural and regional Victoria and is supporting 481 projects to the value of \$161 million and leveraging a total investment value of almost \$433 million.

The fund manages and delivers programs that support regional and rural development; oversees delivery of key regional infrastructure projects, such as the Energy for the Regions program and the Mildura riverfront

development; delivers the Latrobe Valley Industry and Employment Roadmap; and monitors the development of the Murray-Darling Basin plan and anticipates its impacts. It has engaged with the private sector through a market process on the Marysville hotel and conference centre, which has been instrumental in the recovery process of that area; facilitated the Black Saturday memorial service; delivered flood recovery grants; and instigated the Latrobe Valley transition process in collaboration with local partners and the commonwealth government.

The fund supports the Regional Policy Advisory Committee to undertake work on behalf of the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, the Minister for Regional Cities and the parliamentary secretary. It delivered the inaugural Regional Victoria Living Expo, which was a fantastic expo showcasing rural living in Victoria and all its benefits. It developed a new regional marketing campaign to promote regional Victoria as a location to live, work, invest and study. It has worked with the commonwealth government to appoint new Regional Development Australia committees and delivered and managed programs that support recovery from natural disasters, such as the floods of 2010, 2011 and 2012.

I have spoken many times about the fire, flood and drought we have experienced over the last 10 years. Communities in the electorate that I represent, Northern Victoria Region, and many others in rural Victoria need our support. They have had their share of difficulties. I look at this issue and contrast it with that of the previous government. Over 10 years up until 2010–11, total expenses grew at an unsustainable average rate of 7.3 per cent. The previous Treasurer now sits on the opposite side of the chamber. The current Treasurer said on 1 May:

The previous Labor government left Victoria a trend of unsustainable spending growth and escalating debt with no plan to address the deteriorating budget position.

Earlier today in a motion members opposite commented on the Baillieu government's track record and what it is doing. Members on the other side of the chamber, particularly the previous Treasurer, have a gall to preach to us about expenditure. I think the Victorian taxpayer has a very long memory.

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs PETROVICH — Yes. The best thing we can do to boost jobs and opportunities in Victoria is to not talk Victoria down for a start, as members on the other side of the chamber continually do, and create a practical and nurturing environment for business to

flourish. It is very important for us to do that. That is what we are doing through activities such as this.

The Regional Growth Fund represents a new way of supporting development in regional and rural Victoria. It is designed to be delivered in close consultation with regional and rural communities so we can deliver what those communities want. We are listening to them. That is a very important function of government.

The major streams of the fund are \$221 million for the economic infrastructure program; \$100 million for the Putting Locals First program; and \$100 million for the Local Government Infrastructure program. The individual programs that rural and regional Victoria have benefited from are wide, far ranging and include the Mildura airport terminal upgrade, the Bendigo tram depot and museum redevelopment and SPC Ardmona — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Time!

Sustainability Victoria: report 2010–11

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Today I wish to speak on Sustainability Victoria's annual report 2010–11. I want to highlight a case study involving Melbourne Zoo, which switched to solar energy, which is fantastic. Under a Sustainability Victoria scheme, the zoo installed a lot of environmentally sustainable equipment, especially for its gift shop. I understand the zoo's gift shop receives 60 000 visitors annually. The gift shop supports the zoo's education function and it previously used inefficient lighting. The zoo successfully applied to Sustainability Victoria for an energy, waste and waste grant and received \$5000 to help install more efficient lights, including T5 fluorescent lights and light-emitting diode lights. I recall that one of the platforms of the previous government during its election campaign of 2010 was to support councils to provide funding to replace fluorescent street lighting with T5 fluorescent energy-efficient lighting. That was another promise that this government did not follow through on when it came to power.

The zoo's gift shop installed a solar panel system that it can promote to visitors. As I said, the gift shop receives 60 000 visitors annually. The report quotes the zoo's commercial manager, Robyn Graffidge, as saying:

'Lots of visitors see the panels, and often want to know what they are for', she said. 'It has become a good way for staff to engage with zoo customers, to talk about our environmental work —

especially around these solar panels.

