

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 4 February 2010

(Extract from book 1)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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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*): Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney.

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.

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

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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:

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Mr P. J. RYAN

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Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP			

¹ Resigned 6 August 2007

² Elected 15 September 2007

³ Resigned 2 June 2008

⁴ Elected 28 June 2008

⁵ Resigned 18 January 2010

⁶ Elected 15 September 2007

⁷ Resigned 6 August 2007

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2010

BUSHFIRES: BLACK SATURDAY ANNIVERSARY.....	189
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Notices of motion: removal</i>	189
<i>Adjournment</i>	189
PETITION	
<i>Rail: Mildura line</i>	189
VICTORIAN COMPETITION AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION	
<i>A Sustainable Future for Victoria — Getting Environmental Regulation Right</i>	189
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE	
<i>Audit Act</i>	189
DOCUMENTS.....	189
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Professor Patrick McGorry</i>	190
<i>Planning: Warrandyte green wedge</i>	190
<i>Werribee Mercy Hospital: maternity services</i>	190
<i>Toolamba Primary School: fire</i>	191
<i>Australia Day: Macedon electorate</i>	191
<i>Planning: Box Hill development</i>	192
<i>George Hanlon</i>	192
<i>Sandie Jeffcoat</i>	192
<i>Hugh Monroe</i>	192
<i>World Congress of Chinese Medicine</i>	193
<i>Wild dogs: control</i>	193
<i>Zac Berra</i>	193
<i>Mornington Peninsula: infrastructure</i>	194
<i>Electricity: smart meters</i>	194
<i>Brad Hodge</i>	194
<i>Liquor licensing: regime</i>	194
<i>Bushfires: Black Saturday anniversary</i>	195
<i>Friends of Wattle Park</i>	195
<i>Mountain cattlemen: coalition policy</i>	196
<i>Australia Day: Ballarat East electorate</i>	196
<i>George Constas</i>	196
<i>Bayswater Secondary College: building works</i>	197
ANNUAL STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS.....	197, 234
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
<i>Police: data security</i>	225, 226
<i>Bushfires: preparedness</i>	226, 233
<i>Minister for Police and Emergency Services: performance</i>	227
<i>Bushfires: local government</i>	229
<i>West Gate Bridge: lighting</i>	230
<i>Bushfires: recovery</i>	230
<i>Shire of Gannawarra: jobs</i>	231
<i>Bushfires: children's support services</i>	232
<i>Electricity: smart meters</i>	233
SUSPENSION OF MEMBER	
<i>Member for Polwarth</i>	226
ACCIDENT COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	243
<i>Consideration in detail</i>	244
<i>Third reading</i>	245
TRANSPORT INTEGRATION BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	246
<i>Third reading</i>	246
MAGISTRATES' COURT AMENDMENT (MENTAL HEALTH LIST) BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	246
<i>Third reading</i>	246
WATER AMENDMENT (ENTITLEMENTS) BILL	
<i>Council's amendment</i>	246
OFFSHORE PETROLEUM AND GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE BILL	
<i>Statement of compatibility</i>	246
<i>Second reading</i>	250
LIQUOR CONTROL REFORM AMENDMENT (ANZAC DAY) BILL	
<i>Statement of compatibility</i>	253
<i>Second reading</i>	254
SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES.....	254
CONDOLENCES	
<i>James Bernard Maher, AO</i>	255
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>St John's Elsternwick Cricket Club: liquor licence</i>	255
<i>Housing: Cranbourne electorate</i>	255
<i>Housing: Mildura electorate</i>	256
<i>Bushfires: Strathewen hall</i>	256
<i>Bulleen Road—Golden Way, Bulleen: traffic lights</i>	257
<i>Racing: picnic clubs</i>	258
<i>Princes Highway: eastern upgrade</i>	258
<i>Mobil Yarraville: retrenchments</i>	258
<i>Planning: Abbotsford development</i>	259
<i>Public transport: Yan Yean electorate</i>	259
<i>Responses</i>	260

Thursday, 4 February 2010

The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSHFIRES: BLACK SATURDAY ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER — Order! I would like to let members know that to commemorate the first anniversary of Black Saturday the parliamentary library will display for the month of February some of the condolence messages sent to the Speaker and the chamber along with a bound copy of the condolence motion that was passed by the Assembly. Also, the Victorian bushfire message books, including those messages signed at Parliament House and members' electorate offices, were handed to the State Library of Victoria yesterday by the Premier and the Minister for the Arts, and they will be displayed in the state library on Swanston Street in the Cowen gallery on level 2A.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of motion: removal**

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 87 to 91, 157 to 159, 197 and 249 to 255 will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who requires the notice standing in his or her name to be continued must advise the Clerk in writing by 2.00 p.m. today.

PETITION**Following petition presented to house:****Rail: Mildura line**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house 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) (49 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition be considered next day on motion of Mr CRISP (Mildura).

VICTORIAN COMPETITION AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION***A Sustainable Future for Victoria — Getting Environmental Regulation Right***

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health), by leave, presented report and government response.

Motion agreed to.

Tabled.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**Audit Act**

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) presented discussion paper.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004 — Report 2008–09 of the Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police under s 31

Police Integrity, Office of — Information Security and the Victoria Police State Surveillance Unit — Ordered to be printed

Surveillance Devices Act 1999 — Report 2008–09 of the Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police under s 30L

Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 — Report 2008–09 of the Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police under s 21M.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Adjournment**

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 23 February 2010.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Professor Patrick McGorry

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health) — I congratulate Professor Patrick McGorry, our Australian of the Year. This great honour recognises his tireless commitment to the treatment of mental illness, particularly in young people. Professor McGorry is a renowned leader in the field of youth mental health. His pioneering work, particularly in the area of early psychosis, has won him both national and international recognition. Professor McGorry has made an enormous contribution, both nationally and internationally, to service reform particularly in the area of early psychosis and youth mental health for over 15 years.

As the executive director of Orygen Youth Health Clinical Program and executive director of the Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, he has driven a youth-specific mental health service and the development of more effective and safe treatment practices for young people presenting with early symptoms of mental illness. As well as contributing significantly to the field of schizophrenia and psychosis research, Professor McGorry has conducted important research in other fields of psychiatry such as homelessness and prisoners, treatment for refugees and torture survivors, youth suicide and youth substance use.

The importance of Professor McGorry's work cannot be understated. He has played a big part in helping shape the Brumby government's mental health reform strategy. Through his work at Orygen Youth Health, as a member of the Victorian Mental Health Reform Council and now as Australian of the Year, I know that Professor McGorry will continue his great work to achieve better outcomes for people living with mental illness. I look forward to continuing to work with him in these efforts through the implementation of our mental health reform agenda in Victoria. I congratulate him again and thank him for his dedication and extraordinary contribution to mental health services and research both here and overseas.

Planning: Warrandyte green wedge

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — News that the Brumby government may allow an extensive expansion to a local nursing home situated in a green wedge zone in my electorate has justifiably raised serious concerns in my community about the Labor government's commitment to the green wedge. While local Labor representatives have claimed to be against development in the local green wedge, the possibility that the Labor

government could give its approval to this extension should make local residents very cautious as to the sincerity of those claims. It has been clearly demonstrated in the past that on controversial planning decisions the Brumby government will willingly remove the right of local residents who are affected by developments to have the opportunity to comment. This disregard for local communities extends to residents often not even being made aware that these decisions have been made so that the government can avoid scrutiny until the bulldozers move in.

Manningham City Council deputy mayor Fred Chua has apparently and inexplicably applied directly to the Minister for Planning to intervene in the decision to allow the expansion of the development, apparently without notification to the entirety of the council. It is my sincere hope the minister will make the decision to not exercise his authority in this matter. To do so would be a flagrant disregard for the views of the Warrandyte township. Although many Warrandyte residents are not necessarily opposed to the nursing home in isolation, they strongly believe in their right to voice their opinion on a major development proposed in their community. I support that right and will stand up for my community in their fight to be heard. Decisions such as these need to be made in the open and with maximum consultation, not as a result of arbitrary rulings and secret deals made behind closed doors.

Werribee Mercy Hospital: maternity services

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — Yesterday I had the great pleasure of attending the sod turn with Minister Andrews beginning the construction of the \$14 million expansion of the Werribee Mercy Hospital maternity services. I had the opportunity to see the babies and equipment being moved at the end of last year, and yesterday's event began the construction of the new antenatal and postnatal area, which will convert part of the old maternity ward into a new state-of-the-art special care nursery. The project will be delivered in two phases, with the post-natal unit completed first, towards the end of 2010, followed by the special care nursery in 2010. The expansion of the Werribee Mercy Hospital will deliver 8 additional obstetric beds and 4 additional special care nursery cots; this will increase obstetric beds from 24 to 32, and special care nursery cots from 12 to 16.

The city of Wyndham is Victoria's fastest growing municipality. With its phenomenal growth it is exceedingly important that we support it by providing infrastructure locally and enable women to give birth in the area where they live.

This also will allow babies with extra needs born at other hospitals to be moved closer to home with their mothers. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that exceptional maternal health services are available locally, especially when the number of births per year at Werribee Mercy Hospital is expected to increase from 1740 in 2008–09 to 2692 in 2016, after the maternity ward and special care nursery have been expanded.

I would like to thank Mercy Health's chief executive officer John Ballard; Mercy Health's executive director Deborah Cole; Werribee Mercy Hospital's chief operating officer Stephen Cornelissen; its director of nursing Wendy Dunn; and all the doctors, nurses and health professionals at Werribee Mercy Hospital.

Toolamba Primary School: fire

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — I awoke yesterday morning to the shocking news that the Toolamba Primary School, in my electorate, had been destroyed by fire. As I was in Melbourne and could not personally visit the area I immediately phoned to offer my assistance and support.

The regional network leader, Marion Lawless, was already at the school site with the principal, Heather Kennedy, and teachers, parents, the council and the regional team to assess the damage. The fire broke out at about 4.00 a.m. yesterday, completely destroying all classrooms. Investigations are under way to find its cause, but thankfully no-one was hurt.

Toolamba is a very close-knit community, with the school being an important part of the community. Parents, students, teachers and community members who rushed to the school were devastated by the loss of the school and the kindergarten, as well as the loss of memorabilia, students' work and the important history that cannot be replaced. Over 100 students attend the school; they are to be relocated to nearby schools and will return to the Toolamba school site in about three weeks' time to be accommodated in relocatable classrooms.

The school is already planned for replacement, and land has been purchased next to the school for that purpose. A decision will now have to be made about the location of the new school. This will be a hectic time for principals, teachers and the president of the Toolamba school council, Cameron Pogue, and I ask the Minister for Education to assist in making the transition for the students as stress free as possible and to commence building of the new school urgently.

On ABC radio this morning the Minister for Education said she is absolutely committed to building a new school at Toolamba, and I will monitor progress to ensure it is built, hopefully before the end of this year, but certainly before the next school year starts.

Australia Day: Macedon electorate

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — I would like to pay tribute to the Australia Day award recipients in my electorate. Stephen Mills, Sarah Gunn and Laura Baseggio; and Romina Martiniello from Sunbury were all made Young Citizens of the Year.

Stephen Mills is president of the student union and representative of the school student council at Gisborne Secondary College. He has organised students to visit the St Vincent de Paul shelter in North Melbourne on a regular basis and helped coordinate fundraising after the Black Saturday bushfires.

Laura Baseggio suffers from a disorder — complex regional pain syndrome — which is characterised by severe pain. Laura has worked to raise funds for research into this disorder, as well as raising awareness among staff and students at her school.

Sarah Gunn has been an active member of the Macedon Ranges Basketball Association for the past 10 years as a player, coach and umpires coordinator.

Romina Martiniello attends Salesian College and has been a volunteer at the local St Vincent de Paul shop and at Don Bosco camps during her school holidays. Romina was a recipient of the Community Spirit award in 2009 for her positive contribution to her school community.

Noel Shaw from Romsey was named Citizen of the Year for his decades of work with the Romsey mechanics hall committee and the Romsey Uniting Church. Glenys Quaipe was also recognised. Glenys has been a local business owner and volunteer for many years, and has been involved in the Gisborne festival, the Gisborne fountain project and the Gisborne swimming pool. Glenys is on the original committee of the Gisborne and District Business Association, and she is still very involved in many different projects around Gisborne.

Community achievements awards were given to Jane Walduck and Kellie Duff for their amazing work in establishing the Woodend children's park.

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

Planning: Box Hill development

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The decision by the Minister for Planning to call in the planning application for a 38-storey tower at the corner of Station Street and Carrington Road, Box Hill, is an appalling and unjustified removal of the community's rights in relation to a proposal that is pivotal to the future direction of Box Hill.

The Brumby government has given no good reason for the call-in. Whitehorse City Council gave the application full and careful consideration. It was listed for appeal before VCAT (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal), where I understand it was due to be heard within the month and where all the issues involved could be publicly debated and examined.

