

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 27 May 2010

(Extract from book 7)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

Professor DAVID de KRETZER, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

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Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. R. J. Hulls, MP
Treasurer, Minister for Information and Communication Technology, and Minister for Financial Services	The Hon. J. Lenders, MLC
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Minister for Energy and Resources, and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. P. Batchelor, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. R. G. Cameron, MP
Minister for Community Development	The Hon. L. D' Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. J. Helper, MP
Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission, Minister for Water and Minister for Tourism and Major Events	The Hon. T. J. Holding, MP
Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Innovation.	The Hon. G. W. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Planning and Minister for the Respect Agenda.	The Hon. J. M. Madden, MLC
Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development and Minister for Women's Affairs	The Hon. M. V. Morand, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services and Minister for Senior Victorians	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MLC
Minister for Roads and Ports, and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Education and Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation	The Hon. B. J. Pike, MP
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. A. G. Robinson, MP
Minister for Housing, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr A. G. Lupton, MP

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Carli, Mr Clark, Mr Delahunty, Mr Lupton, Mrs Maddigan, Dr Naphthine, Mr Nardella, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson.

Standing Orders Committee — The Speaker, Ms Barker, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Langdon, Mr McIntosh, Mr Nardella and Mrs Powell.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Batchelor, Mr Cameron, Mr Clark, Mr Holding, Mr Lupton, Mr McIntosh and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Jennings, Mr Lenders and Ms Pennicuik.

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mrs Maddigan and Mr Morris. (*Council*): Mrs Coote, Mr Leane and Ms Mikakos.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr Crisp, Mr Lim and Ms Thomson. (*Council*): Mr Atkinson, Mr D. Davis and Mr Tee.

Education and Training Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Dr Harkness, Mr Herbert, Mr Howard and Mr Kotsiras. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr and Mr Hall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr O'Brien, Mr Scott and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Ms Broad, Mr P. Davis and Mr Somyurek.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Ingram, Ms Lobato, Mr Pandazopoulos and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr Murphy and Mrs Petrovich.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Kairouz, Mr Noonan, Mr Perera, Mrs Powell and Mrs Shardey. (*Council*): Mr Finn and Mr Scheffer.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mr Howard, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Scott and Mr K. Smith. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Atkinson, Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Mr Eideh and Ms Hartland.

Law Reform Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Donnellan, Mr Foley and Mrs Victoria. (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Scheffer.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Hodgett, Mr Langdon, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz and Mr K. Smith. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr, Mr Guy and Ms Hartland.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Graley, Mr Noonan, Mr Scott, Mr Stensholt, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva, Ms Huppert, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Road Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Eren, Mr Langdon, Mr Tilley, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr Leane.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Nardella and Mr Northe. (*Council*): Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Ms Lovell, Ms Tierney and Mr Vogels.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Burgess, Mr Carli, Mr Jasper and Mr Languiller. (*Council*): Mr Eideh, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Peulich and Ms Pulford.

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 ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. JENNY LINDELL

Deputy Speaker: Ms A. P. BARKER

Acting Speakers: Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mr Eren, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Green, Dr Harkness, Mr Howard, Mr Ingram, Mr Jasper, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Languiller, Ms Munt, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz, Mr K. Smith, Dr Sykes, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. J. M. BRUMBY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. R. J. HULLS

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. L. WALSH

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Lindell, Ms Jennifer Margaret	Carrum	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Lobato, Ms Tamara Louise	Gembrook	ALP
Baillieu, Mr Edward Norman	Hawthorn	LP	Lupton, Mr Anthony Gerard	Prahran	ALP
Barker, Ms Ann Patricia	Oakleigh	ALP	McIntosh, Mr Andrew John	Kew	LP
Batchelor, Mr Peter John	Thomastown	ALP	Maddigan, Mrs Judith Marilyn	Essendon	ALP
Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean	Yuroke	ALP	Marshall, Ms Kirstie	Forest Hill	ALP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Bracks, Mr Stephen Phillip ¹	Williamstown	ALP	Morand, Ms Maxine Veronica	Mount Waverley	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield	Broadmeadows	ALP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Munt, Ms Janice Ruth	Mordialloc	ALP
Cameron, Mr Robert Graham	Bendigo West	ALP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Carli, Mr Carlo Domenico	Brunswick	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Noonan, Wade Mathew ⁷	Williamstown	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Crutchfield, Mr Michael Paul	South Barwon	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Overington, Ms Karen Marie	Ballarat West	ALP
Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Lowan	Nats	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Tarneit	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Pandazopoulos, Mr John	Dandenong	ALP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Duncan, Ms Joanne Therese	Macedon	ALP	Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane	Melbourne	ALP
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Powell, Mrs Elizabeth Jeanette	Shepparton	Nats
Foley, Martin Peter ²	Albert Park	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Ann	Evelyn	LP	Robinson, Mr Anthony Gerard	Mitcham	ALP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian	Gippsland South	Nats
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Haermeyer, Mr André ³	Kororoit	ALP	Seitz, Mr George	Keilor	ALP
Hardman, Mr Benedict Paul	Seymour	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
Harkness, Dr Alistair Ross	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Mr Kenneth Maurice	Bass	LP
Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill ⁴	Altona	ALP	Stensholt, Mr Robert Einar	Burwood	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Sykes, Dr William Everett	Benalla	Nats
Hodgett, Mr David John	Kilsyth	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Lyndhurst	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Ballarat East	ALP	Thwaites, Mr Johnstone William ⁸	Albert Park	ALP
Hudson, Mr Robert John	Bentleigh	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Ingram, Mr Craig	Gippsland East	Ind	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen	Murray Valley	Nats	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene ⁵	Kororoit	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Swan Hill	Nats
Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice ⁶	Altona	ALP	Weller, Mr Paul	Rodney	Nats
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Resigned 6 August 2007

² Elected 15 September 2007

³ Resigned 2 June 2008

⁴ Elected 13 February 2010

⁵ Elected 28 June 2008

⁶ Resigned 18 January 2010

⁷ Elected 15 September 2007

⁸ Resigned 6 August 2007

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Thursday, 27 May 2010

The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 222 to 226 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices of motion given.

Mr LIM having given notice of motion:

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the member for Clayton that notices of motion are supposed to be limited to 250 words. The Clerk will obviously review and edit the notice of motion where possible.

Further notices of motion given.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Graham Street, Wonthaggi: traffic management

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

Graham Street, Wonthaggi, is a main street and is used by drivers to access roads to Melbourne, Inverloch, Cape Paterson and South Dudley, and for people to visit shops. Including regular traffic, many heavy vehicles access Graham Street, and this is creating safety issues for pedestrians trying to cross the road and also for vehicles reversing out of car parks. It has been observed that the construction of the desalination plant at Wonthaggi and the increasing number of tourists and shoppers to the Bass Coast region have significantly increased the flow of vehicular traffic along Graham Street.

We, the undersigned concerned citizens of Victoria, ask the Victorian Parliament and the Minister for Roads and Ports to support our petition and act immediately to install a suitable pedestrian crossing at Graham Street, Wonthaggi, and to consider allocating an alternative route for heavy vehicles.

By Mr K. SMITH (Bass) (174 signatures).

Mildura Aboriginal Corporation: activities

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Aboriginal and non-indigenous residents of Mildura, north-west Victoria, draws to the attention of the house:

explanation of how funding is being used or not used to support the Aboriginal community at the Mildura Aboriginal Corporation (MAC);

right of Aboriginal community members to be serviced by MAC, without prejudice due to their connection to certain family groups which are currently being refused service;

membership forms for the corporation to be offered to all members of the Aboriginal community and are easily accessible;

the right to elect a new board of directors every year;

annual community consultations, which should be promoted to ensure community members have an opportunity to attend;

the community wishes to be informed about annual general meetings and to be provided with the minutes of the AGMs;

stolen generation members/descendants to be afforded the same opportunities as other Aboriginal people and to receive services from MAC without waiting for confirmation of Aboriginality forms to be signed off;

that all staff, Aboriginal and non-indigenous, are treated with respect and dignity;

that MAC staff and community issues are not discussed by senior staff in a way that is offensive or derogatory;

that all community knowledge is handled in a private and confidential manner and is based on evidence, not innuendo;

that single mothers, homosexuals, pregnant women, people with drug and alcohol issues, criminal offenders, other community service organisations, government workers and government agencies, former employees of MAC, unemployed people and people with mental health issues are not slandered or bullied in staff meetings or at any other time by senior management at MAC;

that MAC family services makes all endeavours to place children removed from their parents with extended family members/community members and alerts community elders of placement requests/needs;

MAC senior staff should ensure all information regarding possible paternal family connections of a child who has been removed is given to relevant child protection services;

that MAC senior staff and members of the board of directors and their families should not use or apply for MAC housing unless they are financially unable to

obtain private or public housing due to extenuating circumstances;

that no member of MAC staff should receive any financial remuneration or fringe benefit from Aboriginal funded programs;

MAC should endeavour to work in partnership with other community service organisations to ensure the best outcomes possible for Aboriginal people;

that Mildura Aboriginal Corporation needs to have an Aboriginal CEO and an Aboriginal family services manager/coordinator to ensure self-determination and cultural safety.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly addresses the abovementioned issues and stands up for Aboriginal people in this region who are being discriminated against. We are asking that the Mildura Aboriginal Corporation is investigated thoroughly.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (21 signatures).

Rail: Mildura line

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house for the reinstatement of the Mildura–Melbourne passenger train.

The petitioners register their request that the passenger service be suitable for the long-distance needs of the aged and disabled who need to travel for medical treatment, for whom travelling by coach or car is not a comfort option and for whom flying is financially and logistically prohibitive.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria reinstate the passenger train to service the needs of residents in the state's far north who are disadvantaged by distance.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (57 signatures).

Rail: Shepparton line

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the need to reinstate passenger rail services from Shepparton through Numurkah and Strathmerton to Cobram and return, to service this important area and provide the convenience of passenger rail services directly to and from Melbourne, as has previously been provided.

The petitioners therefore request that the Victorian government takes positive action to reinstate passenger rail services as a matter of urgency.

By Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) (30 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Mildura be considered next day on motion of Mr CRISP (Mildura).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Murray Valley be considered next day on motion of Mr JASPER (Murray Valley).

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Right of reply: Mr Rob Small

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) presented report on right of reply, together with appendix.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

Right of reply: Mr Brian Rule

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) presented report on right of reply, together with appendix.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

National Parks Act 1975 — Notice of consent under s 40

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee Report on the Inquiry into the Impact of the State Government's Decision to Change the Urban Growth Boundary.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr HELPER (Minister for Agriculture) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 8 June 2010.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Energy and water ombudsman: report

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I refer to a document called *Resolution* published by the Victorian energy and water ombudsman. It is issue 28 dated May 2010. In that document it shows that 1075 cases were laid against water authorities in the period July to December 2009, which was an increase of 43 per cent on the

previous segment, from July to December 2008, when there were 750 cases, of which 52 per cent related to billing complaints about water authorities.

In relation to complaints against metropolitan retailers, in July to December 2008 there were 392 complaints; in January to June 2009 there were 480 complaints; and in July to December 2009 there were 608 complaints. The main complaints were that consumers' bills were too high, and against fees and charges levied by the water authorities. This shows that increases in the price of water are impacting on Victorians.

The complaints, in fact, bear out the findings of the Victorian parliamentary Environment and Natural Resources Committee inquiry into Melbourne's future water supply, which laid bare the case that 90 per cent of the government's water projects will be financed by water consumers, not by the government or the water authorities. Again, this report clearly shows that Victorians will continue to pay for the Labor government failure on water policy.

Diggers and Greeks — The Australian Campaigns in Greece and Crete

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — Last Friday, I attended the launch of Dr Maria Hill's book *Diggers and Greeks — The Australian Campaigns in Greece and Crete* at the Shrine of Remembrance. The event also celebrated the freedom of Greece and Crete as well as remembering those who gave their lives in battle against tyranny. Little is known about the real reasons why Australia committed troops to Greece. Australian historians have for too long neglected the Greek and Crete campaigns.

Of the Australian soldiers captured by the Italians and Germans, 83 per cent came from the Greek and Crete campaigns. The diggers who fought in Greece and Crete were never issued with a campaign medal; the soldiers were forbidden for many years to wear the medal issued to them by the Greek government on Anzac Day. Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the campaigns in Greece, and I hope we will finally see a campaign medal being issued to the Australian soldiers who fought in Greece. More than 4000 Allied soldiers, including Australians, British and New Zealanders were killed or wounded, and almost 12 000 were captured and spent the rest of the war as prisoners of war. What has been written until now has largely ignored the Greek and Cretan side of the story.

The book shows how, amidst the confusion and questionable strategies, people of vastly different cultures and backgrounds could form profound

relationships that had immense impact for generations to come. I do not think we will ever know the true cost to the people of Greece and Crete, who suffered through years of occupation by the Nazis. What I do know is that the struggle for freedom created a bond between Greeks and Australians that lasts to this day and which was, no doubt, a factor in many Greeks choosing Australia as a new home, an outcome that has enriched our lives along with our history.

VicRoads: roadside trade

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — Small businesses in country Victoria are doing it tough enough without the government making it even tougher. Malcolm and Dianne Blake are proprietors of Blakes Florist in Shepparton. Mr Blake copied me an email that he sent to the Minister for Public Transport, drawing the minister's attention to enforcement inaction by VicRoads in regard to an illegal roadside seller.

On Saturday, 8 May, Mr Blake reported a person selling flowers in a roadside stop on the Goulburn Valley Highway at Kialla, south of Shepparton. This roadside seller again set up his flower stall with signs on Sunday, 9 May, which was Mothers Day. Mr Blake again phoned the VicRoads call centre and spoke to the same operator he spoke to on the previous day and was told the call had been logged, but the operator could not do any more than that. As a professional florist, Mr Blake relies on peak periods, such as Mothers Day, when he pays higher staff costs.

While running a permanent business in Shepparton he pays rates, electricity, rent and wages. Mr Blake rightly asks why this roadside seller, who did not have a permit, was not moved on or prosecuted by VicRoads. Roadside stops are there for drivers to rest, not for opportunistic sellers to take money away from our permanent local businesses.

Mr Blake advised the minister that he sold fewer flowers than last year, and he believes he should be reimbursed for his loss of sales. Flowers are perishable items and their loss cannot be made up in the future. Mr Blake is seeking compensation to the value of \$713, which he believes is the value of lost sales. I urge the minister to respond to Mr Blake's request and investigate why this complaint was not acted upon and the seller fined.

Waubra: community facilities

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Community Development) — I rise to congratulate the Waubra community and the Pyrenees Shire Council for their

great work in sourcing \$710 000 in Brumby government funding to redevelop the existing Waubra sporting complex and recreation reserve into a centralised, modern, multipurpose community space.

I was in Waubra last week with the member for Ripon, and together we announced this funding. I was inspired by the enthusiasm of the local community for this project, and I acknowledge the fine work done by the local member in advocating for this project. The need for this facility was identified by the community and supported by council, and the result will be a centre that caters for the needs of various community groups and organisations, including sporting groups, the progress association, the Country Fire Authority, the horticultural society, the local scout group, the taekwondo club, the preschool group and the parents association.

This is a very important project for the Waubra community and for the people in surrounding towns who will no doubt make use of it as well. Locals who attended the launch last week were keen to highlight the benefit to the community of bringing people together through shared use of this facility. They have a great appreciation for the importance of increased opportunities for social interaction, ensuring their community remains strong and vibrant into the future.

I have no doubt this new facility will be a great success. I thank the Waubra community and the Pyrenees Shire Council for their hard work in pulling this project together. I also thank them for the hospitality they showed me last week, and I look forward to returning when the centre is completed early next year.

Warrnambool: cycling events

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I urge the Minister for Regional and Rural Development and the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs to meet with the Warrnambool citizens road race committee with a view to gaining ongoing state funding for the historic Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic and its associated Shipwreck Coast Cycling Classic.

The Melbourne to Warrnambool race was first held in 1895 and is the world's second-oldest bike race. It is also one of the world's longest one-day bike races. The names of its competitors and winners read like a who's who of Australian and international cycling. It is an iconic event which puts Warrnambool and Victoria on the world cycling map. This race delivers great media coverage and significant economic benefits to the region.

To increase the benefits to the region the Shipwreck Coast Classic is held on the Sunday after the Melbourne to Warrnambool race, increasing overnight accommodation and associated expenditure from participants and supporters of cycling. These events warrant ongoing government support as a major event in regional Victoria. Investment in these events will grow local tourism jobs and the regional economy, as well as promoting the great sport of cycling.

Great South Coast: strategic plan

Dr NAPTHINE — On another matter, along with many other people, I was invited to a round table discussion to help develop the Great South Coast regional strategic plan. I was shocked to be asked, along with others, to sign a release and acknowledgment form to give the Brumby government 'exclusive ... right, title and interest including copyright, of all statements, quotes and/or testimonials, photographs' taken at the round table. Clearly this is an attempt to trap those people who would be involved in government advertising for the future.

Wes Fleming

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs) — I am once again very proud to rise to congratulate Wes Fleming and his extraordinary team for their latest gold-medal triumph at the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show. In six attempts Wes has won an amazing four gold and two silver gilt awards. Wes Fleming, designer Scott Wynd, and the team were visited by the Queen, who told the Australians they were missed at last year's show, which they were not able to attend due to the damage at Wes's Taggerty nursery on Black Saturday. To have such a world-leading horticulturist based in the Monbulk electorate, employing local people and beating the world with innovative garden design, is an honour for the area. Well done, Wes!

State Emergency Service: Dandenong Ranges

Mr MERLINO — I recently had the pleasure of meeting my three local State Emergency Service units at Emerald, Knox and Lilydale. At the Emerald SES I joined the member for Gembrook to discuss the unit's future plans, while at both the Lilydale SES and the Knox SES I had the pleasure of officially handing over the keys for new emergency response vehicles. I would like to thank Knox deputy unit controller Craig Carson, Lilydale deputy unit controller Steven Bevins, and every member of these units for the incredibly important work they do in the Dandenong Ranges.

Knox Leisureworks: warm water pool

Mr MERLINO — A number of years ago local resident Joe Sinclair approached me, calling for my support for a warm water rehabilitation facility for Knox's ageing community. Joe's strong community campaign helped make his dream a reality, and I was delighted last week to help officially open a new \$4 million warm-water pool at Knox Leisureworks in Boronia.

Local health-care providers will provide many programs at this important regional facility to which the Brumby Government was proud to provide over \$1 million. Congratulations to Joe Sinclair and his dedicated team of community activists. It is a great partnership between the Rudd government, the Brumby government and the local council.

Police: resources

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I raise the issue of the failure of the Brumby government to properly resource police stations to allow police to respond to the needs of the community, and I ask the minister to respond. I have had a number of Caulfield constituents complain to me that local police say they cannot respond to requests for assistance because they simply do not have the resources — that is, they are not funded, so they are unable to provide the staff to satisfy the needs of residents.

One resident wrote to me that some three rave parties had been held at a neighbouring house, starting at 10.00 p.m. and going until 4.00 a.m. We are talking about hundreds of people attending a rave in suburban Caulfield involving drugs, drinking, screaming, extremely loud music and, finally, attendees getting into cars and driving off to put others at risk. The same non-response resulted when this family called 000 for assistance.

Another constituent called me, extremely upset over the failure of police to attend. The first instance of this involved her seeing someone climbing through the window of a neighbour's house when it was known the neighbour was away on holiday. The police finally arrived as the burglar exited the home and ran around the corner; he was not pursued. The same constituent claims police arrived some 4 hours after she called them twice for assistance for a young woman she found outside her home who claimed she had been raped. My constituent was told police simply did not have the staffing numbers to attend even when the situation seemed serious.

These local examples show that the Brumby government cannot be trusted to provide basic services to Victorians and will use any amount of spin and obfuscation to avoid responsibility.

Wind farms: opposition policy

Mr HELPER (Minister for Agriculture) — On 13 May the Liberal-Nationals coalition launched the Landscape Guardians policy to kill the wind energy sector in Victoria. We are used to the flip-flop policy approach of the coalition in this state. In this case, we have seen a flip to a great big flop. Many commentators have indicated that if the policy were to be implemented, it would kill the wind energy sector in this state. I quote from a press release of 13 May 2010 from the Clean Energy Council, in which its chief executive, Matthew Warren, said:

... the industry was disappointed that Mr Baillieu would make such a radical announcement without even discussing his plan with the industry in question first.

...

Victoria stands to get a big share of the looming \$20 billion clean energy boom in Australia, but these new rules would just drive most of that interstate.

What does it mean to farmers? For example, in my electorate at Waubra, where the Waubra wind farm would certainly not have gone ahead under the policies proposed by the coalition, there are 128 wind turbines. If we take what I suspect is a low figure for the lease income of \$6000 for every turbine on farmers' land, that equals an injection of income of more than \$750 000 per annum to landowners in my electorate.

Anticorruption commission: establishment

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — Victoria needs an independent, broadbased anticorruption commission. Allegations aired yesterday go to the heart of our democracy. These allegations point to the Victorian state Labor government pressuring senior police to issue speeding fines, issue demerit points and cancel the licences of innocent Victorians, using speed camera equipment that the government knew to be faulty.

The government's defence was that there was a robust discussion in relation to the matter. This is code for a shouting match, bullying and intimidation towards Victoria Police to toe the government's line and put revenue raising before justice for innocent Victorians. It is obvious that the government's sole object with the use of speed cameras in Victoria is to raise and protect the revenue stream that flows from the traffic camera office to state Treasury.

But this issue is not about tolerances, revenue, location of cameras, the number of cameras, mistakes or incompetence. What we are looking at here is the corrupt culture that exists within the Labor government. This is about distorting the justice system. How many times have we seen the spineless Minister for Police and Emergency Services claim he could not answer questions in this place that relate to what he deems to be police operational matters, and yet here we have interference at the highest level?

If we do not get a broadbased anticorruption commission in the state of Victoria, this type of corrupt activity will spread throughout all areas of government. We have seen bungled myki, bungled smart meters, a bungled pokies auction, a lack of leadership during a bushfire crisis, corrupt planning decisions and a stuffed public transport system, but nothing could compare with this.

Samir Kairouz

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — It is with much sadness that I acknowledge the passing of Samir Chahid Kairouz, who passed away unexpectedly on 18 May at home at the age of 61. Samir's passing is a tragic loss to his family, friends and the Lebanese and wider communities.

Samir Kairouz was a larger than life character. He devoted his life to serving his god, his family and those who were in need or less fortunate than himself. We mourn the loss of a remarkable and modest man. Samir Kairouz left a lasting impression and legacy. He was a man of great courage and generosity, and his legacy will continue to be lived through those he left behind.

Samir's kind spirit and generosity touched many people, and this was instantly recognisable at his funeral. At least 3000 people paid tribute to a man who lived a rich life centred on family and his Catholic Maronite faith. That was the essence of the man I knew, and it was only appropriate that we celebrated his life at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church on 25 May in a way that was fitting for a king.

I express my deepest condolences to Samir's wife, Mona; his five children, Chahid, Maria, Joseph, Souard and Sammy; Samir's parents, Chahid and Maria; and Samir's five brothers, Joseph, Tony, Sami, George and Pierre, and six sisters, Souard, Therese, Samira, Seeham, Salam and May, and their families. We will never know if Samir was unlucky or lucky to leave this world at such an early time. However, what I do know is that those who knew him were very lucky and privileged to do so.

Public transport: north-eastern Victoria

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — The lack of public transport within and between communities continues to cause hardship for many not so well off people in north-east Victoria. The Transport Connections program has certainly helped, but in those oft-quoted words, more needs to be done. It may seem odd to many Melbourne-based Labor Party politicians and senior bureaucrats that in many country towns there is little or no public transport and it is quite a challenge to travel between communities such as Euroa and Shepparton or Mount Beauty and Bright.

In the case of Mount Beauty, I am advised the best way for the government to help is to provide capital replacement funds for community transport programs like the Ovens and King Community Health Service and the local Community Accessibility Inc. program, to provide recurrent funding for volunteer coordinators who coordinate the volunteer drivers and support them in their work and also to provide leadership for community transport programs that rely on volunteers to provide the most flexible, affordable and reliable way for people to get to their appointments.

I call upon the Brumby government to live up to its claim that it governs for all Victorians and to provide the basic intertown and intratown public transport that people in Melbourne and the provincial cities take for granted.

For the benefit of the member for Melton, I again call on the Brumby government to plug the pipe.

Edgars Creek Parkland Taskforce

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — Today I want to place on record my admiration for the members of the Edgars Creek Parkland Taskforce. The thorough work and genuine spirit of cooperation and respect from each of the members of that task force has been one of the highlights of my time as member for Pascoe Vale.

I pay tribute to the task force members — Jane Monk, who is the acting director of state planning, and Peter Boyle, senior urban designer, both with the Department of Planning and Community Development; Nial Finegan, who is a regional director with VicRoads; Peter Brown, who is the chief executive officer of Moreland City Council; the current and immediate past mayors of the council, Cr Stella Kariofyllidis and Cr Tapinos; Greg Carden and Travis Cox from the Merri and Edgars Creek Parkland Group; and Stephen Northey and Anita Morgan from the Friends of Edgars Creek. Their collective work was outstanding.

It is fair to say that some members attended the initial meetings with questions in their minds about our ability to come up with a unanimous report. The fact that that was achieved was a tribute to each of the individuals concerned. It was with pride and trust that we presented the minister with our report, and we look forward to his consideration of the matter. The aim of the task force was to ensure that provision for public open space and pedestrian and bike path facilities is considered in the context of increasing urban development.

Crime: sentencing

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — Recently the Attorney-General purported to announce that the Brumby government would end suspended sentences, apparently copying coalition policy announced on 14 January. However, in fact all the government has committed to doing is removing the ‘exceptional circumstances’ loophole the government itself created in 2006 when it claimed it was ending suspended sentences for a list of specified serious offences — a measure which even the government’s own Sentencing Advisory Council found has made no noticeable difference.

For all other offences, which are the vast majority, Labor’s revolving door will continue as usual, including for crimes such as recklessly causing serious injury, aggravated burglary, arson and drug trafficking. Thus, if a thug bashes a victim, knowing the attack is likely to cause serious injury, but claims they did not intend it, they can still walk free on a suspended sentence straight out the court door. Recklessly causing serious injury is the plea bargaining offence of choice for violent thugs and their legal advisers, with around 300 convictions a year in the Magistrates Court and 100 a year in the County Court.

Under Labor hundreds of violent thugs each year will still be able to walk free on a pretend jail term — thugs like those who attacked promising footballer Luke Adams in a Hungry Jacks store, choked him unconscious in a headlock and flung him to the ground, and thugs like the ones who king-hit former Olympian Russell Riches from behind and left him fighting for his life, as well as rioters like those involved in the G20 riots, none of whom went to jail.

In contrast to Labor’s continued soft-on-crime approach, a coalition government will legislate to end suspended sentences for all offences during its first term in government. Under a Baillieu government, jail will mean jail for all crimes, not just a few.

Housing: Ashwood Chadstone Gateway project

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — Yesterday, along with the Minister for Housing, I had the good fortune to attend the sod-turning ceremony to mark the commencement of the Ashwood Chadstone Gateway housing project, in which \$140 million worth of housing with over 500 homes will put a roof over the heads of more than 1000 people. This is a comprehensive redevelopment planned to deliver over 280 new integrated affordable rental homes and private dwellings in the Ashwood and Chadstone area, as well as a further approximately 260 additional affordable rental homes in other areas of Melbourne. The Brumby Labor government is investing \$71.3 million, and the Port Phillip Housing Association is putting \$68.6 million towards the total project cost. Some 440 jobs will be involved in the construction project, including some for people in public housing locally.

The minister and I were joined by the mayor, councillors and senior officers from the City of Monash; the Port Phillip Housing Association’s Anne Tuohey, Karen Barnett and Paul Di Masi; the Community Liaison Committee’s Peter Arnold, Margaret Taylor, Eileen Mosden, Sandra Grant and Reverend Peter Grasby; representatives of other firms involved in this project, Reshape Development, St Hillers and Affordable Housing Solutions; as well as representatives of local organisations and the Department of Human Services.

This is a great housing project, which is part of the historic \$500 million investment by the then Bracks and now Brumby Labor government in public and social housing. I am proud to be passionate about and committed to putting a roof over the heads of so many people in need — people who do not have much money; people who are disabled, sick or old; people with mental health problems; people who are homeless, fragile or in need of assistance; single mums; middle-aged men thrown on the unemployment scrapheap; and battered wives. I repeat: we in the local community are proud that such a great project can go ahead. I condemn David Davis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place, and the Liberal Party for opposing this project and being so out of touch with housing needs.

Transport Accident Commission: claim

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — During the previous sitting of Parliament I raised concerns about a Lysterfield resident who had been struggling to gain assistance from the TAC (Transport Accident Commission) for her 24-year-old son. Subsequently

this issue gained coverage in the local media. A media representative from the TAC indicated that the organisation had been working with this family. I am advised, however, that a senior member of corporate affairs was forced to contact the family to clarify the TAC's assistance for their son. This family does not deserve TAC spin doctors trying to paint a rosy picture for the Brumby government. This family needs the TAC to treat their son like a person and work directly with him to achieve the care he rightly deserves.

City of Knox: disability access

Mr WAKELING — Many residents in Knox who face mobility issues are deeply concerned about the difficulties associated with disability access. For residents confined to wheelchairs or residents reliant on mobility scooters, many footpaths are in dire need of improvement. Furthermore, infrastructure such as bus stops requires attention to ensure it is disability compliant. In fact the first member statement I delivered in this house, on 13 February 2007, concerned the upgrade of the Burwood Highway bus stop near Manna Gum Road to accommodate disabled residents. Over three years later, the Brumby government has still failed my community by not upgrading this facility. I will continue to stand up for vulnerable residents on this issue to ensure that Knox residents of all abilities are adequately catered for.

Ferntree Gully electorate: multicultural organisations

Mr WAKELING — I recently convened an informative meeting with representatives from a number of multicultural organisations throughout the Ferntree Gully electorate. The attendees discussed a range of topics with me and Nick Kotsiras, the shadow minister for multicultural affairs and citizenship, and I look forward to future meetings with these important organisations.

Andrew Kent

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — I rise to congratulate Andrew Kent of the Greenhills Montmorency Baseball Club on playing his 400th game last Saturday, 22 May, against the Watsonia Baseball Club. To the impassioned cheers of the crowd, Andrew gave an outstanding performance. Not only did he pitch exceptionally in some late innings, but during the game he collected three crucial hits, one run, and he brought home two other runners. His efforts led the team to a 4 to 1 victory, cementing its position at the top of the ladder.

Andrew is only the second player in the club's proud 63-year history to achieve this milestone, and whilst his accomplishments on the field have now become part of the Greenhills Monty folklore, his involvement within the organisation as coach and president speaks volumes for his love of the club. Andrew's deeds and achievements throughout his 28-year association with the club are evidence of his enduring dedication and commitment to Greenhills-Montmorency, and to the landscape of sport in the Eltham electorate.

Greenhills Montmorency Baseball Club

Mr HERBERT — The Greenhills Montmorency Baseball Club is a local force in Victorian baseball and in recent times has gone from strength to strength. In the last winter season the club dominated the competition with six out of their seven teams winning pennants. With its fantastic new clubrooms — thanks to the Brumby Labor government — and its on-field success and terrific reputation in the local community, it has added four new junior teams in the last 12 months. Their success is due to the hard work of Andrew Kent and other members of the Greenhills-Montmorency committee, and I would like to congratulate them all on their outstanding achievements.

Murray to Mountains rail trail

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — One of the great success stories in north-eastern Victoria is the establishment of the Murray to Mountains rail trail, utilising closed rail lines developed as cycle tracks. During the 1990s, \$2 million was allocated for the first stage from Wangaratta through Myrtleford to Bright, with an offshoot to Beechworth. It has become a major tourist attraction in north-eastern Victoria for cyclists of all ages.