Unfortunately the Baillieu government does not have the same vigour and passion around solar panels as the Melbourne Zoo. After long discussions, the Brumby government's 60-cent premium solar feed-in tariff was not good enough for the coalition. The coalition did not like that it was a net rate and believed it should have been a gross rate, and the coalition said how terrible that was.

Mr Lenders — Gross behaviour.

Mr LEANE — It would have simply been gross behaviour if the coalition had not, upon coming to government, cut the feed-in tariff to 25 cents and kept it as a net rate. The Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr O'Brien, announced that at the start of next year the feed-in tariff will be a measly 8 cents. The Melbourne Zoo is setting a good example, because people are being encouraged to care for their environment and to use renewable energy. The zoo understands the importance of the environment and biodiversity, and the importance of looking at these sorts of energy-saving initiatives.

I commend Sustainability Victoria for providing grants to encourage organisations to follow this track. I encourage the government to support Sustainability Victoria and to keep funding these sorts of grants. That is probably wishful thinking on my part, but let us wait and see.

I commend this report to the house. I look forward to next year's report and to seeing what sorts of grants are available then. The way this government is cutting everything that is good for the environment, it will be interesting to see what it cuts over the next year.

Auditor-General: *Fare Evasion on Public Transport*

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's report of August 2012 *Fare Evasion on Public Transport*. As all members would agree, our public transport system operates on important infrastructure throughout the state, but obviously more predominately here in metropolitan Melbourne and other regional centres. However, due to the nature of public transport, a number of shortfalls both in Melbourne and across regional Victoria have been highlighted.

As I said, I am speaking about the Auditor-General's report on fare evasion that has been occurring on our public transport over the past few years. As has already

been highlighted by Mrs Kronberg, there needs to be significant investment in public transport, and fare evasion goes a fair way towards having a major impact on the operation of public transport.

In the background to his report, the Auditor-General states:

In 2010–11 the cost of operating public transport services was \$2.2 billion, with 30 per cent coming from fares and 70 per cent from government subsidy.

A significant amount of money is collected through fares, and the significant fare evasion that this report has highlighted has a huge impact on the overall capacity of the public transport system to operate appropriately and properly.

The Auditor-General goes on to examine the control of fare evasion by adequately understanding the scale, nature and drivers of fare evasion; the importance of putting in place contractual arrangements and other measures that provide an effective framework for monitoring and controlling fare evasion; and responding to adverse fare revenue trends in a timely and effective way. The report addresses a number of those issues, but what it really highlights are the shortfalls we saw under the previous Labor government. I have to say that that was due partly to the introduction of myki.

As we know, myki is a very flawed system that we have inherited, and we are dealing with the issues that the former government saddled Victorian taxpayers with. Myki had cost overruns, and it is symbolic of the previous government's inability to manage projects. It beggars belief how something such as a ticketing and fare system could have been got so wrong.

Every time I think of myki I recall that dreadful television news footage of a former Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky, during which the equipment fell on her. I felt very sorry for her because it was out of her control, but it just symbolised the entire debacle of the myki ticketing system. During that time the government was probably pretty embarrassed about the whole shambolic exercise, and so there was a decrease in people being fined for fare evasion. I have travelled on public transport on a number of occasions and I have seen people get on and off without producing a ticket of any form. One wonders whether they are actually travelling in a legal and valid manner. I suspect not on most of those occasions.

It is interesting to note that according to the report the steepest rise in fare evasion happened during the period when, as I said, myki was introduced — that is, on the

trains from December 2009 and the trams from July 2010. There were a number of other issues surrounding enforcement, and I would have to say that this government has taken that on board very seriously. It has had significant financial consequences for the state, as has been highlighted by the Auditor-General in his report. I am pleased to say that the Minister for Public Transport has cracked down on this, and that the figures are much improved. In a press release of 29 August the minister stated:

In 2012 to 28 August, Metro passengers have received 111 215 infringement notices. This compares to only 94 848 for the whole of 2010 ...