By taking this application out of the hands of VCAT the government is usurping its own umpire which the government itself has designated to decide planning issues in accordance with the government's own planning laws. The call-in has been condemned by planning experts as an unjustified abuse of process that sets a bad precedent for the integrity of the planning system.

The site in question has potential for substantial development, but only if problems such as traffic flow, pedestrian flow, parking, overshadowing and integration with the Box Hill transport interchange can be properly sorted out first. This should not be done through the government snatching the decision from the community and having it imposed by the minister.

If the government really wanted to work with the community to achieve a good outcome, it should be upgrading the Box Hill transport interchange and ensuring it is properly integrated with any development. However, instead the government is continuing to treat the residents of the Box Hill electorate with contempt by imposing high-rise, high-density developments with none of the public transport improvements that Box Hill was supposed to receive as a transit city.

George Hanlon

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I take this opportunity to mark the life of the great George Hanlon, who died on 28 January 2010 aged 92. As most members would be aware, George Hanlon was a master horse trainer who at his peak matched his rivals at the time — people like Bart Cummings, Colin Hayes and Tommy Smith.

George Hanlon's connections to Geelong commenced in 1985 when he shifted his stables to Leopold to train

on the rolling hills of his property. And train horses he did. Over his 60-year career George Hanlon trained three Melbourne Cup winners — Piping Lane, Arwon and Black Knight. In addition there were was a Caulfield Cup, a Brisbane Cup, four Adelaide cups, one Australian Cup, one Cox Plate with Family Of Man, one AJC Derby and a Doncaster Handicap — in total 37 group 1 winners. It is not a bad strike rate for a trainer who averaged 15 horses in his stable at any one time, compared with the hundreds of his rivals.

George's love of sport went beyond the bounds of racing. He was an avid Cats follower and had a real passion for boxing. It was through this love of boxing that I met and came to know George Hanlon. On a pretty regular basis through the 1980s and 1990s I had the privilege of going to fight nights with my late father, George and his son Gary to watch the likes of Lester Ellis, Barry Michael and Jeff Fenech.

They were memorable nights, with the conversation in the car quickly turning from racehorses to boxing champions of the past. They were great nights that will remain etched in my mind forever. George Hanlon is a member of the Australian Racing Hall of Fame — and rightly so — and a legend of the racing world. The racing world will be much poorer for his passing. My condolences to his family.

Sandie Jeffcoat

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — I wish to pay tribute to two Mansfield shire citizens who passed away recently. Sandie Jeffcoat passed away on 31 December 2009 after a long battle with cancer. Sandie was a can-do person who contributed significantly to the development of Mount Buller and Mount Stirling in his role as chief executive officer of the resort management board for many years. He later became a councillor and then mayor of the Shire of Mansfield, during which time he provided strong leadership and gained considerable government support for a range of projects for the benefit of the people of Mansfield shire. Sandie will be sadly missed by his wife, Rae, and his family.

Hugh Monroe

Dr SYKES — On Sunday, 10 January 2010, Country Fire Authority volunteer Hugh Monroe was killed when the CFA tanker which he was driving crashed. Hugh put service above self, serving two tours of duty in Vietnam. Upon his move to Tolmie about 10 years ago, he served the local community in many forms, including being a very active member of the Tolmie brigade of the CFA, using his much-valued

driving skills. Hugh is survived by his wife, Kathy, and family.

Over 400 people attended the funerals of both Sandie and Hugh, highlighting how much the local community, friends and families respected and loved both men. I join the people of Mansfield area in offering my deepest sympathy to Rae and family, and Kathy and family, as they cope with the loss of such fine men.

World Congress of Chinese Medicine

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — It was an honour on 5 December to be able to represent the Premier at the World Congress of Chinese Medicine hosted by the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, which represents Chinese medicine practitioners and experts from 56 countries, 185 associations or societies worldwide, including the society in Australia, which is the Federation of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Societies. There were approximately 1000 people at the dinner.

I was fortunate enough to sit beside Professor T. Chiang Lin, who is the national president of the federation and also the person who has written much of the coursework for the Chinese medicine course at RMIT. I was also able to talk to Mr Wang Guo Qiang, the Vice-Minister for Health and Director-General of the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine of the People's Republic of China, who was the honoured guest of the congress.

Generally the message from the practitioners in attendance was what a wonderful job Victoria had done in being the first state in a Western country to regulate the practice of Chinese medicine via a statute, with the passing of the Chinese Medicine Registration Act 2000. Time and again they said how impressed they were that Victoria had actually done that and set up proper regulation and encouraged professionalism in this industry. It was a great honour to give a brief speech and to notice that the well-known — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Wild dogs: control

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I call on the government to address the real and ongoing concern in Gippsland East with the scourge of wild dogs. Farmers from across my electorate are becoming increasingly frustrated by the apparent lack of interest and stupid decisions that have been taken by the government

agencies, which are severely hampering their efforts to control wild dogs.

The latest is the dog trapper position at Orbost. This position has now been converted to a planning and office role — just another pen-pushing bureaucrat, when what we need are real dog trappers on the ground, dealing with the issue and working with farmers and land-holders to address the problem.

This is on top of the apparent withdrawal of the older, larger traps for reasons unknown to local trappers, leaving the doggers with less effective small traps. This means that doggers have less capacity to catch and deal with wild dogs.

The minister must take action to address these problems. The minister needs to come down to Gippsland East, to spend a day with a real trapper, to travel around and speak firsthand to the farmers, who are at the pointy end of this issue.

A number of these decisions just show how out of touch the Department of Primary Industries' managers and the government are with what is going on on the ground. While doggers are only part of the solution for dealing with wild dogs, they are an important part. Over the last few years the dog problem has become worse in most areas of Gippsland East.

Zac Berra

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — Thornbury has its very own Karate Kid, Zac Berra, who has been crowned Australian champion in the 11-year-old age group. I am not surprised that Zac has been able to achieve this honour as late last year he won the Catherine Helen Spence Award at Thornbury Primary School, a school of excellence that has supported all of Zac's achievements.

At each school in my electorate the award is given to a nominated student who displays outstanding leadership in their school community. When nominating him for the award, Carolyn Flegg, the assistant principal, had this to say about Zac:

Zac has stood out in his leadership qualities and contribution to the school community. In his many roles he has been active in improving the school environment and in taking the initiative in completing tasks. His personal qualities show a caring and considerate manner towards others. Well done, Zac. Thank you for showing us great leadership and community spirit.

Thornbury Primary School, very able led by principal Kathleen Noonan, is committed to excellence in education. The school declares on its website that its

'core business is learning' and lists the importance of learning as being to value each other, to think critically and creatively, to be a good community member, to appreciate compassion and, of course, to have fun.

Zac exemplifies these qualities. As he explained after becoming karate champion, 'I was just focusing on doing my best and trying my hardest. I love the physical challenges that it gives me, and it also gives me self-discipline'. Zac is hoping to attend next year's championships, where he aims to get a black belt. I am sure that, with this sort of attitude, he has every chance of achieving his goals.

Mornington Peninsula: infrastructure

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Usually the first week of each parliamentary year I give a run down of the issues that have affected the Nepean electorate over the summer. As members would be aware, the population of the Mornington Peninsula increases significantly then as thousands flock to holiday or visit its many features. Once again, the two services that failed miserably were the peninsula's roads and boating facilities.

Again the peninsula's main roads and rat runs came to a standstill, with up to 30 000 vehicles a day using the two-lane Point Nepean Road. It is not uncommon for the usual 15-minute drive from Dromana to Rye to take 75 minutes. The congestion blocked access for emergency vehicles, spoil the amenity for everyone and made crossing over to the beach a risky and drawn-out process for families.

This government has to work with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and the community to identify options to relieve this chaos, which will be made worse by the extra traffic Peninsula Link will bring.

We also saw chaos at every boat ramp, with an hour-long wait to use ramps commonplace, as well as there being a lack of boat trailer parking. These are only two examples of the Brumby government's lack of concern for the Mornington Peninsula.

Electricity: smart meters

Mr DIXON — I have been inundated with concerns from constituents regarding this government's policy of forcing households to purchase smart meters. As the majority of my constituents are pensioners, they are justifiably worried about how they will pay for them on their fixed incomes. They are even more upset when they realise that there is no upside for them in having a smart meter; the only beneficiary is the electricity

company. This government needs to revisit its heavy-handed policy.

Brad Hodge

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park) — I rise to pay tribute to the first-class career of Victorian batsman Brad Hodge, who recently announced his retirement from Sheffield Shield cricket. Brad Hodge has shown himself to be a great servant of Victorian cricket through his career as Victoria's all-time leading run scorer. He will be a hard act to ever eclipse, as will his looming record as the nation's top run scorer in domestic one-day games. His 17 084 runs for Victoria since 1993–94, at an average of over 48, puts him amongst the legends of Victorian cricket. His 51 centuries, including a highest score of 302 not out, reveal him as a champion who has demonstrated the highest levels of skill and commitment in the best traditions of the game.

However, it is the deliberate underrecognition of these achievements by the Sydney-centric national selectors, who have long sought to deny him a place in the national team, that stands out as the one scourge of this brilliant career. When even they could not keep him out by weight of his runs they had to resort to doing their best to make his stay as short as possible. In a period of Australian cricket dominance this is perhaps the greatest national loss that the Australian selectors inflicted on cricket supporters, for when Brad Hodge did force his way into the national team under an avalanche of runs and maintained that at the test level, including an unbeaten double century against South Africa and averaging over 58 runs, he was surprisingly dropped after only five tests. Undeterred he continued to pile on the runs for Victoria and forced his way back into the national one-day team.

These guardians of Sydney batsmen who pass for national selectors sought to justify their anti-Victorian stance with false rumours of problems with technique and softness against the short ball. The same failings are now, apparently, a prerequisite to captain the Australian team.

Liquor licensing: regime

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — During the Christmas-New Year break a sign appeared in the window of a vacant shop in Mountain View Road, Mount Eliza, announcing an application for a packaged liquor licence. The area is entirely residential and the premises were formerly a local convenience store. It is proposed that trading hours will extend until 11.00 p.m. on all evenings except Christmas Day and Good Friday. The shop is completely unsuitable for the purpose as it

is surrounded by houses on quiet residential streets, it is distant from a main thoroughfare and there is insufficient parking to deal with the level of traffic that will be generated. The site is zoned residential and retail premises are prohibited in the zone, which should finish the matter, except that convenience shops and food and drink premises are excluded. The council is unlikely to support a permit, but the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal has proven again and again that it is prepared to grant permits for applications which stretch the rules to the extreme.

This is of course a two-stage process, with the liquor licence application coming before the town planning application. While the grounds for objection are restricted, the act makes it clear that opposition based on potential detriment to amenity or the likelihood of the misuse or abuse of alcohol are both valid reasons for the application to be refused. This application would fall at either hurdle. There is clear evidence that poor planning controls have resulted in both excessive numbers of licensed premises and premises being located in inappropriate locations, a point made recently by senior police. I urge the director of liquor licensing to reject this application, and I urge the minister to amend the act immediately to ban the sale of packaged liquor in residential areas.

Bushfires: Black Saturday anniversary

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — As the anniversary of Black Saturday nears it is time for us all to pause and reflect. Many of us had some connection to people and places that were devastated by the biggest disaster in Australia's history. The fire has impacted on people in many different ways. We remember those who lost their lives and think about those who have suffered the pain of losing loved ones. We remember those whose lives have been scarred physically, mentally and emotionally by the tragedy as well as the people who have been displaced and are trying to get their lives back together. We will take the time to learn from our mistakes before, during and after the fires. We also remember the wonderful people who have been so generous with their time and resources to provide assistance to survivors. I regularly meet people who have dedicated their lives to assisting with an aspect of a community's recovery at a significant financial cost to themselves. The important thing though is that we remember the survivors, maintain our focus on rebuilding their communities and assist people with their recovery for as long as they require it.

Bushfires: Black Saturday anniversary

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — As the first anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires approaches it is timely to reflect on Gippsland's recovery from this disastrous day and of course the fires of late January that impacted upon the Boolarra and Yinnar communities. The recovery process over this last 12 months has been slow and cumbersome for many. For those who lost loved ones the hurt still remains, yet despite the sorrow, grief and loss I have been amazed at the resilience, determination and positive approach displayed by so many bushfire survivors in our bushfire-affected communities.

Whilst there are still significant challenges confronting these communities, families and individuals, the progress that has been made in these last 12 months is substantial. It has been the efforts and generosity of so many selfless people that has allowed this to occur. It is unfair to individualise as there have been contributions from a diverse range of groups including service clubs, community recovery committees, businesses and government and community associations, amongst others. Within communities leaders have arisen and despite their own personal challenges these people continue to do what they can to assist their fellow men. I know this spirit is reflected across all bushfire-ravaged communities and those people need to be acknowledged.