The first part of stage 2 to connect Wahgunyah through to North Wangaratta received state, federal and local government funding totalling \$850 000. Following a major hold-up, it was opened earlier this year with great fanfare. Additionally, funding from the state government and the Rural City of Wangaratta is providing for a cycle connection from Oxley through Milawa to connect to the main Wangaratta to Bright section of the cycle track. This ambitious program now requires funding for completion of stage 2 from Rutherglen through Springhurst to North Wangaratta for the vision of the Murray to Mountains rail trail.

A further stage is then to be developed with a new connection for the cycle trail from Wangaratta to Whitfield, utilising the former railway line land. This will add to the huge length of cycle trails provided for

cyclists and will complement tourist attractions in north-eastern Victoria. I call on the state government to ensure that applications for further funding for these rail trails will be approved for early completion of the Murray to Mountains rail trail, which is an enormous success story for north-eastern Victoria.

St Augustine's Opportunity Shop: 50th anniversary

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I am constantly amazed at the breadth and variety of the community in my electorate. Last weekend I attended three functions which demonstrate the community's energy and endeavours. I would like to place on the record my congratulations to St Augustine's Opportunity Shop. On Saturday, 22 May, it celebrated 50 years of service to our local community with a service, followed by morning tea, at St Augustine's Anglican Church. Over the past 50 years its loyal and dedicated teams of volunteers have raised almost \$3.5 million to help the disadvantaged and needy in our community, to lend a hand when it is needed most.

Mordialloc Writers Group: 15th anniversary

Ms MUNT — I would also like to congratulate the Mordialloc Writers Group on its 15th anniversary. It operates from the Mordialloc Neighbourhood House, a busy centre of community activity. This group was set up by Mairi Neil and others to provide a creative and friendly literary environment. At this event I met Kay Watson, who joined the group and began writing when she was 80 years old. Nine years later she has just published her first book, her memoirs entitled *Ceinsen's Journey*, a truly wonderful achievement for both Kay and the Mordialloc Writers Group. Well done and congratulations to you both!

Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery: Tragic '20s Tour

Ms MUNT — I also attended the Sunday morning Tragic '20s Tour of the historic Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery. This is a historic cemetery, and the tour was organised and presented by the Friends of Cheltenham and Regional Cemeteries. It was a wonderful walk through our local history, and a large crowd attended. Thank you, Travis Sellers, for all of your work. It was a busy, but very enjoyable weekend.

Weeds and pest animals: control

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — Yesterday the Victorian Auditor-General confirmed what locals in north-east Victoria have known for years: feral animals

and weeds are killing our local environment and are costing our regional economies a fortune.

In his report entitled *Control of Invasive Plants and Animals in Victoria's Parks* the Auditor-General confirmed that the Premier and his Labor government Department of Sustainability and Environment, including Parks Victoria, and Department of Primary Industries do not have systems in place to ensure success in managing invasive species, do not keep up-to-date data on invasive species. The Auditor-General also found that more than half the data that is kept is over 10 years old and 30 per cent is over 20 years old. The government has no planning mechanism in place that details invasive species threats and there is no chain of command detailing who is ultimately responsible for managing these threats.

As the Auditor-General said, 20 per cent of Victoria is made up of either state or national parks. He has found that the state's parks are in appalling shape and are getting worse under Labor. Because of the appalling management of our parks by the Premier and Labor our communities have to live with increased bushfire risk, livestock losses and further destruction of prime farming land. This report again proves that the Premier and the government are the worst neighbours in the state. Who would want to live next to land owned by this appalling Labor government?

Lenice Vidler

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — Today I pay tribute to Lenice Vidler, who for 17 years has worked very diligently for the Liberal Party although she became a member only 12 months ago. During previous elections she has volunteered at polling booths and prepolling booths in setting up and closing on polling days. On election days she will often work all day with no breaks, just moving from booth to booth — and it is not always in her own electorate, just where she is required. Between elections she is always putting her hand up to assist where possible, including regularly letterboxing for local candidates and members. She attends many functions and party events. Although Lenice supports those on the opposite side of the house, I sincerely congratulate her for her continued work. It also proves that at the age of 73 you can continue to be involved.

Rosanna Bowling Club: 50th anniversary

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — Yesterday I attended the 50th birthday celebrations for the Rosanna Bowling Club, and I congratulate the club on this important anniversary. The club began on 26 May 1960 with the words 'I move that there be a Rosanna Bowling Club'.

That simple motion created a lot of history, and the Rosanna Bowling Club has become part of the fabric of the area. Much has been done by the club in the past 50 years. I pay tribute to all the individuals who have contributed to the club's success both on and off the green. The club's history is recorded for all to read in a booklet entitled *The First 50 Years*. Well done to all those who have contributed to the history of the club and well done to the club for yesterday's very successful event.

Samoan Choir

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — If you want to hear the angels sing, enjoy the wonderful Samoan Choir at the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. The choir is made up of immigrants from Samoa who are mainly residents of Hampton Park and Narre Warren South.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time for making member's statements has expired.

APPROPRIATION (2010/2011) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Premier).

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — I rise to continue from where I left off last night in speaking in the debate on the appropriation bill. Last night I was talking about the projected water savings for the 2008–09 year of 429 000 megalitres when the actual figure was 327 000 megalitres and about the commitment the state had made to save 520 000 megalitres in the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district, and how it will not be able to do it. This figure of 327 000 megalitres of actual savings could very well include the savings from the Grampians Wimmera-Mallee pipeline and savings from the Macalister irrigation district. The budget just talks about savings across the state and does not make it clear where those savings were achieved.

Mr Nardella — They're here in Victoria!

Mr WELLER — Yes, they are in Victoria, so that means that the government is nowhere near achieving its projected savings for the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district if that figure includes savings from the Grampians Wimmera-Mallee pipeline and the Macalister irrigation district. So the member for Melton is supporting the point that the government is making promises that it knows it cannot live up to.

At page 66 budget information paper 1 talks about the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project and contains a figure for total estimated investment (TEI) of \$484 million. The government has always said that its contribution would be \$600 million, but in this budget there is only \$484 million. That is considerably less than \$600 million, so \$115 million has gone missing somewhere. That item refers you to note (d), which states:

The TEI for Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project has decreased by \$69.214 million. This amount has been transferred to DSE's provision of outputs in accordance with the reclassification of works from asset to output.

I went back and had a look at the figures in last year's budget, and a further \$45 million was taken off the project there. This is probably what the government classes as management fees. We have a gross total of about \$115 million to manage a \$600 million project for two years, and bear in mind that the project runs over five years. Are we going to see over the next three years another \$150 million coming out of the budget as management fees? That will mean we will spend \$265 million to manage a \$600 million project. That is over 40 per cent of the cost of the project going towards management costs. I think the government has a fair bit of explaining to do in relation to how we can have such high management costs, or is it that it is just taking money back and not spending it on the project?

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr WELLER — It may actually be taking the money back, not spending it and leaving it in consolidated revenue. The government is misleading the public when it keeps saying that it is spending \$600 million on the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project when all along it has never intended to do that. It was always understood that \$100 million would come from the irrigators. If the government is not going to spend \$600 million on the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project, and if it reduces its contribution by 20 per cent, is it going to ask the irrigators for 20 per cent less, reducing their contribution from \$100 million to \$80 million? Whatever the government's contribution is reduced by, the irrigators' contribution should be reduced by the same percentage.

The budget was disappointing for my electorate in many other ways. In my electorate there is a long list of much-needed and very worthwhile projects which have again been ignored, dashing the hopes of many community groups that have worked long and hard to ensure the ongoing progress and development of their towns and cities. Not one cent has been allocated to the

new bridge crossing at Echuca-Moama. The government ran a process through VicRoads and came up with a route through the Echuca side that people did not agree to. The government bullied the council into saying yes, so the Campaspe Shire Council agreed.

Mr Nardella — Bullied them?

Mr WELLER — It bullied them. The government bullied the council into accepting the proposed route. Now that the council has accepted it, the government should be moving forward. It should be saying, 'Here's the money, and we're going to build it'. But no, the government has bullied the council into accepting a route that the community does not want, so the government is hanging back on spending the money.

Mr Nardella — So it is the council's fault.

Mr WELLER — No, it is the government's fault, because the government made it quite clear to the council: you take this route or no route.

Mr O'Brien — That is disgraceful.

Mr WELLER — It is this route or no bridge'. That is what the councillors were told. The least the government can do now is put money on the table and say, 'Here we are; we're going to build it'.

There is the Echuca hospital.

An honourable member — A very good hospital.

An honourable member — A great hospital.

Mr WELLER — It is a great hospital. It has a very good CEO and board members, who do the best they can with the limited resources they have been given. The Echuca hospital is very old and in need of a rebuild. It has three new theatres — and we do not complain; they are very good — but that was stage 1. We need to go on and do stages 2 and 3 of the rebuild of the Echuca hospital.

Echuca is a growing area. There is no argument that the rate of growth in presentations to the Echuca hospital, particularly in the accident and emergency department, is amongst the highest rates in the state, therefore the rebuild of the hospital needs to be started very soon. Unfortunately there was no money in the budget for that. The government says we need to do a feasibility study. If we are to be consistent, why was the Bendigo hospital not asked to do a feasibility study? Where is the Bendigo hospital's business plan? None of that information is available, yet under the same pretext the government is saying we cannot have the Echuca

hospital rebuilt. If it is good enough for the government to commit money for the Bendigo hospital without a business plan, it is good enough for it to commit to Echuca hospital, where there is a definite need.

There is also the Rushworth hospital. There would be a saving to the state if the hospital and the nursing home were put together. This would produce lots of efficiencies. You would need only one kitchen and one laundry. Also, you would not need as many nurses, and we know that nurses are hard to get in country areas. There would be lots of benefits in putting the Rushworth hospital and the Rushworth nursing home together.

Turning to education, the Nathalia High School badly needs replacing; it was built in the 1940s. I have been to the school several times, and the home economics area is similar to what was at Rochester when I was there in the early 1970s, and that was a hangover from the 1950s. The school is definitely in need of a rebuild. The science room cannot be used because the plumbing in that room has failed and the building is too old to restore the plumbing to a science room standard.

Turning to police in my electorate, again there is no money for a rebuild of the police station at Rochester. If you go into the interview room at the Rochester police station and you want to have a witness with you while the policeman is interviewing you, you have to leave the door open because there is not enough room for three people in the interview room. The Rochester police station is definitely in need of a rebuild. With respect to the Echuca police station, there is funding to buy land, but we need a commitment and money in the budget to actually build the new station.

If we go back to 1999, the then opposition leader Steve Bracks and, I would imagine, the then shadow Treasurer would have known all about the commitment to connect natural gas to towns in rural Victoria. There are still lots of towns in my electorate, including the likes of Heathcote, Nathalia, Leitchville, Gunbower, Cohuna, Elmore and Lockington, that have been ignored and overlooked again in this budget. They are all still waiting to be connected to natural gas.

It surprises me that the government continues to ignore Nathalia; major industries there include Rapid Spray, Ryans abattoir and Rex James feed mill. It is a town of some 1400 to 1600 people, and it is not far up the road from Numurkah. I would have thought that a gas pipeline to Nathalia would make a lot of sense, as it does for the other towns. It is a case in point where there is a population, industry and the gas is not far

away; I would have thought the government would have been jumping to support it.

Road safety is a priority for me but obviously not for this government. Ever since I have been an MP I have been appealing for the Heathcote-Redesdale Road to be widened, for white line marking and for the shoulders to be done. It is a very dangerous road. With the Calder Freeway now connecting Melbourne all the way through to Bendigo, people come down the road to Kyneton, turn off, then go through Redesdale and on to Heathcote when they are going to Echuca. That dangerous and bendy road is being used a lot more, and the government would be wise to spend some money on it.

Weeds and pests continue to ruin large tracts of rural land, especially Crown land. The Auditor-General's report tabled yesterday makes clear that the government is doing a very poor job of managing pest plants and animals on Crown land. I suggest there should have been a greater amount in the budget to address this.

Last night in this debate I spoke about water savings. It is a physical impossibility for the government to achieve its savings in the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district. It says it is going to save 520 000 megalitres; last year the losses were only 300 000 megalitres. If the government actually achieves what it says it aims to achieve and gets the system up to 85 per cent efficiency, it will still lose 15 per cent. That means last year it would have lost 150 000 megalitres and saved 200 000 megalitres. Yes, we should do that, because 200 000 megalitres of water is worth saving.

The problem though is that 245 000 megalitres is being committed to Melbourne and to the environment. If we had gone right through and delivered the projects as the government planned to do, in a year like last year that would have meant there would have been 45 000 megalitres less in the irrigators pool. If we are going to upgrade the system and effect savings, let us make sure we do not disadvantage the irrigators by giving them less water.

The Premier came into the house and said the environment is going to win, farmers are going to win and Melbourne is going to win, but the problem is the government's figures do not stack up. In a year like last year irrigators would have been worse off by 145 000 megalitres. Even if we go back to 2006, when there was a full allocation, there would have been 300 000 megalitres of savings, with a greater amount given to Melbourne and to the environment — but the farmers still would have missed out.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — It is with great pleasure that I speak in support of the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill. This is another responsible budget delivered by the Brumby Labor government, and I congratulate the Treasurer for presenting a forward-looking budget that sets the economic direction while paying a social dividend to all Victorians.

This is a budget that will deliver a substantial budget operating surplus of \$872 million in the financial year 2010–11 and will average \$1.2 billion over the following three years. Today's surplus is tomorrow's investment, just like a household budget. That is why I say it is a forward-looking and responsible budget, balancing future investment and today's social dividends.

During the seven dark years of the Liberal-Nationals coalition one thing that was proved was that the opposition is incapable of striking a balance, even during the economic growth it enjoyed during those seven years as opposed to the current economic global downturn this government is experiencing. That is why the coalition was very rightly discarded by the Victorian electorate 11 years ago, and that is why it deserves to be in political oblivion now.

This budget has the hallmarks of a true Labor budget. There are no cutbacks, no job losses, no sacking of public servants and no asset sales; instead there are record infrastructure investment programs that create real jobs. There is record investment in health, education and public safety.

Throughout the toughest economic challenges ever to face the state over the 12 months to April, 109 700 new jobs were created. What a record achievement! This is the first time in more than 20 years that we had an annual increase in employment of over 100 000 people. For the first time, more than 50 per cent of the jobs created were full-time jobs. This year's budget invests \$9.5 billion in 2010–11 to deliver capital projects across Victoria — projects that are vital to Victoria's future and which will secure around 30 000 jobs in the next financial year. That figure confirms that we have recorded the highest full-time job growth of any state in the nation, doing so while keeping our budget in the black. After about two decades it has had to be a Labor government that has delivered such fantastic outcomes in the job market.

Every member of the Brumby Labor caucus should take pride in the fact that the Victorian unemployment rate is now significantly below that of comparable western developed economies. The rate has fallen to 5.3 per cent. That is why when Labor says it will

deliver jobs, people believe us. That is why people are migrating to Victoria and the population is growing. This is in stark contrast to the number of people who left Victoria, causing the population to drop, while the opposition was in government last time. At one stage under the coalition 45 people on average were leaving Victoria every day.

There are many small businesses in the electorate of Cranbourne, and many of them will certainly benefit from this budget. The payroll tax rate has been cut to 4.9 per cent, which is the seventh payroll tax cut delivered by the Brumby Labor government. The current land tax exemption has been extended to include the construction phase of residential aged-care facilities and retirement villages developed by the private sector, which offers a strong incentive for the sector to develop new facilities. WorkCover premiums have been cut by a further 3.5 per cent, bringing the total accumulated cuts to nearly 40 per cent. The Brumby Labor government is also continuing to take action to reduce red tape for small business.

One of the many highlights in this year's budget is the strong support for community safety by the Brumby Labor government. Locally we have seen the construction of a state-of-the-art police station in Cranbourne, and currently another state-of-the-art police station is being constructed in Carrum Downs, which will service Carrum Downs, Langwarrin and surrounding areas. An additional 21 police officers will be stationed there. This year's budget will deliver an additional 1966 front-line police to this great state. This means that Carrum Downs police station will be equipped with new uniformed police officers, not just officers transferred from police stations elsewhere, creating a shortage in those areas.

Forty per cent of my electorate of Cranbourne falls into the Casey local government area and 60 per cent falls into the Frankston local government area. It is important to review the effects of public safety measures in successive Labor budgets to ascertain the importance and strength of the measures. In the Casey police service area the number of front-line police has increased by 75.1 per cent since 1999; since 2000–01 the crime rate in the Casey police service area has fallen by 8.1 per cent. In the Frankston police service area the number of police has increased by a record 93.4 per cent since 1999; since 2000–01 the crime rate in the Frankston police service area has fallen by 15.9 per cent. The Brumby Labor government is delivering police in numbers to service my local community.

Those results are on top of extra initiatives, including a special task force to target street violence; anti-hoon

laws with tough penalties and fines; the strengthening of our sentencing laws, and an extra 55 youth workers to tackle violence.

Education is also a priority for the Brumby government. With this budget the Brumby Labor government will have funded the modernising or rebuilding of 553 government schools across the state. In the local area Cranbourne Secondary College, Cranbourne West Primary School, Mahogany Rise Primary School, Belvedere Park Primary School, Rangebank Primary School, and Woodlands Primary School, to name but a few, have been modernised.

The brand new Cranbourne North East Primary School has started taking the first batch of students this year. The Cranbourne East primary and secondary colleges will be ready for enrolments in the next school year. The new Carrum Downs school was built by the Labor government and the first batch of students there successfully sat for the Victorian certificate of education last year. This is the first secondary school built in the Carrum Downs and Skye area after many years of students graduating from three public primary schools and one Catholic school in Carrum Downs.

The Liberal-Nationals coalition refused to build a secondary school in Carrum Downs in all the years it was in office, even under enormous public pressure from the residents of Carrum Downs. It sold the land, which had been bought for the purpose of building a secondary school in Carrum Downs, for residential development. It had a track record of selling public assets to developers. We all know about the famous real estate agency that sold our schools during the Kennett era.

In my electorate the old Monterey secondary school site in Frankston North was sold to a developer for residential development against the wishes of every resident of the area. The residents fought for a much-needed park for The Pines, but those calls went unheeded by the arrogant coalition government. It had to be a Labor government that came to the rescue of the struggling families of Frankston North and delivered the much-needed park to local residents.

As soon as the Labor government came into office in 1999 it had to buy the land from the developers to create the beautiful park that today can be seen in the middle of Frankston North. Just imagine what Victorians will have to go through again if the Liberal Party accidentally falls into government — they will lose the public assets rightly owned by all Victorians.

First home buyers are also gaining from initiatives in this year's budget. They will receive a grant of \$20 000 to build homes in metropolitan Melbourne and \$26 500 to build in regional Victoria.

The Brumby Labor government has kept the state's budget in the black while cutting taxes and improving services not only for families in the electorate of Cranbourne but also for all families across Victoria.

Back in 2008 when the government announced the Victorian transport plan, there was no shortage of people claiming it could not be delivered and would never happen. This has proved to be wrong. The government has now delivered dozens of projects under the plan ahead of schedule, and this year's budget includes \$4.3 billion, in cooperation with the commonwealth, for the new regional rail link.

Also announced in the budget is funding for 35 new peak hour services on the Frankston rail line and another 35 peak services on the Cranbourne line, which will start operating in early June. The Frankston line will have over 70 new trips, and there will be about 80 new trips on the Cranbourne line.

The Cranbourne railway station car park will be increased in size by about 700 parking spots as part of the \$37.5 million upgrade to that station. That includes the facility to have six trains sleep over, which can then roll out every morning, rather than those trains having empty trips from Dandenong to Cranbourne.

Under Labor there have been massive road improvements in my electorate, compared with the seven years of the former coalition government in which nothing was done. There has been a massive \$90 million investment in the duplication of a 23-kilometre stretch of the Cranbourne-Frankston Road. Last week the \$30 million Thompsons Road duplication was completed; that section of Thompsons Road will connect the important Frankston Freeway and EastLink.

I am sure that over successive budgets Thompsons Road will be duplicated all the way up to Evans Road; Thompsons Road was like a goat track when we came to office. It was first widened by the Labor government, and it is on track for duplication. The transport plan is also on track to build the Cranbourne East railway station between 2013 and 2016. It is complete hypocrisy for the opposition to crow about road safety. My electorate is a living, breathing example of the investment this government has made in rail and road infrastructure. It is also very visible across Victoria

what road infrastructure improvements have been delivered by the Brumby Labor government.

It is a pleasure and a great honour to represent the Cranbourne electorate and also to be part of the Brumby Labor government, which is delivering for Victorians — whether it be in road infrastructure, public transport, education or health — in all areas of services. I commend this appropriation bill to the house.

Mr K. SMITH (Bass) — It is nice to get up and talk on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill, but it is another very disappointing budget, certainly for the people of Bass, that this government has delivered in an election year. When you look at the money that has been put by this government into its Labor-held marginal seats, it is just a disgrace that it has the temerity to allow the Treasurer to come into this house and deliver a speech that is so slanted towards the Labor Party, trying to protect some of its incompetent members and ministers by pushing money into their areas.

I must say it was interesting to read two weeks ago in the *Age* of 15 May an article by Farrah Tomazin, who is a very good journalist. She was looking at election issues, and she sat down with a clear mind and looked at who got the fat, which is how the article is structured. The article shows a big, fat pig, which is obviously representative of the Labor government and some of its people, and talks about what sort of money went into Labor-held seats. Some of the highlights include health, which is a major issue right across the state of Victoria.

I have a hospital down in Wonthaggi, and this government has held two reviews of what health issues should be looked at down in the Gippsland area. For the first one it appointed some Labor Party stooge, who stuffed up the whole thing. It then got somebody else to come in and take over the review, and the government said, 'We'll just manage to stall it over this budget period so we don't have to allocate any money to the Wonthaggi hospital or Bass Coast Regional Health'. It has done that, although it says in the budget that \$3 million went into the Wonthaggi hospital; in fact it was money that was allocated in the 2009–10 budget and that has already been spent. The budget papers themselves are a lie, and we find that many members and ministers in this house are also liars.

In relation to health allocations, Labor seats received more \$1.57 billion — that is billion with a 'b' — whereas coalition seats got a miserable \$53.8 million. You just have to try to understand this allocation of funds. It is not fair, it is not right, it is not equitable and what this Labor Party has done is wrong. It has

neglected Liberal Party seats and The Nationals seats with its very poor management of funds.

In relation to new schools, which are an issue of great importance to all, the money that went to seats held by the Labor Party totalled \$54.13 million. What went to coalition seats? Across the state of Victoria — not just in one little area, but across the whole state — \$8.46 million went to coalition seats. That is \$54 million as compared to \$8 million. It is wrong.

In relation to premium train stations \$83.7 million has gone to Labor-held seats — and they are marginal Labor-held seats, too. They are trying to prop up their incompetence. Of those premium train stations, 18 are in Labor-held seats and 3 are in Liberal Party seats — 18 against 3. It is totally inequitable. What the government is trying to do is save Labor MPs, because there is some electoral threat coming. Let me tell them: it is coming on 27 November this year, and it is coming in the form of a coalition of Liberal and National party members who are going to absolutely run over this government. We will get some equity back into the budget next year when we declare what the budget is, when the member for Scoresby — who will be Treasurer — will be in a position to look at things in the real, clear light of day and make sure he delivers money to all Victorians — not just Victorians in seats held by the Liberals or Nationals. All Victorians will be getting a fair swag of what comes out of it.

It is annoying to come into this house — and I have been sitting in this Parliament for some years, and ever since the Labor Party has been in power it has always been the same — to see budgets that are very much slanted by the Labor government in a way to suit itself. This being an election year has only made it worse. When you read the budget papers you see we are going to have a frightening \$31.7 billion — \$31.7 billion! — debt by 2014. That is from figures this Labor Party — the Treasurer — has produced; it is a public document, and it is there for everyone to see. We will be another \$31 billion in debt.

When the Kennett government took over it inherited \$31 billion of debt. We do not know what other liabilities there are now, but that is money that is owed. Some \$3.2 billion will be paid in interest in trying to furnish the debt that is being held and created by this Labor government. We cannot do anything about that debt — it is in place, it is set and it is in motion, and its repayment will happen.

Now we have to listen to this mob in here — this rabble from the Labor Party. Yesterday the Minister for Housing stood up and talked about the Kennett

government, what that government did as far as social housing and public housing were concerned and supposedly how little was left of public housing. He talked about the towers around Melbourne. If the truth of the matter is known, I am surprised there was anything left after the Cain and Kirner governments caused absolute mayhem in the state of Victoria because of the money they lost because of their neglect. Those governments created \$31 billion of debt, and there was almost another \$40 billion in liabilities. At the end of the day the Kennett government regained some of Victoria's credibility. We got back our AAA rating. It was not done by the Bracks and Brumby governments; it was got back by the Kennett government. We did not sack any police, as the liars on the other side say, and we did not sack any teachers.

Mr Lim interjected.

Mr K. SMITH — Teachers took redundancy payments that were offered, and none of them were sacked. The member for Clayton can laugh, but none were sacked. No nurses were sacked — none at all. Schools were closed, but this mob on the other side — this rabble — seem to forget that its government has closed 150 schools so far in its time in office.

Mr Burgess — They have gone quiet.

Mr K. SMITH — Yes, government members have gone quiet now. They seem to forget what they have done and neglect to mention all of them. Then yesterday we had the miserable Minister for Housing stand up and talk about what was left in public housing. Let me tell you that Labor has been in government for 11 years, and we have a crisis in public housing, a crisis which is not Jeff Kennett's fault. It is the fault of former Premier Bracks and Premier Brumby; they are the ones who have neglected public housing and crisis and emergency housing.

In the Bass electorate we do not have one property that can be used for crisis housing. If a woman and her kids get thrown out because the old man has come home drunk and beaten them up again, there is nowhere for them to go in Bass Coast — nowhere. That did not happen under the Kennett government, but it is happening under the Brumby government. Members opposite should be hanging their heads in shame, because we do not have enough public housing to put our people in. There are waiting lists of between 7 and 10 years, and people do not even bother to put their names on them because they cannot wait that long for housing. Even the priority lists which some people manage to get on are not available to people for years and years. It is a disgrace that people cannot get into

priority emergency housing, and this government keeps saying it was all Kennett's fault.

Let me remind those opposite that Jeff Kennett was here 11 years ago, and every problem we have now in the state of Victoria hangs around the necks of Labor Party members, particularly the treasurers and premiers who have been giving the Labor Party so-called 'guidance'. It is no good their coming out now and promising extra police when they have neglected the police force. Government members only came out and said they were putting in extra police because the coalition took a stand and said it would put in police, protective services officers and staff on railway stations to give people a sense of security so they at least can feel that they are safe in the streets. The coalition would have police off their bums, out of offices and out on the streets where they want to be. Police officers do not want to be in offices writing out reports. They want to be out on the streets maintaining law and order and enforcing civil law, not sitting and filling in reports.

I turn to schools. What is in the budget for schools in the Bass electorate? There is no money for schools in the rapidly growing area of Pakenham. There is \$2 million for the Garfield Primary School, a school that is just about falling down, apart from a couple of mod 5 classrooms that were put in a couple of years ago, as they were in several schools, to shut people up. Giving schools mod 5 classrooms was all about shutting people up. Those classrooms are terrific, but Garfield Primary School, which has been the centre of its community for a long time, is a shambles. The school has fabulous teachers and great kids, but it does not stand a change of competing with the other schools in the area. Now the government has allocated Garfield Primary School \$2 million, the only money that has gone into the Bass electorate for education, and what is that money for? It is to fix up the relocatable classrooms. The school has tiny classrooms in which you could not swing a cat, and the government expects our kids to be taught, and taught properly, in them. What about the money that was promised by the member for Gembrook, who was going to have money put aside for a secondary college at Officer? Where was the money for that? It is nowhere in the budget, and now she is squirming and trying to find some money. It is the coalition that has committed \$20 million to buy land, build the school and have it open in our first term in government. This government has been in office for 11 years, but in this rapidly growing area — six and a half families move into the Pakenham part of the electorate every day, into Cardinia shire — what has the government done for planning? Nothing. What has it done for education? Zilch. There is nothing to try and

make those kids' lives a bit better and to stop the crowding.

Koo Wee Rup Secondary College is in the Bass electorate, about 20 kilometres out of Pakenham. Some 150 kids travel from Pakenham to that school, which was built for 650 kids. It now has 950 kids, and every time new kids arrive each year the school brings in a couple more portables. The college is running out of space. There is no room for kids to kick footballs or play hockey, because the hockey ground is now covered in portable classrooms. This government has not properly planned what it will do with Koo Wee Rup Secondary College. It is a great school with great teachers and a great principal and it offers great programs, but the government has not even considered putting any money into the school to bring it up to an appropriate standard. The school has a canteen in which it cannot feed kids in the time allocated for lunch because they cannot get all of the kids through. A hall was provided — mainly by the school community, not by the education department — but it cannot fit all of the students because there are so many of them.

Next year the school is looking at 1050 kids in facilities designed for 650. This government did not even consider putting any money aside to buy a block of land in Officer to build a secondary college that would have relieved that pressure. You have got to wonder what is going on. In the Pakenham and Cardinia area there are more kids going to non-government schools than there are to government schools; something like 55 per cent or 60 per cent of the kids are going to non-government schools. No wonder!

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill because it is a great Labor budget and a great budget for all Victorians. The Brumby Labor government is standing up for families and securing jobs. Securing jobs for Victorians has been our priority, and this budget reflects a Premier, a Treasurer and a government that has strategically and carefully steered Victoria through the global financial crisis, and in the middle of this crisis created more than 100 000 jobs for Victorians.

Giving people jobs and providing job security are the best things any government can do for any family. Knowing that you will be able to pay your mortgage, put food on the plate and send your children to your school of choice is great for any family at the end of every day. This growth in jobs represents the highest growth of any state in Australia. Victoria is a great place to live, work and raise a family. Despite the aspersions and criticisms of those opposite and their

absolute talking down of the Victorian economy, the Victorian government has continued to grow the Victorian economy and this budget is in surplus.

I worry when I hear people opposite talking about cutting the public service. I think every doctor, nurse, teacher and police officer should watch out because if the worst was to happen and the coalition was on the other side of this house after November, I assure you that nobody's jobs will be safe. The security that Victorians now have with having a job, raising a family and buying a home will all be undercut by those opposite. They have declared they are going to cut. They are going to sell, sell, sell and cut, cut, cut, and every Victorian should be warned.

Mr K. Smith — Pay off your debts.

Ms GRALEY — Yes, you are going to cut, cut, cut, and sell, sell, sell.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Beattie) — Order! Through the Chair! The member for Bass has had his turn, and the member for Narre Warren South should speak through the Chair.

Ms GRALEY — Economic growth is forecast at 3.25 per cent in 2010–11, and the budget delivers a surplus of \$872 million in 2010–11 and surpluses averaging \$1.2 billion over the following three years. The government has maintained those surpluses despite the talking down of the Victorian economy by the shadow Treasurer, who the member for Bass has just endorsed as the next Treasurer of Victoria. God help us. What did the shadow Treasurer have to say on 5 May 2010?

It is now clear that Labor will not protect jobs as the recession takes hold, even as the Premier and Treasurer continue to deny that Victoria is suffering from recession.

What recession? What sorts of credentials does a person like that have to be the next Treasurer of Victoria?