It is a significant improvement overall, and it is particularly pleasing that Metro Trains Melbourne has increased enforcement. It is cracking down on bad behaviour on trains, including travelling without a valid ticket. The Minister for Public Transport says that this is a major step towards making our public transport safer, and I completely agree with him. The Auditor-General's report has highlighted those issues very effectively.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Department of Primary Industries: Cobram office

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise on the adjournment tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh. I refer to his comments during question time yesterday where in the Assembly on a number of occasions he reiterated there were no redundancies in the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). He said there are voluntary departure packages available as part of the sustainable government initiative, but no redundancies.

Part of this goes to unbelievable semantics that are coming from this minister and this government. We had an election promise of no loss of public sector jobs, which became that there would be some public sector jobs lost following a mini-budget last December and then more public sector jobs would be lost after a full budget in May. Then we had a statement last year that no front-line services would go from any individual department or area, and now we have moved to, 'As a

general rule front-line services will not go, but we won't define what a front-line service is'.

In this game of semantics we have seen, as I outlined in my address on the Department of Primary Industries report earlier, that DPI is running in deficit this year, so there are fewer people employed in the department. If the minister says there are no redundancies, the action I seek is that he drive to Cobram and talk to the 10 people who were employed by the Department of Primary Industries there but whose jobs no longer exist. I say they no longer exist because if you go to the DPI website now, Cobram no longer exists. It has been wiped. It has gone. Several weeks ago there was a DPI office at Cobram with 10 people working there and doing assorted tasks, but Cobram has been wiped from the map. It is like something from George Orwell's Ministry of Truth: if you get rid of the evidence, it goes away and if you keep on spinning and talking, the problem is gone.

This minister says there are no redundancies, but there were 10 jobs in Cobram. They have been deleted from the DPI website, and presumably if those people still wish to have a job, they are travelling 80 kilometres to the next DPI office, which is not one of 25 or 26 that have been closed. The minister says no front-line services are gone, and I guess they are not gone if you delete them from the website and pretend they were never there.

The action I am seeking from the minister is that he go to Cobram, talk to his 10 employees about what their front-line services were, how the sustainable government initiative which has taken 200 jobs out of the Department of Primary Industries makes government sustainable and particularly what is his definition of a front-line service. Cobram is now in an endemic fruit fly zone, but the fruit fly inspectors have gone. Presumably some of the doggers gone from the region were in Cobram, and Cobram presumably has shed staff so that in a tall building at 1 Spring Street a desktop search can be done for the big cat.

Planning: Williamstown

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Planning. The *Sunday Age* revealed that the Baillieu government is considering introducing tough controls along the Yarra River to protect the waterway from being overrun by inappropriate development. The paper outlined that Minister Guy conceded that the river is at risk of encroachment and requires new rules to limit 'overdevelopment' and inconsistent planning decisions

along its edge. Minister Guy is also quoted in the *Sunday Age* as saying:

What is needed is clarity in state and local policy that does give a level of consistency and certainty in relation to planning near the edge of the river.

The Yarra River is a valuable natural asset for our city, our community and visiting tourists, so I agree with the government that its values should be protected. I therefore welcome Minister Guy's comments, but I wonder whether the minister is aware that the Yarra River extends all the way to Williamstown? While I am not entirely sure where the river mouth ends and Port Phillip Bay starts — it is often difficult to distinguish — perhaps the minister would like to make it clear so that we know where the Yarra River restrictions will apply.

It appears that the government is inconsistent in its approach. In Williamstown, at the mouth of the Yarra River, Minister Guy, against community and council wishes, has wound back development restrictions, paving the way for unlimited heights for development. I am talking about the minister's intervention in the proposed development of the former Port Phillip Woollen Mills. This development proposal has no height restrictions. The site used to have strict heritage controls and a three-storey height limit. Now the developers are talking about 813 dwellings and 2000 people.

Do different development restrictions exist for the west and the east? Will the minister make these development restrictions consistent and therefore amend the planning controls for the Port Phillip Woollen Mills site? The site is adjacent to a hazardous substance facility and only 200 metres from a Mobil fuel storage site. It is a risky business for the government to permit high-density, high-rise development, housing 2000 people close to a hazardous site.

Making matters worse, our firefighting service is facing a cut of \$65 million, so perhaps if there were an emergency on site the firefighting service would not have the capacity to evacuate such a large number of people and adequately protect their safety.