As 7 February approaches may I, on behalf of the Morwell electorate, pass on my most sincere condolences to those families who lost loved ones as a result of the Black Saturday fires. It is difficult to know or understand your pain, but please know your community stands by to support you during this time of sorrow.

Friends of Wattle Park

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — Last night I had the opportunity to ring members of the committee of management of Friends of Wattle Park at their meeting and talk about the great support the state government and Parks Victoria is providing to keep Wattle Park a wonderful oasis in the middle of the eastern suburbs. We discussed the announcement made last Friday by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings, and me of a \$100 000 program to improve and redevelop the trail on the southern boundary of Wattle Park. Naturally, the Friends of Wattle Park, led by Howard and Marie Hodgens, were delighted with this announcement. It was also delighted with the grant of \$5000 to support the Wattle Day

Festival in September this year; that festival was reinstated four or five years ago.

Unfortunately Wattle Park was allowed to run down under the Liberals, and Parks Victoria staff were removed. We now have rangers on site. The popular trams have been restored; car parks have been upgraded, as has the water supply; there is a roof over the bandstand; a new golf centre; and many other improvements. Around half a million visits are made each year to Wattle Park, a popular playground for nearly a century.

It is also home to the original lone pine, the first planted after the First World War in support of the memory of soldiers of the 24th Battalion killed during the siege at Gallipoli. It is a wonderful part of Melbourne, and I suggest members pay it a visit.

Mountain cattlemen: coalition policy

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — It was with pleasure that in early January I joined a large number of my Liberal-Nationals colleagues at this year's mountain cattlemen's get-together at Wombat Crossing in Boisdale. My thanks go to the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria for hosting this great event. High country cattlemen are an iconic part of Victoria's rural community and our state's heritage. Victorian cattlemen were hung out to dry by the Premier and Labor, so I am proud to support the Liberal-Nationals policy to return cattlemen to the high country after this November's election.

It is clear that Labor's ministers and bureaucrats, who seem to be more versed in inner city cafe culture and hemp clothing, fail to understand the basic principles of land management. This government, through gross negligence, has let this state burn with three major, complex fires during its 10 long years in power. For those opposite who do not understand the issue, strategic and targeted cattle grazing is an effective tool for reducing fire fuel and bushfire risk. Cattlemen also play a role in reducing the number of feral animals, including wild dogs. It was reported that there was a 15 per cent decrease in the number of wild dogs killed last year, and it is interesting to note Labor's lack of commitment to culling wild dogs.

The electorates of government members for Narre Warren North and Narre Warren South, Yan Yean, Gembrook, Seymour, Bendigo East and Bendigo West, Ballarat East and Ballarat West, South Barwon and especially Ripon all faced fire or are at risk from fire — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Australia Day: Ballarat East electorate

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — Last week I was pleased to attend a number of community events to celebrate Australia Day. I am pleased that councils across my electorate have become very positive in organising significant celebrations, which are attracting high levels of community participation. In Moorabool shire I attended a community breakfast in Ballan, which was followed by recognition of Citizen of the Year Pat Liffman and Young Citizen of the Year Billy Smith. John Birt spoke as Australia Day ambassador, and many residents became Australian citizens.

In Hepburn shire Creswick hosted a breakfast which was attended by several hundred people; other residents enjoyed an even earlier breakfast at Mount Beckwith, which they climbed at dawn. A barbecue was held in Trentham and other events were held in Glenlyon. The night before, in Daylesford, a significant event was held. Jonathon Welch was the Australia Day ambassador, Clunes resident Mac Fawcett was recognised as Citizen of the Year, and Joshua Gilligan of Daylesford was the Young Citizen of the Year.

The City of Ballarat also held a range of events around Lake Wendouree, culminating in fireworks. Courtney McKay was named Young Citizen of the Year and foster carer Ronnie Rosenow was named Citizen of the Year. A citizenship ceremony saw previous residents of African, Asian and European countries become new Australian citizens. *Advance Australia Fair* was sung on numerous occasions. It was very encouraging to see many people reflecting on how fortunate they are to be Australian and to enjoy the great contributions made by so many people.

George Constas

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I rise to pay tribute to the late George Constas. He was a dear friend, a comrade and a great supporter. Born and raised on the island of Hios in Greece, George started his working life on the ships as a merchant seaman at the age of 14. He made many trips to Australia during his working years.

In the late 1950s George met his bride, Poppy, and they both took the plunge and migrated to Australia hoping for a better life for themselves and subsequently to give their children opportunities to excel. George and Poppy decided to call Frankston North, which is in my electorate of Cranbourne, home. They have three

beautiful daughters, Debbie, Anna and Helen. George and Poppy educated their daughters in Frankston North, and they all subsequently went on to further education.

George was an active member of the local Greek-Australian community. He also played a big role in the construction of the Greek community centre located in Carrum Downs, also in my electorate. As a resident of Frankston North, George was also a proud member of his beloved Australian Labor Party. His political beliefs inspired many. He was a proud union man who became a union delegate in the then Seamen's Union of Australia, which later became the Maritime Union of Australia.

He was a very hospitable person, as is his wife Poppy. He called union meetings at home and treated his guests well. A number of times George invited me to visit him at my leisure and enjoy a drink in his and Poppy's company. I managed to visit his place and have the best brandy — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Bayswater Secondary College: building works

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — I rise to bring a matter to this house that I have brought here on many occasions, and it is the promise that has been broken by the Labor government in the seat of Bayswater — —

Mr R. Smith — Another one?

Mrs VICTORIA — Yes, another one. The government has not supplied stage 2 of the building works at Bayswater Secondary College. This is a fantastic school, and the kids there deserve every chance in life. By not doing what it promised to do prior to the 2006 election the government is letting down the children in this community. This is an absolutely shameful indictment of what the government thinks of students in the outer east.

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

Debate resumed from 2 February.

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — The first statement of government intentions in 2008 was a fizzer — lots of pomp and ceremony, but a fizzer. The second was a fizzer too, so much so that even the Labor Party faithful forgot to turn up that day last year. The third statement delivered on Tuesday of this week was no better — once again a fizzer, proclaimed by the

media as providing nothing new. But at least this time some of the faithful turned up. There is no doubt they were instructed to. How they must have been hauled over the coals for embarrassing the Premier last year!

It is a trifecta of fizzers, but at least the spin doctors had some fun with this year's statement. They conjured up a new title, a little alliteration. This statement was, they said, about families, fairness and the future. The Premier hammed it up even further and said he was 'firmly focused', but there are plenty of other words that might more fittingly and forever be applied in labelling this statement. They might well have been included in that cute title. They are words that neatly sum up this government. Consider just one: failure. This government has failed over nearly 11 years to deliver an improvement in basic services for Victorian families, and this statement, like its predecessors, has failed to deliver any prospect of change.

Any objective evaluation of previous statements shows clearly that the government failed to deliver even the commitments in those statements. But perhaps the most obvious failure from last year's statement is what the Premier then described as his respect strategy. It was a key commitment, a key priority, for 2009, he said. It was groundbreaking, he said. But nothing happened. It seems, frankly, that the government forgot. Someone in the Premier's office must have realised at the end of last year and found it. Whoops! What to do? Cobble it together quickly, appoint a minister — heaven forbid, not that one! Never mind; muddle through anyway. It is another chance for an advertising campaign. Now it is a respect agenda, an idea stolen from Tony Blair, who launched it in 2005 and abandoned it in 2007, and the government has given it to a minister whose credibility vanished in Brimbank and who routinely ignores constituents. Now it rolls it out again in this year's statement — that is respect.

This statement is little more than a list of government activities; it disappeared as quickly as it was delivered. Amongst other things, the statement recycles previous projects, repeats announcements from the past of things not yet done, promises changes that simply reflect the government's failures over 11 years and even quietly proposes changes that implement opposition policy.

This document is all about the government's interests. What Victorian families need and want is their story told — a report that updates the Parliament about the position of Victorian families, an audit of the conditions in which Victorians find themselves, a benchmarking of key issues for all Victorian families, a base on which to measure improvements in the future. This is what the coalition government will deliver — an annual families

statement — and that is what we present today. It is an undertaking we made last year, which we honour in this first instance in opposition and which we will continue and develop in government.

This report is part of the coalition's commitment to Victorian families. It aims to do three things: firstly, to provide a snapshot of Victorian families and households and the financial and other challenges affecting their lives in Melbourne and regional Victoria; secondly, to look at how Victorian families are affected by the taxes, charges and borrowings of the Labor government since 1999; thirdly, to look at particular state government services that directly affect families to gauge whether Victorian families' lives are better or worse after more than a decade of Labor.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive and exhaustive report, but it will include the facts that those opposite seek to hide. It is about the support that families get to deal with the challenges of illness and disability; it is about being able to walk down the street without fear of violence, it is about getting the best education for our children and it is about quality of life. Hours spent waiting in a traffic jam or waiting on a platform for a delayed train is time that would be far better spent with loved ones.

In short, Victorian families are finding life harder under this government. They face bigger bills and failing services. They have lost faith in the Premier and his ministers; they simply do not trust them any more. As we have seen again this week as the failings of this government are exposed, the Labor Party resorts to smear, innuendo and political thuggery. Even the bushfire royal commission is being heaved.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Narre Warren North is out of his place and out of order.

Mr BAILLIEU — The Premier remains in denial and turns his back on Victorian families; instead of helping them he spends hundreds of millions of dollars on self-promotional advertising. Over several years this government has continually ignored warnings about a range of issues that affect families: rising levels of violence on our streets, shortages of police on our streets, sentencing, child protection, mental health services, secret hospital waiting lists, a shortage of hospital beds, Catholic school funding, international education, arts education, literacy, flaws in the ticketing system, faulty trains, capacity shortages on public transport, the cost of housing, corruption in local

government, water shortages, the impact of drought on regional communities, ambulance response times, liquor licensing reforms, bushfire preparation, government investment of superannuation funds, and many other issues. It is a sign of the deep-seated arrogance of this government and its incompetent ministers. It is reflective of the fact that the government is tired, out of touch and out of ideas, and it is families that are suffering as a result.

What do Victorian families face after 11 years of Labor and 11 years of John Brumby? Let us first take a snapshot of Victorian families. In regard to incomes, Victorian households are under pressure as costs, taxes and charges outpace their incomes. Average weekly earnings have been increasing over the last 10 years. But since 2005 Victorian earnings have lagged behind the national average, and the gap is growing. Victorians' real increase in average weekly earnings has been 40 per cent below the national level. The decline of Victoria's share of gross state product per capita from significantly above to significantly below the average shows how real production and relative income capacity have declined under this government.

Victorian families are struggling to keep pace. They now have relatively less income with which to pay mortgages, rent and other bills, and Victorians have to work harder to maintain their standard of living. Many do this by working longer hours, taking second jobs and taking on greater debt, and that is before this government's taxes and charges.

Look at housing. The great Victorian dream of home ownership is less and less affordable for those on modest and median incomes. The Real Estate Institute of Victoria's recent quarterly median house price survey indicates that the median house price in Melbourne is now \$540 000. The survey also found that median house prices increased in key centres in regional Victoria as well: in Ballarat to \$265 000, in Bendigo to \$261 000 and in Geelong to over \$340 000. Real earnings in Victoria increased 11 per cent over the decade to 2008, but the cost of median-priced houses rose by more than 10 times that rate. Victorian families are paying off home loans with a disproportionate share of their net income. Home ownership is increasingly out of reach for the average Victorian family.

Given these pressures, it is no wonder that home ownership rates have fallen from 75 per cent of Victorians owning their own home in 1999 to under 71 per cent by 2008. The latest study on housing affordability by Demographia shows Melbourne is now one of the most unaffordable cities in the world, ranked eighth out of 272 major urban housing markets. The

study describes Melbourne as ‘severely unaffordable’. Households spending 30 to 35 per cent of their gross annual income on a mortgage are regarded as under stress. In Melbourne up to 50 per cent of households are in that position, and as prices continue to rise the situation is expected to deteriorate further. The study identifies the cause — it is the lack of competent planning and foresight, a direct responsibility of this government.

As buying becomes more expensive, rents have also increased. Between 1999 and 2009 metropolitan rents increased by 77 per cent and regional Victorian rents by 66 per cent. But it is not just the cost of housing that is increasing. Since 1999 Victorian families have faced price rises in many areas. Property rates and charges have doubled; water and sewerage costs have almost doubled; the prices of meat, fruit and vegetables have risen by 40 to 60 per cent, with cost spikes at times of high demand or scarcity; urban transport fares have climbed by more than 15 per cent; and other transport costs have risen by more than 30 per cent. What is more, for many of these basic household expenses Victoria runs at or significantly ahead of the national average.

In relation to taxes and charges, while costs keep going up for staple items this Labor government is imposing greater taxes and charges on Victorian families: 26 new and extended state taxes over the last decade, taking hundreds of millions of dollars every year in additional taxes from families and businesses, and there are more to come. At the same time payroll tax is up by over 80 per cent, land tax by more than 220 per cent, stamp duty by more than 180 per cent, and insurance taxes by over 24 per cent. Police fines are five times what they were in 1999 and now raise \$500 million a year.