This strong financial and economic management means that the government can provide massive investment for Victorian families. In health the government is investing \$4 billion and delivering a historic partnership with the commonwealth. This includes new improved hospitals — good hospitals, I heard people opposite saying — in regional areas. We want to keep them good. We want to keep doctors and nurses in jobs, so that they can deliver terrific services to all Victorians. There is greater funding for elective surgery, and, as I said, more money for more doctors and nurses, so people can get the best possible health care. I am also

heartened to see the progress of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, with \$69 million funding for the next stage in this year's budget, as well as \$11 million for the expansion of Monash Children's Hospital. People in my electorate are heartened by this investment because they like to know that if their child is suffering from some disease or falls sick, they have good quality services close to home.

In education we are continuing to deliver the largest schools rebuilding program in Victoria's history. In my electorate of Narre Warren South our government has built nine new schools. In fact we have built a beautiful new school in the member for Bass's electorate; Berwick Chase Primary School is winning awards for its design and the innovative teaching that is happening there. I suggest the member pop down to Berwick and have a good look at this great new school in his electorate. Two of these new schools in my electorate, Alkira Secondary College and Nossal High School, have been officially opened in 2010. This is an amazing achievement and an absolute contrast to the Kennett government program of closing schools and in the process destroying school communities. The budget also funds an additional 3590 kindergarten places, which is great news for the many young families moving into my electorate. Education is the Brumby Labor government's no. 1 priority because it believes every child deserves the opportunity to shine.

The budget also continues to deliver the \$38 billion Victorian transport plan which benefits many Victorians, particularly those in my electorate, which I will get back to in a moment. The rollout of 38 new trains continues, and the budget provides \$84 million over four years to upgrade a further 20 train stations to premium station status. We are also providing \$231 million over six years to deliver major Nation Building road projects in partnership with the commonwealth.

I know what happens when conservative governments get into power. There are people in the Liberal Party who actually voted against funding for road projects in my electorate. That would be the taste of things to come if we saw conservative governments return to power in Victoria. We are seeing it in England too: cut, cut, cut, sell, sell, sell.

We are also investing in an additional 1966 police, and that is a massive investment of \$561 million. I also welcome the 50 new youth workers who will be out on the streets helping young people. Adolescents often experience great difficulties when they are growing up,

and we certainly do not want them getting into trouble with the police.

Locally the people of my electorate have much to celebrate in this budget. The first home bonus will be increased from \$18 000 to \$20 000 for new homes, an initiative that means a great deal to the young people of my electorate. My electorate is commonly referred to as the first home buyer's capital of Melbourne on account of the number of local people benefiting from the government bonus. My electorate of Narre Warren South has one of the highest amounts of first home buyers, with Cranbourne residents buying 1274 homes in the area in the past year, ranking fourth in the list of the most popular places in Victoria to buy a new home. In fact the Treasurer was out in my electorate recently to meet with some first home buyers who, thanks to this government, have been well placed to realise their dream of buying their own home.

The Premier recently visited my electorate and delivered some very good news for road users. The Premier announced that Clyde Road will be duplicated through High Street and Kangan Drive in Berwick. This project, which is funded in this budget, is a substantial investment of \$25.6 million, with \$30 million committed by the Rudd Labor government, which the Abbott and Turnbull federal opposition voted against. This is a project that the member for Gembrook and I have been pushing for some time. We acted on the community concerns, and I am very pleased that the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Ports delivered for us. This is a project that will make life much easier for residents in my electorate. It will mean less time stuck in traffic and more time spent with their families, many of them in their brand-new homes.

We are also duplicating Hallam Road, with \$35 million being invested in this project. Again, the government has taken notice of the concerns and opinions of the community and delivered a terrific result that the strong Hampton Park community can be very proud of.

It has been an absolute pleasure to work with community members on this project, and I am very pleased the Minister for Roads and Ports was able to champion our cause and get it up in this year's budget. Since coming to office our government has invested over half a billion dollars in roads in the city of Casey. It is a champion effort, and people are really benefiting from having these new roads, which make it much easier for them to get about, get to work and enjoy time with their families.

Hallam railway station will be upgraded to premium status as part of the government's \$84 million program

over four years, which I mentioned earlier. It means Hallam station will be staffed from first train to last train. I was at Hallam station the other day; commuters using the trains were very happy about the upgrade, and they are very pleased there will be extra services on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines. It will make life much easier for them, and it will allow them to get to and from their secure jobs more quickly. The strong investment in roads and transport is possible because of the Brumby government's \$38 billion transport plan, a plan the Liberal Party has said it will tear up.

The Liberal Party is a threat to road duplications, station upgrades and other important transport projects, especially in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Only the Brumby Labor government can deliver the projects and services important to Victorian families. Only Labor governments believe in supporting families and in building schools, hospitals, kindergartens and libraries, and that is especially so in the outer areas. I have heard those opposite talk with derision about life in the outer suburbs. The member for Nepean is still bemoaning the fact that people in his electorate did not get noise walls and the people in Beaconsfield did. I can tell him that the people in the outer suburbs — in Beaconsfield, Berwick, Narre Warren South — deserve the best possible community infrastructure that a government can provide, whether it be roads, kindergartens, schools or hospitals. That is exactly what this government is doing.

When I go to citizenship ceremonies in my electorate, which happen every two weeks, there are usually over 100 people there. A lot of people are moving into the Narre Warren South electorate. It is my habit to say to them, 'You are very welcome to our prosperous, peaceful and cosmopolitan Victoria'. This budget goes a long way to making sure all the excellent work the Labor government has done in the past decade that has already made Victoria a great place to live, work and raise a family will continue. It is a place where people want to come for our lifestyle, our community and all the good things that happen here like sporting festivals, multicultural festivals and the sheer quality of life. It is about being able to walk around the streets and feel safe.

In this budget we are not only building on our strong record, but we are looking forward to the future where Victorians can know that Victoria will continue to be a place where they have a good job, they can provide for their families, they can send their child to a quality school and, if their child gets ill, there is a hospital service and an ambulance service that is responsive and of an excellent standard close by. This again demonstrates the great economic management the

Brumby Labor government has been able to deliver in what have been quite trying financial circumstances for the world. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Treasurer, the Premier and all the ministers for putting together such a worthy budget. I commend this great Labor budget to the house

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010. This budget provides little hope and little promise, and certainly it provides very little for residents of the outer eastern suburbs, particularly the residents of Knox. It is great to contrast the contributions from the member for Narre Warren South and the member for Bass, because they point starkly to how the government has chosen to spend its dollars in a pork-barrelling exercise on those most marginal Labor seats at the expense of the rest of Victoria. One only needed to listen to the contribution from the member for Narre Warren South to see how pointedly that is the case, because we heard about project after project and millions upon millions of dollars being expended by this government as a political exercise to try to save members of the government.

This budget will raise in excess of \$45.8 billion in revenue — that is, \$45.8 billion that is going to be extracted from Victorians and from the federal government. It will be extracted from Victorians in fine revenue and taxation revenue in terms of stamp duty, payroll tax and land tax, and I will come to that in a moment. When this government came to office it started with \$19 billion; that was the revenue of the last year from the Kennett government. We have seen a significant rise to \$45.8 billion, and in the forward estimates it is expected the figure will increase to \$50.4 billion by 2013–14. You would think with that amount of money, with a significant increase in resources, Victorians all across the state would be better off. You would think they would be better off in the electorates of Rodney, Hastings and Ferntree Gully and in other electorates held by members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. But sadly that is not the case. My community has been left behind because of 11 years of neglect from this state Labor government.

One only needs to look at housing prices. The previous member talked in glowing terms about new housing. One only needs to look at the prices young families are forced to pay under the watch of this government. The median house price for a home in Melbourne is almost eight times the average pre-tax wage of \$63 000. How is a young family expected to purchase their brand-new home when they are going to be paying a figure that is almost eight times the amount they earn in a year, that

being the average salary of \$63 000? This government has the gall to stand up and say it is proud of its record of helping people purchase their new homes. I can tell you, Acting Speaker, I have people in my office on a regular basis complaining about their inability to purchase a home. Housing affordability in this state has become so difficult that their only option is rental or to go to the public housing system. They cannot afford to buy a brand-new home in this state. You only need to look at the significant increases and at the disparity. In September 1999 the average price of a median home was almost equal to the average yearly salary for an individual. That has blown out to an eightfold increase.

Payroll tax has been a boon for this government. If there is one area where it has gouged businesses large and small in this state, it has been in the area of payroll tax. Under the watch of the government payroll tax has increased by 105 per cent. The government has gouged the money from small mum and dad businesses. These are people who meet the threshold, people who employ people from my electorate, entrepreneurs who set up a business and have the gall to want to employ other people to make their business prosper. They are all punished with a 105 per cent increase under the watch of this government. The figure being extracted from Victorian businesses has increased from \$2.1 billion to \$4.3 billion under the watch of this government.

Let us have a look at land tax, the insidious tax that is causing so much pain in the Victorian community. Under the watch of this government land tax has increased by 270 per cent. Over 11 years the amount raised in land tax has increased from \$378 million to \$1.4 billion. That is a significant increase.

In relation to stamp duty one needs to listen to the stories of constituents about the problems they face with respect to it. As it has with land tax, this state government has reaped the benefit of a 270 per cent increase in stamp duty from \$1 billion when the government took office to \$3.7 billion now. That is money that has been gouged from Victorians, including from young families and residents in my electorate to help to pork-barrel and fund the projects in marginal seats we have heard mentioned by members opposite. You can see that this is not about helping all Victorians or sharing benefits amongst all Victorians; it is a calculated program of delivering infrastructure and services to achieve a political outcome. It is not about helping my residents or residents in electorates that are not held by the government; it is all about saving the political bacon of this government.

Given this significant increase in revenue, we need to look at how this state is faring with respect to its level

of debt. We know only too well the story that when the Kennett government was elected it inherited a debt of \$31 billion as a legacy of the Cain and Kirner years. We understand the problems that beset the Cain and Kirner governments because of the way in which it managed the finances of this state. Under the Kennett government the state's debt level was almost eradicated. For the first couple of years of the current government it looked like the debt level was going to be reduced, which was something we had never before seen under Labor governments. Between 2001 and 2002 the debt actually decreased, and we thought, 'Finally we're seeing a Labor government that has learnt from the problems of the past and will not repeat those mistakes'. But that was not to be. The debt figure has now blown out, and according to the estimates will again be around \$31 billion by 2014.

What is it about the Labor Party and debt? Whether it be at a federal or state level it has been proved that Labor governments cannot manage money. Labor has proved that it is the party of debt. It does not matter what you look at or what test you use, debt levels are always higher under a Labor government than under a conservative coalition government.

Let us have a look at the way this government has neglected my local community in Ferntree Gully. When I have a look at the budget in relation to the \$38 billion transport plan — the blueprint for the future, the 20-year vision plan, the document that was meant to deliver for all Victorians to meet their transport needs — I see that not one cent out of a total figure of \$45.8 billion in that budget is going to be spent on transport infrastructure in my electorate, whether it be on roads or on public transport such as buses and trains.

With respect to roads, there is nothing in the budget about upgrading important intersections such as the Tormore–Boronia roads intersection, which is something the local community has been fighting for for years. My community and the member for Bayswater's community are unfortunately probably going to have to wait for somebody to die before this government will be willing to listen to the calls from Knox residents. The long-awaited Dorset Road extension is something this government has ignored for years. This government chooses to completely ignore not only my wishes and calls for the extension as a member and the wishes of local residents but it even ignores the wishes of the local council, which has identified it as the no. 1 local road issue it wants addressed.

With respect to public transport, the government recently commissioned a review of bus services in the

Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges areas, which identified a need for a number of new bus services. Not one cent of this \$45.8 billion budget is going to be expended on upgrading bus services in my electorate.

I turn to deal with the long-awaited feasibility study for the Rowville rail line, which I talk about constantly in this place. It was not me as a Liberal member of Parliament who raised the issue; the Labor Party when in opposition in 1999 promised my community that it would commit funds to conduct a feasibility study. Eleven years later all we have asked for is \$2 million. We have not even asked for the train line; we have just asked for \$2 million out of \$45 billion of expenditure to be spent on a feasibility study that the government promised my community 11 years ago. However, not one cent has been allocated for that important project.

This government has failed my community miserably on the important issue of law and order. When I talk to residents the issue that most concerns them is the lack of police on the beat and a fear of being victims of assault and violence in their local communities. My community has had a gutful and is sick of the spin coming from this government. It expects real action. It is very interesting that after the opposition came out with a clear policy on the issue the government cobbled together a copy of that policy in an attempt to try to steal back the law and order agenda.

I had a very interesting discussion last week with a father at an Auskick clinic. Unbeknownst to me that father was a senior member of the Victorian police force, and I asked him, 'What is your view and what are your colleagues' view of the government's announcement?' And he said, 'The most galling thing this government has done is when it came out and said it was going to announce 1900 new police'. I said, 'Why would that be the case?'. And he said, 'Because for five years we have been trying to convince this government that we need more members. The response from the government has been that statistically crimes are down, the government had delivered the police resources we needed and it was not going to deliver any more members. Then just because the opposition comes out with a policy, and just because there is an election later this year, the government cobbled together this policy'. The police officer then said, 'It galled members even more when the Premier and the police minister stood up and said that it was now going to deliver this amount of members. So the question needs to be asked: at what point did the Premier and the police minister realise that we needed to move from having no new members to 1900 new members of the Victorian police force?'. The community is sick of the spin coming from this government.

I am pleased that, finally, this government has been dragged kicking and screaming to make a decision about the future use of the Ferntree Gully Secondary College site, closed nearly four years ago under the watch of this government. It did not spontaneously combust; it closed under the watch of this government. We are pleased to see that it is going to be converted to an autism spectrum disorder facility, something that I have been campaigning on for years. More importantly, it is something the local community and parents of children with autism have been fighting for. I pay tribute to those parents, and we are very pleased to see that outcome, but there is still so much more that my community expected. It has been badly let down by this government.

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — I am pleased to bring some order into the world, and paint it like it really is in commenting on the terrific budget the Brumby government recently brought down in this house. The government has delivered so much for this entire state, as have all the previous budgets brought down by the Brumby government, and ones earlier under the Bracks government when Premier Brumby was the Treasurer.

One of the underpinning features of this budget, which I am pleased to see, is that on a financial footing it is very sound, as have been the other budgets. We have seen how under a Labor government Premier Brumby, and as the former Treasurer, has set a path for this state that economically has been very sound and that saw us through the global economic downturn so that Victoria was one of the best positioned states across the world to respond. Since the global economic downturn, as jobs have come back through the stimulus of both the federal and state governments and then the flow-on via the private sector gaining new confidence, 92 per cent of new full-time jobs in this country have been provided in Victoria. We are well ahead. That is a very good note to start upon when commenting on this budget.

Jobs and a sound income for every family is one of the prime responsibilities of a government to support, and clearly through the global economic downturn we experienced some significant challenges across my electorate. How did our government respond? Our government showed that in conjunction with the federal government it was serious about acting to support jobs in our region. The Premier visited Ballarat on a number of occasions. The Minister for Regional and Rural Development has visited companies such as CMI Ballarat and OzPress. She also visited the Ballarat University Technology Park, where with the state government's assistance we opened the new IBM

Regional Software Solutions Centre which will see 200 new jobs in Ballarat. There are jobs in the private sector, jobs in the public sector and jobs at the United Group rail workshop site as a result of the X'trapolis trains being produced there. The Premier and the Minister for Public Transport were in Ballarat recently to see the work taking place at United Group workshops. Jobs are being provided over a period of time.

Within this budget what is the other stimulus we have continued to provide? One of the great stimuluses is the first home owner assistance scheme this state has had in place for a number of years. In recent years it has increased the bonus for people who are wanting to build new homes in regional Victoria. Since January 2009 that has seen first home owners across Ballarat sharing in more than \$35 million in the first home owner scheme. More than 630 first home owners across our region have shared in \$2.4 million, and that is great news for people, including young families, who are wanting to get into a new home. It is also great news for the construction sector in Ballarat. I am pleased to see this scheme continuing in this budget.

We have also seen major construction projects taking place and committed to in this budget. The regional rail link is obviously going to be of substantial benefit to public transport travellers on the Ballarat to Melbourne rail line. This new dedicated rail link continues to be built, again with support from the federal government. In the state budget there is \$4.3 billion to see this new line built from Tarneit to Southern Cross station. The benefits of a regional fast rail service are being greatly appreciated by people on the Ballarat to Melbourne rail line and in my electorate on the Bendigo rail line through Kyneton and Malmsbury. People know they are getting smooth, comfortable, good quality travel into Melbourne on the V/Locity trains, which have many more services. But they still experience the frustration of going into the metropolitan rail loop and periodically being held up behind some of the trains. This measure will help to overcome that issue and see that the whole part of the journey is smooth and reliable travelling. It is going to see the many people who are getting on our trains in the regions feeling that is a great value service. I am pleased to see that happening.

In terms of roads I am pleased to see the Anthonys Cutting work well under way, with a contribution from the state government and more significantly from the federal government, which again is improving those transport links between Ballarat and Melbourne, and of course the Calder link work has been completed and is providing great links into Melbourne from the Kyneton and Malmsbury areas.

All of these construction works are providing greater opportunities for the construction industry, for jobs in our region, but they have other flow-ons, including having people in new homes. Another project that is of great benefit to the people of Ballarat will be the new \$55 million Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre, with \$13 million coming from this state government, meaning that people who unfortunately are suffering from some form of cancer will be able to be treated in Ballarat rather than having to travel to Melbourne and will be provided with a great range of support services that will be incorporated into this world-class centre. I am really pleased that the member for Ballarat West and I have been successful, as has Catherine King, the federal member for Ballarat, in impressing upon our governments the need for an upgrade to our oncology facilities in Ballarat, and this is certainly an outstanding result. I look forward to seeing this centre being constructed and being available for the families who need this service into the future.

This is, of course, on top of other contributions that our government has made in terms of health, whether it be in Ballarat, where in the last budget we had \$20 million for the dedicated coronary catheterisation laboratory and six day beds at Ballarat hospital, or over in Trentham at the Hepburn Health Service, where we see the new \$11 million hospital, with stages 1 and 2 now complete and stage 3 under way. Again these are great health facilities across this state, across my electorate, and they are helping to provide jobs but also clearly providing great health benefits for the people of my region.

I also note the funding to employ more police. I do not know where the member for Ferntree Gully has been over the last 10 years, but obviously he has not been keeping an eye on what our government has been doing, because in every term of our government we have increased the number of police. When we came to office the number of police had been run down under the Kennett government. We added 800 police in our first term, and we are up to nearly 2000 additional police already. But in this new budget we have announced an extra \$561.3 million investment over five years to recruit, train and employ an extra 1700 police, who will be on front-line duties. On top of that we have contributed an additional \$73.9 million over four years to redeploy 200 police to the front line. I have always been very clearly on record as welcoming more police in my region. We have already contributed significantly to improving the police force in Ballarat, which was in a sorry state when we came to office.

It is also great to see that as part of the budget we have committed to moving the police component of the rural

emergency services dispatch into the dedicated Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority — or ESTA, as it is known — at Mount Helen. This service, employing 180 people, will take those emergency service dispatch calls and free up 66 police officers across the state who are currently taking these calls.

All up, on top of the nearly 2000 police already added, we have provided 1966 additional police. Further to that announcement in the budget I was excited to see — as the Daylesford community will be — an amount of \$2 million dedicated to building a new police station in Daylesford.

In the last fortnight the Minister for Police and Emergency Services came to Daylesford to open, along with me, the new State Emergency Service and ambulance centre on a new prime site on the Midland Highway in Daylesford. It is a state-of-the-art ambulance centre with a new SES unit in a new home, and at that same site we are planning to locate a brand-new police station there, so we will have a great emergency services precinct in Daylesford, which will benefit the people of the Hepburn shire over the coming years. Again, it is a great outcome for the people of my electorate.

Now let me move to another area close to my heart as a former teacher, and it concerns what we are delivering in education. Over the years that we have been in government it has been fantastic to see the upgrading of schools right across my electorate. We have continued to do that over the past year, and it has been fantastic to see the additional funding coming from the federal government through the Building the Education Revolution program, where so many primary schools across my electorate have new facilities either constructed or well under way. That is in addition to the state funding that the government has provided.

I note also the new language centre at Mount Clear College, which is being provided through federal funding, which is in addition to the new \$4 million science centre that was provided for in the state government's last budget. These are fantastic things that are happening, but in this budget again we have another 11 schools in my electorate that are to be funded. The smaller schools, including Newlyn, Mount Egerton, Magpie, Drummond, Creswick North, Bullarto, Bungaree, Warrenheip and Yandoit, are all receiving between \$200 000 and \$300 000 upgrades. I am also pleased to see an additional \$1 million allocation to allow the Ballarat Secondary College east campus and the Daylesford Secondary College to complete their planning on stage 2 or stage 3

developments. They will be well and truly ready for the next budget, when I will work to see that they receive the funding to complete those works.

Those schools are very excited about that funding because, again, it means more great facilities for schools, great benefits for the construction industry and work for Ballarat firms — so great benefits all around.

One of the other issues that has continued to be somewhat of a bugbear for residents in the Mount Clear and Mount Helen areas, as well as for people who work at the technology park — and there are now well over a thousand people working on site there every day — is the clogging up of Main Road at peak periods. I am pleased to see that in the budget we announced \$2 million to improve the flow through the Whitehorse–Main roads intersection. I am assured that by replacing the roundabout with traffic lights we should be able to double the capacity through that intersection.

Straight after the budget was announced I was very pleased to be out there again to announce the safer roads improvement program funding of \$612 000, which will provide for further line marking, dedicated flow-through lanes along the Ballarat–Buninyong Road, or Main Road, and dedicated, protected turning lanes, which will both allow the road to be safer for people who are doing right-hand turns off Main Road and also ensure that there is a dedicated lane for flow-through traffic to keep the flow working well there.

There are so many great things in this budget, and there will be so many other announcements to come in the future because it does not all get specified in the budget. We know we have committed further funding to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, and we will see some great projects funded out of that, along with the Community Support Fund, which will provide for some great sport and recreation and other projects. I am pleased that soon after the budget was announced the Minister for Education was in Ballarat announcing details of the Fairer Victoria package, which is again another significant direction that this government has taken in supporting disadvantaged Victorians to be able to have a fair opportunity to deal with their disadvantage and be equal members of the Victorian community. It is a great budget all around, and I am very proud to be part of this government.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — The member for Scoresby in his excellent contribution was able to provide a generic summary of what this budget means for Victorian families. He was also able to outline this government's ability — or should I say inability — to

manage money. One aspect that I want to speak to is the unbelievable blow-out in costs of major projects, which is to the tune of almost \$11 billion, and it continues to grow.

In its 11 years in government Labor has collected \$340 billion in revenue; during this time the budget has more than doubled. One has to ask: what has the Victorian community got to show for this unprecedented increase in revenue? Despite all of this and the increased revenue, Victoria's state debt will rise to a forecast \$31.7 billion in 2014 — but without any perceived debt repayment plan.

What does this budget mean for families in the Morwell electorate? If I were to list the commitments made in this budget by the government, my contribution to this debate would be very short, to say the least. Indeed, the list of references to projects or communities in the Morwell electorate simply consists of a number of existing projects that have already been committed to or those that are funded federally.

Some of those are the Traralgon to Sale highway duplication. This road project involves \$140 million of federal government funding and \$35 million from the state; it is already under construction. The Latrobe Community Health Service in Morwell, which I acknowledge is an important asset, is being redeveloped; it is nearing completion and can be classed as an existing project, as is the GippsTAFE facility currently being constructed in Traralgon. Also mentioned in the budget is the expansion of the Gippsland Cancer Care Centre, which of course is very much welcomed by the Gippsland community; but again, it has been federally funded.

If I may, I will indulge in some local media commentary in response to the budget. I refer to the *Latrobe Valley Express* of 6 May. A large heading on the front page reads 'Valley misses out'. On subsequent pages are subheadings which read 'No funds for ambo services', 'Walkers and peddlers miss out on money' and 'School merger denied funding'. Further in that paper are some comments from one of the Labor members for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, Mr Matt Viney, who is reported as saying:

This budget is a great result for our local communities as this government continues to invest heavily in healthcare, education, community safety and world-class events that underpin family life in Victoria.

He is reported as going on to say that the budget highlights include the Glengarry West fire station upgrade. On that point I make further reference to the following page in the same edition of the *Latrobe*

Valley Express where another heading reads 'Fire station upgrade questioned'. This relates to the Glengarry West fire brigade; its fire station captain, Helen Henry, is reported as saying:

... it must have been a mistake.

She is quoted as saying:

I haven't heard anything but we could do with some funding, we have been mistaken for other fire stations before.

There is no reference in the budget itself to the Glengarry West fire station upgrade, so I will be monitoring the situation very closely to ensure that the station is upgraded. Those comments from the local media and other organisations were interesting.

I now want to scrutinise and address relevant chapters in the budget overview. Firstly, I refer to the heading 'More jobs and a resilient, competitive Victorian economy'. I am not sure that residents or businesses in the Latrobe Valley will embrace that, particularly as it refers to elements of the government's budget which impact on jobs and businesses.

I will say that it is pleasing to see a reduction in WorkCover premiums and a very slight reduction in payroll tax. However, for many businesses in the Latrobe Valley it is a struggle. Indeed, just last week I had the opportunity to visit a small-to-medium business in the Latrobe Valley. I had a discussion about various things with its operators, whose concern was payroll tax, specifically the payroll tax threshold which they believe prohibits any opportunity they have to grow their business further. As members know, the payroll tax thresholds in Victoria are the lowest of any state and, I believe, are a genuine impediment to business growth.

Also, within my electorate the energy business is very prominent but is facing many threats. The Rudd government's proposed emissions trading scheme has had a huge impact on local business in terms of long-term maintenance for the power stations. Because of the uncertainty that exists in the industry at the moment, much of this long-term maintenance is not being conducted and, therefore, many itinerant workers who predominantly go around power stations as part of their workload are simply not getting this work, which is certainly having an impact.

It has been brought to my attention on many occasions, and I believe, that the government's way of creating more jobs is through its procurement policy, which is flawed. The government could do much better by ensuring that Victorian manufacturers — I am drilling

down to a local perspective — such as Australian Paper, Australia's largest white paper manufacturer, are not at a disadvantage. The government's procurement policy does not provide an opportunity for better utilisation of its products. Gippsland Aeronautics, probably one of Australia's best manufacturers of aircraft, is also finding it difficult to get a look in under this government's procurement policy.

The next budget heading I would like to address is 'Putting patients first', and I will talk about health services across Victoria. I mentioned previously the redevelopment of the Latrobe Community Health Service in Morwell, which will be of great benefit to that community, as will the future development of the Gippsland Cancer Care Centre. However, I was extremely disappointed that the master plan developed by the Latrobe Regional Hospital was not supported by the government through the budget. For a long time that hospital has experienced a decline in its ability to meet its standard benchmarks, and this impacts on service delivery to those needing health services in our region.

I also want to mention mental health beds and services across the region. The Flynn ward of the Latrobe Regional Hospital exceeds its capacity on a regular basis, therefore identifying a need for additional beds and services in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland regions; but again there is nothing mentioned in the budget to address those types of issues.

I turn to the heading 'Promoting community safety'. There is some acknowledgement of the copying of the coalition's policy of making our streets safe again by recruiting 1600 front-line police and 100 Victoria Police officers to join the transit safety division and also providing 940 fully trained protective services officers to man Victoria's train stations every night. This coalition policy was very much embraced by the Gippsland community and, as I said, copied in part by this government.

In our region we have had some issues around the entertainment and nightclub precinct in Traralgon. There has been some great work conducted by the Traralgon CBD Safety Committee and also the Morwell CBD Safety Group, which have come up with some great local initiatives to address the incidence of assaults and antisocial behaviour in our communities. There have been a number of local initiatives adopted, but it has been extremely difficult to get support from this government to address those. I think in some cases you cannot just apply a one-size-fits-all approach to try to address these issues, so from that perspective that has been disappointing. I note that just recently the Traralgon CBD Safety Committee was finally able to

get some funding through the taxi rank safety program to install closed-circuit television cameras at the local taxi rank.

I will not go into too much detail about what is covered under the heading 'More support and services for children and families' because time prevents me doing so and the Ombudsman's report tabled yesterday says it all. Unfortunately Gippsland has been on the wrong end of the stick, if you like, on this issue. Previously in this house I have raised the fact that some time ago 60 per cent of at-risk children in Gippsland were not allocated a case manager. That is just an appalling set of circumstances and something that needs to be addressed urgently.

The next heading is 'Investing in our schools'. As I mentioned previously, there is not much in the way of education funding for the Latrobe Valley community. It was disappointing that the Morwell Primary School regeneration program missed out on funding. This is a program that seeks to close three primary schools in Morwell. This government attests that it does not close primary schools, but in Morwell the proposal is that this government will close three primary schools and redevelop them on one site. There is no funding for that program, which is extremely disappointing.

I will also quickly mention the Building the Education Revolution program. It has been an appalling failure of the federal government — it is administered by the state government — particularly for government schools. The program is simply not providing value for money and there is no opportunity for local tradespeople to be involved in a number of the projects. It is an absolute disgrace.

In terms of housing, I acknowledge that the regional first home bonus provides some benefit. However, the fact that people are buying an established home means that the bonus is ripped right back by the government through the application of stamp duty. Stamp duty rates in Victoria are the highest of any state. Again, it is all well and good to have the first home bonus in place, but at the same time it is being ripped right back through stamp duty. Public housing waiting lists in Morwell and wider Gippsland are a significant problem. The waiting lists have grown rapidly over the last three or four years, and it is an appalling indictment of this government that it does not address that.

I will just make a couple of quick comments about the points under the heading 'A Fairer Victoria'. It is interesting to note that members on the government side have been espousing the virtues of this budget. I can tell members now that recently the Gippsland

Carers Association released a document headed 'Big Brumby budget fails disabled and carers and ignores government inquiry findings'. It goes on to give a summation of the association's feelings on the budget, and given that heading you can certainly get some sense of the content of that document.

The next heading is 'Delivering the Victorian transport plan'. The budget talks about the \$4.3 billion regional rail link and allowing express services into Melbourne from Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. There is absolutely no mention of Gippsland or the Latrobe Valley in that regional rail link or in the transport plan itself. In fact it was the previous public transport minister's idea that some rail services coming from the Latrobe Valley would terminate at Flinders Street station, not Southern Cross station, which is just appalling. For that \$4.3 billion we in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland might actually get a reduction in services.

In terms of sustainability and environment, I have spoken previously in this house about the Gippsland Water Factory and the lack of government contribution to that important project. It is in effect being paid for by ratepayers. I was pleased to see the coalition's plan over the last week to support Landcare coordinators, which is terrific.

In closing I just want to quickly speak about the bushfire reconstruction and recovery effort, which is noted in the budget. It talks about the redevelopment of the Callignee community centre, which is terrific for that particular community. As many members would be aware, the Morwell electorate was heavily impacted not only by the awful disaster of the Black Saturday fires but also by the fires that preceded Black Saturday in late January 2009 in the communities of Yinnar and Boolarra. It has been a pleasure to witness the redevelopment of these communities over the intervening period and against the odds in many cases. I pay tribute to all those across the board who have had some involvement in ensuring that these communities have been able to get back on their feet. It has been an extraordinary effort. Well done to all involved.

Ms MORAND (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I am very pleased to speak on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill. As they rise to speak in the debate on this bill members will refer to investments made in their electorates and the broader investments made through this budget. I am pleased that the member for Morwell acknowledged some of the good work that is going on in his electorate, because many members fail to ever acknowledge that there has been some good investment in opposition electorates. I

remind the member for Morwell that even though he may not have received any funding for education in this budget, \$79 million has been spent on schools in Morwell since 1999.