The action I ask of the minister is that he apply the same development restrictions proposed for the Yarra River to the whole of the Yarra River and the river mouth, bringing the Port Phillip Woollen Mills into line with appropriate development restrictions rather than the inappropriate option we currently face.

Hampton Park: botanic garden proposal

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. It was brought to my attention through my involvement in Hampton Park. I am the chair of the Hampton Park community renewal project, and I received a couple of telephone calls, one from a member of the Labor Party and another from a member of the general community, expressing disappointment that at an ordinary council meeting of the City of Casey a motion put forward by Cr Geoff Ablett, an outstanding councillor who has an ability to cut through red tape like you would not believe and deliver real outcomes for his ward, in relation to calling for a report to investigate the feasibility of establishing an Australian botanic garden at the Hallam Road landfill in Hampton Park was defeated.

The motion went to the central issue, which is that the council take control of the land now and that in 30 years, when council takes over the entire site, native vegetation would have grown and thousands of native trees would already have achieved mature status. Cr Ablett's concept was that native animals, such as the endangered southern brown bandicoot, would then be introduced to the area. This would be a wonderful opportunity to develop and showcase Victorian flora and fauna.

I was surprised and disappointed that the motion was defeated; it was lost in the hurly-burly of local council election posturing. The most disappointing aspect was that the councillor for that ward, Lynette Keleher, who represents the Greens, voted against the planning and establishment of an Australian botanic garden, which would be a wonderful asset to be enjoyed by the whole community.

I ask that the minister join Cr Geoff Ablett and me in an investigation of the feasibility of this concept and also obtain a report from the department so that this idea can be fully explored. This is an outstanding concept, and it is disappointing that a Greens councillor for that ward was instrumental in voting the concept down.

Calder Highway: maintenance

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder, and it relates to the work currently being done on a stretch of road that spans the Calder Highway, but particularly from a bit before Karlsruhe to Sunbury. The Calder Highway is a major stretch of road that connects communities such as Bendigo, Kyneton,

Gisborne and Sunbury with Melbourne's CBD. Due to the recent heavy rains, parts of the Calder Highway have deteriorated and have been in pretty bad shape. Winter in northern Victoria has seen higher-than-average rainfall, and the Macedon Ranges has been no exception.

Mr Finn — Have you mentioned that to Tim Flannery?

Mrs PETROVICH — Not this week. With such high levels of rain throughout north-central Victoria, the Calder Highway has needed more maintenance than usual. The permeable surface of the road has been so saturated that it has bubbled, which has caused a lot of breakdowns. I am pleased to be able to congratulate the Minister for Roads on his timely response to this issue. Affected areas of road, such as the stretch of road from Kyneton through to Sunbury, have been under repair for many weeks, due to the wettest winter I think in living memory.

As we all know, the Calder Highway provides road access for rural communities and its continued maintenance is essential to the wellbeing of all communities along that Calder corridor. As a member of the Macedon Ranges community I understand that the Calder Highway is part of the everyday work-life balance for not only country people but also those who commute to the area.

I would like to congratulate the VicRoads staff I met on Monday, 10 September. I had the pleasure of visiting one of the repair sites just outside Gisborne and talking to some of the staff working on this project. They are delivering results for the community. I would like to reaffirm my support and ask that the Minister for Roads continue to support the Macedon Ranges community and the broader networks across Victoria through maintenance and repair of the Calder Highway.

Seaspray: caravan park

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I wish to raise tonight is for the attention of the Deputy Premier, Mr Ryan. The matter concerns his correspondence with a concerned residents group at Seaspray about a new development at the Seaspray caravan park. In particular I wish to raise some issues relating to his correspondence with the group but more particularly correspondence from the Department of Sustainability and Environment that he sent to the group. I have previously raised this matter with the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and I think I am due for a response in the next two days.

This issue demonstrates that Mr Ryan may not have been properly advised by the department regarding the community's concerns. The department's correspondence with Mr Ryan and via him to the community indicates that a concept plan on the problem of car parking around the existing community hall was agreed to by the community in 2010.