Over \$300 billion has been provided by taxpayers to this government over the last decade, with the budget almost doubling in size. Victoria is now running neck and neck with New South Wales as the highest taxing state in Australia. Victorian families are entitled to ask, ‘Have state government services also doubled in size, quality or effectiveness of delivery?’.

At the same time this government is plunging every Victorian family deeper and deeper into debt. In four years time our state debt will have increased 700 per cent since 2008. The result is that every man, woman and child will soon owe nearly \$6000 each in state debt, and it will have to be paid off even though Labor has no plan to pay off that debt. The interest bill alone on this debt will soon be \$2.5 billion a year and rising. That is more than the annual budget of Victoria Police, or enough to build and operate several public hospitals,

train and employ thousands more teachers and nurses, renew and expand the struggling road and rail networks, or invest in the people, equipment and infrastructure essential to protecting Victorian families from bushfires.

Let us turn to the services this government delivers to our families. Indeed the government provides a wide range of services that affect families.

Dr Napthine — Should.

Mr BAILLIEU — Should affect them. Victorians rely on these services to be cost-effective, efficient and timely. If they are not, the effects on family life can be deeply damaging.

Let us look at transport. This government gave Victorian families myki, the most overpriced, absurdly complex and unworkable smartcard anywhere in the world — a winner! It is the ticketing system no-one asked for, the system that does not work on buses and trams, the system that does not work for students. There are Third World countries with smartcards that work better than myki and at a fraction of the price.

Victorians do not have enough trains. Those we have cannot stop. Platforms at train stations remain dangerously crowded at each and every rush hour. Train services are cancelled and delayed every day, adding up to thousands of affected services every year. One day Victorian families see blokes hosing the tracks to stop them buckling, the next day they see them applying glue to keep the trains on the tracks. The confidence of Victorian families dependent on the public transport system is eroded every day. Victorians also face an increasingly congested road system. That means longer commutes for families trying to get to work, school or even just to do their shopping. Dangerous regional road problems remain.

In relation to crime and safety, it is unacceptable that families in this state should be afraid to go to the local shops at night or travel on a train for fear of being assaulted, but that is precisely what is happening in the city and in various places across the state. Why? It is no surprise. Victoria has the lowest number of police per capita the least spend on policing of all states per capita, and the lowest proportion of operational staff of any state in Australia. Escalating problems with violence around Melbourne’s nightclubs and bars can be directly linked to the lack of available front-line police to maintain an adequate presence on the streets. As the incidence of violent crime has hit new records over the last few years, police patrols have declined by more than 20 per cent from 1.9 million hours to 1.5 million.

Police rosters have also revealed there are more than 1400 officers across Victoria missing from their front-line positions. According to the police's own data, between 1999 and 2009 violent crime has skyrocketed: assaults are up nearly 70 per cent, weapons offences are up nearly 57 per cent, and total violent crime is up by over 40 per cent. It is not an illusion as some in the government have suggested. It is not a statistical blip. It is real. It is a major cultural problem. Random, reckless, ruthless violence is ruining lives, destroying families and undermining confidence in this state.

When the criminals are finally caught there is now a long wait for justice to be done and seen to be done. Victoria now has Australia's longest criminal case waiting list in every court in the state. There are more than 42 000 criminal cases awaiting trial in Victoria's courts, compared with just 26 000 cases in New South Wales. Since 2003 backlogs in Victoria's courts have leapt by more than 36 per cent. Years of delays are causing greater distress for victims, their families and witnesses. Worse again, many of those found guilty of violent crimes walk free on suspended sentences. Justice and Victorian families are being taken for a ride.

Let us look at water. The Labor government is playing catch-up. For years it neglected water security. Victoria's water infrastructure spending per head of population has been the lowest of all states. Victoria has been in drought for a decade, but not until 2007 did those in the Labor government commit to any substantial initiatives to combat water shortages, and even then they lied about it and got it wrong. A leaked report commissioned by the government itself shows that the north-south pipeline and the desalination plant were both highly questionable. The \$750 million pipeline not only steals water from country Victorians, but it now seems that the water being taken to Melbourne will not even be needed. The desalination plant as modelled will cost Victorian families approximately \$3.6 billion and result in a rise in family water bills by over 60 per cent, even if we do not need the water.

The coalition is committed to a long-term, sustainable water solution. That is why we support initiatives such as recycling, stormwater capture, storage solutions and water tanks. Victorian families should not have to worry about running out of water. Future supplies must be guaranteed.

Let us look at education and schooling. This government has been responsible for school education for a decade, but now it is clear our children have been short-changed in resourcing and results. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

Development rates Victoria as having the lowest basic skills levels — in mathematical, scientific and reading literacy — of any mainland state.

In the Australian Education Union's State of Our Schools survey released in April 2009, 72 per cent of principals said they did not have adequate funds to deliver their education programs, 85 per cent said their schools needed equipment upgrades, and 88 per cent relied upon fundraising to provide basic services for their schools. And this government is making parents pay for toilet paper at a primary school. Victoria spends less per head on its students than any other state according to the Productivity Commission. Victoria's population is growing, but there was a drop of 1300 students enrolling in government schools between 2008 and 2009, twice the decline seen in 2007 and 2008. During the same period, enrolments in Victorian non-government schools grew by 4000 students.

The Premier promised to fix the health system, but he has failed dramatically. Performance has deteriorated since 1999 and failed to meet key benchmarks. This has hurt most the vulnerable and elderly, those waiting for desperately needed elective surgery, and hospital emergency patients.

In his recent report the Auditor-General exposed Victorian hospitals' declining performance under Labor. Every hospital showed a falling share of patients admitted within 90 days, a falling percentage of semi-urgent patients treated within 90 days across the state, falling statewide performance for triage patients, and falling emergency access, with more patients than ever waiting over 8 hours for admission.

It is telling that the capacity of the Victorian hospital system has actually declined in this time even though the Victorian population continues to grow and age. In 1999 there were 2.48 acute public hospital beds for every 1000 Victorians. In 2009, 10 years later, there were just 2.38. The Australian Medical Association has identified a shortage of 600 beds in Victorian public hospitals, but its advice has been ignored by this government. Victorian families, who want to know that their loved ones will be looked after in times of need, are missing out.

Let us look at mental health. Material recently released under freedom of information shows this government has failed families and individuals who have been touched by mental illness. The number of mental health beds relative to our adult population has recently fallen; 30 per cent of mental health patients wait for more than 8 hours in busy public hospital emergency departments for a bed; 66 per cent of hospitals fall short of the

government's own admission performance benchmark; 43 per cent of patients with a mental illness fail to get adequate care in the community before entering hospital; and 26 per cent of patients with a mental illness fail to get adequate care in the community after they are discharged from hospital, with 14 per cent of all patients being readmitted within a month.

These figures do not show the suffering, the frustration and the pain of many highly vulnerable Victorians, their families and other carers. After a decade of Labor, essential facilities and services are inadequate. Neglected by the Labor government, people with a mental illness, their families and carers are increasingly struggling in this state.

Let us look at the disabled and their carers. Victorians with a disability and their families are waiting years to access support services and accommodation. They face a system that is underresourced and underfunded. Thousands of families needing support and accommodation now cannot access either. Almost one in five of those waiting to access accommodation are cared for by someone aged over 75. Victorian families and carers are desperate and frustrated with a government that has consistently failed to support our most vulnerable.

The Auditor-General found that the Labor government has not invested in one new supported accommodation bed since 2003. He also found that Labor's system is unable to meet the current demand for service, let alone plan for future demand, which is increasing by 4 to 5 per cent annually. With demand for supported accommodation places expected to grow by more than 50 per cent in the next six years, even further pressure will be placed on a system in crisis — another system that is essential to families in crisis.

Let us look at energy prices. Residential electricity prices have shown the greatest increases in Victoria. Melbourne is now the most expensive capital city in Australia for electricity. The Brumby government's bungling of the smart meter rollout in 2009 has seen the cost of smart meters to Victorian families blow out from \$800 million to \$2.25 billion, with Victorian families now required to pay for smart meters before they are even installed. The annual electricity bills of Victorian households will rise by between \$68 and \$135 in 2010 as a direct consequence of the cost of rolling out these so-called smart meters. In addition, a University of Melbourne report commissioned by the Ministerial Council on Energy found that an average Victorian pensioner with a smart meter will face an additional price increase of \$113. Because of the Brumby government's mismanagement and

incompetence, smart meters have become the myki of metering.

These are just a few of the areas in which this government has failed Victorian families. Our families statement sets out more. The record of this government speaks for itself. Families are under greater pressure, bills are rising and services are failing.

The coalition is committed to five key themes: a growing competitive economy, services that actually work for all families, secure water resources and environments, government that can be trusted and strong families and vibrant communities. A strong family is the greatest source of support and comfort an individual can possess. That is why the hopes and dreams of Victorian families are the focal point of coalition policy development. We believe Victoria should and must offer the highest quality and standard of services to those families. Our families statement represents the next step in a continuing dialogue with Victorian families, and we will continue to actively engage with, have discussions with and listen to Victorian families as we release policies before the next election. Unlike Labor, we will keep our commitment with openness, transparency and accountability.

We have already made a string of announcements setting the basis for these changes. In the last few months we have announced key policies that will help Victorians reclaim our streets for families. We will introduce tough new anti-hoon laws, including immediate 30-day vehicle impoundment for a first offence, up to three months for a second offence and forfeiture and crushing of vehicles for a third offence after parts have been stripped and sold.

We will end Labor's soft home detention laws; abolish suspended sentences; ban the sale of bongos to reduce the harm to Victorian families caused by cannabis; restore access to street-by-street crime data to Neighbourhood Watch; launch a liquor licence infringement demerit point scheme, targeting problem venues which continue to disobey liquor licensing laws; and establish a 5-star rating system that will reward liquor licensees who act responsibly and observe the law.

We will make Victoria's train network safe again by putting Victoria Police protective services officers on every train station in metropolitan Melbourne and the major regional centres after 6.00 p.m. seven days a week. Additional Victoria Police officers will also patrol the train, tram and bus networks. We will ban violent drunks from entering licensed premises for two years, and we will guarantee communities a say about

packaged liquor sales in their local area by ending the planning permit exemption of bottle shops.

There are other commitments we have made, and there will be more — in health, disability, mental health, carers, water, transport, education, housing, planning, taxes and regional and rural development and services.

The future of families is best served not by public relations gloss and TV advertisements but by an understanding of what the problems are, what the shortcomings in government services are and how they can be improved. We know that what is needed are effective policies to tackle these problems and shortcomings, not advertising campaigns. This first families statement is the start of that process.

Finally, there are a few other words fit for the fancy title of the government's statement of intentions. They are words that send a compelling message about this government's priorities. These words are cutting through in the Victorian community. They are words now being uttered around the barbecues, they are words being volunteered by the people of Altona in the shopping centres and they are words increasingly being reviled by the people of Victoria — fairy lights! That is the solution of the Minister for Roads and Ports to traffic and congestion issues in Melbourne — to spend \$20 million on fairy lights for the West Gate Bridge. If it is not advertising, it is fairy lights. How out of touch this government has become.

This announcement marks a new low in the arrogance of this government. Where next for the fairy lights of Labor? The minister may be away with the fairy lights, but this government is out of touch and out of time, and in due course it will be out of office. When it goes, it can take its fairy lights with it. It is families that count. The statement of government intentions is as feeble and forgettable as this government. Victorian families deserve a stronger, better and fairer Victoria.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — Victorians would be very disappointed with such a weak, half-hearted, pathetic contribution by the Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I remind members of the opposition that the Leader of the Opposition was heard in relative silence.

Mr Wells interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I inform the member for Scoresby that there was one small

interruption of the Leader of the Opposition, and I ask members of the opposition not to yell in such a manner.

Mr HULLS — Victorians will not be fooled by somebody who is so removed from their day-to-day struggles and so out of touch with their day-to-day needs and aspirations as is the Leader of the Opposition. Victorians and Victorian families know when somebody just does not have their heart in their job. It is not just Victorian families who know that; those on the backbench of the Liberal Party know that as well.

It is my privilege today to speak on the statement of government intentions. The statement is, after all, a hallmark Labor initiative — one borne of three fundamental beliefs — namely, that a good, responsible government is open about both its record and its intentions; that a good, responsible government is driven by a considered, long-term vision; and that a good, responsible government has the energy to see this vision through. That is the kind of government the Brumby Labor government is; it has a long-term, well-planned vision for this state. The Brumby Labor government is open about this vision and indeed continually seeks to engage the community in its realisation.

Responsible, accountable government is not about whingeing and tugging at Victoria's skirts, nor is it about serving up half-baked homework on a scrap of paper that you could not possibly fund, even if you knew how. Planned policy making is not a boys' own adventure where you step off your jet ski just long enough to adjust your budgie-smugglers and issue off the cuff statements before collapsing from the strain of it all on the sand.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kilsyth will lower his voice.