Sometimes I think it is appropriate that the spending that has been occurring in electorates over previous years should be acknowledged. It is likewise with the member for Ferntree Gully, who did not refer to the investments that are being made but only to things he felt should have been invested in. I remind him that there is a new special development school being built on the site of the former Ferntree Gully Secondary College. It is a new P-12 dedicated autism school, which is replacing the Wantirna Heights special development school. The first stage of that project is going to be funded with \$8 million. It seems important to acknowledge that there is investment going on in all seats in all parts of Victoria.

This budget significantly increases our funding of services that are fundamentally important to Victorian families — that is, health and hospital services, community safety services, and education and early childhood services. I want to spend a few minutes talking about my own portfolios and also about the investment that is being made in my electorate of Mount Waverley. The evidence is clear that the early years have a very profound impact on outcomes for children. My responsibilities begin with maternal and child health services.

Victoria continues to experience a baby boom, the level of which is continuing to surprise us. In the last 10 years Victoria has experienced a 20 per cent increase in the number of babies being born. That equates to around 12 000 extra children being born. Our programs are designed to support new mothers and their babies, and our maternal and child health service is recognised as being the best in Australia. We have 900 nurses in 700 different locations right across Victoria supporting new mothers and their children, particularly with the intense support that is needed in the first 12 months but also until children are three and a half to four years of age through 10 key age and stage visits.

The budget provides an additional \$2 million to expand the maternal and child health line and Parentline. The maternal and child health line is an important service that offers 24-hour support and advice to Victorian parents. Most of the calls that go to the line come from parents of children under 12 months of age. It is important that we respond to this increase in demand. At the moment the line receives about 100 000 calls a year. This funding will strengthen the counselling

services and offer more support to the growing number of families in Victoria.

The government has also increased funding to Parentline, which receives about 20 000 calls, more than half of which are handled by experienced social workers and psychologists. The expansion of funding for Parentline will allow it to answer more calls, thereby supporting parents of adolescents in particular. Many calls to Parentline are from parents who have issues in managing their adolescents.

Ensuring that Victorian children have the opportunity to participate in a kindergarten program is obviously a high priority. This year more than 66 000 Victorian children are participating in a four-year-old kindergarten program. Around one-quarter of those children receive additional support through the kindergarten fees subsidy. I note that when we came into government, that subsidy was \$100 and it is now \$820, in effect making kindergarten free for 27 per cent of families, allowing them to access a four-year-old kindergarten program.

This budget, in responding to the increasing number of children in the community through the continuing baby boom, means that \$63 million will be invested in meeting consequent demands through providing an additional 3590 places. This builds on the extra 4000 places that were funded in last year's budget. I note that in terms of our global budget for kindergartens, we have increased kindergarten funding by 225 per cent since 1999. The rate of children being born in that period increased by 20 per cent, but we have increased our funding and support for kindergarten services by 225 per cent.

Having more kindergarten places means we need a more qualified early childhood workforce and more teachers. This budget provides \$3.5 million towards mentoring, leadership courses and professional development, including professional development for around 1000 teachers on the new early learning framework. This builds on the workforce strategy I announced at the end of last year; it is about attracting teachers to work in long day care and kindergartens, particularly in hard to staff locations such as rural and regional Victoria.

It is an incentive program to attract teachers to work in kindergartens. So far we have supported 300 teachers through both scholarships and the incentive program. In addition, the strategy will help around 2000 staff to upskill their qualifications. This will support people who are already working in long day care or kindergartens to upgrade their skills; that might involve

getting certificate 3 training, a diploma or an advanced diploma.

The budget also contains \$14 million to expand the government's successful children's capital program, which supports grants for the construction of integrated children's centres and also renovation and refurbishment grants, and minor capital grants. That \$14 million funding is for one year and will allow us to construct at least seven integrated children's centres, which have been a great success.

This is a great model for partnership between the state government and local government, often also involving other community partners and in some cases involving business as well, to build integrated children's centres that provide the early years services that are so important to families. That might include kindergarten services, occasional care, playgroups, early childhood intervention or maternal and child health services — a range of services under the one roof. They have been a great success.

Families with children who have disabilities face additional challenges, especially in the early years; the government understands the importance of early intervention and investment in early intervention services. The government's support continues in this budget with an additional \$108 million funding boost for the quality and range of services that are supporting children with a disability or developmental delay. This includes an additional \$38 million over the next four years to support early childhood intervention services.

Those services support preschool-age children who have developmental delays or disabilities with things like speech therapy, physiotherapy, special education, equipment or other things that support the family. At the moment the funding supports around 12 000 children who attend early childhood intervention services. The additional funding will increase the unit price for each of those places, which means that each child supported by an early childhood intervention service will get additional hours of support and more intensive support during that period.

When it is fully implemented, the funding boost will represent a 40 per cent increase in funding for early childhood intervention services places. Overall we have increased funding for early childhood intervention by 140 per cent since we have been in government.

Also in this budget is a \$38 million commitment over the next 18 months to increase our support for the program for students with disabilities — an important program that supports more than 20 000 Victorian

children who attend government schools, around 9000 of whom attend 77 special schools.

Part of the additional funding in the budget is also for the development of a new model of provision for support of children with disabilities through the creation of new satellite and inclusion units. Satellite units are what they sound like — that is, satellites to special schools. This is a new model for facilities to be constructed on the grounds of existing schools that will then be auspiced and managed by special schools. The other model, inclusion support units, will be specifically for children with autism. Again this will involve purpose-built facilities being built in existing schools. This will offer another option to parents of children with autism.

The budget also contains \$9 million for a new deaf education institute to support and train teachers to work with the deaf and the hard of hearing. The institute will be based in Melbourne and will significantly increase the teaching and allied health expertise to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing. I believe it will play a leading role in deaf education in Australia.

In my women's affairs portfolio the government has made a strong commitment. We want to see Victorian women being able to participate equally in all aspects of Victorian life. A number of key aspects of the budget are around family violence and women's leadership. Firstly, in relation to family violence we will be providing \$16.8 million over four years, of which \$14 million is to support the A Right to Respect prevention framework. This allocation will be on the basis of important research that was done by VicHealth, which helped the government formulate its 10-year plan in relation to the A Right to Respect strategy.

The research showed that there is a strong correlation in family violence between things like gender stereotyping, unequal power relationships between men and women, and also a broader culture of violence. Our strategy is to promote in settings that we know have the most influence in the way behaviour is cultivated, through the media and popular culture, sporting clubs, local government, education and training, and through health and community services.

As part of that funding, we will also be expanding on risk assessment and risk management training. This has been a very successful initiative, and another \$2.7 million will enable us to extend and tailor the program to new areas of the workforce such as homelessness services, child protection, mental and clinical health services, correctional staff, local government and also services for vulnerable groups.

Finally in the women's affairs portfolio, there is some funding to support new partnerships with business and government to drive and increase participation, and to provide opportunities for women to serve on government and private sector boards. There is also increased funding for the successful financial literacy program which has seen around 900 women participate in the 'Women and money' seminars. This new round of funding will ensure that we specifically tailor these financial literacy workshops to support women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and also indigenous women.

I want to turn to initiatives that have an impact in my local area. I was really pleased that funding was announced for a \$6 million transformation of Essex Heights Primary School; that transformation will include 16 classrooms, an administration area, amenities and a library. That funding will support the great work that school does for the community; it will be virtually rebuilt from the ground up. The design reflects a school that has a very proud record of diversity and inclusiveness and which offers a really stimulating learning environment.

As a former health professional, I am very proud that this budget also significantly increases funding to health services. Specifically, in my local area it included \$9 million for the MonashLink Community Health Service, which will allow the construction of a purpose-built new community health centre in Glen Waverley. This involves the relocation of the existing service, which is also in Glen Waverley, and provides community health, diabetes education, dietetics, occupational health, oral health, physiotherapy, podiatry and speech therapy.

I am also really pleased with the expansion of paediatric services at Monash Medical Centre in Clayton. This will allow local families to get improved access to paediatric and neonatal services. The initiative will provide 10 extra paediatric beds, 4 neonatal intensive care beds, 5 paediatric intensive care beds and the construction of additional amenities.

I was also pleased to welcome a funding boost for Waverley Emergency Adolescent Care (WEAC) to run its Tandana Place program based in Mount Waverley. It provides a really important service to youths in the local community, and the funding will allow it to continue this vital service.

I also know that Waverley residents will welcome the additional investment this government is making in community safety. We have already invested substantially in community safety and support for

police over the last 10 years, with an extra 2000 police officers. The budget, as members know, includes building the police force by an additional 1966 police. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill. The Nationals in coalition do not oppose this bill.

Confucius once said something like, 'We live in interesting times'. At present, I think we live in concerning times, particularly in relation to financial matters and particularly in country Victoria. The Mildura electorate has suffered from the effects of a long drought and poor commodity prices, and from the federal government's policy focus on environmental water without any adjustment policy beyond the farm gate. There are planning dilemmas for our local councils, particularly in the older irrigation areas.

A local newspaper headline, in relation to local government, reads 'Stop the dive'. That is the result of both some federal and state policies on planning, thereby producing a dilemma for local government. There is considerable slack in the economy that needs to be picked up to allow Mildura to continue to have a vibrant and positive future, but I will have more to say about that later.

There is also concern in my electorate about debt, as interest can be used for many programs. A debt of \$31.7 billion and an interest bill of \$3.2 billion can easily turn concern about issues that I have raised to despair.

Let us turn to education issues. In relation to schools, Ouyen Secondary College picked up funding for its P-12 program, which is something that I have publicly stated is overdue but welcome. The council at the school expected this to be done in stages but only two of the three stages have been funded, so more will be needed at Ouyen to finish that program. It would give that community great confidence if they could be assured that stage 3 — to finish the job off — will be done.

At Merbein there is \$2 million, plus or minus the BER (Building the Education Revolution) money, to start a new primary school. The community was promised a new school, yet nowhere does it see the funding for that second stage, which was the new secondary school. In talking to the school council, I gathered that what they really needed most at their secondary school — although it was ageing — was a new library resource area. That is now to be incorporated into the

never-never program for the second stage. This too is causing despair in the community due to that lack of commitment to forward planning — or, in their words, ‘Where is the rest of the money coming from?’.

Robinvale has \$1.5 million, plus or minus its BER (Building the Education Revolution) money, for its school in the year after next, but much more money will be required there. Robinvale is a little larger than Ouyen, which has a \$4.5 million-plus program. Providing \$1.5 million on the never-never is a concern for the Robinvale community. In education these communities were pushed to go through the merger processes, which caused great community stress and pain, and now the promised projects are not being laid out in a way that gives people confidence in the future.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development earlier in this debate talked about kindergarten education, the importance of which is well recognised; however, we have issues with four smaller kindergartens in my electorate that are struggling for numbers, and parents are having to raise considerable amounts of money to keep those kindergartens open.

During the adjournment debate last night I spoke about the efforts of the Nangiloc and District Kindergarten, which has had to raise \$18 000, but due to a small dip in enrolments next year, this will become a \$30 000 task. People in some of these places are having to make round trips of between 60 kilometres and 120 kilometres to their nearest kindergarten if their towns’ existing kindergartens close, so there are significant issues in how we manage those smaller kindergartens. I do not know how our kindergartens will be able to afford the 2013 move to 15-hour programs without crippling their communities financially.

I read the most cutting comment about this matter in a letter I had from Fiona Murdoch, the president of the parents committee of the Nangiloc and District Kindergarten. Ms Murdoch is someone who recognises the value of education, and I understand that she has also sent a letter to the minister, in which she expresses her view that the discouragement experienced by parents can be harmful for both parents and children.

Sometimes parents are so exhausted by travelling and supporting their children through kindergarten and primary school that they back away from making a similar contribution to their children’s education when their children reach secondary school. This is the sort of dilemma that parents have to deal with: their fingers can be burnt, and they can be exhausted by contributing to the education system.

The Mildura Base Hospital is an ongoing concern for the Mildura community. As I have mentioned many times in this house, Mildura has outgrown its hospital, as I know many communities have, so it was not helpful for the Treasurer to come past and tell people in my community that its hospital is too good, particularly when people have been forced to wait in the accident and emergency department and have experienced their elective surgery being postponed because the post-operative care area is not big enough or because patients admitted to the accident and emergency department on the previous night have been occupying beds.

The Treasurer’s comments were not helpful and have done nothing to give the community confidence that the government can get this right. It is not a big ask to fix conditions at the hospital. The Minister for Health visited the hospital late last year, and the hospital has plans for its accident and emergency area, its post-operative care area and for its maternity and mental health facilities. There is no convenient ambulance bypass down the road from Mildura — our hospital has to take what comes to the door. We simply cannot send an ambulance anywhere else because it can take hours for an ambulance to reach another hospital.

We have worked out our priorities, and we have developed a plan. The hospital has gone through a planning process, and the proposed improvements have been costed at just under \$5 million. A proposal has been submitted to the health minister. However, it appears that the Treasurer has had his way; he has decided that our hospital is too good and has tied the health minister’s hands, thereby preventing him from assisting our hospital. That situation must change.

In the area of transport, Mildura has been working very hard for the re-establishment of its passenger rail service. We are awaiting the Department of Transport’s feasibility study to be passed to the minister and made public. Many issues are involved in re-establishing passenger rail services to Mildura, including the condition of the railway stations, work that needs to be done to signalling and passing loops, selection of rolling stock and the condition of level crossings, the latter issue being of particular concern.

Trains on that line will have to slow down to 50 kilometres an hour if a crossing is unprotected by lights and booms. If a crossing happens to be on a curve, and there are several of them on that line, a train will have to slow to 30 kilometres an hour. The extra time it takes for a train to get to Melbourne will become of concern.

The activities of first home buyers in Mildura are providing fuel for the engine room of the Mildura economy and are helping us overcome some of the problems that are occurring as fallout from the drought. However, the extra money that has been offered first home buyers has to be discounted against rising interest rates to see if there is a net benefit. First home buyers need to be confident that, if they are able to get into the market, they will not be caught in an interest trap. Interest rates are an offset for that and affect the confidence of those people.

The coalition is in favour of supporting first home buyers, because that support will get people out of public housing and into their own homes. We need to be mindful of the impact of interest rates on assistance to first home buyers.

The issue of water has rocked the confidence of people in Mildura. Mildura was established on permanent plantings for horticulture. Many growers did not consider water security a risk, but the drought has eaten into that security and confidence. As part of that, the carryover system for irrigators was introduced, and this year the professional growers in my area have lost considerable amounts of money due to this system.

Carryover is an important risk management tool, and if you did not carry over water into this current water year, you would not have grown a crop. If you look at the curves on the charts that show the amount of water required for the crops we grow in Mildura versus allocation, the allocation lags the amount of water that is required by the crop. If you did not have carryover water for the first three or four months of the horticultural year or the water year, you would not have grown a crop.

However, climate conditions changed later in the year and allocations did rise to 100 per cent; irrigators had to forfeit their allocation. This has led to the issue of forfeiture or socialisation of water. A number of people, including Dick Wells and Georgina Gibson, who are first-class horticulturalists have shown that they had no choice but to buy carryover water in order to produce a crop and maintain their properties. However, forfeiting that water has meant they have paid a very high price for doing so.

That arrangement needs to change. Our water policy has damaged the operations of our best horticulturalists. Due to the drought, water policy has not kept up with addressing the risks that are evident for our horticulturalists.

As a result of this situation, Mildura needs support for its Rural Financial Counselling Services and for other drought counsellors. Because of the drought, growers are exiting in quite high numbers; some 60 or 80 growers have exited in recent times. Many of these people are working off farm, are trying to find employment or have retired. However, for those who are still there and with the end of the small block irrigators grant, they are stuck in the headlights and do not know what to do. That is a considerable concern for those who remain. The water security issue is too great for them, and to leave is too great a step. Those people have to work out what to do.

As we move forward with this situation in Victoria, the issue becomes where these people should move to. The Sunraysia Skills Store initiative has helped, as do TAFE and regional training organisations, but the issue of fees can be an impediment. Sometimes it is the smallest things that stop people from leaving the land, and the issue of fees for TAFE education and training is of great concern, particularly if people are stepping down in their aspirations and careers, and want to undertake a course that is a little less than something they may have done some years ago. Nevertheless, people have to find the money to pay those fees. This is a challenging environment.

As we move forward with this water policy, there is also the issue of food security. As the Australian population rises, our demand for food will rise, our production will fall, our exports will fall and then at some point in time we will cease to be a food exporting nation. In fact we may become a food importing nation. This will affect not only our balance of trade but the security for people to have food in their fridges. I note that I have had these conversations with the member for Rodney, who has told me how rapidly dairy production is falling in his area. At some point in time we may well cease to be a dairy exporting nation, a citrus exporting nation and a vegetable exporting nation; we will be dependent on imports, and that is going to have a big effect on prices.

On energy, smart meters are still not going down well in my electorate. People are angry that they are paying for them and will continue to pay for them, and they are particularly angry about the explosion of cost. There is a lot of anger about the cost of smart meter charging on people's quarterly bills, and now we know that the cost of the program has blown out and the expense will be to the consumer — the mums and dads, and the pensioners. The cost of these meters blowing out is a huge imposition on those people, who are already facing rising energy costs. As we go forward trying to balance our energy usage it will be a considerable issue.

In Mildura we are also facing a couple of other things. Locusts will be back in spring, and we had better be prepared, otherwise there are going to be big problems in all of our areas. There is also our casino. Our council tonight will debate something that is still a state government decision. Mildura is tearing itself apart on a casino debate, not knowing whether there is a second licence available. It does nothing for the Mildura electorate's confidence in this government.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010 pertaining to this year's Victorian state budget. I am very pleased that the budget delivered by the Treasurer in this place is a great budget for my area. It helps local families by cutting taxes, creating jobs and boosting local services, while also keeping our community safe.

I am very pleased, as is my community, that this is a jobs-focused budget, as was last year's. It is very important to my electorate in particular, because my electorate has more tradespeople living in it than any other electorate in Victoria.

In terms of general economic settings, there are very few jurisdictions in the world that have been able to reduce taxes in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. It was said by many peak bodies like the Master Builders Association, even as the world was going into the global financial crisis, that there was no better place than Australia and Victoria to wait out the global financial crisis. When we see how many homes have been built in Victoria, how people are moving to Victoria and how that is keeping the economy strong, I think the Master Builders Association has been proven to be absolutely correct.

The first home owner bonus for newly constructed homes is getting an additional \$2000; this is a great thing across the state but particularly for the local economy in my electorate. The bonus will be for purchases made after 1 July, which means that \$20 000 will be available in metropolitan Melbourne for those newly constructed homes. I support the additional bonuses going into regional Victoria — although it is not an area I represent, it is not far up the road — because it encourages those local economies and also takes pressure off the growth that Melbourne is experiencing and evens that out across the state. This is a very popular state for families to come and live and establish in.

The government infrastructure that was funded in last year's budget and is in the pipeline is also providing local jobs. The wholesale fruit and vegetable market in

Epping is an amazing project with a lot of construction jobs. The market will make it a lot easier for our primary producers to bring their products to Melbourne in that they will only have to bring them to the northern edge of the city, and 70 per cent of that product does come down the Hume Highway. The market will also free up road space in that those trucks will not have to come all the way into Melbourne on the Western Ring Road.

The South Morang rail project, which began this year, will upgrade the whole Epping line, duplicating it from Keon Park all the way out to South Morang. I am very pleased about this, and I lobbied very strongly for it to be designed so it allows for future extension to the Mernda and Doreen area, which is where I live.

It was a great budget for health services. Locally, I had great pleasure in taking a little jaunt out from Parliament in budget week to personally deliver the good news to the Whittlesea community that the ambulance station, which has only been open a bit over a year, will now be operating on a 24-hour basis permanently. I want to congratulate the Whittlesea community, which worked so closely with the member for Seymour and me, on obtaining that service and on its now being operational 24 hours a day permanently. At the same time Kinglake will also now get a permanent peak period ambulance service, which is great. Both these services have been operating on that basis since the fires and giving their communities much-needed support and certainty following that tragic event, but the communities can rest assured that these services will operate on that basis into the future due to recurrent funding. That was a great announcement.

There are also 10 new intensive care unit beds at both the Austin Hospital and the Northern Hospital, hospitals that serve my electorate well. I was delighted to go out to the Austin Hospital with the Premier and Olivia Newton-John to celebrate the announcement in the budget of \$68.9 million for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. It was incredibly touching to see how absolutely delighted Olivia was that this will be funded and to see her humility in having the centre named after her. It will offer great services. She said it was one of the three best events in her life, and that it was up there with the birth of her child and her marriage. It was quite clear to see how happy she was, as were the patients who were there on the day who will benefit from it. I am very pleased it will be located at the Austin Hospital.

There is also a new catheterisation laboratory at the Northern Hospital. I think this is one of the success

stories of our health system in Victoria, given the amazing recovery and treatment rates achieved for patients who suffer cardiac problems. I have two friends who are local constituents and who both received treatment locally. In a different time I think they would probably have lost their lives, but they are still with their families. They were able to get good care with the early provision of stents, which saved their lives. They are back in the workforce and at home with the families that love them. Having an eight-bed recovery area and two extra laboratories at the Northern Hospital will mean a great deal to my community.

Only recently I was talking to members of the Wright family, who live in my electorate. They have been travelling through indigenous communities, and I was shocked when they told me that in Western Australia, for example, there are catheterisation laboratory services only in Perth and there is nothing else in the whole of that state. It is a similar story in South Australia. In Victoria we are indeed very fortunate that we have the level of care we do for our cardiac patients.

There is \$14.2 million in the budget for a 22-bed mental health unit at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital site. There is recurrent funding for 25 adult mental health beds at the Northern Hospital, and those beds can also be used for young people. I offer my thanks to the Minister for Mental Health for her commitment to these mental health beds serving my community. I was delighted when she came out to the Northern Hospital to see them firsthand. I wish her a happy birthday today and thank her for her continued support for bushfire survivors in my community and for being very concerned about their mental health and recovery. I thank her for her continued support of the retention of the community service hubs in Hurstbridge and Whittlesea that are so necessary to the continued support of the survivors.

In relation to education and children and early childhood development, I am very pleased to see the Minister for Education at the table. Her contribution on the budget followed that made by the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development just a few minutes earlier. Christmas Hills Primary School will receive some funding under the school improvement program. Strathewen Primary School will get \$539 000 to assist in the rebuilding of the school after Black Saturday. I thank both of the ministers I just mentioned for their commitment to the children and staff of Strathewen Primary School in that rebuilding effort.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development was a very welcome recent visitor in my electorate when she opened the Mernda community

activity centre, which includes a children's centre. It is another great initiative of this government. It is a one-stop shop for all early childhood services. My electorate is the beneficiary of having such a centre in South Morang and of having the one that has recently opened in Mernda. We are also about to turn the first sod for one at Lorimer in Doreen, which will be co-located next to the great Lorimer Primary School. On the day the minister opened the Mernda children's hub she also announced one for Whittlesea township. The minister is always a welcome visitor who comes with great news for kids and families in the Yan Yean electorate.

In relation to kindergartens, the government understands that Victorian parents want the best possible start in life for their children, and delivering 3590 additional kinder places and increasing the skills of our early childhood workforce are provided for in this year's budget. Two of my kindergartens — Whittlesea and Diamond Creek — will also get capital upgrades. It is a very good year for education and early childhood services, but there are also many other great projects in the pipeline in these portfolios.

At Mernda Primary School a public-private partnership project is ahead of schedule and is due for completion in October, with the children not planned to move in until February. The project is months ahead. It will be great for the community to see that facility, which includes community use facilities such as playing surfaces and a gymnasium. The full basketball and netball facilities will be available for community use. It is being built next door to the community activity centre, which includes a children's hub, so again it will be a great one-stop shop for families like the ones we have at South Morang and at Doreen.

In the education area I am really pleased to see that funds have been allocated to upgrade the bushfire resistance of schools and that \$41 million has been committed to schools in higher risk areas, many of which are in my electorate. Schools will be upgraded to comply with the new bushfire standards. The program includes retrofitting schools with fire doors and shutters and with water deluge and fire sprinkler systems. This will be very welcome.

On bushfire preparedness, there is \$136.6 million to boost fire prevention and emergency services, including the provision of additional personnel training at incident control centres across the state; the upgrading and improving of bushfire warnings, with funding for the Bushfire Information Line and the emergency alert systems; the provision of additional Country Fire Authority staff to train local brigades to support and

advise private landowners, local councils and government agencies on vegetation management; and support for local government to implement neighbourhood safer places. For the State Emergency Service there will be additional road accident rescue kits, pagers and rescue vehicles including a new rescue vehicle for our own local Eltham SES unit. This comes on top of the recent opening, for the first time, of the Whittlesea unit.

On community safety, I am very pleased to say that the Brumby government is very tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. This year's budget commits to an extra 1966 police on the beat. Locally this comes on top of a 44.3 per cent increase in police numbers in the Nillumbik policing area, which has seen a 27.5 per cent increase in crime. In Whittlesea there has been a 25.19 per cent increase in police numbers and a 3.4 per cent decline in crime. But we will be relentless in our pursuit of keeping our community safe, and that is why it is important for these 1966 police to be trained and for the Chief Commissioner of Police to allocate them where he sees fit to allocate them across the state.

We are also seeing improvements in local bus services and roads which will allow for better operation of the 520 bus. In this financial year we will see the introduction of the yellow orbital bus route in my electorate, which will be a great addition and will mean that for the first time people will be able to get a bus to the airport for work or other travel. Over the past 12 months 671 bus services have been operating in my electorate, and I encourage members of my local community to use them.

In addition I am very pleased to see in the budget a new allocation to and a continuation of the outer suburban roads fund. I am aware that not all of the funds have been allocated, so I certainly put in a bid to the Minister for Roads and Ports, because we would like some of the action in the Yan Yean electorate. The minister has been very generous in the past, and I know he understands we need to keep up with growth in the area. I look forward to that. I commend the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill to the house.

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010, but I must say that the Brumby government has again failed to deliver for those in my electorate of Narracan. In outlining what it has failed to deliver I intend to outline and acknowledge what we did get in the budget, which will not take me long.

First of all, we got the redevelopment of the Trafalgar police station, which was long overdue and is very welcome. That certainly will help support the hardworking police in the Trafalgar area. But I must say this initiative could well have been a waste of money if the coalition had not made an early pre-election commitment to increase police and protective services officer numbers by 2640. It took the Baillieu policy announcement on law and order to jolt the Brumby government into gear and force it to finally acknowledge that it has failed the people of Victoria by not providing adequate police numbers over the past 11 years. The Trafalgar police station is currently resourced as a 16-hour station. With the growth in population and increasing incidents of illegal activity and threats to community safety this police station must have 24-hour status.

The need for extra police resources goes well beyond just Trafalgar in my electorate. With the population increasing pretty much right across the electorate, current resources are stretched to the limit and the morale of our dedicated and very hardworking police officers is at an all-time low. Annual leave, maternity leave, stress leave and sick leave vacancies have led to the closure of outlying police stations at Neerim South and Rawson for unacceptably long periods of time over the past five months. These distant communities have been subjected to unacceptable response times and on some occasions no response at all, which has clearly compromised the safety of residents in those towns.

What else did we get from the budget? We got reannouncements of the upgrade of three primary schools that had already been committed to. The funding for those had already been allocated and announced about 12 months ago. In fact one primary school principal rang my office in a very excited state to check if the budget announcement was over and above — that is, on top of — what they had already been promised 12 months ago. Such are the spin and reckless tactics the Brumby government continues to engage in in its desperate efforts to trick Victorians into believing they are getting a good deal. Trust me, Acting Speaker, Victorians are way smarter than that.

The biggest shock this budget has delivered to Narracan has been the complete disregard for the critical needs of the West Gippsland Hospital. This hospital is a subregional hospital, according to the Brumby government's own classification. It is a subregional hospital desperately struggling to meet the demand that a regional hospital would be resourced to deal with. The emergency department is managing 18 000 presentations this year in only 8 cubicles. According to this government's own guidelines, it

should have at least 13 cubicles. Despite what Matt Viney, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, has claimed, there has been an application for funding presented to the health department for \$2 million to extend the emergency department. I wrote to the Minister for Health on 26 January this year alerting him to the enormous pressure the emergency department was under and the critical need for funding in this budget for an upgrade. The Minister for Health chose to ignore this request for desperately needed funding in the budget.

The West Gippsland Hospital is also in desperate need of funding for a level 2 nursery, given that around 800 babies will be born at the hospital this year. As a subregional hospital it should have a level 2 nursery available for the community. The Brumby government is not even meeting its own funding guidelines for a subregional hospital. According to the government's own service delivery charter for a subregional hospital, the West Gippsland community is entitled to have available to it a palliative care unit. This would provide a specialist palliative care medical practitioner and options for inpatient and outpatient care. The current palliative care service is an excellent service delivered by very professional nursing staff and volunteers. They and the families they assist deserve to have the backup of specialist medical support and a designated inpatient option for patients.

Already my constituents of Narracan have had to endure insufficient spending throughout the electorate on hospitals, schools, roads, rail, police and emergency services and public infrastructure. Just last week the Minister for Public Transport, Martin Pakula, was in Warragul proclaiming that the Labor government's sleeper upgrade program has made regional rail more reliable and that it has allowed regional trains to run faster because they have a more reliable track. In the past 27 months V/Line has had consistently late services, with a one-in-four chance of turning up late to work from Bairnsdale and a one-in-five chance from the Latrobe Valley. When pressured during the interview, Mr Pakula was happy to play the blame game for late services when he stated that it has been known for a while that V/Line punctuality is impacted by the metropolitan network.

Melbourne will always come first for this Labor government, even if it means forcing V/Line passengers to travel behind metropolitan trains, which get priority between Pakenham and the city. It is not only the metro trains that get priority. Time and again many metropolitan passengers take the seats of V/Line commuters on V/Line trains between the city and Pakenham, forcing genuine V/Line passengers to stand

for unacceptably long distances until the metropolitan passengers arrive at their destination somewhere between Southern Cross and Pakenham stations.

While sleeper upgrades are occurring to allow for faster trains, still we have had no action from this government on the Lardners Track level crossing, which has no boom gates and forces regional trains to slow down. It is simply dangerous for both rail and road users alike. Buses, trucks and cars all use this crossing every day. The level crossing is closely adjacent to a very busy road intersection on the Warragul–Drouin road, which increases the risk of a major accident. The level of community concern is so great that in 2008 I tabled a petition in this house containing nearly 4000 signatures. The Brumby government continues to allow the safety of all who use this crossing to be compromised on a daily basis.

The Warragul rail precinct upgrade is a necessary development to ensure that residents of our regional area are able to access public transport and to relieve the pressure on CBD parking in Warragul caused by commuters. The Baw Baw Shire Council, following state government direction, developed a master plan for the station, which included a 400-space car park, a five-bay bus terminal and a rail underpass which would allow for the development of land south of the station. Despite extensive assessment of the proposed car park site to the south of the station having been completed back in 2007 by the Baw Baw Shire Council and the Department of Transport, the Brumby government insisted that a master plan be developed for parking in the entire CBD, including the railway car park site, before a funding application would be considered.

This master plan was completed very early this year, and in plenty of time for the proposal to be considered for this year's budget. It has been completely overlooked; Warragul and district rail commuters have once again been ignored. It is very interesting to note that a park-and-ride car park was constructed at Drouin on the back of a 2006 pre-election commitment made by the former Labor member for Narracan, Ian Maxfield.

That project was given the nod, funded and constructed with very little discussion between the Department of Transport and the Shire of Baw Baw, with no requirement for the development of a master plan for the entire CBD of Drouin, including the Drouin railway station car park, before the project could proceed. As usual the Brumby government has two sets of rules as it blatantly plays politics with the welfare and opportunities afforded the residents of Baw Baw shire. The town of Warragul continues to grow at a rapid rate,

but without that development, traffic management issues will only be compounded.