However, reading in closer detail and through my careful analysis of the documents associated with this matter, the crux of the problem is that the concept plan agreed to between the community, the department and the committee of management in 2010 was subsequently changed in the detailed design plan. It appears that the Department of Sustainability and Environment's correspondence with Mr Ryan omits to mention this fact. I am aware that Mr Ryan is very busy in the business of government, and I do not expect him to understand all the detail of all these matters. However, if I were Deputy Premier, I would be concerned if a department was less than clear in its briefing to me on this issue.

This matter relates to both my and the Deputy Premier's electorate. I am seeking that the Deputy Premier investigate this matter further with the department. It is clear that there was a concept plan agreed to by the community. It was one of three plans that were presented to the community in 2010. That plan provided adequate parking around the community hall. Following that, between that concept plan and the detailed design stage, this matter was changed. Outcomes cannot be changed after conducting community consultation. This reminds me of something that I was involved in many years ago when a similar thing occurred. I am seeking that the Deputy Premier investigate this matter further and clarify the position with the community.

Ambulance services: Mooroolbark

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Health and concerns ambulance services in Mooroolbark. Late in 2010 the previous government earmarked the vacant site of the former Mooroolbark Primary School as a location for an ambulance substation service. The announcement delighted the member for Kilsyth in the Assembly, Mr David Hodgett, who said that the decision by the state government to provide an ambulance substation in Mooroolbark was a win for the area. In an article in the local paper Mr Hodgett is reported to have said:

I have repeatedly lobbied for the vacant school land to be used to benefit the community, so this is a big win for locals ...

The key now is for the government to actually build the facility ...

A couple of months after Mr Hodgett made that statement there was a change of government and he became a member of this government. What surprises me is that only in the last few months the site of the former Mooroolbark Primary School has been sold by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to a developer for a new housing estate. This move has confused the people in the Mooroolbark area about whether there will be an ambulance service in the Mooroolbark area and, if so, where it will be located, especially after the passion shown previously by the member for Kilsyth.

The action I seek is that the minister tell the people of the outer east whether the Baillieu government still has plans for an ambulance substation to service the Mooroolbark area, which the member for Kilsyth was so jubilant about a couple of years ago, particularly because of the confusion with the government flogging off the land earmarked for this service.

East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship. The matter concerns the Vietnamese community in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region, a community for which I have a very high regard and work with a lot, in particular the Footscray Asian Business Association (FABA), which was founded in 1990 and represents the interests of the increasing numbers of traders from the Far East who are revitalising and developing Footscray. I am delighted to see the Minister for Planning in the chamber. He knows a fair bit about redeveloping and revitalising Footscray as well. As community leaders and with very close involvement with the Vietnamese Community in Australia and other community groups, FABA helps to represent the interests of cultural groups and community organisations as well.

Approximately one-third of the 65 000 people in Maribyrnong were born in the Far East, or are children of parents from that region. Footscray also attracts large numbers of customers and visitors from all cultural backgrounds, who come to shop, to eat and to join in its rich cultural life. I can fully understand that; Footscray is a great spot, particularly every year when it holds the East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival. The festival has been the centrepiece of Vietnamese cultural life and for 21 years has been celebrated in Footscray as an inclusive event that recognises and celebrates the importance of the lunar new year to the Chinese, Thai,

Cambodian, Lao and other Australian Asian communities. The festival also celebrates the economic and cultural contribution the Vietnamese community has made to Footscray and to Australia, because the Vietnamese community has made and continues to make an enormous contribution to its new home.

The East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival is also an inclusive event that celebrates other Far Eastern communities and their close cooperation with other multicultural communities, including the Indian and African communities. I invite members to attend the East Meets West New Year Festival, which is usually held in January. It is pretty warm out there, but the streets of Footscray will be alive and throbbing with the joys of community life. To put on such a magnificent festival every year takes some financial support from sponsors, and in years gone by one of those sponsors has been the Victorian government through the Victorian Multicultural Commission. I ask the minister to speak to people in the commission with a view to suggesting that once again the commission supports the festival, as it is very important for the Vietnamese community, for Footscray and for the western suburbs.