Mr HULLS — Responsible, accountable government is about having fresh ideas and a real vision of what you want to achieve, being sure to consider all points of view so that you get the best result, carefully mapping out how you will go about it and then working your guts out until you get there. That is what responsible, accountable government is about. I am afraid there are no short cuts in this game, as disappointed as some opposite will be to hear that.

The statement of government intentions makes it absolutely clear what you can achieve if you have the energy and the vision to give. From things such as job creation and bolstering the economy; improving

livability, safety and services in Victoria's diverse and expanding communities; strengthening rural and regional populations and improving our statewide response to bushfires to strong, ongoing action on climate change, the Brumby Labor government's statement of government intentions spells out what we can do in 2010, with all Victorians invited to contribute their ideas.

I am particularly excited when it comes to the action-packed agenda for 2010 in the justice arena. This year a great deal of our careful planning and hard work will come to fruition with the commencement of the Evidence Act 2009, which brings Victoria into line with other Australian jurisdictions, as well as the criminal procedure legislation, which in addition to dispensing with unnecessarily formal language and references to the Queen in criminal proceedings, builds much more efficiency into case management. These changes will get parties talking before going to court, making the most of each court appearance and having much better information to make decisions.

In fact recent trials of these new streamlined procedures at the Magistrates Courts in Ballarat and Heidelberg saw the time it took for matters to be brought to court drop from an average of 210 days to 32 days, while the number of contested mentions reduced from about 40 to only 6 per week, so these changes are indeed working.

The criminal investigation powers legislation will seek to strengthen the capacity for our law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute crime, all the while maintaining protections for privacy and human rights. Meanwhile new Crimes Act legislation will see a huge number of criminal offences updated, clarified or abolished where no longer relevant, ensuring that our law reflects 21st century expectations.

In addition, further work will occur regarding the law's response to hate-based crime, or crime motivated by prejudice, such as racial or homophobic violence. However, this is only part of the story. As well as meeting crime and its causes with a strong and clear response, the criminal law must be able to recognise the experience and needs of victims of crime. That is why — building on so much other work that has already occurred in this area — this year we will introduce legislation that grants judges and magistrates scope to award urgent safety-related payments to victims of crime, as well as legislating to increase the profile and more effective use of victim impact statements in proceedings.

As important as the criminal law is, for many people their contact with the justice system is in the civil law area, and in fact one-third of Victorian individuals and businesses find themselves embroiled in civil legal disputes each year. That is why the Brumby government has been on a concerted campaign to find ways to resolve these disputes more easily and indeed outside the formal court process.

What we term 'appropriate' rather than 'alternative' dispute resolution is the main attraction now — not just a sideshow. So following our commitment of \$17.8 million in previous budgets to foster the use of mediation and other forms of ADR, or appropriate dispute resolution, both at a local and a community level throughout our entire system, the 2010 statement of government intentions signals the next stage of that journey. New legislation will simplify civil court proceedings, give judges and magistrates more scope to control and speed up cases, create more opportunities for disputes to be directed away from litigation where appropriate and indeed require greater communication and higher standards of conduct from all parties involved in proceedings. In short, this legislation will enable more civil legal disputes to be resolved faster and cheaper, and meanwhile access to ADR services will be progressively rolled out in other parts of Victoria.

Other initiatives in the statement of which I am equally proud include, with federal government cooperation, legislation that puts into effect our native title settlement framework, giving greater certainty to all parties affected by native title claims, while more work will occur to improve economic opportunity for indigenous communities to reduce indigenous overrepresentation in the justice system.

In addition, further reform to our equal opportunity laws will enable us to tackle systemic discrimination more effectively, replacing it instead with best practice and greater diversity and productivity throughout Victorian organisations.

All these initiatives speak of a government that is proud of its record and excited about what it can achieve in the future. The Brumby government is certainly an open, energetic and visionary government — and that is three more claims than can be made by those opposite.

I am privileged to commend this statement to the house. I encourage all Victorians to get online, get involved and engage with the energy and ideas that this statement of government intentions indicates. We do cherish the views of Victorians. We understand their aspirations, and we indeed want to bring Victorians

with us. I repeat what I said at the outset: Victorians will not be fooled by a Leader of the Opposition who has no idea of the day-to-day aspirations, struggles and needs of ordinary Victorians. They will not be fooled by a leader of the opposition who has no idea what Victorians' needs and aspirations are.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — At the outset I pause to reflect on the fact that the first anniversary of last year's disaster of the Gippsland fires and Black Saturday is almost upon us. A time which tested this state to its very soul will be remembered this Sunday, and I do have regard to the 173 people who lost their lives and the many others who have suffered and who continue to suffer and will do so for literally generations.

I turn to the statement of government intentions. The forerunner for this document was in fact written in 1837 by Hans Christian Andersen. It was titled *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and it was a story about two weavers who promised an emperor a new set of clothes which were invisible to those unfit for their positions or incompetent. When the emperor went out and paraded before his subjects in his new set of clothes he was going well until a child called out, 'But he isn't wearing anything at all!', and of course that, in a euphemistic sense, is what has happened to Victoria's self-professed emperor.

The people of Victoria are sick of Mr Brumby; they are sick of his government, and in 296 days they will record their vote and this government will be swept from office and the current opposition will become the government of the day.

When you have regard to the content of this statement of government intentions it fortifies the issues which we say underpin the events and the circumstances which will give rise to people voting to change government on 27 November this year.

I want to deal with aspects of this statement from particularly a rural and regional perspective but also having regard to my role as the shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services and in the area of regional and rural development. I will leave the issues of bushfire response — for which I also have responsibility — until another day in due deference to the impending anniversary.

An insight into this government and the way it does not do the things it talks about is provided in the *Blueprint for Regional Victoria*, the document referred to at page 9 of the Premier's speech and at page 33 of the supporting 80-page statement. It is relevant because

when you have regard to the content of the Premier's speech of 2009 — 12 months ago — what the Premier said was:

This year —

and I pause to say again that he meant 2009 —

we will see:

amendments to the urban growth boundary for Melbourne to provide more land in accordance with our Melbourne @ 5 million strategy; and —

I repeat 'and' —

the development of a new blueprint for regional growth to develop strategies for each region in close consultation with regional communities.

The Premier told us at the time of delivering his statement 12 months ago, in 2009, that in 2009 we would have before us a blueprint for regional Victoria. That is what the Premier told us. But if one throws forward to this year's statement, one sees at page 9 that the Premier says:

In 2010 our blueprint for regional Victoria —

yadda, yadda, yadda.

What it all amounts to is that once again the government has had plenty to say and yet it has failed to deliver. Here is reference to a document, purportedly critical as a blueprint to the future of regional Victoria; it was going to be done in 2009, yet we have not got it. If you turn to page 33 of the statement, you see it talks about conferences and discussions with stakeholders and going to 14 regional locations, and then it goes on to say:

This work will culminate in the release of the blueprint in 2010.

The document of 2009 never materialised. The blueprint which the government was going to produce after almost 10 years of government did not happen. We are now told that in 2010, on some date yet to be defined, we will have the document in whatever form it might take.

I understand from various conversations I have had that the probability is that this blueprint will be produced sometime around the middle of the year. So if you take a stab at around about the end of June or the start of July, what we will ultimately see is the government producing some sort of a document — with about 100 days plus a bit to go to the opening of the election campaign — which will be this purported blueprint for regional Victoria. It was going to be produced last year,

and here we are facing the prospect of this document, which is supposed to cast the future of country Victoria, being available for all of us to have a look at within around 100 days, plus a bit, of the commencement of the election campaign.

I might say that all of this is after 10 years of government. After 10 years of purportedly running the place, the best it can do — having supposedly done all of this work and having said last year it would have this critical document available — is to produce it at some indeterminate time in the course of this year. It is a snapshot of this government. In the words of that well-known axiom of former Australian Football League coach John Kennedy, 'For heaven's sake, do something!'. That is what country Victorians want from the government.

As a segue to the issues around this blueprint, I want to touch particularly upon the use of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF).

Mr Robinson — You're a fan!

Mr RYAN — I am a fan of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, as the minister suggests, and I have never said otherwise. I think this fund has been productive in bringing about some very good outcomes for country Victoria, but the pity of it is the government has undercommitted to it and it has underspent the funds. It has told country Victorians that money from this program, spanning a total of 10 years and having available within it a total of \$610 million, would be available for the purposes to which the act relates, principally infrastructure development. However, when you have a look at the specifics, the story is entirely different. Time precludes me from going through it all in detail, but when you look at the figures and distil them down, the bottom line is this: to 30 June 2009 the government had spent \$382.7 million from the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. This is in circumstances where, I repeat, the fund is \$610 million and due to expire on 30 June 2010. As at 12 months before that date it has spent \$382.7 million.

The annual report of Regional Development Victoria says that, as at 30 June 2009, the government had committed to spend \$466 million. The total allocation to RIDF, as I say, is \$610 million by the end of June 2010. Accordingly, and it is obvious on the mathematics, to achieve its commitments the government is going to have to commit to spend another \$144 million in the 12-month period up to 30 June this year. That of course is considerably more than it has ever allocated from RIDF in a financial year. It is well above the \$84.6 million, as stated in the

2009–10 budget papers, it anticipates committing to the RIDF projects this year. It is highly likely therefore that RIDF will be undercommitted and underspent by 30 June this year. It is an example of a government telling people one thing and doing another, or in this case not doing what it has undertaken to do.

The annual statement of government intentions makes reference to issues surrounding drought-proofing Victoria. On the issue of drought itself this government has conducted itself in a fashion which is nothing less than disgraceful. At 30 June last year it cut 9 of the 11 drought programs. It was a vicious, cynical thing to do to these communities that are impacted upon by drought. It is all very well for the Premier in this statement to be talking about the fact of this drought having lasted 10-odd years and continuing. The government's actions once again put the lie to what were its words. It cut those programs. It was not until October and after we had been pleading with the government to reinstate the programs that some of them were reinstated. Even then the amount of the benefit was about one-half of that which had previously applied. It was an appalling act on the part of this government, and country Victorians will never forgive it for that.

Then there is commentary in the statement about securing our water supply. That is replete with the history of the Labor Party doing what it does best — that is, telling people one thing and doing another, and in this case blatantly lying to them. It went to the election in 2006, as we know, promising it would never pipe water from north of the Great Dividing Range. It went to the election saying that the proposal for a desalination plant was a hoax. Now what is the government doing? It is building a desalination plant which is three times the capacity of that which it swore was a hoax. Furthermore the government is now on the brink of piping water from northern Victoria across the Great Divide and into Melbourne in a situation where, according to recent reports, the water is not even needed anyway. But apart from that, it is a blatant breach of a promise which was made to country Victorians about an issue utterly fundamental to them not only in the sense of the economy but in the sense of the many families of whom the Leader of the Opposition has spoken so eloquently this morning.

This is something that strikes at the heart of these people. We are told by the person who occupies the role of Minister for Water that during the course of the early part of this year we are supposed to see water come down that pipeline into Sugarloaf Reservoir. I trust in keeping true to form the government of the day will colour that water red. It should, because it will represent

the blood of the people of northern Victoria. What this government is doing is nothing less than a disgrace. It should be ashamed of itself. Country Victorians will never forgive or forget this. It is disgraceful act on Labor's part.

The announcement yesterday of the closure of the factory at Leitchville is but another issue that the people in the north have to face. I know the member for Rodney has already spoken about and will continue to speak about this issue. When you think about the circumstances faced by Murray Goulburn Cooperative and the way in which the milk supplies have dropped over the last few years, you can understand in a sense how it is that the company has regrettably come to this terrible conclusion. It will mean 80 jobs gone from that town. But of course the pivotal thing is that water supply is critical to the future of the industry. Here we have a government striking at the heart of one of the last great competitive edges — availability of water for our industries in the north — and also breaking a faithful promise which it made to all Victorians. The government will not be forgiven for this. It is another case of saying one thing and doing another. Into the bargain the government is going to use some of the savings achieved out of the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline to make sure that it can get some water into this area. It is irony upon irony.

On the issue of police numbers there is plenty to comment on in the statement which the Premier has made. The Premier said:

Since coming to office, our government has increased the number of police by more than 1400 and is delivering a further 520 police in the current term.

The reality is starkly in contrast. One of the great things about the availability of the Productivity Commission reports is that they represent a benchmark from an entity completely removed from government of any persuasion. You can rely upon them, because there are people beavering away somewhere, crunching the numbers, looking at the screens, producing the outcomes that are available to all Australians.