There is a very similar case in Moe, at the other end of my electorate. A master plan has also been developed there for its railway precinct that would allow more parking and more integration of road-rail networks in the town. There is a \$15 million cost attached to the Moe activity centre project, and while the state government previously committed \$2 million in the 2007–08 budget, the project is dependent upon further funding from the Brumby government. I find it very hard to believe that after 11 years of record income, this government still believes it can neglect our regional areas.

As the Premier said in the annual statement of government intentions, the government aims to deliver for families, fairness and the future. There is nothing in this budget that delivers some of the most critical needs for fairness, families and the future of my electorate. There are many initiatives that are crucial to families in my electorate and which are critically needed to give them their fair share. But it is the future that gives me most concern.

The Brumby government has this state heading back into enormous debt. Nothing will undermine the future of Victorian families more than excessive debt. This government has had 11 years of record income. It took government with a \$2 billion surplus back in 1999, so it is an absolute disgrace that Victoria is heading rapidly towards being \$30 billion in debt. This will seriously compromise the future opportunities of all Victorians.

In closing I must comment on the extreme difficulties that our ambulance service is facing in Gippsland. We have seen a critical shortage of resources, which has led to less than acceptable response times. The current enterprise bargaining agreement, which ambulance officers are forced to work under, is not acceptable and is putting undue pressure on them, leading once again to unacceptable response times.

I call on the Brumby government to address those issues, to look at my electorate and give it the fair go it promised to all Victorians. This budget was supposed to deliver for all Victorians. It has not delivered that, and I criticise the Brumby government for its lack of action in terms of what is needed in Narracan.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Education) — In the brief time before the lunch break I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to this debate, and I take the opportunity to remind the house of the fantastic initiatives that are contained in this budget for my portfolio of education,

and skills and workforce participation. When the government says education is its no. 1 priority, it does that because it knows education is the absolute foundation for social participation, for the fulfilment of people's potential, and for the opening of broad opportunities within the community. But it is also absolutely essential for our ongoing prosperity and productivity as a state.

That is why we are investing not only in rebuilding the infrastructure of our schools but also in numerous programs which expand our initiatives in literacy and numeracy, in teacher quality, and with a special emphasis on support for schools in low-income communities. Already those initiatives are bearing a lot of fruit, with Victoria being recognised internationally as one of the best jurisdictions in the world for our work in professional development, particularly leadership development of principals and aspirant principals, and with Victorian students continuing to perform at or above the national average in literacy and numeracy tests. The investment is important — it is targeted, it is strategic, it is worthwhile and it is bearing fruit.

In the last two years we have been working more closely in partnership with the commonwealth government through a number of initiatives in the education area, not just the huge additional resources through the Building the Education Revolution program, which is outlined in the budget, but also through the national partnerships in the areas I previously described. It is a very exciting time in education; it is a very promising and hopeful time, and the work we are doing underscores our absolute commitment to this important area.

The only downside to all of this is the recurring talking down of our government school education system in particular. Such talk is an incredible insult to the hardworking principals and teachers. This continued talking down — sniping, looking for the worst, picking up every issue that may be a challenge or concern, and describing it as the norm for the whole system — is denigrating and disappointing and does nothing to add value to our system as a whole. We are committed and passionate about investing, about building public confidence in our education system and making sure that every single child gets the very best chance to thrive, learn, grow and shine.

The SPEAKER — Order! Now is an appropriate time to adjourn for lunch. I understand the Minister for Education will not seek the call when the bill is next before the chamber.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.04 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Minister for Police and Emergency Services:
Black Saturday**

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I ask: is it not a fact that under his watch on Black Saturday emergency management displayed a complete failure of leadership and command, despite days of weather warnings and assurances from the government that it was fully prepared, or is the minister still just committed to spin?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — We established a royal commission to examine all matters. On 7 February 2009 I acted appropriately, and counsel assisting the commission says I acted entirely appropriately.

Regional and rural Victoria: population growth

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the Premier outline to the house what efforts the government is making to encourage people to move to regional Victoria?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the member for South Barwon for his question and for his continued advocacy for his community, particularly of course in relation to the selection of a second hospital site for Geelong and the region. Our government is committed to investing in and growing regional Victoria. A crucial part of that is encouraging Victorians to move to our regions. It is in fact strong population growth and confidence in country Victoria which is driving economic growth and creating jobs in regional Victoria.

Our government's track record on growing our regions is strong. In fact in 2008–09 Victoria's regional population grew by 1.6 per cent. This was the highest growth rate since 1982 and, I might say, the third-highest growth rate of all the states behind only parts of Western Australia and Queensland. I am also proud to say that Victoria is home to the four fastest growing inland cities in Australia. I am talking about Mildura, Bendigo, Ballarat and Shepparton. Our strong population growth has of course led to jobs. The total number of people employed in provincial Victoria last

year was 681 857. As I said in the Parliament yesterday, we have seen strong employment growth in regional Victoria over the last 12 months.

As a government we understand that it is important to pursue the right long-term plans and the right long-term strategy for the whole state and for country Victoria. We embarked upon and completed channel deepening, for example, despite opposition from some, because it supported regional communities and supported strong economic and jobs growth.

We embarked upon and are working on the food bowl modernisation project for farmers and communities because we believe it is the right thing for the long-term future of country Victoria. It is also why we invested in and were able to complete ahead of schedule the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline, which is driving such investment and confidence in the north-west of the state. All those initiatives and others are providing certainty for regional communities. After the years and years of neglect we saw in the 1990s, regional Victoria today is a very different and much better place than it was in the 1990s.

That is why I am pleased to tell the house that last weekend the government launched the new Make it Happen in Provincial Victoria campaign. This campaign continues to raise awareness of the great opportunities to live, work and invest in provincial Victoria. Can I say too that this is a campaign that is working. This is a campaign that was launched in 2003 in partnership with the state's 48 rural and regional councils, and it is part of our commitment to grow the whole state. Can I just say that in regional Victoria 16 000 jobs were created over the last year and, as I have said, jobs growth significantly exceeded the national average.

The campaign we have been running has already begun to receive endorsements. I quote from one that I saw recently:

Look, we think that anything we can do to market our regional areas is a positive and, in fact, 23 000 people moved to regional and rural Victoria in the last year to June 2009.

This person went on to say:

There are many good things happening up there —

with reference to western Victoria —

like the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline we've spoken about, cheaper housing, greater opportunities, and I think it should be marketed strongly so we can get more people to move to country Victoria.

I thank the member for Lowan for his endorsement of our program! He is a person who has directly and accurately described the strong growth, the positive growth, the forward-looking growth, the action and the activity that is occurring in country Victoria under our government. We thank the member for Lowan for that. We welcome his support, particularly for the great work our government did on the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline — a great initiative.

This is one of the advertisements you see from the Make It Happen in Provincial Victoria campaign — farmers from Rupanyup promoting — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Minister for Regional and Rural Development not to interject in that manner, and I suggest to the member for South-West Coast that he not interject either.

Mr BRUMBY — There are other advertisements as well, but that one is about the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline and the benefits that brings. But there is also Paddy’s Pies, which is a great success story of a great expansion because the extension of natural gas provided under our government through our Regional Infrastructure Development Fund has provided improved competitiveness for that company. It has now increased its expansion and increased its employment, and it is exporting pies all around the world. This is a good story, a positive story, about our investment in country Victoria. The Make It Happen in Provincial Victoria campaign will continue to see strong population growth in country Victoria.

**Minister for Police and Emergency Services:
Black Saturday**

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I ask: is it not a fact that the minister’s excuse for staying at home on Black Saturday — because emergency coordination in his view somehow involves function and not location — is nothing more than cynical spin of what can only be considered a gross dereliction of duty and a grossly negligent failure of his ministerial and leadership responsibilities?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I repeat that on 7 February 2009 I acted appropriately, and that counsel assisting has told the royal commission that I acted entirely appropriately.

Crime: sentencing

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — My question is for the Attorney-General. I refer to the Brumby Labor government’s commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the Attorney-General outline to the house measures the government is taking to equip our courts with suitable sentencing options and protect the community?

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I thank the member for his question. As members of this place would know, in 2006, after requesting advice on suspended sentences, I received a report from the Sentencing Advisory Council — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I suggest to members of the opposition that the Attorney-General will not be shouted down, and I ask for some restraint from the member for Polwarth.

Mr HULLS — I received a report in 2006 from the Sentencing Advisory Council. It recommended the government limit the use of suspended sentences in relation to serious offences. That is exactly what the government did. Within a matter of months of the report’s release we introduced legislation to implement that recommendation.

As the council also indicated it would provide its advice in two parts — members may remember that 2006 report; the council said there would be two parts to it — I said we would await its final report before taking further action.

In announcing the government’s response to this report, I said to the community at the time — and people will no doubt have a look at the quotes — that the community regarded suspended sentences really as get-out-of-jail-free cards.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass! The member for South-West Coast will also use some restraint.

Mr McIntosh interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kew is warned.

Mr HULLS — I also said at the time it was important for sentences to mean what they say. If a judge believed it was not appropriate to send someone to jail, that should be the case, and if a judge or

magistrate was of the view that jail was to be imposed, then that indeed should be what should occur.

I might say that at the time some people opposed the abolition of suspended sentences. In fact at the time one person said ‘suspended sentences should be retained as a sentencing option’. That was not me, Speaker; it was the honourable member for Kew!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Attorney-General not to invite interjections from the opposition.

Mr HULLS — In 2008 the government received the council’s final report on suspended sentences, and this report recommended that — —

Mr Hodgett interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Kilsyth.

Mr HULLS — This report recommended that the future of suspended sentences be reviewed once a range of reforms to other sentencing orders, including home detention, had been implemented and there had indeed been a monitoring of the effects of these reforms across the system. We introduced legislation to implement the recommendations earlier this year and — lo and behold! — the very same people who had previously vehemently opposed home detention thankfully did an extraordinary backflip, enabling this legislation to pass through the upper house.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte will stop interjecting in that manner, or he will not stay at question time.

Mr HULLS — As members would know, a week later we received a further report from the Sentencing Advisory Council examining the use of suspended sentences for serious offences and examining whether or not the reforms we had put in place had had any impact, and if so, what impact.

On the same day we received this report we announced that we would introduce legislation this year — and we will — to abolish suspended sentences for all serious offences and to implement the rest of the council’s recommendations to give the courts credible alternative sentencing options, as well as abolishing mandatory jail penalties for driving whilst disqualified.

As members of this place should know, sentencing is indeed a complex task that needs a holistic approach, not simplistic policies. In implementing the council’s recommendations, in introducing new sentencing options, such as more flexible intensive corrections orders, community-based orders and the like, and in abolishing mandatory sentencing for some driving offences, we are indeed, as the Sentencing Advisory Council said we should, taking a holistic view in relation to sentencing.

Those who would take the view — the lazy view, I might say — of simply abolishing suspended sentences without providing alternatives and without holistic strategies would send 2400 mum and dad drivers to jail each year, would also limit judicial discretion and would do nothing to address the causes of crime and nothing to make Victorians safer.

As the Sentencing Advisory Council said, to do that would be catastrophic. A holistic approach is what is required. That is what we have. We think that the Sentencing Advisory Council’s recommendations are appropriate, and indeed we are implementing them.

Children: protection

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Community Services. I refer the minister to her repeated attempts to blame parents, carers, the department and anybody else except herself for her failure to implement key recommendations which would have protected children under her responsibility from physical and sexual abuse, and I ask: is it not a fact that this minister has grossly failed in her responsibilities and that as a consequence of that neglect vulnerable children were placed in harm’s way and that as a result she is clearly no longer fit to hold office, or is it simply a case that this minister too is more interested in self-protection?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Community Services) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. What the Ombudsman recognises in his report is that here in Victoria we have undertaken significant improvement in the out-of-home care system. In fact what the Ombudsman said was that we are heading in the right direction, that we have taken ‘positive steps in the area of policy reform’ — and the Ombudsman is clear about that.

The Ombudsman has made a series of recommendations which are not about systemic reform but about how we can improve processes and policies to continue to improve our out-of-home care system here in Victoria. By far the majority of children in

out-of-home care, as the Ombudsman says, are not harmed. The overwhelming majority of carers, whether they be foster carers, relatives or agency staff, are dedicated, loving and nurturing to children, and they do a remarkable job with some of the most vulnerable and traumatised children in our community.

What the report also highlights is that there is devastation caused when people in positions of trust hurt children. In our community, unfortunately, there are people — whether they be carers, teachers or family members — who do inflict harm on children. In this report there are some terrible cases of children who have been failed by families, by carers and in some cases because of mistakes that were made by the department.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will not be shouted down.

Ms NEVILLE — What we can do is make sure that we have the best systems in place and resources to back them up, and that is why, back in 2008, we commenced a major review into out-of-home care that led to a new reform direction that is backed up by significant funding, and that is what the Ombudsman refers to — positive steps in policy reform.

The past two budgets have delivered a record \$183.7 million, including \$34 million in this budget alone, specifically for out-of-home care. In fact since the government came to office there has been a 160 per cent increase in child protection. We do not think the solution is about cutting funding; it is about increasing funding and having the right policies in place. In response to this report all but one of the recommendations have been accepted by the government, and we will make the changes to better protect children from harm. We will continue the reforms, we will make the changes and we will continue to deliver a better system.

Questions interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the member for Bentleigh, I welcome to the chamber today a former minister, Brian Dixon. Welcome, as always.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions resumed.

Wangaratta High School: building program

Mr HUDSON (Bentleigh) — My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer to the Brumby Labor government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister update the house on how the government is consistently delivering on its plan to rebuild, renovate and extend schools right across the state?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for Bentleigh for his question. The Brumby government wants all children in Victoria, regardless of their postcode or background, to have the very best start in life. That is why we have delivered on our commitment to invest \$1.9 billion in this term of government to fund the rebuilding, modernising and extension of 500 schools through the Victorian schools plan, and in fact we have exceeded that commitment by more than 50 schools. Yet again Labor delivers, and Labor delivers in a very substantial way, for our schools.

Last Friday I was fortunate enough to visit Wangaratta — a place that is a prime example of the Brumby government's commitment to education as our no. 1 priority. Whilst I was in Wangaratta I officially opened the first stage of the \$16 million modernisation of Wangaratta High School project and had the chance to inspect the stage 2 works that are currently under way. I also opened the \$8 million Technical Education Centre (TEC), which is a partnership between the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE and the high school. I also announced an additional \$150 000 project to address skills and workforce development issues in Victoria's north-east.

It was an absolute honour to meet students, educators and representatives of local industry, employers and local government. They all had the same message: that educational opportunities for young people in Wangaratta have never been better. They were not the only ones with that message. The member for Murray Valley is reported as saying:

In years gone by, we were the poor relation to many other cities in country Victoria, but not now. Wangaratta's really on the move.

I absolutely concur with the member for Murray Valley, and I thank him for those words of support for his local community. That is why this government really does take the needs of rural and regional communities very seriously. He is proud of his home town, of this town and of what the Brumby government has achieved, not only in Wangaratta but in

Yarrawonga, Cobram and other communities right across the state.

The member for Murray Valley also understands, as we do, that when the government allocates funds for a project they appear as the total amount in the TEI (total estimated investment) in the budget information papers. They are locked into the forward estimates and paid out as the project is built. This could not be clearer. It is done according to longstanding accounting standards, and it is the way projects are described. That is clearly written in our budget papers, which of course the Treasurer delivered in this house. It seems that everybody understands these accounting standards, everybody knows what has been the case for years and years, unless of course you go to the Heidi School of Economic Stupidity!

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister!

Ms PIKE — And of course the Heidi school has been attended by the member for Nepean — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will conclude her answer with no further debate.

Ms PIKE — There has been a very substantial investment in the rebuilding, modernising and renovating of schools right across our state. We have delivered on that investment — we have over-delivered on that investment! — and we will continue to invest because education is such an important priority for this government.

Children: protection

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Doncaster) — My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Is it not a fact that, despite endless reports and all of the minister's claims that everything is adequately funded, the Ombudsman has identified that tonight there will still be nearly 200 children left in dangerous and risky accommodation where they will continue to be in fear of sexual and physical abuse?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Community Services) — I thank the member for her question. Can I say at the outset that we have provided record funding to out-of-home care in Victoria. We have increased funding to child protection — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind members of the opposition once again that the minister will not be shouted down.

Ms NEVILLE — In fact we have increased funding to child protection, to family services and to out-of-home care by over 160 per cent since coming to government.

Ms Wooldridge interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Doncaster has had her opportunity to ask the question. She will not interject while the minister is responding.

Ms NEVILLE — Over the last two budgets, as I said previously, fact, there has been an injection of over \$183 million. Can I just make it very clear that we do not run waiting lists in child protection. If a child needs to be removed from their family to keep them safe, they are removed, placed appropriately and cared for. These are very important issues which require bipartisanship, and that is recognised by other members of this house. In fact, a former Minister for Community Services said:

I believe the community of Victoria would be much better served if we had a bipartisan approach to this important issue and if we had positive and constructive comments ... It is preferable to provide support, including moral support, to those workers by offering constructive suggestions about how the system can be made better.

Those remarks were made by the member for South-West Coast when he was the Minister for Community Services.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Minister for Health.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. It was a question that was very clearly about 200 children who will be at risk in accommodation tonight.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the member for Doncaster that to take a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The minister will come back to responding to the question without debate.

Ms NEVILLE — These are very important issues. That is why we are leading system reform, and that is why we are putting record investment into the out-of-home care system. We will focus on implementing the recommendations of the Ombudsman to continue to improve the out-of-home care system.

Mr Baillieu — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has concluded her answer.

Mr Baillieu — Speaker, the minister was asked a question about children. She is ignoring the children — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition. The Parliament will not be abused in that manner.

Regional Infrastructure Development Fund: grants

Mr EREN (Lara) — My question is to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. I refer to the Brumby Labor government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister update the house on any new announcements under the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund and have there been any challenges to this program?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — I thank the member for Lara for his question. The member for Lara, like many members of this chamber, is a great supporter of investing in jobs in regional Victoria and particularly in the successful Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). From day one this government has been determined to rebuild the regional communities and economies that were absolutely decimated by the seven dark years of cuts and closures in the 1990s. That is why the very first act of this government in this Parliament was to establish the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. It was Australia's very first dedicated fund for regional infrastructure projects.

Since that time the fund has gone on to deliver in spades to regional communities. It has delivered \$553 million to date to 351 projects that in turn have yielded more than \$1.4 billion in new infrastructure projects that can be found in every local government area in regional Victoria. I am also proud to say, as are all members on this side of the house, that this is a fund that has helped to make regional Victoria a better place to live and also a better place, as the Premier mentioned earlier, in terms of being able to attract more people, more jobs and more investment into regional communities.

I am pleased today to announce two more grants under the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. The first is to the Sebastian game bird farm. This is a

business that is located north of Bendigo. It will install a new \$1.6 million geothermal exchange technology, thanks to a \$330 000 RIDF grant. This is a great example of the sorts of projects that RIDF supports. The installation will provide a year-round climatically controlled environment for the birds, it will reduce the company's energy costs by around 80 per cent and it will create 28 new jobs. We will also see the Sebastian game bird farm become Australia's first large-scale commercial grower of guinea fowl, pheasant and partridge for local and overseas markets. It is a great result all round — a partridge in a pear tree!

The second project I am pleased to announce today is that through RIDF the Brumby government will be investing \$500 000 in the 45-kilometre Old Beechy rail trail project, running from Colac to Gellibrand. This will allow it to be used for cycling and will also create 10 new jobs. I am sure the member for Colac is pretty happy with that outcome.

Disappointingly, some people have labelled these sorts of projects 'cynical politics' and 'a sham'. We know that, like a good pair of thongs walking along the Old Beechy rail trail, you will hear a lot of flip-flopping from some people on this issue. Take as an example the \$8 million Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre. Wangaratta was featured earlier today by the Minister for Education, and this is another great project in Wangaratta that is strongly supported by the member for Murray Valley and backed by a \$4.5 million RIDF grant.

I know this will be of particular interest to members of The Nationals, who could take a tour of the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre this weekend while they are up there for their state conference. They could see what sorts of projects the RIDF has supported. The Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre has already hosted big performances. It has hosted Jimeoin, it has hosted Le Ballet Rock; it has hosted the Delltones and it has even hosted The Nationals preselection contest for Murray Valley.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister, without further debate.

Ms ALLAN — I know the member for Murray Valley is very proud of this project, and he was in attendance on the night the Premier opened the centre last September. Another performance that the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre could host might be a remake of the classic 1980s Bucks Fizz hit *Making Your Mind Up*, and it could also be used as a guide for all members of this Parliament!

RIDF has invested in many important and long-lasting projects in regional and rural Victoria that have gone on to support regional communities. The question before the house to be asked is: when it comes to RIDF, when it comes to backing jobs and when it comes to backing regional communities, is investing in regional infrastructure like the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre and the Old Beechy rail trail cynical politics or a sham, or is it a good investment in regional Victoria's future? We on this side know the answer — that it is a good investment in regional Victoria's future. Those opposite will have to make up their own minds when it comes to supporting the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund and regional communities right across the state.

Locusts: control

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Given that this year's spring locust plague is predicted to be the worst in more than 30 years, will the minister advise the house what action he has taken to prevent this locust plague from causing devastation throughout all Victoria?

Mr HELPER (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for Swan Hill for his question. At the outset I say that certainly the situation that faces Victoria in springtime this year may be a very difficult one in terms of locusts. I said yesterday to the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria conference that the Victorian government is taking a step-by-step approach, as you would expect any rational decision-making government to take.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HELPER — I said step by step, not hop by hop.

The approach that we obviously have to take is: as information becomes available on the spread and location of locusts in relation to the crops that the locusts, when their eggs hatch in spring, may be affecting, we have to take that into account in making sure we are in dialogue with chemical manufacturers. The supply chain of chemicals to our farmers and for the treatment of public land must be ensured so that chemicals are likely to be available without any great interruption.

The one thing that we have not been doing throughout this planning exercise for the response — and it will be a response that will have to involve government, local government and landowners, as best as we can work together, which will determine how successful that joint efforts will be — is committing to actions which we

know we will never have to carry out, because a press release from The Nationals does not kill a single locust.

Box Hill Hospital: redevelopment

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the Brumby Labor government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to work, live and to raise a family, and I ask: can the minister inform the house about investment by the Brumby government in Victoria's health system and are there any challenges or alternatives to these investments?

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for Forest Hill for her question and for her very strong interest in quality health service provision in her local community. On this side of the house we have in every single budget in every single year of our time in office made sure that we supported country hospitals in small country towns, regional health services in regional centres, hospitals in the outer suburbs and indeed hospitals right in the centre of Melbourne — right across the length and breadth of our state — with more money to employ more nurses and more doctors, more money to expand and grow ambulance services, and more money to treat more patients and to treat them more quickly. That is our record, that is our commitment and that is what this year's state budget delivers in spades right across our great state.

I am very pleased that the member for Forest Hill has asked this question, given there is one particular project that tells the story both of our approach in terms of investing in the health infrastructure that makes such a difference to patients, staff and communities and indeed tells a story about alternatives — and I was asked about alternatives. I am speaking about the \$407.5 million commitment by this government to transform and rebuild the Box Hill Hospital. This is a fantastic project that is the biggest single health infrastructure project in Melbourne's suburbs in the history of our state. There is \$407.5 million for doubling the floor space; for providing more beds, more theatres and more services right across the board; for a dedicated mother and baby unit for the first time; and for bringing subacute care to that site for the first time.

Not only will it be a bigger brighter purpose-built hospital but it will also provide new models of care, reform and innovation, giving to its staff — the dedicated team out there in Melbourne's east — the equipment and facilities they need to treat more patients and to provide better care. That is what that \$407.5 million is all about; that is our approach.

There is of course an alternative approach. For instance, we could as a government invest, say, just \$5 million over a period of, say, seven years at the Box Hill Hospital. That would be one approach that the government could take. As a government we could also take the approach that we would run down Box Hill Hospital in favour of a for-profit private hospital at Knox. That would be another approach that a government could take. As a government we could take a further alternative approach that would be to criticise the Box Hill Hospital every day and on every issue and offer no alternative. That would be a series of alternative approaches that sit in stark contrast to the strong, meaningful and real support that this government has provided to Box Hill Hospital and the community that it serves.

At many different times this week we have heard examples about changes in terms of position — about flipping and flopping. There is one group in this Parliament — —

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr ANDREWS — Our position has been consistent — that is, to strongly support the Box Hill Hospital, its staff and the patients who turn to it. There are other alternatives, and whilst we have heard a lot about alternative positions of flipping and flopping, there is one group in this Parliament which in terms of its position on Box Hill Hospital is no flip but is all flop.

APPROPRIATION (2010/2011) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr McINTOSH (Kew).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

BUILDING AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 May; motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing).

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I move:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to provide for first resort builders warranty

insurance similar to the Queensland model, which is accepted best practice'.

As most members of this place would know, the building industry is a very important industry and building the family home is one of the largest investments that most people will make. Whilst many good initiatives are contained in the legislation before the house, one of the issues that comes before members of Parliament very often, and which can be devastating when it does occur, is when for one reason or another a builder does not fulfil their obligations to or the expected outcomes of people in the community. There has been a lot of debate about how to fix this problem. This issue arose following the collapse of HIH in 2001. Since that time consumers have had access to home warranty insurance for rectification of a defect only when a builder has died, disappeared or gone bankrupt. A number of changes have been made to the arrangements since that time, and there have been some real disasters as a result of the current insurance model.

The legislation before the Parliament and the press release issued by the minister look at the issue of building warranty insurance. In my view this legislation does not go far enough. It is very clear that the current system of protection for home owners and for builders is not adequate to meet the needs of the community. As a member of Parliament in this place I know that it is essential that the most important thing we do is protect consumers, particularly those people who do not have the capacity to address the problems they are confronted with.

Some of the most challenging issues I have come across as a member of Parliament have involved listening to people who have had the building of their dream home come unstuck because the insurance product they thought would protect them did not do so. Sometimes the builder they have chosen, having come with the right accreditation and all the rest of it, for one reason or another has not been able to fulfil their obligation and has not built the dream home. Often it is only when consumers try to test the insurance product that they realise the insurance is not what it is cracked up to be and basically junk insurance.

Builders, insurance collectors and others have raised this issue, and there has been a lot of public discussion about it, and that is why I have moved this reasoned amendment. From all the research that I have done over the years it is very clear to me that the Queensland model is accepted around the country as the best model. I know that there are moves afoot to investigate this matter at a federal level, but my view is that our state should ensure that home builders are protected.

The legislation before the house comes with a range of changes, and it increases the level of penalties for a range of compliance issues under the act. To implement these types of things is one step, but we must also ensure that there is adequate consumer protection. My view is that despite the government's commitment to ensure adequate consumer protection the current bill will not do that. The government has made a statement that it will effectively underwrite building warranty insurance. My view is that the government should take the next step and provide real protection for home owners and the building industry.

Having said that, I will conclude my comments. I have moved the reasoned amendment, and I would like the opportunity to debate the issue. The only other comment I would make is that without this change I believe the bill should not be supported.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Box Hill will confine his comments to the reasoned amendment.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — As you indicate, Speaker, as I spoke on the bill during the second-reading debate I will now speak solely on the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Gippsland East.

The coalition parties share the member's concern that Labor's home warranty scheme is not working. It has delivered lose, lose, lose results for home buyers, for builders and even for insurers, and that is the point that I made clear on Tuesday during my contribution to the second-reading debate. For that reason the coalition parties believe that major change is needed to Victoria's home building warranty scheme.

The issue of building warranty insurance is currently being investigated by the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration. For that reason we believe it is premature to put forward an amendment such as the one moved by the member for Gippsland East without first seeing and considering the report and recommendations of the Legislative Council's committee as to what form the changes to the scheme should take. For that reason the coalition parties will not be supporting the member's motion today.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PORTS INTEGRATION) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 May; motion of Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports).

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — The Port of Melbourne Corporation is to be the successor in law of the Port of Hastings Corporation. This legislation is bad for my community, bad for business and bad for Victoria. The opposition opposes this bill and the failed principles it is based on.

Through this bill the Brumby government is legislating a monopoly within an industry that is one of the most crucial elements of Victoria's competitiveness against the rest of the world.

The policy document *Port Futures — New Priorities and Directions for Victoria's Port System* states:

Under the current 'competitive' model, the incentives for PMC are to maximise throughput through Melbourne and defer diversion to Hastings for as long as possible. This includes retaining all existing non-containerised trades for as long as possible, as well as retaining the container trade.

Simply put, the port of Melbourne said that because the port of Hastings was its competitor, it would not allow it to have any business.

Why is it that the Brumby government has allowed one of Victoria's ports to have a total monopoly over such a critical element of Victoria's economy? Why through this bill is it rewarding it with ownership of its competitor for its openly anticompetitive practices, practices which are to the great benefit of Labor's union mates at the port of Melbourne but so damaging to the remainder of our state?

Decades of experience around the world has comprehensively proven that where there is real competition, efficiencies develop, costs are controlled and living standards improve for the community. Where there is no competition, efficiencies drop, costs artificially inflate and the community inevitably pays through lower living standards and higher prices. This government has chosen to prevent competition, and Victorians will be worse off because of that decision.

When this Labor government came to power, 20 per cent of all freight going to and from our ports was on rail. In 2001 this government promised that by 2010 it would increase to 30 per cent. That promise was repeated time and again by minister after minister.

Incredibly, last year's budget revealed that the figure had almost halved to just 12.3 per cent. Then, in this year's budget the government gave up completely and dropped the promise. The budget says, 'We have now dropped that promise, fundamentally because we could not keep it'. The result of that failure has been a massive increase in trucks on our roads. Unfortunately, under this government's policies our roads are forecast to get much worse.

In the *Melbourne Intermodal System Study Report* of 2008, the Port of Melbourne Corporation predicted that as total port container throughput rises from just over 2 million TEU (20-foot equivalent units) per annum in 2007 to 8 million TEU by 2035, the metropolitan container distribution task will increase from about 1.6 million TEU per annum to some 6 million TEU. This equates to an increase from the current level of about 6000 truck trips per day to 12 000 trips per day to and from the port of Melbourne. This is an open admission by the Brumby government that its policies will in fact double the number of trucks on our roads in just 25 years.

This legislation also guarantees that the Brumby government will continue to force any distasteful industry, toxic or otherwise, down to the port of Hastings. Boral originally approached the Port of Melbourne Corporation for a location for its bitumen plant, and the government sent it to the port of Hastings. It was in fact a state government officer who provided Boral with its initial guided tour of Crib Point. The government then went the extra mile and overruled the local council and the wishes of the community to force the plant on the residents of Crib Point.

A second example was a company that wanted to establish a urea plant in Victoria. According to the managing director of that company, it was sent to the port of Hastings by the Brumby government.

Another real problem with the government's refusal to allow the port of Hastings to compete is that without competition, the true value of land at Hastings will never be properly recognised, and industries that are not wanted anywhere else and that will never return value for the space they occupy will inevitably be pushed to Hastings.

Competition between the ports would ensure that the best and most productive businesses would locate themselves at Hastings because of its natural advantages. This bill operates to remove those advantages. If value-added businesses were encouraged to locate themselves at Hastings, there would be strong competition for land, and Boral and other businesses

that are toxic or of low value to the community would be forced to go elsewhere.

The Brumby government has little if any intention of investing in infrastructure to develop the port of Hastings, instead taking the cheap and temporary solution of using existing local infrastructure, no matter what difficulties that presents for local businesses and communities. A perfect example is the Brumby government's plan to move port of Hastings freight on the Stony Point passenger line. Anyone who knows the Stony Point line knows it is a single-rail passenger service that has no capacity to accommodate any further freight than the small amount of BlueScope Steel product that currently moves on one train a day. Even this single train effectively gridlocks areas as it passes through the more than 20 crossings between Stony Point and Frankston.