Dementia: age-specific care

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Ageing. It relates to the increasing prevalence of dementia in Victoria and the Victorian government's response to this. In my members statement this morning I referred to the inaugural breakfast launch of the Victorian Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, which is a very worthwhile initiative aimed at raising, particularly amongst members of Parliament, greater community awareness of dementia and providing an important platform for bipartisan support of what is a growing issue in our community. Again I commend the co-convenors of that body.

Currently 72 000 Victorians live with dementia, and this number is expected to double by 2030. According to Alzheimer's Australia, the local government area of Greater Geelong has the highest prevalence of dementia, with almost 3500 people, and it is expected to retain the highest prevalence of dementia in the next few decades, with an estimated 11 600 cases. In my own electorate the Department of Health's north and west metropolitan region currently has the highest prevalence of dementia, so this issue clearly concerns me.

The launch this morning focused on younger onset dementia affecting people under the age of 65 years, which is rarer than dementia diagnosed in people aged

over 65 years. Mr Garry Lovell, who developed dementia in his 40s, spoke bravely about his fear of going into an aged-care facility with people decades older than himself. In particular I urge the minister to work with Alzheimer's Australia to ensure that the aged-care sector can provide suitable facilities for people with younger onset dementia. The presentation by Dr Michael Woodward, head of aged and residential care services and the director of Austin's Health memory clinic, also focused on the need for greater training for GPs in younger onset dementia, as patients were being misdiagnosed and had treatment delayed.

I also point to the fact that the previous government had provided new funding in the 2008–09 budget to include \$150 000 per annum to target young people with dementia and provide support to their families and carers. I ask the minister to develop a comprehensive package and to look at a range of measures that can provide specific support to younger people with dementia as well as to their families and carers.

Responses

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — Mr Lenders raised an issue for the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security in relation to the Department of Primary Industries office in Cobram. I will pass that matter on for Minister Walsh to respond to.

Ms Hartland raised an issue for me in relation to planning controls along the Yarra River. Since the time Ms Hartland raised the matter I have looked online and, if I am correct, have ascertained that the river appears to finish around Newport. Having said that, on the subject of the woollen mills site, I have returned the responsible authority status to the local council. Although the recommendation of the advisory committee was for me to be the responsible authority, I have given that responsibility back to the council. I have not put a mandatory height control on the site but a recommended height control, which the government has not made to be wildly abused. It is there as an indication of what the government considers appropriate for the location, although that is obviously something for the responsible authority, which is the council now, to manage.

Having said that, I will take Ms Hartland's matter on notice and give her a written reply. Maybe someone else will be able to provide us both with an absolutely 100 per cent and definitive answer as to where the Yarra River finishes. It appears to be Newport, but I might be wrong; it might be in part of Hobsons Bay

towards Williamstown, but I am sure I can provide Ms Hartland with a proper response nonetheless.

Mrs Peulich raised an issue for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change in relation to the feasibility of a new Australian botanic gardens in Hampton Park, which was first suggested by Cr Geoff Ablett, who is a terrific councillor of the City of Casey. I will pass that on for Minister Smith to reply to.

Mrs Petrovich raised an issue for the Minister for Roads in relation to an upgrade of the Calder Highway. I will ask Minister Mulder to reply to Mrs Petrovich directly.

Mr Viney raised an issue for the Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan, in relation to Seaspray residents and correspondence to him about the upgrading of the caravan park, and I will ask the Deputy Premier to respond to Mr Viney directly on that.

Mr Leane raised an issue for the Minister for Health, David Davis, around ambulance services in Mooroolbark, and I will have Mr Davis give a written reply to Mr Leane on that issue.

Mr Finn raised an issue for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, Nick Kotsiras, in relation to a Vietnamese community festival put on primarily, I understand, by the Footscray Asian Business Association, and he asked whether some money could be made available to the association to continue the very good work it does out in the western suburbs.

Ms Mikakos raised an issue for the Minister for Ageing, David Davis, in relation to the concerning and increasing prevalence of dementia in Victoria, and I will have Mr Davis respond to her directly.

I have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised by Mrs Coote on 22 May 2012, Mr Viney on 15 August 2012 — and I hope that is the issue he was seeking a response on — Ms Pennicuik on 16 August and Mr Lenders on 24 November 2011 and 5 June and 15 August 2012.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.56 p.m