That report is an absolutely compelling read, particularly in the context of what the Premier has had to say. Again he is saying one thing when in fact he is doing another. When you look at the actual numbers and in the face of what the Premier has had to say, what those numbers from the Productivity Commission show is that Victoria had the lowest number of police officers per capita of all the states in Australia. In Victoria it was 206 per 100 000; in New South Wales, 237; in Queensland, 265; in Western Australia, 287; in South Australia, 303; and in Tasmania, 308. That Victoria

should languish on the bottom of the pile at 206 is disgraceful; it flies absolutely and directly in the face of what the Premier keeps telling us, and worse, this is the continuance of a trend. It has been there for years. If you go back to 2002–03, you see a similar sort of trend in these Productivity Commission figures.

Add to that the fact that we now spend less per capita on police resourcing than any other state in Australia that in the last five years our increases in expenditure on police resourcing have been the lowest in the Australian nation, and that in the last five years we have had less per capita of operational police on the front line, doing the job to look after our communities, than any other state in Australia. This is all in the Productivity Commission report.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr RYAN — I invite the member for Melton to wind up that toy that he carts around with him, look up the Productivity Commission report and see it for himself. It is all there to be seen. What the Premier talks about would do Hans Christian Andersen a great justice; he would smile if he were to read it and have a look at the reality of it.

As to economic performance, this issue is critical to us in country Victoria. The Premier said in his statement that Victoria will have the fastest growth of all the states in the financial year 2009–10, but when you look at the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) figures, you see they tell a different story.

Victorian gross state product per head actually fell from 5.9 per cent above the national average in 2000–01 to 6.1 per cent below the national average in 2008–09. Furthermore, Victoria's share of the national economy, the national gross domestic product, fell from 26.2 per cent in 2000–01 to 23.3 per cent in 2008–09. Furthermore, Victorian exports as a percentage of national exports fell from 19.6 per cent in 2000–01 to 8.9 per cent in 2008–09. I repeat: from 19.6 per cent to 8.9 per cent over the period of this government — yet the Premier stands up and says what he says about these important economic issues.

In his statement the Premier said:

In the last 10 years Victoria's exports have grown 50 per cent, rising to a total of \$33.1 billion in 2009. The government is proud of the state's strong record of export growth — simply put, exports create jobs.

This issue is critical to us in country Victoria, because we are internationally focused. We are a nation of only 21 million-plus people. We are selling vast amounts of our product to international markets. Our millions have

to sell to the billions, otherwise our country cannot function. Certainly in the case of the state of Victoria, which is truly the food bowl of Australia, it is imperative that our exports continue to grow. But in the face of what the Premier has had to say, you see the facts in the ABS figures, which again put the lie to his commentary.

Over Labor's 10 years exports have increased by \$10 billion, or by 45 per cent, but 60 per cent of that increase occurred in the first two years of the Labor government — that is, from 1999–00 and 2000–01. That, presumably, was due to the excellent work which was done by the former government.

What has happened since then is a lamentable performance. Since 2001–02, over the succeeding years, exports increased by \$4 billion — that is, the level of Victoria's increase over almost eight years has been just \$4 billion! It has been an absolutely miserable performance on the part of the government. It puts the lie again to what the Premier has had to say. There is plenty of talk on the one hand but on the other hand, when you look at the facts you see it is entirely different.

Let us consider the commentary by the Premier about street crime in Victoria and problems in relation to violence. He said in his statement that knife attacks fell by 21 per cent between 2001–02 and 2007–08, but what he did not say is that total assaults are up by 33.7 per cent, and, furthermore, assaults with a bottle or glass are up by 35 per cent. These figures, the Productivity Commission report and the ABS figures are all replete with putting the lie to what this government consistently tells Victorians.

Time precludes me from going through the many other aspects of this, not the least of which is that in the course of the Premier's statement reference was made to 26 plans and white papers that are going to be delivered this year. John Kennedy would fairly fall over if he heard this! The government has to do something. We need a government that is actually going to do things to make it better for Victorian families.

I conclude on that note. We on this side of the house care about families. We care about the small business sector. We share their concerns about what is being done by this government, about failing services and prospective increases running rampant in the delivery of basic services such as power, water and education. Victoria needs from a future government a vision which is appropriate to the needs of the future of our great state. On 27 November we will have the opportunity to deliver it, and we will!

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) — I am pleased to be able to make a contribution this morning in support of the annual statement of government intentions, which sets out an overview of the Brumby government's priorities for 2010. The statement comprises nine different sections, which set out a range of important policy areas that the government will be focusing on during the course of this year.

The first two sections that I will mention relate to jobs and a resilient economy for long-term growth; and to bushfires, in particular responding to the bushfires of February 2009. It is no surprise that the first sections in the document this year relate to those particular issues, because they have been at the forefront of government and community interest, action and concern over the last 12 months, and they have continued to be at the forefront in this current year.

Early last year the government set out its agenda to respond to, cope with and bring Victoria through the global financial crisis. In last May we delivered our jobs-building budget, the budget that was to secure up to 35 000 jobs in Victoria, to place Victoria at the forefront of responding to the global financial crisis, and to make sure that Victoria was the state first out of the blocks in resuming strong economic growth.

While the opposition opposed that jobs building budget, the government pursued that agenda vigorously, and, as the community now well knows, Victoria did in fact respond to the global financial crisis incredibly well; it responded to it the best of all jurisdictions in Australia and among the best in the world. We have seen strong growth, particularly in jobs, in Victoria over the last 12 months, and it is continuing. We are pleased to see that that is the case, with something like 75 000 jobs having been created in Victoria, which is some two-thirds of all jobs created in Australia in the last period.

It is a great reflection on the government's actions and response, particularly in the way it has worked closely with the federal government in stimulating the economy and promoting jobs. The particular actions of the Victorian government have seen stronger jobs growth in Victoria than in other parts of Australia, which indicates there is an element of cooperation between the commonwealth and state governments, and the state government has also utilised its own resources, which has meant that our jobs growth has been stronger in Victoria than in any other state.

We, as a government, as a Parliament and as a community, have also spent considerable time responding to the bushfires, and it is right and proper to

reflect on the fact that next Sunday is the first anniversary of the 7 February bushfires. I think all of us reflect at this time on Australia's worst natural disaster, particularly on the losses that were sustained last year by so many Victorians and the extraordinary response of the Victorian community at large. Work continued last year in preparing for the current fire season to make sure we were as well prepared as we could possibly be. That work goes on as the government continues to respond to appropriate issues in relation to bushfire prevention planning and preparation and dealing with the recommendations flowing from the royal commission.

In the statement of government intentions this year we also focus our attention on important issues facing communities. We continue to make sure we actively work to ensure that our communities remain safe and secure and that where issues of safety and security emerge, in particular around the abuse of alcohol and the violence that can result from that abuse, we respond appropriately as a government and as a community. By that I mean that everyone in the community has a responsibility. The government must show leadership, but the community has a responsibility broadly to respond to these sorts of issues. People who are involved in licensing — whether it be the licensees of licensed venues, the officers of appropriate agencies that are involved in regulation, the people who attend licensed venues or others — all have a responsibility to make sure that they look after themselves, their friends and their communities.

As far as those matters are concerned, this year we are continuing our ongoing policy of increasing police resources and police numbers, and as is well known, we now have the largest number of police in the history of Victoria. Through the course of this government we have increased operational police numbers on the front line — by over 1400 before this term. During this term of government we are providing an additional 470 police to perform their important roles. We have also been increasing, appropriately, police powers, particularly move-on powers and the power of police to search for knives and other weapons, and we continue to pursue those reforms. We have also introduced landmark legislation in relation to hoon drivers that has been incredibly successful. However, as there is a continuing element who continue to flout the law and continue to show no respect for themselves, for passengers in their cars, for other road users and for the community, the government is determined to continue to look at the issue of hoon driving laws and continue to toughen laws on the impounding and confiscation of cars.

We made some significant changes last year in the way we deal with any offences related to hate crimes by amending the Sentencing Act to make it a mandatory requirement in sentencing that if there is any element of hatred involved in the commission of an offence it will be an element in sentencing. This year the government will continue to pursue that agenda through its reference to retired Supreme Court judge Justice Eames, who will report to the government during the year on the advisability of including a specific hate crime as a stand-alone crime in the Crimes Act. We look forward to that report.

Overall we have seen the crime rate in Victoria continue to go down, and through the course of this decade there has been a reduction of some 25 per cent, which is to be welcomed. But there are some issues out there that need to be dealt with, and we believe the changes the government is putting in place and has already put in place will continue to drive the crime rate down.

The statement of government intentions also deals with the fact of our growing population, whether that be by migration from overseas, migration from other states because Victoria is such a great place to live, or by our increasing birth rate as we are seeing a major baby boom. The government has set out a range of plans in the statement for appropriately managing population growth and managing the way in which that impacts on the need for increased housing options and increased infrastructure, in particular in transport. We have seen the new public transport operators take over, and we are now starting to see the new rolling stock that the government has been investing in coming onto our train lines. That will allow new timetables to be introduced during the course of the year with increased services across the board.

The statement also deals in detail with education and health matters. We are making sure that we give all of our young people the best start in life; we are continuing to increase record funding in health; and, importantly, we are making sure that we address issues about the environment and climate change for our future. We will deliver a climate change white paper, and a climate change bill will be introduced during the course of the year. We continue to invest in water infrastructure, and we see great results through Melbourne and Victoria in water conservation, which we will continue to pursue.

In relation to environmental matters we have seen the implementation of the river red gum national parks, which were opposed by the opposition. We will

continue to keep cattle out of the Alpine National Park — something the opposition will not do.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — The annual statement of government intentions is basically fluff and spin, as it has been in previous years. This government is tired, out of touch and out of ideas, and this statement delivers nothing for Victorian families. I note that the subtitle in 2008 and 2009 for the statement of intentions was ‘Delivering for Victoria’. That has been removed this year. Clearly the government has come to the realisation that it is not delivering for Victoria.

I want to start my contribution to the debate by giving a small example of why this statement is just a ridiculous pantomime that we have to go through every year, and it relates to the area of water. In 2008 the government claimed that it would reform the metropolitan retail sector. The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) had done a review and the government indicated that that would happen in 2008. In 2009 the government again promised there would be a review of the metropolitan water retail sector and that the legislation would be called the Water Amendment (Governance and Other Reforms) Bill. Basically this entailed the three water retailers becoming statutory corporations. That has not happened.

In 2010 I have looked for the progress of that bill, because there had been a clear expectation — for example, from the Auditor-General and in the government’s response to the VCEC review — that this would happen prior to 1 July this year. The bill has just disappeared. In appendix 1, a progress report on the 2009 statement of government intentions, the bill has disappeared. I raise this simply because it is symbolic of the government’s failure to deliver. It said it would produce a bill in 2008, it said it would produce the bill in 2009, and we have still not seen the bill.

On the more substantive issues in relation to water, by way of example in the 2009 statement of government intentions, the government made reference to water recycling. In its 2009 statement at page 77 it said:

The government will continue its push for increased water recycling across the state ...

That is a fairly clear statement. But the reality is — and so much of this statement of government intentions has this flaw — that the government glibly makes a comment in its statement of government intentions, and then proceeds to do exactly the reverse. While last year the government said that it would increase water recycling, if you look at Melbourne Water’s last available annual report, for 2008–09, at page 59 you see that the government has done the precise reverse. Total

recycled water volumes at both the western treatment plant and eastern treatment plant in 2007–08 were in actuality 61 984 megalitres, and yet in 2008–09 the actual volume went down to 60 285 megalitres. So whilst the government said that it would increase water recycling, in actuality it has done the reverse.

Not only that, it has not even met its own targets. On the targets that were set out for the government to meet, in both its budget papers and in *Our Water Our Future*, again the government is well down. That to my mind encapsulates what these statements are about. The government glibly puts out a little bit of information for public relations (PR) purposes and in many instances then proceeds to do the reverse. The fact is that the government will now not have class A recycled water available from the eastern treatment plant until 2013 because of Department of Human Services accreditation.

Also in terms of the government failing to act or acting in a tardy manner, I would draw the attention of the Minister for Water — when he finishes doing a little bit of spin and PR — to the fact that the Environment and Natural Resources Committee has produced a substantial report, *Inquiry into Melbourne’s Water Supply*. It presents the government with a range of options for Melbourne’s future water supply as Melbourne grows. That was tabled in June 2009 and, according to the Parliamentary Committees Act the government response is required within six months, but the government has not responded. That is the most comprehensive report done in this Parliament on Melbourne’s future water supply. The minister and the government should be directing their attention to this, not worrying about fluff and spin in their statement of government intentions.

I would have thought that community expectation would be that governments provide a supply of water, but the message of the statement of government intentions before us is that everyone has to cut back on their water. The government has bungled, but we all have to cut back on our water consumption.

I also want to make a brief reference to the price increases for families and households. We are going to have water price increases of over 60 per cent over the next few years — for example, with South East Water a 2008–09 household bill of \$566 will grow to \$894 per annum in 2012–13. We are seeing very substantial price increases in water, which will impact adversely on families and households.