The government's plan contains no intention to upgrade the line. I sought a briefing from the government's logistics planners regarding its plan to use the Stony Point line for port of Hastings freight traffic and was appalled that their view was that moving port freight on the line would not create problems for our roads as there was only 'one' road crossing on the line. These Brumby government planners had no idea that there are 20 crossings on the Stony Point line. It is incredible that members of this government continue to plan things for rural and regional areas, in ignorance, from their ivory towers in the city.

Any development of the port of Hastings must be led by appropriate new infrastructure and infrastructure upgrades. Development of the port of Hastings as a competitive port is the only way to ensure that Hastings will be developed in the careful and sensitive way it should be. Any development must be entirely subject to an up-front independent, environmental, social and economic impact assessment. Businesses that currently operate in the port of Hastings, including BlueScope Steel and Esso, understand their privileged position and treat that privilege with great care. Most people in Hastings, Tyabb and Somerville are blissfully unaware on a day-to-day basis that they live on a port that has a BlueScope Steel plant and Esso fractionation plant.

Development of the port of Hastings must only be north of Hastings, and Crib Point and other communities to the south must be protected completely from industrialisation. It is only in that way that the roads and communities throughout the Western Port area can be kept free of massive numbers of B-double trucks.

Developing the port of Hastings must not be allowed to impact negatively on the Western Port area's wonderful

townships and communities. Investment in infrastructure for the port must come first. Use of the Stony Point line for further freight movement undervalues the importance of the port to Victoria, will destroy the Western Port area's passenger service and gridlock local roads. Utilising the Western Port Highway corridor to implement a dedicated two-way freight rail line will allow provision of an effective and efficient freight movement avenue for port of Hastings freight and at the same time allow the Stony Point line to be protected as the crucial passenger service that it is.

It is only through competition that the land around the port of Hastings would be properly valued and therefore used for high-value and value-added products and services. The approach the Brumby government is taking through this bill will cost jobs and guarantee the devaluation of port of Hastings land and the establishment of toxic and other unwanted industries throughout the Western Port community.

Another element of this Brumby government plan — or lack of a plan — has been brought to my attention recently by people residing along the Western Port Highway. They came to me and said they had been approached by VicRoads with a request that it be allowed to investigate their properties for the further removal of land on behalf of the state. These people thought that approach was a mistake, because they had only recently had land resumed by the state for the duplication of the Western Port Highway. You can imagine their shock at being told the state was now going to revisit their properties and resume more land for a further expansion. Even people living along the Cranbourne-Frankston Road, where the duplication has still not been completed, have been visited by VicRoads, which says it is going to come back to them again and ask for more land. This indicates that the government really does not have a plan and does not know where it is going. Anyone would expect that a government with a plan would have been able to go to these people and, if it needed to resume land, take that land with proper compensation and not need to interfere with these people's lives again. That has not been the case with this government, but that is not a major surprise, given the way it has gone about trying to plan for the port of Hastings.

In addition there are indications from VicRoads that it is looking to put a rail line down Peninsula Link and up EastLink. Retrofitting rail to EastLink will be expensive, and obviously will cause trouble for people located along that road. People will remember that originally EastLink was called the Scoresby corridor and that it was intended to have a corridor for passenger and freight rail and any other element the state wanted

to put down it. Unfortunately the Bracks government pared back that plan from providing a transport corridor to providing merely a road. Unfortunately when the government revisits these things and tries to do retrospectively what it should have done in the first place, it disadvantages local communities and Victoria.

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — It is an honour to talk today on the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill 2010. I want to make some brief comments on the contribution of the member for Hastings and say what a load of drivel it was. Here we have the Liberal Party, which at the end of the day would not support dredging in the port of Melbourne because it had a bird brain idea to somehow or other link itself with the Greens and not support dredging. We have people talking about competition, yet the Liberal Party would have rolled over the pre-eminent position the port of Melbourne has in logistics in Australia and handed it over to Queensland or New South Wales. If we look at this factually we see that we would have lost many jobs because the Liberal Party would not support dredging. It does not have a policy; it is all over the place on these types of things and really does not know what it is doing.

Under the Liberal Party we would not have had dredging, and some of the most substantial container ships would not have been able to come into the port. I do not know what that would have done for jobs, but it would not have been an improvement. There is simply not a policy in the Liberal Party, full stop, which deals with issues like this. The only way Liberal Party members will deal with this is to do little deals with the Greens and say, 'Yes, we sort of support you. Yes, we do not really have a position. Yes, we are all over the place'. At the end of the day it is really just a joke to have the member for Hastings come in here and talk a load of drivel about competition and things like that.

This is an important bill which will bring the management of the ports under one entity. It makes very good sense to manage them together instead of doubling up and having inefficiency and a larger bureaucracy. This is a very sensible move forward. At the end of the day the Liberal Party does not really have a policy; it is all over the place on everything. One day if someone says they do not like something then the Liberal Party will support them, but if on the next day they say they like it, the Liberal Party will jump up and support them as well.

The government has a policy on ports. We have brought legislation into the house to ensure the ports form part of an integrated transport system. It is essential we have this so that we can integrate water

transport with land transport. The member for Hastings says he does not like this railway line but he likes that one; that he does not think that is important, but he does think something else is important. We do not have an integrated transport policy from the Liberal Party, we have an each-way bet on everything. That is very nice, but at the end of the day you have to have a policy and you have to nail your colours to one outcome or another. You cannot be all things to all people; it just does not work that way. Some decisions are difficult, but they need to be made and made within a policy framework. That is one thing we have not seen here today. One minute the member for Hastings says we should be using more rail and the next minute he says we should not be using rail down near Hastings. We should not be doing this and we should not be doing that. He said we should not be retrofitting rail into EastLink. You either want further transport through rail or you do not. You cannot really have an each-way bet and say, 'This is no good, but I like this'.

The bill deals with an integrated policy — a real policy. It is a policy we have nailed our colours to. It seeks to achieve this by integrating the Port of Hastings Corporation into the Port of Melbourne Corporation. The integration means that the specific knowledge and experience of the Port of Hastings Corporation, when the corporation is combined with the Port of Melbourne Corporation, will help form a single entity that is designed to maximise planning efficiencies and reduce duplication. I do not think it is a bad thing to reduce the number of people who manage our ports. I would have thought that would create a more competitive and efficient environment. It is something the Liberal Party should support, but it will not do so today. The Liberal Party says, 'We will have an each-way bet on all these things'. The bill reinforces that the Port of Melbourne Corporation has a role in delivering social and environmental outcomes for the community, and I would have thought that would be supported as well, but probably it will not happen.

Amalgamating the management of the two ports is the most effective way to direct and drive future development of the port of Hastings, which is central to the strategy to cope with projected growth in commercial shipping and the projected growth down in the south-east of Victoria. As I understand it, there will be no job losses as a result of the amalgamation of the two entities. All staff currently employed by the Port of Hastings Corporation will work within the new entity and remain employed locally. With that short contribution, I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — It is a pleasure to speak in the debate on the Transport Legislation

Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill. I thought the opportunity might have been lost to me, but fortunately we have found some time this afternoon. Before I proceed to my intended contribution I want to make two observations on the debate so far and particularly on the contribution of the member for Narre Warren North. He talked about efficiencies coming from competition. I simply observe that, as is proposed in this case, monopolies are almost always more efficient but they almost never — I would say never — produce the best possible results and never produce results that are in the public interest. The second point is that if the Bracks government had grasped the nettle and acted on the Victorian ports strategic study following its completion in 1999, perhaps channel deepening might have been avoided. But because it dillydallied for six or seven years it was forced into a situation where the Port Phillip channel had to be deepened.

Having said all of that, let me observe that I have had a long interest in the development of Hastings and in the Western Port region in particular. As a small child I spent a lot of time at various beaches around the bay. In later years, as a member of the Westernport Regional Planning and Coordination Committee for five and a half or six years, I was involved in the development of the Western Port bay strategy, the review of statement of planning policy no. 1 and the review of port land use planning. As a private citizen and on behalf of the Shell-Mobil consortium I chaired the Crib Point Terminal Oil Spill Response Plan Community Committee and later on, following the dissolution of the regional planning committee, I chaired a federal government-funded review into the Western Port bay strategy.

The potential of Western Port has long been recognised. Of course it goes back to statement of planning policy no. 1 and well before that. I think the Western Port refinery legislation went through in 1964. There were some pretty grand plans, including plans for a substantial industrial complex on the Hastings shore. There were plans for nuclear power plants and other facilities on French Island.

Mr Foley — There still is; there's a new one.

Mr MORRIS — I think you will find that land has been sold off. There was also a rush of early development. There was the Western Port refinery, there was the John Lysaght (Australia) facility that is now BlueScope Steel, the fractionation plant and so on. But the early promise of rapid development failed to eventuate, and I think in the short term that was quite a good thing, because it allowed the incredibly sensitive environment that is the bay — the intertidal zones, the

abutting coastline and so on — to be properly assessed. In 1975 the landmark Shapiro report was released, and that provided baseline data to an extent and to a level of detail that simply had not been seen before. It was, and remains, a tremendous storehouse of information. There have been many subsequent publications using the data collected by Shapiro. I think the library indicated in a brief that there were more than 200 subsequent publications based on that data and other related work.

Western Port of course is a Ramsar-listed site. It is also a listed Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement and China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement site, and it is part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation biosphere. It is an environment characterised by its mangroves, by its mudflats, by intertidal deep channels and of course by the seagrass. Contained within the bay are some three marine national parks, and I guess that gives an indication of the environmental sensitivity of the bay, and of course it is opposite Phillip Island as well, with its penguins, Seal Rocks, Churchill Island and so on. So it is a very sensitive area.

But the deep channels and the abutting flat land are what makes Hastings such a stunning site for a port and what gives it such huge potential as a port. I will not wave it around, but you only have to look at the chart to realise that the approach channel is 14.9 metres deep, the main channel itself 14.3 metres, and while that is dredged to ensure consistency of the sea floor, if you look at the depth of the channels on either side, you see that most of those depths are similar. It is a stunning natural deepwater port.

The port has a number of precincts: Stony Point, where the port operations are run by Patricks; Crib Point, with the Crib Point terminal formerly built to serve the Western Port refinery but subsequently and currently used for petroleum imports; and the terminal that was proposed to bring in crude for Shell and Mobil when they proposed to bring in the cadmium-rich crudes in the early 1990s; and of course Hastings Bight and the Long Island Point area. Further north, north of Lumeah Road, is the Yaringa Marine National Park, and of course then you get into the incredibly sensitive areas.

The alternatives for ports in Victoria are incredibly limited. All you have to do is look at a map of the coastline to realise just how few options we have. Some have argued, certainly to me, and often in the context of oil imports and such, that any ports should be built remote from the coast. Quite how you achieve that I do not know. However you might try — and it certainly may be what would be best for the environment if it could be achieved — it is not now and I suspect it never

will be feasible. It will never be feasible from a cost point of view, and it certainly would never be feasible from a safety point of view for the men and women who work both on the ships and in loading and unloading them.

Western Port has tremendous natural attributes. It has had a history of extensive planned development. Earlier plans reserved huge areas of land. There was the intention to build a steelworks in between Crib Point and Hastings Bight itself. That land has subsequently been disposed of by the successors to BHP, or perhaps even by BHP itself, and turned into a very successful residential development. Similarly, huge tracts of land on French Island, as I alluded to earlier, were reserved for the Gas and Fuel Corporation, or were actually owned by the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the State Electricity Commission. Both tracts have been disposed of. Today the development is intended to be on a much more modest scale, but still some 3500 hectares is currently zoned for port-related uses, and little of that is occupied.

Shipping activity is currently largely confined to steel, and this has been the situation basically since crude oil imports ceased in I think the late 1980s or early 1990s. Oil and gas of course come through the pipeline from Longford and are forwarded on through the Western Port–Altona–Geelong pipeline to Altona and Geelong, and petrol — not crude oil, but refined petroleum comes in through Crib Point.

Western Port has tremendous natural attributes for port development, and it has tremendous natural attributes in a broader environmental sense. The two are not mutually exclusive, and it is critical that in the development phase we get that right. There is unfortunately a history of Melbourne-based organisations — and the port of Melbourne, or its predecessor corporations is among those — being very keen to see Western Port used for more odious trades. We had a plan to convert the refinery land into an ammonia-urea plant in the 1980s but that was knocked on the head. We had the Shell and Mobil plan, as I said, to import cadmium-rich crude oil in the early 1990s, and of course most recently we have had the bitumen plant approved by the incompetent planning minister, Justin Madden.

Western Port has enormous natural attributes and it has unlimited potential. It is essential that we tap into the potential, that we do so in a manner that maximises the capacity of the local community to have jobs growth and economic reward and that we also ensure that any port development maximises, to the greatest extent possible, harmony with the environment. Those things

only go some way towards what can be achieved, but if it is to be, then the local community really needs to be in charge of its own destiny and not subject to the whims and pressures of a remote port authority with a completely foreign set of priorities. That is why we cannot support the bill.

Mr LIM (Clayton) — I rise to support the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill 2010. It is most disappointing to hear that the opposition is not supporting the bill, but I do not want to go into its negative and very poor rationale for doing so. I ask the house to allow me to concentrate on the debate at hand, particularly given the allocated time constraints.

The economic importance of our ports has long been clearly recognised in this country, particularly in Victoria. Statistically speaking, the port of Melbourne alone delivers some \$85 billion in trade every year, making it the biggest general cargo and container port in Australia, and one of the top 50 container ports globally. This is significant, and we should never overlook that fact because it is in this context that we should understand the importance of the bill.

The key purpose of this bill is that it recognises that Victoria's ports and shipping channels have a critical function in offering a sustainable and integrated transport system in Victoria. The bill also affirms the interconnectedness and mutual dependency between ports and the general transport system. The overall management of the ports of Hastings and Melbourne are agglomerated by this bill, under the Port of Melbourne Corporation (PMC). The contemporary Transport Integration Act framework still oversees the new integrated Port of Melbourne Corporation and the Victorian Regional Channels Authority; the integrated entity will be transferred into the new primary statute.

The unification and consolidation of Victoria's transport agencies will be completed in the transport portfolio, within the modern policy framework in the Transport Integration Act 2010. The new act also covers the Victorian Regional Channels Authority which is defined as one of the 'transport corporations', together with the port of Melbourne. The Port of Melbourne Corporation must satisfy a decision-making process that best serves the interests of the transport system as one integrated system. Other transport agencies will, in this regard, have the same objectives as the PMC.

The backbone of the one transport system philosophy is focused on policy-making and operational amalgamation, which serves as the basis of the Transport Integration Act. The same legislation and

framework will govern every entity in the state that regulates or oversees land and water transport. These entities must be brought to agreement with the vision, goals and underpinning framework of the act. Consolidating the management of the ports of Melbourne and Hastings is an essential part in integrating a sustainable transport system, unlike the wishy-washy view that we can expect from members opposite. This can improve the future development of the port of Hastings in a most efficient way.

In August 2009 the government established an updated blueprint for overall port strategy entitled Port Futures. This bill aims to implement the updated agreements in port governance. Under the strategy blueprint, national transport freight networks are connected in an integrated way under the sustainable ports framework to deliver results. I have great regard for this bill, therefore I commend it to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr K. SMITH (Bass) — I am pleased Acting Speaker Ingram is in the chair, as it is nice to be able to stand up in this house and speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill 2010, to say that the Liberal-Nationals coalition will be voting against it, and we oppose it very strongly.

Mr Foley — Shame, shame!

Mr K. SMITH — You'll have your chance! And we oppose very strongly what is proposed by this government, which is taking control of development of the port of Hastings out of the hands of the very competent authority that is down there now, headed by Ralph Kenyan. It wants to be able to put the port in the hands of Melbourne people, who have worked hard and assiduously against getting the port of Hastings developed. Giving control to Melbourne is a stupid way for this government to go.

We have down there the very best deep water port anywhere in southern Australia or in the Southern Hemisphere. We have a port that the biggest ships in the world are already coming in to and have been coming in to for some years, and there is no need to dredge it out. It has a huge draught — I think its draught is 14.3 metres when the tide is out. It is a port that can be developed properly to make use of the 33 500 hectares of port-related land that is around the north of Hastings. It is there, and it was put aside when Henry Bolte — a thinking Premier at least, not like we have at the moment — thought that Western Port —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr K. SMITH — He was a visionary, there is no doubt about that. He thought Western Port could be developed into a port. It could be developed into a town that was in a position where there would be full employment for people down in that area, that could use that Western Port area in a very good and strong way.

I am thrilled to pieces that the Minister for Roads and Ports has come into the chamber, and he is more than interested in hearing what I have to say because I am going to quote him. This is a minister who is pushing this bill into the Parliament to take control of the port of Hastings out of the hands of local people, putting it in the hands of people up here in Melbourne who pull the minister's strings.

This is what the minister said in the *Port of Hastings — Land Use and Transport Strategy* that was published in August 2009. Under a picture of the minister — and I must say it is a very likeable photo — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! The member for Bass should not use props in that manner.

Mr K. SMITH — It is not a prop; I am sorry. I am quoting from this paper.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order!

Mr K. SMITH — You're wasting my time, Speaker!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! The member for Bass!

Mr K. SMITH — This is what this minister says here — and just think; this is the minister who wants to cut the guts out of this port:

No other port location offers the same overall advantages as Hastings and it holds major economic potential for the state of Victoria. Consequently there is a fundamental need to plan and prepare now for the future development to ensure that the opportunity is not built out or lost to alternative uses.

This minister has introduced this legislation to take control of the port and move its control away from people who are actually interested in developing it and in having competition for the port of Melbourne so that shippers can bring their ships in to the port of Hastings, requiring less steaming time than is involved in berthing in the port of Melbourne. Those people would want to have plenty of land — and there is 3500 hectares — where they can store their cars, bulk materials or containers that have arrived; then all that can be stored close to the port. The minister

acknowledges it is a great port, but now he wants to cut the guts out of it.

This would put a knife in the heart of any development of the port of Hastings, and the minister sits there scoffing at what I am saying.

An honourable member — He's holding the knife.

Mr K. SMITH — The minister also said — and I am quoting again from this document, not this prop:

I am particularly excited by the proposition to develop the port of Hastings as a world leader in 'green port' development and management.

I can only say that the minister is a hypocrite. He is pushing these views on the people down there with this prop, which I am holding up for you, Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! The member for Bass knows very well — —

Mr K. SMITH — I know very well; it's true!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! The member for Bass, through the Chair.

Mr K. SMITH — Speaker, you may wonder why I have an interest in this — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! It is 'Acting Speaker.'

Mr K. SMITH — Yes, Acting Speaker. You'll never be Speaker, that's for sure!

The reason I have great interest in this particular piece of legislation is that I was a councillor of the Shire of Hastings in the early 1980s. I became very much aware of Hastings and the opportunities it had with the great development down there at one stage, with BHP; then it became John Lysaght; then it became BlueScope Steel, as it is now. Esso is also down there.

With an environmentally sensitive area such as we have in Western Port, people should understand that Esso has been taking its big ships in, and some of the biggest oil tankers in the world have been going into Hastings, yet there has never been one drop of oil spilled in Western Port. It has the greatest of safety measures, and it is a port that already operates, it is there. It is a good, strong and safe port.

We want to see development of the port of Hastings, which has been espoused by the Minister for Roads and Ports, who is now wielding the knife and has got it into the heart of Hastings. He wants to get rid of it and hand it over to his mates, who are sitting on the board and in

the management team in Melbourne and who do not want Hastings to develop. They would just like to see it go back completely to being a Ramsar area, a green wasteland; and that is what the minister would like to see. The government has taken the commercial fishermen out, and now the minister wants to take the heart out of Hastings and the port of Hastings.

It is a great port and there are great opportunities down there. It is a great chance for Victoria to have some competition instead of leaving it in the hands of the people who guided — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr K. SMITH — God forbid you, my friends!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! Members of the government should not interject in that manner and should leave the member for Bass alone.

Mr K. SMITH — Thank you so very much. My belief is that this port should be allowed to develop — and develop properly. It should be allowed to become competition for the port of Melbourne. It should give the stevedores and the shippers the opportunity to have a choice of where they berth. That is what the Port of Melbourne Corporation is afraid of — that the shippers will want to steam into Western Port, not up Port Phillip Bay, through the channel into Melbourne, where they will be held up from time to time.

Western Port has enough depth for the biggest ships in the world to berth. We have the opportunity, with clear land, for the development of the port — for the bulky goods to go in there and for all of the good things it should be used for. We can use this port and make it what the visionary Henry Bolte saw it as: one of the best deepwater ports anywhere in the world — not just in the Southern Hemisphere but anywhere in the world. It is a port that has proven how good it is and can be in the future.

Members should actually look at some of the plans for the development of the port. It should not be 35 years distant but very soon when that port is developed, and developed properly. That is what should be happening, not what members on the other side of the house are doing and not what the ports minister would like to do — that is, to cut the heart out of the port of Hastings and give it to his mates sitting up in Melbourne.

They are the people who forced him into digging the channel up the middle of Port Phillip Bay, the people who wasted billions of dollars doing that, when we had a port in Hastings where those ships could have steamed straight in and pulled up next to the pier. That

is what we want, and I can only say we oppose this legislation.

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park) — It gives me great pleasure to make a few brief comments on the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill. I was really surprised to learn that the opposition was opposing this bill, and I was wondering what it would take to get the member for Bass to support it. With some help from a Labor member, I have come up with the reason. What it would take to get the member for Bass to support this bill would be for the first tanker to come out of that redeveloped harbour to go straight to Shanghai. The member for Bass in that case would be the first candidate to support this bill, I am sure.

What we have heard from the Liberal Party today is unmitigated drivel. This is the same Liberal Party that tried to sell the port of Hastings, the same Liberal Party that would sell the entire framework of the port system around Victoria. What this Liberal Party has reduced itself to is an antibusiness rabble. It has reduced itself to an anti-community rabble, and what the member for Bass, in particular, has highlighted is the inconsistency, the lack of any valid arguments and the gross popularism to which they will sink to try to get their names in the paper, for who knows what possible argument, in opposing this particular bill.

The district of Albert Park has been home to substantial parts of the port of Melbourne for over 150 years, particularly through Webb Dock and arrangements there. This bill will take the next step in reintegrating the plan in the management and the long-term strategic vision for port planning, with the view that not only are ports the economic lifeblood of the economy of Melbourne and of regional Victoria but that the port of Melbourne, with its regional sister ports around Victoria, is the lifeblood of south-east Australia.

What we have here is a sensible, practical process that will integrate planning and development across the port structures, and I refer the Liberal Party to the well thought out research brief no. 7 of May 2010 from the parliamentary library, which sets this out in some detail.

I will make one further brief comment. Recently in the other place a member for Southern Metropolitan Region, Mrs Coote — who has her office in Port Melbourne, it should be noted — took the extraordinary position of trying to sink to new depths by opposing the development of Webb Dock. I point out to the member that the port of Melbourne is a thriving port, and it will continue to thrive, with its well set out strategic planning, which was consulted on widely through industry and the community. We will see Webb Dock

become an even more integral part of that port, and we will have a thriving Port Melbourne and a thriving Webb Dock side by side, which will make the future for this area particularly important.

There is a particularly important provision in section 141P of new division 3A inserted by clause 8 of the bill, which establishes the public interest functions for the minister, and it is those areas with which we will be particularly concerned. I call upon not only the member for Bass but the member for Southern Metropolitan Region to whom I referred earlier to support the bill, to support industry, to support communities and to stop playing pathetic, lowest common denominator politics by opposing this very sensible arrangement. I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I rise to support the member for South-West Coast, the shadow minister for ports. As we know, the member, who is from Portland, has had a very keen and long interest in the development of ports. He has seen the port in his own region grow and prosper over a long period of time, and he understands the need for the port of Hastings to remain under the control of the port of Hastings and not to be dragged away and put under an umbrella arrangement of the Port of Melbourne Corporation.

There is no doubt that what would take place if that were to be the case, would be that the development of the port of Hastings would become the second string in the bow of the Port of Melbourne Corporation. There is no doubt that the Port of Melbourne Corporation has its own interests to look after down there. It has formed long-lasting relationships with a lot of the operators out of the Port of Melbourne Corporation, and there is no doubt that this bill would be the death knell for the port of Hastings as we know it today.

I turn to the statement of compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, where it says:

It is noteworthy that the bill applies the social and economic inclusion objective of the Transport Integration Act 2010 to the Port of Melbourne Corporation and the Victorian Regional Channels Authority.

I spoke about this issue when the Transport Integration Bill went through the house. When you go to that bill and get an independent understanding of what that particular bill did, you see it ensured that the Port of Melbourne Corporation got dragged into all the vision statements, objectives, principles and statements of policy principles that the government wished to embrace in its overall transport plan.

When one reads that particular integration bill, it talks about the vision statement, the social economic inclusion, economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, integration of transport and land use, safety, health and wellbeing, decision-making principles, principles of integrated decision making, principles of triple bottom line assessment, principles of equity, a precautionary principle, principles of stakeholder engagement and community participation and principles of transparency, and it goes on and on until you get to the last clause in that part where it says that there is no real need for anybody within any department, anyone with anything to do with transport planning, to take any notice of any of those provisions within the bill.

It is not legislation but a whole range of waffle that would have chewed up hours and hours of the time of the draftspersons who put together that bill — a complete and total waste of time.

It also threw the Port of Melbourne Corporation into the Victorian Transport Plan. Once again it was rolled into the Transport Integration Bill, and as we know with the transport plan — and I suppose this is where we get a better understanding when we talk about the government's transport plan — the government is telling the public that this transport plan is set in concrete, but when you look at the actual bill you see that the minister may have the transport plan revised from time to time, and we see that here today.

In one breath the Minister for Roads and Ports is selling the great benefits of the port of Hastings, but with a second breath he is wiping out the port of Hastings and rolling it under the control of the Port of Melbourne Corporation. The minister flip-flops, flip-flops, flip-flops as he goes through his portfolio arrangements and gives one major commitment to the people of Hastings in one breath and then turns around and simply changes it with the next.

You have only to look at the government's record in relation to freight, to ports and its so-called commitment to have 30 per cent of freight on rail by 2010 to see the way the government works. I have an article from the *Age* dated 28 April in which Sir Rod Eddington talked about the government's commitment to have 30 per cent of freight on rail by 2010, and I understand it has gone below 16 per cent. Rail freight has gone backwards under the government, with its so-called visionary plans in relation to ports and freight movement in and around the state.

Then of course we had, going right back to the very early stages, announcements made by the former

Premier early in 2000 that we were going to get another container operator down at the port of Melbourne — that we would definitely have another container operator here in Melbourne. Today we are still waiting for that new container operator and that new competition that was supposed to be introduced into the port of Melbourne, but for some reason or other it was slowly pushed aside. That is why I talk about the interests, the relationship and the flip-flop, flip-flop that has been going on with this government in relation to ports and freight.

We do not have that container operator because of pressure applied to the port of Melbourne by the existing operators down at the Port of Melbourne Corporation, saying, ‘We don’t want that level of competition here.’ That is the reason we have not had that third container operator running out of the port of Melbourne — ready to work, ready to go, infrastructure in place, vision in place — and why we have heard absolutely nothing from the government of the day.

It is worth looking at the government’s so-called intermodal hubs whereby freight was going to be taken out of the port of Melbourne and rolled out into intermodal hubs at different locations around the suburbs. Once again, what has happened to that over a long period of time? The government has had the money, the time to plan and everything at its fingertips, including an operator that came out of Queensland. We had Queensland Rail getting the message that the Victorian government was ready to go down the path of shuttles and setting up intermodal hubs. Queensland Rail bought its way into Victoria, moved in, started up an operation running from Altona and in and out of the Port of Melbourne Corporation, and then it walked away. It turned around and absolutely walked away — flip-flop, flip-flop, flip-flop goes the minister for ports. ‘Yes, we’re going to go down the pathway of intermodal hubs. Yes, we want to get freight off the road and on the rail. Yes, we’re going to encourage operators to come to Victoria and operate shuttle services. Yes, they have arrived. No, we won’t support them’. Flip-flop, flip-flop.

Is it any wonder that the shadow minister for ports, the member for South-West Coast, has pushed to have this bill opposed? I support the member for South-West Coast. He understands the operations of ports; he understands the importance of competition to try and get some efficiency out of the Port of Melbourne Corporation. While the PMC holds all of the aces in its hands in relation to port operation, we will not get the competition we deserve in Victoria, so I support the member for South-West Coast in opposing the bill.

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — I understand that time is short, so I will make a very brief contribution to the debate. I support the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill, which will continue the establishment of an integrated sustainable transport system in Victoria.

I quickly note that it builds on the previous work of the Transport Integration Act, particularly the new policy framework for transport. I particularly note that the new policy framework for transport, established under the Transport Integration Act, includes for the first time environmental sustainability and the principle of triple-bottom-line assessment, which is an important aspect of transport policy, particularly including the impact of negative externalities on economic development. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I rise on behalf of the great electorate of Lowan to say a few words on the Transport Legislation Amendment (Ports Integration) Bill. Transport is very important to country communities, particularly the Lowan electorate, as most of our freight is moved out through the ports. They are a very important link to our worldwide markets.

We live in a global community, therefore we need good ports. This has been outlined well by members on this side of the house — namely, the members for South-West Coast, Rodney, Hastings, Mornington, Bass and Polwarth. I mention the member for Hastings because I know he is passionate about this subject in relation to his electorate; he understands the issues.

The member for South-West Coast, as shadow ports minister and being responsible for this area, demonstrated in his contribution to the debate that he understands this issue more than anyone else in this house. I agree with the member for South-West Coast, and I support the report he made to shadow cabinet at our party meeting, which advised that we needed to oppose this bill, mainly because it affects ports competition.

The purpose of this bill is to provide for the Port of Melbourne Corporation to take over the Port of Hastings Corporation. It is also to bring the Port of Melbourne Corporation and the Victorian Regional Channels Authority under the Transport Integration Act 2010. It also corrects a number of technical errors in the Transport Integration Act.

This government is fantastic about spin. There are 11 pages of spin but only 11 small clauses in the bill; all of it is about spin. The government does not worry about reality. The main provisions in this bill require all

transport corporations, transport safety agencies, transport system agencies and prescribed transport bodies to develop a strategy and implementation plan in accordance with the provisions of the Transport Integration Act. All of that sounds fine, but the reality is that the transport plan this government promised to deliver on said that 30 per cent of goods going through the port would be on rail. I think the member for Polwarth spoke about the fact that that figure is down to about 16 per cent.

Mr Mulder — It is 12.3 per cent, and dropping

Mr DELAHUNTY — It is 12.3 per cent. That is critical, not only for the people of country Victoria but also for the people of Melbourne. They do not want to see more trucks rumbling through the city, and if we take away competition, we are going to drive more of those trucks into the central Melbourne area. We want to use the ports across Victoria. We have a fantastic port at Portland, down in the south of my electorate, and a lot of the roads and rail are linked to that area. We also have the port of Geelong. As has been mentioned — and I have not been there too many times, to be honest — the port of Hastings gives us another option. We cannot drive everything through the centre of Melbourne.

Look at what is happening in Sydney: it would love to be able to move some of its transport congestion out of the CBD. We have an opportunity in Victoria to have a bit of competition, to give us another option. What is this government going to do? It wants to collapse it under the Port of Melbourne Corporation. I am interested to know whether the government is going to change the name of the Port of Melbourne Corporation. If it is going to take over the port of Hastings, is it going to change the name?