In terms of small business, for which shadow portfolio I have responsibility, in 2008, 2009 and 2010 the

government flagged a very small change to legislation relating to business name registration. There have been a raft of discussions at the Council of Australian Governments, yet for three years the government has been unable to produce a simple bill to change business names in an orderly fashion right across Australia. This area was initially the responsibility of the Minister for Small Business. It has been taken away from him and given to the Treasurer, but the Treasurer cannot deliver even a simple reform for business over three years.

The government has made reference to its program on reducing the regulatory burden. The government can have all its glib public relations and spin about reducing the regulatory burden, but if it looks at the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission report on the Victorian regulatory system in 2009, VCEC points out to the government the following:

At 1 January 2009, Victoria's business regulators administer 188 acts comprising 26 096 pages. While the number of acts had decreased since 1 January 2008 ... the number of pages had increased (from 25 617). In addition, these regulators administered 218 regulations (up from 209 in 2008) comprising 8561 pages (up from 8311) and over 370 codes of practice (up from 352 in 2008).

I make my point over and over again: whilst the government in its statement of government intentions claims that it is reducing the regulatory burden, according to its own body, the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, it is not; rather it is increasing the regulatory burden.

The government has made reference to a draft bill on changing requirements for regulatory impact statements, and it refers to a Victorian regulatory change measurement manual. If the government thinks those things are going to reduce the regulatory burden on small business, then it is dreaming. It is completely and utterly deluding itself.

I want to make reference very briefly to the women's affairs portfolio, for which I am now the responsible shadow spokesperson. The government refers to two documents: the plan to prevent violence against women, which is a plan that goes up to 2020; and the women's policy framework, which goes up to 2011. These are all good goals, ones which any sensible person would support, but as always with this government, let us see the outcomes. Time and again in the statement of government intentions, or in the policy fluff that the government puts out, we see a good intention, but the government fails to deliver.

I want to conclude on a local issue. The government makes reference at page 21 of the statement to plans to construct or refurbish 160 police stations and police

residences across the state. It has left out something very important in that it is also closing a number of police stations; unfortunately one of those is in the Brighton electorate. The proposal is to sell two valuable pieces of Brighton land in Asling and Carpenter streets, gain money from the sale and close down all police services in the Brighton electorate.

I implore the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to reconsider this. I know he has a certain view of Brighton, but its residents also need police. There are serious problems with violence in our community and with home burglaries. I implore him to keep the Brighton police station open.

Ms MORAND (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I am pleased to make a contribution on the statement of government intentions. The member for Brighton just said the statement does nothing for families. I am sorry, but that is rubbish! The government is very proud of its record in children's services. It understands the importance of the first few years of life. It also understands the importance that Victorian families place on high-quality health, education and care services. The government has a very strong record and commitment of reform and investment in early year services. The statement of government intentions provided by the Premier on Tuesday outlines its continued commitment to investment in early years services.

I remind the opposition of what we have achieved over the last 10 years. As the Leader of the Opposition said in his contribution, Victorians are entitled to ask whether services have doubled. I inform the Leader of the Opposition that in relation to early year services, we have almost tripled the funding for that area of government services. We have increased funding by more than 188 per cent to improve the education and care of pre-school aged children.

When we came into government in 1999 the kindergarten subsidy was \$100. It is now \$820, effectively making kindergarten free for the children and families receiving that funding. This year that money is supporting around 17 000 children, enabling them to attend four-year-old kindergarten; that number is about a quarter of all children attending kindergarten this year.

In maternal and child health services we provide a wonderful service for young mothers and their babies for the first few years of their lives. We have increased the funding for maternal and child health services by 145 per cent. In addition, we have established 30 Best

Start sites across Victoria, including 15 rural and regional sites.

We have invested nearly \$72 million in infrastructure for early education and care facilities across the state, including funding for early childhood intervention services. When we came into government, annual funding for that service was \$23 million; it is now \$60 million. Allocated in the last two years was an additional 1000 places in early childhood intervention services.

Around 62 000 children are now experiencing the great benefits of a year of kindergarten before they start school. I joined the Premier last week in welcoming kindergarten children, including a set of triplets, to Jamieson Way Kindergarten in Point Cook as they started their exciting year. We were joined by the ALP candidate for Altona, Jill Hennessy, to meet the excited children and parents and have a discussion with them about the sorts of services they know and appreciate.

The triplets we met are among 17 000 children who are receiving the kindergarten fee subsidy. The Jamieson Way Kindergarten is one of 1200 kindergartens that have received funding from this government over the last 10 years either to refurbish and renovate their facilities or in minor capital grants. In Altona alone we have provided grants of more than \$930 000 to kindergartens and children's centres.

I know the families of Altona understand the investment and how important it is. I do not think everybody understands the importance of investing in early years services, but certainly Jill Hennessy does. She is the mother of young children, and amongst many accomplishments she has chaired the Working Families Council and has a fantastic understanding of the needs of young families and the difficult challenges in balancing work and family life.

Victoria continues to be a leader in kindergarten participation. The 2010 *Report on Government Services* released last week reported that 96.2 per cent of four-year-olds attend kindergarten compared to a national rate of 69.5 per cent. We in Victoria are very proud of our participation rate. We would like to see it even higher, and that is why we are continuing to invest in services and provide subsidies for families who need them. This includes the introduction last year of free kindergarten participation for three and four-year-old indigenous children.

We also support kinders across Victoria with kindergarten cluster management funding, which supports around 600 kinders. That means less time

spent on administration and more time for teachers and parents to concentrate on supporting and enjoying their children's learning and development. Cluster management is a great innovation introduced by this government and is very much welcomed by kindergarten managements and committees.

The statement of government intentions outlines our ongoing commitment to building children's centres right across Victoria. To date 51 of these centres are now operational and 29 are in the planning or construction phase. This year we will open 11 across Victoria, and next week I will join you, Acting Speaker, at the opening of the Brookfield centre, which will provide long day care, kindergarten, maternal and child health facilities and multipurpose community spaces. In a few weeks I will be going to Footscray to open the Bulldogs Community Children's Centre with the hardworking member for Footscray.

In addition, construction is under way in Cranbourne, Malvern, Wodonga, Keilor East, Mernda and Upwey, to name just a few places. This year work will also commence on at least five more centres in St Kilda, Yarraville, Doncaster, Moe and Laurimar. As announced only two days ago by Kate Ellis, the federal Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth, there has been combined investment in a children's centre for Foster.

These children's centres have been welcomed by the community because they provide a range of early years services that are very important and highly valued by families. Combining all those services under the same roof provides a better and integrated early years service for the children and makes it easier for families to access the quality services they need and deserve.

The statement of government intentions also speaks about our intention to conduct the pioneering Early Home Learning Study for vulnerable families with a particular focus on children from birth to three years of age. We have committed \$9 million to the study, which will support 2000 vulnerable families to strengthen their home environment for learning and, importantly, to building an evidence base of the most effective actions and interventions to support these families and make sure they give their children the best possible start in life.

As a companion to the *Growing, Learning and Thriving — Building on Victoria's Achievements in Early Childhood Development* document I have released a strategy for the workforce, understanding that you cannot deliver the sorts of goals we have in early years services without supporting the workforce

and providing opportunities for people working in early years services to upskill and to attract graduates to work in early years services.

We are leading the nation in early years workforce planning, and we have committed \$11.5 million to this strategy. It is around getting more staff to work in long day care, which is an important focus for this government because we want to ensure that children attending a long day care service have access to a structured learning program in kindergarten. We would like to get early childhood teachers to work in long day care, and we have a number of incentives that will help us to achieve that aim.

We are also working closely with the commonwealth on a commitment to provide up to 15 hours of kindergarten for all children in the year before school, to be delivered by 2013. We are working very hard with the commonwealth and organisations such as the Municipal Association of Victoria and Kindergarten Parents Victoria on how we are going to achieve this important and ambitious goal.

I would also like to speak for a few moments on my women's affairs portfolio to say we will continue to build on the great achievements we have already had in supporting Victorian women. This includes the increase we have achieved in the number of women on government boards and statutory authorities. That has increased very substantially to 40 per cent, and last year the Premier, the government and I committed to trying to increase that number to 50 per cent.

We are also undergoing an upgrade of the diversity register in an effort to broaden access by the private sector to the pool of women on the register in order to give them the opportunity to serve on non-government and private sector boards. We are looking forward to seeing the outcome of that and to there being more access to the diversity register.

We are continuing our work on the prevention of family violence, and I am pleased that the member for Brighton has welcomed our intentions in that policy area.

In conclusion, the statement of government intentions continues our commitment to investment and to supporting families to ensure that Victorian children have the best possible start in life. It continues our commitment and investment in making sure that the early years services that support these children are of the highest quality.

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — I am pleased to make a response to the 2010 statement of government

intentions. This statement outlines the government's agenda for the year ahead. The slogan is 'Families, fairness and the future of Victoria'. Under this Labor government Victorian families are worse off. It costs them too much for water, it costs them too much for public transport — if they can get public transport — and it is now going to cost them far too much for electricity with the government's implementation of smart meters.

When you look at the issue of fairness you see that the government has certainly failed here as well. There is no trust and no confidence in the Brumby Labor government. Far too many promises made to the Victorian community are broken and there are far too many lies. The Premier in his speech read out quite a number of motherhood statements, and obviously they cannot be measured. But that is what the government wants. It does not want its statements measured. It wants them to be motherhood statements; it wants them to be airy-fairy so there is no accountability. It has failed to honour almost all of its promises.

The opposition and I, as shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, are really concerned that Aboriginal families' lives have not improved under this government. Despite all the government's rhetoric about closing the gap, its own indigenous affairs report 2008–09, which was tabled in Parliament in December 2009 amongst 300-plus others — and I believe the reason it was tabled at that late stage was so that there would not be any scrutiny of what was going on in government departments — showed massive failings and had some alarming statistics. Literacy and numeracy rates for indigenous primary and secondary school students fell substantially below the rates for non-indigenous students. Year 12 completion rates for indigenous youth have fallen from 56.7 per cent in 2007 to 50.9 per cent in 2008 compared with the 2008 completion rate for non-indigenous students of 81.1 per cent. That is a huge difference. The government has been in office for 10 years and talks about how it wants to support Aboriginal families, but it is certainly not doing that, and the gap is not closing under this government.

The lack of education impacts on employment for indigenous people. If they cannot be educated, they cannot get the jobs. Education is vital for those people — and for anybody — to be able to get a job. It increases people's sense of self-worth, their self-respect and their self-confidence. The lack of educational opportunities for indigenous students means it will be difficult for them to get a job as they get older.

On the issue of Aboriginal health, again after 10 years the government is certainly not closing the gap. The life expectancy of Aboriginal people is still 17.5 years below that of non-Aboriginal people. The proportion of indigenous mothers who are smokers when admitted to hospital from one month prior to delivery increased from 31 per cent in 2005–06 to 38 per cent in 2006–07 and to 40 per cent in 2007–08. This is despite the government, with all its rhetoric in the last two reports, saying that one of its main objectives is to reduce the smoking rate among Aboriginal mothers. The government gave \$400 000 for a three-year project to reduce smoking amongst pregnant women, but the rate of people smoking is increasing. Babies born to mothers who have been smoking may suffer huge complications such as small birth weights, mortality rates and ill health.

Perinatal mortality figures have also been queried by University of Melbourne researchers who said that the true perinatal mortality rate has been hidden. The data the government has been given is incomplete and flawed; the figures could be as high as 40 per cent. This is a staggering figure. The government needs to take heed of this and make sure that the perinatal mortality rate of Aboriginal babies is not 40 per cent. It needs to be putting projects and programs in place that actually work, not just rhetoric and spin to say that this works.

Under this government vulnerable people are worse off. In 2008 the Auditor-General report highlighted that government departments do not even communicate when measuring or evaluating programs for indigenous Victorians and that they have a lack of data with which to measure those programs. How do you know if a program is working if you do not even have the statistics or data to assess the integrity of any information that you have and to make sure that your programs actually support and fit the people who are in need? How can you plan for indigenous Victorians into the future if you do not even know how bad the situation is?

Under this government vulnerable people such as people with a mental illness or disability are much worse off. I am deputy chair of the all-party Family and Community Development Committee of the Parliament, which has just finished an inquiry into supported accommodation. The evidence we heard from service providers, parents, carers, families and people with a disability or mental illness themselves is that this is a system in crisis.

The Minister for Community Services would not give evidence to the committee. The department gave us information that we could not use or that came too late

in our reporting to use. Our report says this is a really bad situation for Victorian families, particularly those who are vulnerable. They cannot get supported accommodation, especially in rural areas, and they also cannot get respite care, which would allow these families to have some time to themselves, knowing that their loved ones are being protected and looked after in the manner that they should be. We also heard evidence that there was a lack of accommodation in rural areas for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and also for Aboriginal Victorians.

On the issue of local government — I am also very proud to be the shadow Minister for Local Government — the government could have used this statement to acknowledge and thank those local councils for their hard work during the bushfires. Many councils were affected, and some of their residents and municipalities were affected, yet there was not one word of thanks in this statement for local councils, to say, ‘Job well done! We are here to support you. We understand the workload you have had’.