Another thing I want to talk about is that in connecting our ports, we need to ensure we have a good rail network. This government promised to standardise the rail network up to Mildura. That was another of its promises but, unfortunately, it failed on that one. It promised it would never take water from north of the Great Dividing Range; it promised it would not build a desalination plant, but again it flipped and flopped as soon as the election was over.

It said it would not toll roads out in the eastern suburbs — another flip-flop. If we are to go on credibility, this government has none. Again, not only is rail important but we need to make sure the ports are connected by good roads.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — The member for Polwarth talks about the green triangle freight action plan. The reality is that we need to make sure that the port of Hastings has not only good rail but also good road linkages. We know that the new standard for bypassing lanes is 1.8 kilometres in length. Many roads across Victoria do not have bypassing lanes of that standard; most are only 1 kilometre long and are dangerous. If we are to make sure our ports are efficient and competitive — after all, we are in a global economic community — we need to make sure that businesses, transport authorities and ports are given every opportunity, taking into account the cost pressures to compete in that global economy.

I am not talking only about road and rail; we also need freight hubs. The member for Polwarth spoke about that issue. There is one proposed in my electorate — the Dooen freight hub. It is a proposal that has been widely supported by councils in my area. We need to ensure that both the federal and state governments get behind this project.

I have a letter, and I will speak to the minister about it at a later stage. It concerns rail access land that is being underutilised. One area I can mention is Penshurst — the member for South-West Coast knows Penshurst very well. There are two blocks of railway land there that the government said it would not sell because they do not have much value. Value to whom?

People around that area want to utilise that land. Why not let them use it? It is currently under lease, and that is fair enough, but at the end of that lease let us see what can be done with that land. A private developer would like to be able to build on that land and use it in a very efficient way. Again this government is stopping competition out there in country communities.

The other thing I want to say is that we are talking about competition. Where we see competition coming from is other states. We are talking about competition between ports. The reason I want to talk about competition in relation to this topic is that Sydney is now bidding to lure Victorian vegetable and flower growers — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member should make sure it relates to the bill.

Mr DELAHUNTY — It will relate to the bill, because we need to be able to move vegetables out of the ports of Hastings, Portland, Geelong or Melbourne. Because we are becoming inefficient in moving goods through our ports we are seeing competition coming at us from Sydney. Each year Victoria produces about

800 000 tonnes of vegetables each year, much of which is shipped out in containers through the port of Melbourne. Many people are saying that it is very uncompetitive and a cost burden.

We need to get some competition into the movement of containers through the ports. We need to make sure the port of Hastings continues to be managed by an independent authority so it can compete against other ports and earn the right to be accessed. If vegetable growers do not get support through improved efficiency in the movement of goods through our ports, there is no doubt that Sydney, which is close to the north-east of Victoria, will attract them. Many vegetable growers in my electorate have had their crops damaged by locusts this year. The reality is that a lot of vegetables are still grown across Victoria, and as I said, 40 per cent of this nation's cut flowers come from Victoria. Those types of things go out of the state through ports.

The reason I support the member for South-West Coast and the opposition on this is that I believe in competition. The reason I am opposing this legislation is that it takes away competition between ports in Victoria — the important ports of Portland and Geelong and the very important port of Melbourne. We also need the appropriate road and rail infrastructure to support these important Victorian ports.

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I stand to support the member for South-West Coast in opposing this legislation. It is all about competition — —

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 52

Allan, Ms	Kairouz, Ms
Andrews, Mr	Langdon, Mr
Batchelor, Mr	Languiller, Mr
Beattie, Ms	Lim, Mr
Brooks, Mr	Lobato, Ms
Brumby, Mr	Lupton, Mr
Cameron, Mr	Maddigan, Mrs
Campbell, Ms	Marshall, Ms
Carli, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Crutchfield, Mr	Morand, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Munt, Ms
Donnellan, Mr	Nardella, Mr
Duncan, Ms	Neville, Ms
Foley, Mr	Noonan, Mr
Graley, Ms	Overington, Ms
Green, Ms	Pallas, Mr

Hardman, Mr
Harkness, Dr
Helper, Mr
Hennessy, Ms
Herbert, Mr
Holding, Mr
Howard, Mr
Hudson, Mr
Hulls, Mr
Ingram, Mr

Pandazopoulos, Mr
Perera, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Robinson, Mr
Scott, Mr
Seitz, Mr
Stensholt, Mr
Thomson, Ms
Trezise, Mr
Wynne, Mr

Noes, 32

Asher, Ms
Baillieu, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Burgess, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Delahunty, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Hodgett, Mr
Jasper, Mr
Kotsiras, Mr
McIntosh, Mr
Morris, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Napthine, Dr

Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr
Powell, Mrs
Ryan, Mr
Shardey, Mrs
Smith, Mr K.
Smith, Mr R.
Sykes, Dr
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Mrs
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Weller, Mr
Wells, Mr
Wooldridge, Ms

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

PARKS AND CROWN LAND LEGISLATION (MOUNT BUFFALO) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 May; motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and Resources).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

STATE TAXATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 May; motion of Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

BUILDING AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing); and Mr INGRAM's amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to provide for first resort builders warranty insurance similar to the Queensland model, which is accepted best practice'.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Those supporting the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Gippsland East should vote no. All those in favour say aye.

Honourable members — Aye.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! To the contrary, no.

Mr Ingram — No.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I think the ayes have it. As there is only one vote for the noes, I declare the motion carried.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I ask that my dissent be recorded.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! In accordance with the standing orders, that will be done.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

CONTROL OF WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL

Statement of compatibility

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2010.

In my opinion, the Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2010, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is partially incompatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The bill amends the Control of Weapons Act 1990 by:

making it an offence for a person to sell a prohibited weapon to a child, and making it an offence for a child to buy a prohibited or a controlled weapon;

making it an offence for a person to sell a controlled weapon to a child, if the seller knows that the purchaser is a child;

relaxing the circumstances in which the chief commissioner may make a planned or unplanned designation of an area for the purpose of enabling weapons searches to be conducted in that area;

relaxing the requirement that weapons searches of children or of persons with impaired intellectual functioning be conducted in the presence of a parent, guardian or independent third person;

providing that the chief commissioner may only delegate his designation powers to a police officer who is of or above the rank of assistant commissioner of police (presently a delegation can be made down to Inspector level);

limiting to strip searches the duty on police to make a written record of random searches conducted within a designated area;

extending the level of detail that the chief commissioner must report to the minister on in respect of weapons searches that have been undertaken;

allowing infringement notices to be served for certain offences in regard to controlled weapons, and providing for the forfeiture of such weapons when the matter is dealt with by infringement notice;

making changes to the powers of the Governor in Council to grant exemptions in respect of prohibited weapons;

sunsetting at three years the amendments to the circumstances in which an unplanned designation can be made.

Human rights issues

The amendments that the bill makes to the scheme (introduced last year) for random searches of persons within temporarily designated areas result, in my view, in incompatibilities with sections 13(a), 21 and 17(2) of the charter (privacy, liberty, and the right of children to protection).

The ban on the sale of weapons to children engages the right to freedom from discrimination (section 8(3) of the charter). In my view, however, the limit that is thereby placed on that right is demonstrably justified in terms of section 7(2) of the charter.

The introduction of a forfeiture regime for controlled weapons that are seized where the offence is being dealt with by way of an infringement notice engages the right to property in section 20 of the charter. However, in my view, any deprivation of property will be in accordance with law and, accordingly, the right in section 20 is not limited. I am also satisfied that the forfeiture regime does not limit section 24 of the charter: the right to a fair hearing.

Right to privacy — section 13(a) of the charter

Last year, this government amended the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to enhance the powers available to police officers to search for weapons in public places. The Summary Offences and Control of Weapons Acts Amendment Act 2009 (the 2009 amendment) introduced provisions extending the police's search powers by empowering the police to stop and search persons and vehicles in public places that fall within temporarily designated areas. In the statement of compatibility for that legislation, I concluded that the new powers of random search were incompatible with section 13(a) of the charter: the right not to have one's privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

This bill enhances the powers of the police to conduct searches within designated areas in a number of ways:

it limits the duty on police to make a written record of the searches conducted within the designated areas to strip searches (cl 10);

it clarifies that, for the purposes of the planned and unplanned designation procedures, the words 'likely' and 'likelihood' are not to be interpreted as meaning 'more likely than not' (clauses 12(1) and 13(2));

it releases planned designations that are designed to cover a particular event from the temporal restriction in section 10D(3) of the act that planned designations must not be for a longer period than is reasonably necessary to enable police to respond to the threat and must not be for

longer than 12 hours. Instead, the duration of events-based planned designations is limited to the duration of the event itself (cl 12);

it extends the circumstances that trigger an unplanned designation and the scope of such designations by replacing references in section 13(1)(a) to 'violence or disorder involving weapons' with references to 'unlawful possession, carriage or use of weapons or violence or disorder involving weapons' (cl 13);

it establishes an additional trigger for an unplanned designation: if the chief commissioner is satisfied that more than one incident of unlawful possession, carriage or use of weapons or violence or disorder involving weapons has occurred in the area in the previous 12 months and that it is likely that the unlawful possession, carriage or use of weapons or the violence of disorder involving weapons will recur (cl 13, introducing new section 10E(1)(b));

in the case of searches with suspicion or searches within an unplanned designation, it relaxes the requirement for an independent person to be present when a child or person with impaired intellectual functioning is searched (cl 19).

There are also some provisions in the bill that strengthen the legislative protections that govern the random search regime. The chief commissioner will only be empowered to delegate his designation power to a police officer who is of or above the rank of assistant commissioner of police (cl 14) and the level of detail that the chief commissioner must report to the minister on in respect of weapons searches that have been undertaken will be extended (cl 11). Taken cumulatively, however, these amendments amount to a relaxation of the constraints that currently exist around the exercise of the powers to conduct random searches within designated areas.

I concluded last year that the scheme governing the exercise of such powers, as introduced, was incompatible with s 13(a) of the charter. It follows that the further amendments contained in the bill, by relaxing the constraints on the use of the scheme, exacerbate this incompatibility.

That conclusion is reinforced by the recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights in *Gillan v. the United Kingdom*, application no. 4158/05 (12 January 2010). It held that a United Kingdom legislative scheme for random searches within designated areas was incompatible with the right to private life in article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. There are a number of differences between the legislative scheme at issue in the Gillan case and the legislative scheme here. Nevertheless, the advice that I have received and that I accept is that the scheme for random searches within designated areas, as amended in the manner set out above, will therefore be incompatible with the charter.

This government nevertheless wishes to proceed with the amendments. Whilst the random search powers introduced in late 2009, as used in planned designated areas, have been effective in the detection of offenders and in deterring others from offending, the community's concern about the level of violence involving the use of knives and other weapons in public places has not abated. It is necessary to ensure that police are empowered to do everything that they need to do to prevent and deter weapons-related offending. Whilst the amendments in this bill will not alleviate the incompatibility

of the existing provisions, they are necessary to ensure the operational effectiveness of these critical police powers.

Liberty and security — section 21 of the charter

Section 21(1) provides that every person has the right to liberty and security. Section 21(2) provides that no person may be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.

The 2009 amendment empowered the police to detain persons to the extent necessary to conduct a search within a designated area (see sections 10G(4) and 10E(2) of the act). Because those powers of detention are strictly confined to what is reasonably necessary to conduct an authorised search, no separate question of incompatibility with section 21 of the charter arises. However, to the extent that the random search powers are themselves arbitrary (and therefore incompatible with section 13(a) of the charter) it must follow that any attendant deprivation of liberty is also arbitrary.

Because this bill exacerbates the incompatibility with section 13(a) of the charter (for the reasons given above), I accept that it must also exacerbate an incompatibility with section 21 of the charter.

Right of children to be protected — section 17(2) of the charter

In the statement of compatibility associated with the 2009 amendment, I acknowledged that the scheme for random searches in designated areas was incompatible with the right of every child to such protection as is in his or her best interests and is needed by him or her by reason of being a child. The bill exacerbates that incompatibility. First, the incompatibilities with sections 13(a) and 21 of the charter identified above will impact on children, amongst others.

Secondly and more specifically, the bill loosens the independent person requirement found in clause 11(3) and (4) of schedule 1 of the act. As currently drafted, clauses 11(3) and 11(4) provide that any search of a child must be conducted in the presence of a parent or guardian of the child being searched or, if that is not acceptable to the child or if the seriousness and urgency of the circumstances require otherwise, an independent person who is capable of representing the interests of the child and who, as far as is practicable in the circumstances, is acceptable to the child. The effect of clause 19 of the bill is to confine this provision to planned designations. In the case of unplanned designations and searches with suspicion under section 10 of the act, the rule will be that a search of a child must, if practicable in the circumstances, be conducted in the presence of a parent or guardian of the child or, if that is not practicable, any person, whether or not he or she is a member of the police force, other than the member conducting the search.

In my view, therefore, the bill is incompatible with section 17(2) of the charter. However, as I determined when these powers were introduced in 2009, the government strongly believes that effective and workable random search powers are important for preventative and deterrent reasons, including the protection of children. Therefore, despite the incompatible nature of the provisions, this government intends to proceed with this legislation. We believe it is important to help protect children.

I note that the new rules governing the presence of an additional person in clause 11 of schedule 1 will remain

subject to the rule in clause 9 that no person can be strip-searched in the presence of a person of a different sex.

Right to freedom from discrimination — section 8(3) of the charter

Clauses 5 and 6 of the bill will amend sections 5 and 6 of the act to:

make it an offence, subject to a maximum penalty of 240 penalty units (currently \$28 668) or two years in prison, to sell a prohibited weapon to a child (proposed section 5(1AC)); and

make it an offence, subject to a maximum penalty of 25 penalty units (currently \$2986.25), for a child to purchase a prohibited weapon (proposed section 5(1AD));

make it an offence, subject to a maximum penalty of 12 penalty units (currently \$1433.40), for a child to purchase a controlled weapon (proposed section 6(1AA)); and

make it an offence, subject to a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units (currently \$2336.40), for a person to sell a controlled weapon to another person knowing that the other person is a child.

‘Child’ will be defined in the act as a person under the age of 18 years (cl 4).

Section 8(3) of the charter provides that every person has a right to the equal protection of the law and to equal and effective protection against discrimination (as defined in the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 — see s 3 of the charter). Section 8 of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 says that ‘direct discrimination’ (which is what is at issue here):

... occurs if a person treats, or proposes to treat, someone with an attribute less favourably than the person treats or would treat someone without that attribute, or with a different attribute, in the same or similar circumstances.

Section 6(a) of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 lists ‘age’ as one of the attributes on the basis of which, discrimination is prohibited.

When the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 comes into force, the definition of ‘direct discrimination’ will be reworded but will be to similar effect; and age will remain a relevant attribute.

I accept that the ban on children purchasing prohibited and controlled weapons results in persons of a given age (under 18) being treated less favourably than persons of a different age (18 or over) who are otherwise in the same or similar circumstances. Accordingly, the right to freedom from discrimination in s 8(3) of the charter is engaged. In my view, however, the limit that is thereby placed on s 8(3) is demonstrably justified in terms of s 7(2) of the charter for the following reasons.

(a) The nature of the right

It is generally accepted that freedom from discrimination is a right that can be subject to reasonable limits. That is because it is the very business of governments to make distinctions between different groups of people, including on the basis of

the attributes listed in s 6 of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (see, for example, *Andrews v. Law Society of British Columbia* [1989] 1 SCR 143 at 181). Further, age is a ground of distinction that has been seen in some other jurisdictions to be relatively susceptible to justified limitation. One reason for this is that although age is a personal characteristic, there is nothing intrinsically demeaning about being treated differently on the basis of age. Further, as noted by McLachlin CJ in *Gosselin v. Quebec (Attorney-General)* [2002] 4 SCR 429 at [31], ‘age-based distinctions are a common and necessary way of ordering our society’.

(b) The importance of the purpose of the limitation

The purpose of the proposed limitation on the right is to protect the public from the violence and intimidation associated with weapons-related crime. This purpose is sufficiently compelling to justify some intrusion on protected rights.

(c) The nature and extent of the limitation

The proposed amendments create a blanket restriction on the ability of children to purchase prohibited and controlled weapons, and impose criminal penalties on children who disregard this restriction.

Two related concerns that are often central to an analysis of the justifiability of discriminatory treatment are the extent to which the difference in treatment demeans the affected person or group, and the extent to which it exacerbates any pre-existing disadvantage or vulnerability that the group has experienced. I accept that some young persons may experience the blanket prohibition on the purchase of weapons (including, within the definition of ‘controlled weapons’, knives of all kinds) as demeaning. The extent to which it ought objectively to be regarded as so, however, is tempered to some degree by the fact that, as discussed below, the difference in treatment is justified by statistical evidence.

Further, although young people are generally regarded as a vulnerable group in society who face pre-existing disadvantage and stereotyping, it is by no means clear that this proposal perpetuates or exacerbates that historical disadvantage.

Finally and importantly, the detriment imposed by the limit is not particularly severe. It is hard to imagine that there will be many, if any, cases in which a young person who wishes to purchase a prohibited or controlled weapon for a legitimate purpose will not be able to find someone who can make the purchase on their behalf. The discriminatory treatment is not of the order of, say, lack of access to education, the inability to marry or the non-recognition of intimate relationships, which have been held to give rise to discrimination in other jurisdictions. The penalties that are imposed on children who defy the ban are also relatively minor. In other words, to the extent that the limitation imposes a disadvantage, it is disadvantage of a relatively minor degree.

(d) The relationship between the limitation and its purpose

In my view, the prohibition on the purchase of weapons by children does advance the purpose of protecting the public from the violence and intimidation associated with weapons-related crime and, accordingly, there is a rational connection between the limiting measure and the purpose it is

designed to achieve, which is a reduction in weapons-related violence committed by young persons.

In tackling social problems, such as weapons carriage, there is often room for debate about what will work and what will not, and the outcome may not always be scientifically measurable.

Accordingly, in developing its policy response, the government is entitled to rely on common sense and inferential reasoning to support the evidence available to it (see, for example, *Sauvé v. Canada (Chief Electoral Officer)* [2002] 3 SCR 519 at [18] and *Canada (Attorney-General) v. JTI-Macdonald Corp* [2007] 2 SCR 610 at [41]). In my view, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the ban on direct purchase of weapons by children will increase the likelihood of responsible adult supervision of children with regards to obtaining and using such weapons.

I therefore conclude that the measure will support the object that it is designed to serve. The government is entitled to assume that, by making it more difficult for children to access weapons, weapons-related offending may well be reduced.

(e) Any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose

In my view, there are no less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose of the limitation. I accept that similar legislation in the United Kingdom contains a ‘carve-out’ provision, making it lawful for a person aged 16 or older to purchase a knife that is designed for domestic use.

A carve-out of this kind might have the effect of encouraging the use of kitchen knives in criminal offending. A carve-out might also create potential uncertainty for both sellers and purchasers as to what is or is not domestic use. For that reason, the government prefers in this instance to draw a clear line in the sand.

I note that the proposal is not otherwise overly broad in that it bans only the sale and purchase of weapons rather than their legitimate possession, carriage or use. It remains possible for minors to obtain weapons from other sources and then to possess, carry and use them for legitimate purposes.

Accordingly, I have concluded that the legislation is sufficiently well tailored to achieving its purpose and that the blanket ban on selling prohibited and controlled weapons to minors is within the range of reasonable alternatives available to Parliament.

Conclusion

I conclude that the ban on children purchasing weapons is justified. The proposal seeks to address the pressing and substantial problems associated with weapons-related violence. The proposal is tailored to its purpose in that it will remain possible for young persons to possess, carry and use prohibited or controlled weapons for legitimate purposes. Given the nature of the right at issue, the fact that the attribute in question is age (rather than, say, race or sex), and the relatively minor disadvantage that flows from the distinction, I have concluded that the limit on the right is reasonable.

Right to property — section 20 of the charter

Clause 9 of the bill inserts a new section 9A into the act. It will provide a regime for the forfeiture of weapons where an

infringement notice has been/is served for an offence under section 6 of the act in regard to a controlled weapon. In such circumstances, the weapon will be forfeited to the Crown. Once the infringement penalty is paid, a payment plan is arranged, the time for payment expires, or an application for internal review of the decision to serve the infringement notice is unsuccessful and 28 days elapse, the weapon can be sold or destroyed.

This provision clearly engages the right to property in section 20 of the charter. Section 20 provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law.

I am, however, satisfied that the legislation guards against any permanent interference with property where no offence has been committed. The section 9A forfeiture regime will not apply where the recipient elects to have the matter determined in the court, or where a member of the police force refers the matter to the court (new section 9A(4)). Instead, the existing forfeiture regime in section 9 of the act will apply, and the weapon will be returned unless the person is convicted of the offence. Under new section 9A(5), the weapon must also be returned if the infringement notice is withdrawn (whether after a review or otherwise), unless a warning is issued or the matter is referred to court, or it is cancelled by the court (cl 9(5)).

In light of these safeguards, I am of the view that the bill does not limit section 20 of the charter. I am also satisfied that the forfeiture regime does not offend the right, in section 24(1) of the charter, to a fair hearing.

Conclusion

For the reasons given in this statement, I consider that the bill is partially incompatible with the charter. However, I believe the bill is ultimately in the best interest of the community.

Bob Cameron, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Second reading

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government is determined to crack down on weapons-related violence in our community. Victoria is not a place in which carrying knives or other weapons unlawfully will be tolerated.

On 4 March 2010, the Premier of Victoria announced that police would be given new powers to issue on-the-spot fines to those aged 16 and above caught carrying controlled weapons without a lawful excuse, that police would have broader powers to designate areas such as train stations or other public places for random weapons searches without notice, and that children under the age of 18 years would be banned from buying weapons.

This bill gives effect to the changes announced by the Premier, as well as making other changes to improve the operation and effectiveness of Victoria's control of weapons regime.

Victoria already has the toughest weapons-search-and-seizure regime in Australia. The changes to weapons laws proposed in this bill are designed to encourage a fundamental change in community attitudes about the carriage of weapons such as knives. They will send a clear message to all Victorians that it is not appropriate to carry weapons in public places and that weapons should be left at home when not necessary for lawful occupations or other purposes.

Victoria has been at the forefront of initiatives to crack down on knife crime over recent years. In 2007, penalties for unlawfully carrying controlled weapons were doubled, and were doubled again if the offence was committed in or around a licensed venue such as a hotel or club. In 2009, police were given tough random search powers to conduct planned and unplanned random searches for weapons in designated areas.

In recent months, the government has run a high-profile advertising campaign to warn young people of the perils and penalties associated with carrying knives. The message of this campaign is simple: if you carry a weapon unlawfully, you will be in trouble.

The bill aims to build on these initiatives and give police the powers they need to tackle knife crime and detect the unlawful carrying of weapons.

I now turn to the key provisions of the bill.

Clause 1 sets out the purpose of the bill, which is to amend the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to prohibit the sale of prohibited weapons to children and the purchase of weapons by children, to enable infringement notices to be issued for certain offences under the act and to make other amendments to improve the operation and effectiveness of the control of weapons regime.

Under clause 2, the majority of the provisions of the bill will come into effect by 1 July 2011, if not proclaimed before.

Clause 5 creates a new offence prohibiting a person from selling a prohibited weapon to a child under 18. Prohibited weapons are the most serious types of weapon and include flick knives, daggers and swords. Sellers of prohibited weapons are already required to have an appropriate exemption or approval under the Control of Weapons Act 1990, to examine the purchaser's proof of identity and to reasonably believe

that the purchaser has the relevant exemption or approval under the act to purchase the weapon. The new offence will require the seller to further ensure that the purchaser is not under 18. Additionally, clause 5 makes it an offence for a child under 18 to purchase a prohibited weapon.

The penalties proposed for these offences are 240 penalty units or 2 years imprisonment for selling a prohibited weapon to a child under 18, and 25 penalty units for the purchase of a prohibited weapon by a child. The penalty applicable to the purchase of a prohibited weapon by a child is significantly lower than the penalty for an adult to sell a weapon to a child, in recognition of the youth and vulnerability of children.

Similarly, clause 6 makes it an offence for a child to purchase a controlled weapon. Controlled weapons include all knives other than prohibited knives such as ordinary kitchen knives and pocket knives. This offence carries a maximum penalty of 12 penalty units.

Clause 6 of the bill makes it an offence to knowingly sell a controlled weapon to a child. This offence will carry a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units.

The aim of these offences is to reduce the circulation of weapons in the community and curb the development of a 'knife culture' among children under 18. We have all heard recent accounts of children carrying knives out of fear and for defensive purposes. In particular, we have heard frightening stories of children bringing knives to school, leading to great tragedy. The Victorian government is determined to stop in its tracks any move towards this type of culture developing. The changes will restrict children's access to weapons and remove the opportunity for them to purchase weapons without the knowledge or guidance of their parents, guardians or coaches.

Of course, a child will still be able to possess or use a prohibited weapon if they have an exemption or approval under the act to do so, or to possess or use controlled weapons with a lawful excuse. However, an adult will now need to purchase the weapon on the child's behalf if it is appropriate for the child, for sporting, recreational, professional or other purposes, to use, carry or possess a prohibited weapon. If purchasing a prohibited weapon, the adult will require an exemption or approval under the act, as is currently the case.

Similarly, if a child is employed as a retail sales assistant, or as a cashier at a retailer who sells controlled weapons, they will not be committing an

offence if they handle, carry or otherwise possess the controlled weapon as part of their sales employment.

Under section 8B of the Control of Weapons Act 1990, the Governor in Council can issue class exemptions to groups of people to possess, use, sell or purchase prohibited weapons. Clause 7 clarifies that the Governor in Council has discretion to apply conditions to exemptions, such as requiring a person to be a member of an exempted class of persons for up to six months before an exemption takes effect, or limiting the period of an exemption.

Given the proposed introduction of on-the-spot infringement notices for certain offences under the bill, clause 9 outlines consequential amendments relating to the forfeiture of weapons seized in connection with infringement offences.

Clause 10 of the bill clarifies the requirements in relation to making records of searches so that records will need to be made in respect of 'with suspicion' searches under section 10 and strip searches under section 10G (i.e., designated area strip searches). The chief commissioner has indicated police will continue to provide estimates, however, of all persons going through an electronic wand and pat down search.

The bill makes important changes to the requirements for random weapons searches in planned and unplanned designated areas.

Planned designations of search areas may be made where an event is to be held in the area, and incidents of violence or disorder involving the use of weapons have occurred on previous occasions of that event, and there is likelihood that the violence or disorder will recur. The period of the planned designation of an area must not be longer than is reasonably necessary to enable police members to mount an effective response, and must not exceed 12 hours. Clause 12 of the bill enables police to provide a more targeted and appropriate coverage for an event that takes place over an extended duration, including events that take place over a number of consecutive days. This clause provides that a planned designation may operate for more than one period, with the proviso that each period of operation must be during the operating hours of the event. Additionally, this change will allow for a given period during which an event is taking place to exceed 12 hours in duration.

The bill further provides increased flexibility for weapons searches in unplanned designated areas to ensure that random searches of areas such as transport hubs are conducted in the most effective and practical way. Unplanned designations were originally designed

to operate in quite urgent situations, where the designation and consequent weapons searches would occur within hours of intelligence being obtained. While unplanned designations do not require the publication of a notice, a range of safeguards still exist with respect to the search. For example, separate notices must be provided to each individual to be searched and any full strip searches must be conducted in a private facility.

Clause 13 of the bill addresses the amendments to searches in such circumstances by including broader criteria for the making of unplanned designations. The clause amends section 10E of the Control of Weapons Act 1990 so that unplanned designations are not limited to only the most urgent of circumstances, but will also be made available where it is appropriate to conduct a random weapons search within a day or number of days (but not where a planned designation with seven days notice is appropriate).

First, the clause includes a ground similar to that found for making a planned designation as an alternate ground, whereby the Chief Commissioner of Police may make an unplanned designation if satisfied that more than one incident of unlawful possession, carriage or use of weapons, or of violence or disorder involving weapons, has occurred in the area in the previous 12 months, or it is likely that such an incident will recur.

Second, the existing unplanned designation criteria will be retained, but each criteria is expanded to include the 'unlawful possession, carriage or use of weapons' as a basis for making the unplanned designation. This will act as a further significant deterrent to the unlawful carriage of weapons.

The bill clarifies the meaning of the terms 'likely' and 'likelihood' as used in relation to the chief commissioner's power to declare a designated area for a planned or unplanned search. Clauses 12 and 13 define how those terms are to be interpreted and indicate that the chief commissioner may determine likelihood of unlawful possession, carriage or use of weapons, or violence or disorder involving the use of weapons, will occur or recur even if that likelihood is less than 'more likely than not'.

As a consequence of the changes to the planned and unplanned designation powers in this bill, the chief commissioner is of the view that the rank should be elevated to the rank of assistant commissioner to ensure oversight at the highest level of Victoria Police. The act currently provides that the chief commissioner may delegate the designation powers to a member not less

than the rank of inspector. The bill reflects the chief commissioner's views and amends the rank at clause 14 to assistant commissioner.

It is proposed to give police new powers to issue on-the-spot fines for certain offences relating to controlled weapons. Clause 15 enables police to issue infringement notices for offences relating to the possession, carriage or use of a controlled weapon without a lawful excuse, and for the purchase of a controlled weapon by a child. Infringement notices will only be issued to people aged 16 years or above. Additionally, police will only issue one infringement notice to a single individual. Should a person commit a second or subsequent offence, police will take the matter to court.

The infringement penalty for unlawfully possessing, carrying or using a controlled weapon will be \$1000. This will increase to \$2000 if the offence is committed in or around a licensed venue, to maintain the differentiated approach the act already takes towards the possession, carriage and use of weapons in the context of alcohol-fuelled violence, and offending in public places more generally.

These infringement penalties have been set at a very high level to provide the strongest possible deterrent to people who wish to carry knives or other controlled weapons unlawfully. They have been expressed in dollar amounts rather than in penalty units so that potential offenders clearly understand the penalty they face and the seriousness of the offence.

As a consequence of amendments proposed by the bill, certain transitional arrangements are necessary. Clause 16 clarifies that the new offences prohibiting the sale of prohibited weapons to children or the purchase of weapons by children will apply to all current holders of Governor in Council exemptions and chief commissioner approvals under the act, irrespective of the terms of their exemptions or approvals. The clause also clarifies that the new police power to serve infringement notices will only apply to offences committed on or after the commencement of the infringement provisions in clause 15.

Schedule 1 to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 sets out a graduated scheme for the conduct of weapons searches in public places that is designed to preserve the dignity and comfort of the person being searched. The bill amends aspects of the rules for searches to ensure that searches can be conducted in the most appropriate and timely manner.

At present, searches of children and persons with impaired intellectual functioning must be conducted in the presence of an independent third party, in the absence of a parent or guardian. However, police are concerned that this requirement poses a range of difficulties that impact upon the effectiveness of the search regime and upon community safety, particularly when there are delays in locating an independent third person to attend. This situation is particularly acute in regional and rural areas as independent third persons are difficult to locate in a timely manner.

Clauses 19 and 20 therefore adjust the rules for searches of children and persons with impaired intellectual functioning to, where practicable, require the presence of an independent third person or any person other than the police member conducting the search. This could be another police member if necessary. This change will provide police with the flexibility they need to conduct searches in a timely manner. It must be stressed, however, that all of the existing safeguards in the schedule that apply generally to strip searches of all persons will continue to apply to searches of children and persons with impaired intellectual functioning.

As a consequence of these amendments, the chief commissioner will be issuing instructions to all members to clarify that where a parent, guardian or independent third person cannot be obtained in a timely manner, that any other person, other than a police member, should be found. The instructions will, however, clarify that where this is not practicable, the search may be conducted in the presence of another police member, other than the member conducting the search.

Clause 22 provides for the sunset of the changes made by the bill to the threshold test for the chief commissioner in making unplanned designations of search areas. The sunset provision will take effect three years from the commencement of the changes and will return the threshold test to its original form, save for retaining the provision clarifying the term 'likelihood'. The government believes this is a suitable period to test the effectiveness of the changes and determine whether they should continue or whether modifications should be made.

It is the intention of the government that the review be undertaken by an appropriate parliamentary committee, to report to the Parliament on the effectiveness of these changes six months before the expiration of the sunset period.

The changes proposed in this bill will reinforce Victoria's tough stance on weapons and make sure our streets remain safe for all Victorians.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WALSH (Swan Hill).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 10 June.

WATER AMENDMENT (ENTITLEMENTS) BILL

Council's amendment

Message from Council relating to following amendment considered:

Clause 6, omit this clause.

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — The opposition supports the omission of clause 6 from this bill. It is interesting that the government would bring forward this amendment from the upper house after 4 o'clock. I believe it is because it wants as little scrutiny of and publicity about the withdrawal of this clause as possible. In my view the changes that were going to be inserted into the act by clause 6 of the Water Amendment (Entitlements) Bill 2009 were about lazy government. Under section 33AAA 'Temporary qualification of rights to water' of the current Water Act there is a requirement on the department and the minister to qualify water entitlements annually. The clause that was to be inserted but will now be omitted would have provided that the minister could have temporarily qualified water entitlements for a greater length of time than one year — in effect for the duration of the shortage. No-one really knows what the duration of a shortage might be because no-one knows when it is going to rain, so I think the government was being lazy in wanting to have more than one year of temporary water qualifications.

This government has some significant history when it comes to the qualification of water entitlements. In 2005 the then minister, John Thwaites, gave an increased environmental entitlement to the Yarra River. That water entitlement has been qualified every year since then until this year when the government with great fanfare talked about returning some of that entitlement back to the Yarra River. The same thing

applies to the Thomson River, in relation to which the environmental entitlement has been qualified for a number of years now. Some of that has finally been returned, but if the clause proposing the changes had not been omitted, the minister would not have had to go back and review those qualifications every year.

The biggest of them all is the qualification of the savings from the Grampians Wimmera–Mallee pipeline project, where there has been a water entitlement from the Goulburn system across to the Wimmera–Mallee channel-fill system. This year with the finishing of the pipeline, under the funding arrangement with the commonwealth that entitlement was supposed to go back to the Goulburn, Murray and Loddon rivers. The minister actually suspended that entitlement and then qualified that entitlement so it could be taken to Melbourne. Again, I believe it is much better that the qualification has to be done on an annual basis rather than, as was the case under the government's original proposal, for the period of any water shortage as it sees fit.

I remind the house that the Goulburn, Murray and Loddon rivers have all had their challenges with the drought but that the Loddon River in particular has something like a 60-kilometre section of riverbed that has been dry for two years now. The minister has qualified the entitlement that was to go back to those rivers to bring it down the north–south pipeline to Melbourne, even though it was actually promised as part of the federal funding arrangement for the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline project to go back to those particular rivers.

I commend this amendment to the house. I think it is good government and good for scrutiny of government that every year the minister and the department have to go back and review the qualification of environmental entitlements or any temporary qualification of entitlements based on a water shortage. The other example that comes to mind, which is raised continually with me by people near Ballarat, is the qualification of entitlements on the Moorabool River and the fact that every year those entitlements have been qualified. If this amending bill had gone through as was originally intended, that shortage could have been declared in effect in perpetuity and the people on that river would not have seen the flows that, again, they were promised by Minister Thwaites a number of years ago.

Although I know the government has brought this amendment into the house after 4 o'clock so that there will not be a lengthy debate on it, I commend this amendment to the house because I think it will provide

for good scrutiny of the government, whereas if the bill as originally proposed had gone through, there would not have been that discipline on the minister to do his job properly.

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Water) — If we had any doubt that the member for Swan Hill does not understand the government's water legislation, he just demonstrated it by that contribution. The amendment that has been accepted by the government in relation to this legislation will not in fact increase the accountability of the Minister for Water. It will actually leave it the way it is and will decrease the level of accountability of the Minister for Water.

The government is happy to accept this legislative amendment; it just finds it puzzling and bizarre that the Greens would have moved it and the Liberal-Nationals opposition, which voted for the legislation when it went through the Legislative Assembly and made no comment on these issues at that time, decided to agree with the amendment made in the upper house by the Greens. The great legislative achievement that will be facilitated by the passage of this amendment to the legislation — an amendment that will be accepted by the government — far from increasing the accountability of the Minister for Water will leave it the way it was. It will actually decrease the level of accountability of the Minister for Water. I am happy to accept that. If the Parliament wants to invest this trust in me, then as Minister for Water I am happy to accept it, but I do wonder why the Greens and the Liberal Party and The Nationals would have insisted on it.

I will mention the comments the member for Swan Hill made in relation to the returning of water to stressed river systems, because despite the incredible difficulties that have been presented to the Victorian community by the drought and despite the pressure that is put on stressed river systems, we have been returning water to those river systems. In some parts of Victoria this is achieved through our efforts to modernise irrigation infrastructure; in other parts we have been removing qualifications that were put in place when water restrictions were at their highest. In some cases we have accelerated the return of that water and returned it faster than the water restriction decrease would have required of us.

Nevertheless we happily accept the amendment moved by the Greens and supported by the Liberal Party and The Nationals in the upper house. We find it puzzling, but we are happy to accept it and on that basis to see its passage through this chamber. I simply say that when people look back on the contribution made by the member for Swan Hill — the remarks that he made just

a few moments ago — they will have it amply demonstrated to them why the Liberals and The Nationals are supporting this amendment moved by the Greens, because they do not even understand it.

Motion agreed to.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 41, page 30, line 26, omit “no” and insert “a”.
2. Clause 41, page 30, lines 27 to 30, omit “; but that the teacher may seek leave of the panel before the hearing to have legal representation”.
3. Clause 41, page 31, line 15, omit “no” and insert “a”.
4. Clause 41, page 31, lines 16 to 19, omit “; but the teacher may seek leave of the panel before the hearing to have legal representation”.

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission) — I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — This is an important bill in the regulation of the teaching workforce and in ensuring the highest levels of integrity apply in our schools. It is an important part of our ongoing reforms to ensure that the highest quality of teachers operate in our schools. Of course the government is totally committed to ensuring the Victorian Institute of Teaching is governed by the highest operating standards. We are fully committed to ensuring the operations of the Merit Protection Board are enhanced, and of course we are fully committed to the fact that registration procedures, be they for teachers or schools, are undertaken in a timely and efficient manner.

To ensure that this very important bill successfully travels through the Parliament, we accept the amendments from the other house in terms of allowing legal representation at teacher medical panel hearings.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — The opposition supports and welcomes the amendments. I think most teachers will be very comfortable with them. The bill will enhance some of the processes of the Victorian Institute of Teaching. I think it is very important — and I made comments about it when the last two education training reform amendment bills were before the house — that

the community, especially parents, have great confidence in the quality of the teachers and the teaching in our schools. I think these amendments enhance that confidence, and therefore we welcome them.

It would have been nice if the minister had been in here. I understand she is going overseas tomorrow, and that is why she only made a 3-minute contribution to the budget debate; she is definitely in a hurry. She is probably on her way as I speak. I note she spoke longer in response to a Dorothy Dixier in question time today than she did on her budget contribution. But the member for Eltham put the case for the amendments very well; we might make him the minister. We support the amendments.

Motion agreed to.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 1, page 4, lines 26 to 31, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
2. Clause 2, line 6, omit “97(2)” and insert “84(2)”.
3. Part heading preceding clause 78, omit “**GAMING ACTS AMENDMENTS**” and insert “**AMENDMENT OF GAMBLING REGULATION ACT 2003**”
4. Division heading preceding clause 78, omit this heading.
5. Subdivision heading preceding clause 78, omit this heading.
6. Subdivision heading preceding clause 80, omit this heading.
7. Clauses 80 to 84, omit these clauses.
8. Subdivision heading preceding clause 85, omit this heading.
9. Clauses 85 to 90, omit these clauses.
10. Division heading preceding clause 91, omit this heading.
11. Clauses 91 and 92, omit these clauses.
12. Clause 102, line 14, omit “101” and insert “88”.
13. Clause 102, line 18, omit “101” and insert “88”.
14. Clause 105, line 32, omit “104” and insert “91”.

15. Clause 105, page 127, line 2, omit "104" and insert "91".

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — The opposition is pleased to support the amendments, because these are the amendments the opposition moved in the upper house. I am very pleased to see the government took a sensible decision to accept them.

Just to remind the house as to the genesis of these amendments, this Justice Legislation Amendment Bill proposed to make some amendments to the governance of the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation, which is the key gambling regulator in this state. One of the amendments had the effect of abolishing the position of executive commissioner of the VCGR, and the effect would have been to replace it with a chief executive officer who would be appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Justice. At the moment, the commissioners of the VCGR are appointed by the Governor in Council for fixed terms. This provides them with a level of independence from day-to-day pressure from or control by the government that a non-fixed term appointment by the Secretary of the Department of Justice would have. For that reason, the opposition moved these amendments to excise those provisions from this bill.

It is now a matter of public record that the government intends to move toward some sort of merger of liquor licensing and gambling regulation functions in this state. That is something which may — and I say 'may' — have some merit, and we will wait to see precisely what the government proposes. But certainly in the meantime the opposition thought it would be a very retrograde step to try to diminish the independence of the gambling regulator. Goodness knows, given the debacle of the gaming licensing process, which saw this government cost Victorian taxpayers between \$1 billion and \$2 billion through its incompetence — —

Mr Walsh — How much?

Mr O'BRIEN — Between \$1 billion and \$2 billion.

Mr Walsh — Struth!

Mr O'BRIEN — This is the thing that makes the Tricontinental bank pale into insignificance in relation to financial disasters. It shows this government needs more independent oversight of its regulation of gaming, not less.

Mr Wynne interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN — The minister says the opposition has made up those figures.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Malvern should ignore interjections. On the amendments, thank you.

Mr O'BRIEN — I advise members that if they want to consider where the evidence for those propositions has come from, they can turn to *Hansard* and read my grievance contribution this week, and I will be happy to provide the minister at the table with a copy for his information. The point is the government has accepted the opposition's amendments on the bill because ultimately it would be outrageous for it to propose a lessening of the independence of the gambling regulator in the state. We are pleased that at least at this stage the government has seen sense and accepted the amendments, and the opposition supports them.

Motion agreed to.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing).

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Israel: diplomatic relations

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — The issue I raise is for the Premier, and it relates to the decision this week by the Prime Minister to expel an Israeli diplomat from Australia. This surprising action has caused a great deal of concern to community leaders and to the many members of this house who have enjoyed a strong and meaningful friendship with Israel and the Jewish community. This action puts at risk that very relationship, which is one that has been fostered by many Australian and state governments and parliaments over a long time.

It was the coalition government under Premier Jeff Kennett which signed the first memorandum of understanding between Victoria and the Jewish National Fund to foster an exchange of ideas, research and scientists in the areas of the environment and water in particular between Israel and Victoria. While one can understand that there was perhaps always going to be some reaction to the passport issue, most thought that a considered diplomatic response would have been more appropriate than one designed to curry favour with

those countries which could deliver the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, a seat on the United Nations Security Council but result in the abandonment of support for our longstanding beleaguered ally.

It is therefore with great sincerity that I ask the Premier of Victoria and all Labor members of this Parliament to stand up for the valued, longstanding and close relationship between Israel and the Jewish people of Australia, including Victoria of course. I call on the Premier to meet or communicate with the Prime Minister and to repudiate the failure to adopt a more consistent and reasonable response to a close ally than the Prime Minister's conduct, which has been described as 'the worst disruption to bilateral relations in decades'.

Oakleigh: cultural precinct

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — This afternoon I wish to raise a matter with the Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, and the action I seek is that he support the recognition of the Oakleigh shopping area, particularly Eaton Mall, as a cultural precinct and recognise that funding should be supplied for the precinct as part of the Cultural Precincts and Community Infrastructure Fund.

Considerable work has already been undertaken by Monash council to establish a framework for the improvement of the Oakleigh shopping area. For example, this year Monash council provide \$478 356 to commence works at the southern end of Eaton Mall. The works being undertaken will create an agora, which is a Greek and Mediterranean concept for a public outdoor place — an open pavilion covered in deciduous grape vines. The works also include appropriate lighting and seating and a series of rain gardens installed to collect and treat the stormwater.

Mr Wynne — Beautiful.

Ms BARKER — It is very good. The Oakleigh shopping area has seen a great deal of improvement over recent years, with many cafes and restaurants being established. There is now a very real European feel to Oakleigh, a cafe culture and experience, which I know the member for Bulleen has experienced for himself. We have quality cafes and restaurants, such as Vanilla Cakes and Lounge, Niko's Quality Cakes, Steve's Wine Bar, Chez Marie, the Bada Tapas Lounge, Dream Cakes Cafe, souvlaki cafes and much more.

There is a great opportunity to build on the culture and experience that has developed with these cafes and

restaurants and the work of Monash City Council to date to accurately reflect our Greek and Italian culture, particularly our Greek culture. Oakleigh has a very long-established Greek community, and while there are still many Italian residents in the Oakleigh area, the Greek community is the largest community, with many of its residents having been in our community since they migrated to Australia after the Second World War. They have contributed a great deal to our local economy and culture. Their contribution has not diminished but has increased with the many new businesses now being established.

It is most appropriate that the contribution to Oakleigh, past and ongoing, particularly of the Greek community, be celebrated and recognised within a cultural precinct. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Oakleigh shopping area and particularly for those new cafes and restaurants to put forward their ideas on how we can develop our cultural precinct in Oakleigh and how we can appropriately recognise our multicultural community, particularly our Greek community. I look forward very much to undertaking many discussions with local restaurant and cafe owners about enhancing our community spaces and facilities in a cultural precinct in Oakleigh.

Nathalia Primary School: building program

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — I wish to ask the Minister for Education to correct an unfair situation which Nathalia Primary School now finds itself in. The school, which has always enjoyed a wonderful reputation for innovative education, has been denied funding to which it was entitled under the Building the Education Revolution program. On the day the school population count was done, as required under the BER guidelines, there were only 146 students present despite a normal student enrolment of 154. Nathalia Primary School population is currently over the 150 mark and enrolment records of the past several years show that it has consistently had over 150 students enrolled. Quite obviously this method of data collection was not representative of the school's general enrolment numbers.

Unfortunately the arbitrary nature of the count meant that the school received only \$850 000 rather than the \$2 million that should have been its entitlement. The department has subsequently refused to budge on this abnormality, effectively robbing a 150-plus student community of the same opportunities afforded to other similar schools.

Nathalia Primary School is more than 100 years old and has a very proud history. Unfortunately with that

history comes old, outdated and very tired facilities, and the school community was looking forward to the Building the Education Revolution program providing some long-term answers to existing infrastructure problems. My understanding is that initial attempts by the school to have the funding decision reviewed have been rejected by the department. I now call on the Minister for Education to intervene and allow the school the right to appeal this decision. There can be no doubt that an injustice has been done; the facts quite clearly support that assertion.

One of the criticisms of BER has been inflexibility regarding guidelines. The minister has an opportunity here to show that this is not necessarily the case. Failure to do so would indicate quite clearly that the government is not listening to local communities and equally that it is not governing in a way that is fair to all sectors of the community. Intervention by the minister could see the issue resolved very quickly, preparing the way for the building program to be planned and implemented. At the moment members of the Nathalia Primary School community are disappointed and frustrated at what has taken place. Their fear is that the students will miss out on the opportunities being provided to other schools right across the state. The new facilities are badly needed, the money is available and the results could be very meaningful to this wonderful country school. Again I say that quick intervention by the minister is all that is required. I hope and trust that common sense will prevail.

Consumer affairs: Reader's Digest promotion

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — The matter that I wish to raise is for the attention and action of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The action I seek is for the minister to provide advice on a Reader's Digest promotional package that has recently been received by a number of my constituents. Reader's Digest is, I believe, a reputable company which is rightly proud of its business reputation. The issue I raise is a matter that is causing confusion for a number of my constituents, and this issue of confusion may need to be considered by Reader's Digest.

My constituents recently received a letter from the chairman, Sweepstakes Committee, at Reader's Digest. It is marked in red on the envelope with the words 'Open immediately — \$205 000 prize funds on hold'. It is further marked in red with the words 'Awaiting claim — \$205 000 opportunity enclosed, details inside'. Inside the envelope an enclosed letter is headed 'Reply requested immediately'. It says 'Attention — this may be the winning number for the \$55 000 lucky number giveaway'. Three stickers are attached to the

letter to attach to an official reply envelope. The letter states 'We may already owe you the sum of \$55 000 if you have, and duly return, the winning number now'. Further down the letter states 'What's more, an even bigger prize is ready and waiting for the next winner of our thankyou prize and bonus draw. You could be that winner'.

I have no doubt that prizes may be won by following the instructions. Indeed on the second page of the letter winners are named and a photo of a presentation ceremony is included. The letter goes on to detail a book that may be purchased for \$39.96 plus \$7.99 postage and handling. My constituents' concern is that they were confused by this letter. They believed that they had already been chosen to receive the winnings highlighted in red and did not understand that they needed to apply, along with other recipients of the letter, to be included for consideration. They were also confused by the merging of the lucky number giveaway with the offer of the sale of the book.

I have many elderly constituents in my electorate and also many constituents who do not have English as their first language. It took some time for me to grasp the intent of this correspondence, so I can easily understand the confusion of constituents who have been under a misapprehension as to the true meaning of the letter. May I suggest that in recognition of this complexity Reader's Digest consider modifying its letter to provide greater clarity.

Carnegie Education Centre: future

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. Firstly, I seek a meeting with her, together with some of my constituents who are parents, and secondly, I seek action on the minister's part to retrieve an educational opportunity for a Sandringham electorate constituent who has Asperger's syndrome. A letter written by a school principal and published in yesterday's *Age* states:

The VRQA invokes its ridiculous powers to disrupt students' education rather than in the more challenging task of solving problems at young schools like Carnegie.

The focus is on regulations rather than education, bureaucracy rather than people.

In a letter forwarded to me by my constituents, they noted:

Our 15-year-old ... son has Asperger's syndrome. Until this year, he attended the Carnegie Education Centre in Kew where his needs both educationally and emotionally were being well catered for.

Unfortunately the centre was selected by the VRQA for an audit. A number of issues were raised by the VRQA, and the school was suspended until the three items raised were attended to. They have been attended to, but still the VRQA has seen fit to hold the school under suspension.

My constituents further noted:

As parents of a child who is probably never going to be able to attend a mainstream school, we are rotable that our son's only opportunity to obtain an education in a suitable setting has been curtailed by bureaucracy.

The school is certainly alternative; however this is the environment that we as parents chose for our child as he is indeed alternative. Our two other children attend excellent mainstream schools, but —

their other son simply would not survive in such a model. They further stated:

Schools like the Carnegie Education Centre exist to ensure that no child falls through the cracks in the education system.

It is noted that the minister once said we needed to:

... improve the education of our young people so that they can thrive, learn, grow and shine.

The Carnegie Education Centre is, in the opinion of his parents, the 'best option'. They further wrote:

Every child deserves the opportunity to do and be the very best that they can be. The suspension of his school is in contrast with his well being and our hopes for the most positive educational outcome.

They have duly sought support from the office of the minister.

The educational journey of every child in Victoria is important. I seek a meeting with the minister and the parents to see whether an outcome can be arrived at which will meet the educational needs not just of my Sandringham electorate constituent, but for a number of students in metropolitan Melbourne who have been attending the Carnegie school.

Hurstbridge: children's hub

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, and the action I seek is for her to support a grant application from the Shire of Nillumbik requesting \$500 000 in funding to support the establishment of a children's hub in Hurstbridge. Children's centres are a fantastic initiative of this Brumby government, and I want to thank the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development for her great commitment in delivering these centres throughout my electorate.

The minister only recently opened the new children's hub as part of the community activity centre at Mernda. There has been \$1 million in funding provided, and the first sod is about to be turned for a facility in Doreen. Services will begin there at the start of 2011. The same day that the minister opened the facility in Mernda, she announced funding for a new children's hub in Whittlesea. South Morang was one of the first children's centres operating in the state, and they are doing great work. We also were able to fund a mini one co-located with the Kangaroo Ground Primary School.

The federal government has run with the Victorian idea and has allocated \$1 million for the establishment of a hub in Hurstbridge. This followed intense lobbying by Rob Mitchell, the Labor candidate for the federal seat of McEwen, prior to the last election, and he has continued with that lobbying since the election of the Rudd government. A children's centre in Hurstbridge would offer a one-stop shop for preschoolers in the town for the increasing numbers of families who are moving there. The hub would have maternal and child health and early intervention services, visiting professionals, a kindergarten, and for the first time we would have child care, because currently there is none.

In leaving it to the market, the Liberal Party, embodied by the former Howard federal government, made a complete mess of child care. We saw the absolute debacle where ABC Developmental Learning Centres was able to grow not just as the largest child-care provider in the country but in the world, and then we saw its collapse. There was a concentration of child care in one entity, with a former minister sitting on its board and claiming a lot of funds from the federal coffers; it was a complete mess.

We do not believe you should leave services for children up to the market. The state's support for children should not begin at the start of school — it begins from birth. We are committing to that by funding children's centres, so I urge the minister to give great consideration to this request for \$500 000 for a children's hub in Hurstbridge.

Anorexia: treatment funding

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — My request for action is directed to the Minister for Health. I was recently contacted by Mrs Adriana De Leo in relation to her talented daughter Gemma, a 16-year-old girl who has been battling anorexia for the last 18 months. She weighs around 36 kilos. Gemma's GP referred her to the Austin Hospital in Heidelberg, which is the closest hospital that admits children with eating disorders. However, the problem is the only treatment they offer

is to re-feed the children. No psychological treatment is offered, which is a serious problem given that anorexia is a mental illness with a mortality rate of around 20 per cent.

Every week Gemma travels to the hospital for check-ups, and when her weight drops to a critical level she is admitted to hospital to keep her medically stable. Once Gemma's weight stabilises she is discharged, only for the cycle to begin again because the root of the problem has not been dealt with. Gemma has had several hospital admissions over the past 18 months, and her mother tells me that her mental state has deteriorated. Gemma's psychologist at Eastern Health has advised Mrs De Leo that her daughter will die unless she receives more intensive psychological care.

There is a desperate need for further funding for eating disorder clinics in Victoria. The approach needs to include intensive, ongoing psychological support as well as medical treatment. The De Leo family is now desperate as they have been advised by doctors at the Austin Hospital that they reside under the Box Hill Hospital jurisdiction, meaning that Gemma will have to have any future admissions taken by Box Hill Hospital. However, Box Hill Hospital is not set up to cater for patients with eating disorders, nor does it have a specific ward dedicated to patients with eating disorders.

The action I seek is that the minister treat the lack of services for children with eating disorders at Box Hill Hospital as an urgent matter and ensures treatment, including psychological treatment, is provided at the Austin and Box Hill hospitals.

Mrs De Leo was told by an Austin Hospital consultant that there has been a 100 per cent increase in the last 12 months of children with eating disorders. She was also told that the hospital has in excess of 50 patients but only 6 beds available.

Over the last 18 months the De Leo family has come to meet many other parents of children and teenagers from the Yarra Ranges who are struggling with the illness but who are required to travel long distances for help. They are despairing at the lack of funding and resources to help their children out of the black hole that is anorexia.

While beyondblue, help lines and other phone-based counselling services provide useful interim services for emergency situations, many parents need to have their children housed at specialist clinics where food attitudes are constantly monitored and reshaped in a supportive environment with expert care.

Funding will allow support services to offer earlier intervention to those suffering from anorexia before the physiological changes set in, when the brain tells the body to no longer accept food. A lack of response from the minister on this issue will be terminal for anorexia sufferers.

Forest Hill electorate: health services

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for the minister to join me at one of my Forest Hill community morning teas to provide information on and to help raise awareness of health issues affecting my constituents such as diabetes and cancer and to inform the people of Forest Hill of the many health services available in the area.

Health is important to people in my electorate for many different reasons. The high proportion of senior Victorians who reside in the area in general — they constitute over 18 per cent of the population in Forest Hill — require access to any number of health services to maintain general wellbeing and, if need be, to address chronic conditions. It is also an issue for families who require medical attention when the children catch a cold, come home from school with chickenpox or break a limb skateboarding.

I have been approached at my mobile offices by constituents regarding hospital waiting times. Along with a number of my constituents, I welcomed the Brumby Labor government's announcement last year that the Box Hill Hospital redevelopment project would be allocated \$407.5 million. When completed this redevelopment will deliver 506 beds, an increase of 113 per cent; 6 new operating theatres; 4 refurbished theatres; a new and significantly larger emergency department; subacute services for the first time — 30 new beds; a new intensive care unit; critical acute services, including a new cardiology ward, coronary care unit and catheter laboratories; two new endoscopy laboratories; and a dedicated precinct for women's and children's services. This redevelopment will provide additional capacity to care for around 7000 extra patients per year.

The health issues that tend to dominate the media and policy arena are those that by and large affect women, such as breast cancer, and there has been until recently limited recognition of the health issues affecting men. Statistically, mortality rates, life expectancy and avoidable deaths due to reduced blood supply to the heart illustrate poorer health outcomes for males.

This issue is very close to my heart. Just over a week ago my father was staying in our house with my mother. He collapsed and stopped breathing, and it was very fortunate that my husband revived him. Fortunately he was transferred to the Alfred, where staff administered sufficient care to provide him the ability to continue to be my father.

Men's health issues certainly need to be more openly discussed, and I ask the minister to assist in continuing this discussion in my electorate. I know that for my father many questions were raised as to what he had been doing that contributed to his difficulty, because there certainly is no history of any of those issues in our family.

Templestowe Road, Bulleen: pedestrian safety

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports. The action I seek from the minister is for the minister and the government to provide funding to install pedestrian refuge crossings and centre lane vehicle turning along Templestowe Road in Bulleen.

On numerous occasions I have raised with the government the need to provide funding for the full upgrade of Templestowe Road. Unfortunately the cost for a full upgrade is approximately \$20 million, and for the last 11 years the government has ignored this request. The situation is very dangerous, and while I understand that the government might not have the \$20 million, because it is too busy spending it on self-promotion and advertising, I urge the government to do something urgently before someone gets killed.

It is a dangerous situation, as I said, so I am requesting that four pedestrian refuge crossings and centre turning lanes be installed on Templestowe Road. This will go a long way in ensuring the safety of local residents until funding is found — the \$20 million — to fully upgrade Templestowe Road. Members of the Templestowe reference panel, comprised of local residents who meet with the council to come up with ideas on how to make this road safe, are frustrated and angry that the government has ignored their pleas. Panel members have sent email after email to VicRoads. In one email the chairman of the action group, Mr Mervyn Hayman-Danker, said:

However, various attempts by our panel to underscore this unique opportunity and the above special case has resulted in the usual 'spin' that Templestowe Road is not eligible for any state funding!!!

We, however, hope that some common sense will now prevail in this attempt to urgently urge another review by the wide responsible authorities to fully confirm the need for the

safety factors pertaining to pedestrians and vehicles in this part of the city of Manningham!

I therefore ask the minister to visit — to come and see Templestowe Road for himself. I will perhaps pay for him to play golf at the club. He could perhaps visit the Heide Gallery or even Melissa Cakes, a shop with outlets also on Smith Street and Thornbury, which makes cakes as good as those of Niko's Quality Cakes, and Vanilla Cakes and Lounge.

It is very important that the minister come and see for himself the need to install these pedestrian crossings on Templestowe Road. When people, including young children and senior citizens, wish to get to the other side of the road, they find it is impossible without taking their lives into their own hands in the attempt. I urge the minister to provide the necessary funding.

Walking: promotion

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. It concerns the provision of initiatives to promote walking, which may be what is necessary for members of this house after suggestions of all the cake eating in the adjournment debate this evening! The action I seek from the minister is that he consider initiatives that will promote the role of walking as a modern mode of transport.

The health benefits of walking and cycling are many. Walking and cycling increase heart and lung fitness, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke and reduce body fat, especially that accumulated from lots of vanilla slices!

These health benefits are proven. A 2007 study of inactive women found that around 75 minutes of exercise per week improved participants' fitness levels significantly in comparison to a non-exercising group. Steady cycling burns around 1200-kilojoules per week, which is an important fact, with research suggesting that we should be burning up at least 8400 kilojoules per week through exercise.

The Brumby Labor government has taken action through initiatives that include Go for your Life and Parks Victoria's Metropolitan Trail Network grants program. Recently I had the pleasure of announcing \$46 405 for an extension to the Hallam Valley trail in my electorate of Narre Warren South. The funding will connect the trail through Sweeney Reserve to the Berwick railway station, the activity centre and Monash University. I am looking forward to walking this trail in the future, and I know that many students and residents are too. I am an avid walker, and I am very keen to see

more people out and about. A walk along River Gum Creek Reserve in my electorate is a great way of experiencing the natural environment but also of recharging the batteries. I look forward to more people getting out and about on our new trail network.

TravelSmart is another Brumby Labor government initiative which aims to reduce people's dependency on cars, and encourages them to choose sustainable travel alternatives such as walking, cycling, car pooling or public transport. To date the grants package has delivered more than \$14.5 million in funding to nearly 100 local projects across the state. As part of a government that constantly builds on its great work and has good plans for the future, I ask that the minister consider further initiatives that will promote the role of walking as a modern mode of transport.

Responses

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Premier, seeking his advocacy to the Rudd government and expressing concerns about the recent expulsion of an Israeli diplomat. I will make sure that the Premier is made aware of that matter.

The member for Oakleigh raised a matter for the Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, seeking support for the recognition of Eaton Mall as a cultural precinct, and specifically a Greek precinct, in the Oakleigh shopping centre and of course to be funded. I will make sure the minister is aware of that.

The member for Rodney raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, seeking her intervention in relation to a Building the Education Revolution proposal for the Nathalia Primary School, which we are advised was not funded on the basis of school student numbers. I will make sure the minister is aware of that matter.

The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, seeking his advice and investigation into a promotion by Reader's Digest, particularly a promotional package which may have the possibility of misleading people and confusing readers. I will make sure that the matter is brought to the minister's attention.

The member for Sandringham raised a matter for the Minister for Education, seeking a meeting with her for one of his constituents whose child suffers from Asperger's syndrome, and seeking support for the Carnegie Education Centre in Kew. I will make sure the

minister is aware of that request for a meeting and conversation in relation to that particular centre.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, seeking financial support for the establishment of a children's centre in Hurstbridge. I will make sure the minister is aware of that matter.

The member for Evelyn raised a matter for the Minister for Health in relation to a Mrs De Leo and her child who is suffering from anorexia, seeking his support for further psychological care for these young people suffering from this dreadful illness at both the Austin and Box Hill hospitals. I will make sure the minister is aware of that request.

The member for Forest Hill raised a matter for the Minister for Health, seeking his support for the promotion of further health education in her electorate at regular community events in the Forest Hill area. I can attest to the great work the minister has done in supporting those types of initiatives in my own area — they are very popular with residents — and can I say I am sure that on both sides of the house we wish the member's father a full recovery.

The member for Bulleen raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports, seeking his support for the installation of four pedestrian safe refuge crossings in the Templestowe Road area in Bulleen. I will make sure the minister is aware of that request.

Finally, the member for Narre Warren South raised a very important matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports, seeking his support for the promotion of walking as not only a very important physical activity but also an important recreational activity which, as we all know, has significant health benefits. The most recent advice I have personally received on these matters is that one can lower one's cholesterol by a whole point if one exercises for half an hour five times a week. Walking is the go!

The SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.09 p.m. until Tuesday, 8 June.