Instead what the government has done is ask councils to find neighbourhood safer places, and then it has stood back. Councils are asked to educate the community, work with the Country Fire Authority and identify the neighbourhood safer places. Councils are telling me that in some of those areas there are no safer places that they would be able to put forward to make sure that their community was protected. There are a number of government bodies that should be helping our local councils, but they are certainly not doing it.

Talking about a respect agenda, councils have also said that the government has brought in local government legislation without actually talking to local government. A lot of legislation has come into this place without the local government sector even being aware of it or being consulted appropriately to make sure the views of the councils and the peak bodies have been heard and taken into account in the legislation. There is an intergovernmental agreement signed by the Minister for Local Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria — a charter of respect, if you like — to say that the state government would consult, but it has not done that.

The Minister for Planning has been made the Minister for the Respect Agenda. He removes local councils’ right to be the planning authority; he removes the voice of Victorian families in planning decisions; and he removed the voice of the people of northern Victoria and beyond when the government planned for the north–south pipeline to take water to Melbourne, which, we now find out, does not need it.

This government has failed Victorian families; it has failed the fairness test. The future of Victoria is best put in the hands of a new government. On 27 November this year I hope that the people of Victoria express their opposition to this government and vote for a coalition government which would look after and represent the people of Victoria much better than this Labor government has done over the past 10 years, with all of the money it has had at its disposal.

The government has not looked after families, it has not looked after our farmers, it has not looked after the environment, it has not looked after our young people, and it has not stopped the violence on our streets. In fact it has made it harder for our country pubs, clubs and liquor licensed venues, because it has increased liquor licence fees, supposedly to stop violence in Melbourne, but I do not know how that action will stop violence in Melbourne. Yet again this government has a lot of spin and rhetoric to say that it is doing something when in fact it is doing nothing.

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the 2010 statement of government intentions which was delivered by the Premier on Tuesday. Since 2008, when the first statement of government intentions was read to the house, it has become a great tradition, because under the Brumby Labor government we tell people at the start of the year what we are going to do — and then we actually do it.

Just saying that does not prove anything, so I actually want to give the house some statistics about what has happened since the last statement of government intentions. In 2009, 94 per cent of the initiatives that were flagged were actually implemented and another 3 per cent were reliant on the Council of Australian Governments and national reforms, so that is actually a total of 97 per cent of things being implemented or actioned. I think that is a great strike rate. Labor says what it is going to do and then it does those things. It has a track record.

I would like to go through a couple of things in the short time that I have allocated to me. We faced a tremendous challenge in 2009. None of us at this time last year thought we would see the devastation, death and hurt that occurred on 7 February, a day which has become known as Black Saturday. One hundred and seventy-three lives were lost and more than 2000 homes were destroyed. Just saying those figures does not really convey the magnitude and absolute tragedy of what happened. I praise all the volunteers who were involved not only in the response to the bushfires but also in the reconstruction that happened

afterwards. We saw the very best of human nature after the Black Saturday fires, and I commend all those who were involved. I also want to congratulate the people who are rebuilding their lives and showing such tremendous spirit in the face of adversity. I think it causes us all to reflect on some of our values.

We have strong leadership to face those issues, and we certainly saw the Premier out there in response to Black Saturday, showing leadership, compassion and the way forward for Victorians. I think it is important at those times to show strong leadership. That leadership was also shown during the global financial crisis. Victoria has done extremely well because of the government packages and assistance that were put in place; I will go into those in more detail later.

Of course there are challenges for the government, and one of the biggest is the culture around alcohol-fuelled violence. The response to that has to be a multipronged approach. One of those prongs is obviously to have more police, and since coming to office we have delivered over 1400 more police and a further 520 in the current term of government. But it is not only about police on the streets. We also have to alter the culture that says to people, young men in particular, that it is okay to go out and perhaps have a pill and some alcohol and then behave totally irresponsibly without any respect for their friends, family, neighbours or the peer group they are out in. The only way to change that is not by putting more police on the streets but by altering the culture of things. That is where the new respect agenda comes into play. We need to address that issue right from the very beginning of primary school education. Again, that shows very strong leadership.

We also have to build for the future. One of the great things about the Brumby Labor government is that it can talk to the federal government. The global financial crisis could have adversely affected Victoria, but the state government had a number of projects ready to go that it could talk to the federal government about, and so Victoria has done very well out of the commonwealth stimulus package.

In my area many schools are now in the process of having new facilities built. Both Gladstone Park Secondary College and Craigieburn Secondary College were the recipients of grants to build science facilities, and many of the primary schools are getting new gymnasiums. The Hume City Council was given \$4.5 million for a library and learning centre in Craigieburn, and I was pleased to attend the turning of the first sod just before Christmas.

Another thing that affects my area is traffic on the Western Ring Road, and we are now seeing the Western Ring Road being widened.

Another thing I am very pleased about — and members here will have heard me talk about this before — is the success of the Craigieburn rail project. It has been an outstanding success. It was opened by the former Minister for Public Transport and the Premier and is making a difference to thousands of lives every day. I am pleased to say it has been such a success that there is now a new station with quite a large car park being built at Coolaroo. I am also very pleased about the South Morang rail extension and the electrification of the line to Sunbury. The Craigieburn rail extension has been such a success for people in that corridor that they are coming from South Morang, Epping and even Sunbury to get on the train at Craigieburn. The new electrifications coming online and the new station at Coolaroo augur well.

There will also be more new police stations opened, which is terrific. All through this — and I have highlighted it in other speeches — there has been strong leadership shown by the Premier and the Treasurer, and we have retained our AAA credit rating, which is absolutely fantastic.

Each day that I come into Parliament I drive along Flemington Road, and it seems almost daily I can see the new Royal Children's Hospital taking shape, with another piece of the jigsaw going up. I know there are currently about 2000 people working very hard on that site, and I congratulate them. I am sure the Minister for Health would be pleased to go to that site and see how it is coming along.

There is also the Box Hill Hospital. We are very pleased about and proud of that. The Kennett government never paid any attention to the Box Hill Hospital even though it was in one of its seats, and it never paid attention to the people of Box Hill. We are doing so, but now the opposition is saying it does not want the hospital.

Ms Wooldridge interjected.

Ms BEATTIE — There you are, the opposition does not want the hospital. It is knocking a hospital. We know it closed hospitals, but now it is knocking them as well.

There is one other project I want to talk about because we have just all enjoyed watching the Australian Open Tennis Championships, and congratulations to Roger Federer and Serena Williams on their magnificent wins. We are spending \$383 million to upgrade the tennis

centre to help the Australian Open retain its position as the finest open tournament in the world; that upgrade will take us well into the future.

I know there are a number of other speakers who want to speak on the statement. This government has done so much that I wish I could get an extension of time —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Fyffe) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Doncaster) — Two days ago the Premier delivered his annual statement of government intentions. Over the years I have come to expect very little from what is otherwise a day to glorify this government. For the last two years the Premier has promised a lot and subsequently tried to justify why in reality the government has achieved very little. Take away all of the carefully crafted spin and the Premier's hyped-up verbiage and all we have is another glossy brochure which conveys activity but not the real impact of this government's policies on families. What I will be talking about — and what the Leader of the Opposition talked about — is the significant negative impact this Labor government has on Victorian families.

Two days ago the Premier said that 2010 will be the year he stands up for families. We will spend some time looking at what the reality is. The government has had 10 years to stand up for families. The Premier talks about a fairer Victoria. It is a great pity the reality is that for many families, Victoria is not a fairer place to live at all.

In my travels recently I have met a number of families whose circumstances highlight the massive gap between the government's rhetoric on families, or 'working families' as they have become this week, and their reality. I met a young couple in their 30s living in Laurimar, just outside Mernda. The effects of high housing prices have pushed them further away from the city, where they both work.

Even though that couple live in the outer suburbs, they are under severe mortgage stress, struggling to pay household bills and maintain a basic standard of living. A lack of public transport, in particular the absence of a railway line, forces them into their cars each day for a long and expensive commute into the city. Their hopes of starting a family have been postponed because of their reliance on dual incomes and the lack of appropriate child care and school amenities.

This couple are worse off under Labor, because housing prices have increased by more than 120 per cent, classing Melbourne as one of the most

unaffordable cities in the world. For Victorians on an average weekly wage, home ownership has become a distant dream. They are worse off because stamp duty on land transfers has jumped a massive 186 per cent, and the cost of meat, fruit and vegies has increased by up to 60 per cent.

Then there is the middle-aged couple with three children who live just outside my electorate in Mitcham. This couple are aged in their mid-50s and have been working for 30 years, saving a nest egg and hoping for a comfortable retirement. But their dream of retiring in the next 5 to 10 years is being rapidly dashed away. Their three children are still living at home, even though two of them are in their 20s. One, still at school, has spent months looking unsuccessfully for a casual job. In the meantime his parents are forking out hundreds of dollars to pay his public transport costs and mobile phone bill. Another is studying at university; and the third, in his late-20s, has recently had to move back home after being pushed out of the rental market, no longer able to meet the soaring costs of rental properties.

This couple have a small coastal shack, which they were keeping for their children, but their annual land tax bills continue to rise and are becoming unaffordable. They are worse off under Labor because land tax collections have leapt a staggering 227 per cent. Their children are worse off because transport fares have increased by more than 50 per cent, and metropolitan rents have increased by 77 per cent. Each Friday and Saturday night these parents stay awake worrying about the safety of their children, who make the trek into the city to catch up with friends. They worry about the escalating violence, often alcohol fuelled, about what that could mean and whether one of their children could be the next victim. They worry because late night public transport is no longer a safe mode of transport for them.

Then there is the family I recently met in Bendigo, an elderly couple in their 70s with a severely disabled son aged in his 30s. This family are at their wits' end. They have spent years fighting the bureaucracy for support and assistance in caring for their son. But like so many carers they are depressed and tired. In short, they are struggling to cope emotionally, financially and physically. For many years they have been waiting to access supported accommodation for their adult son, who is one of the 1300 people stuck on the government's waiting list classed as immediately needing accommodation. None is available. The uncertainty has had a heartbreaking affect on their emotional health, and they do not know what will happen to their son when they are gone. They also wait,

often months, to access a weekend or even a night of respite.

There has been much talk in this house and by this government about respect. One thing that is certain, though, is that ageing parent-carers are not treated with respect by this government. No, this is not what I consider a fairer Victoria, and these families and thousands more like them do not think it is fairer either. What do we have? We have the statement of government intentions, which is clearly a document heavy on public relations and light on genuine commitment.

In terms of my shadow mental health portfolio, the Minister for Mental Health had one parliamentary commitment in 2009, but she failed to fulfil it. According to the 2009 statement of government intentions, as one of the major initiatives of 2009 a ministerial statement on mental health would be delivered. So we are completely clear about what they are, the parliamentary website defines ministerial statements as:

...statements ... used by ministers to occasionally address the Parliament on important issues which are of concern to the government

The Minister for Mental Health could not even manage to carry out this 20-minute commitment to the Parliament. She did, however, launch a glossy document which lacked funding, time lines or concrete commitments — and her noted absence continues.

The 2010 statement of intentions, delivered just two days ago, lists on page 51 the Minister for Mental Health as the minister responsible, along with the Attorney-General, for the Magistrates' Court Amendment (Mental Health List) Bill, yet she failed to speak on the bill despite being the responsible minister. This bill will affect the lives of people with a mental illness or an intellectual disability in significant ways. The Minister for Mental Health was even on duty in the chamber and sat at the table but refused to make a contribution to the debate, let alone answer serious questions posed by the opposition and the community in general about the bill.

In terms of child protection, last year the Minister for Community Services demonstrated three qualities: gross negligence, outright incompetence and spectacular failure. In this Parliament we saw evidence that the minister, and the government, had failed to protect vulnerable children from being injured and neglected and that she had presided over many hundreds of breaches of departmental statutory

responsibilities as well as the manipulation of child protection records.

In the one piece of legislation she introduced she was forced by the opposition and the community sector into an embarrassing backdown and had to introduce government amendments to extend the time frame for the review of child deaths. The Minister for Community Services has only succeeded in proving she is not competent for the important job of protecting neglected and abused children.

Last year the government also made a commitment to introduce a portable long service leave scheme for the community sector. However, we saw this legislation delayed because of the minister's inability to put in place a program that was even slightly acceptable to the community sector, despite everyone wanting to achieve it. This year it did not even rate a mention in the whole section on strengthening community organisations. It is down the back of the 2010 statement of intentions — and the delay is blamed on the Council of Australian Governments. However, everyone who has been involved is not fooled. We know that the minister and the department have been unable to appropriately negotiate a scheme and that that is the reason we have still not seen one.

In the area of environment and climate change, I find it ironic that a government which repeatedly talks about the need to effectively respond to climate change does not even measure the environmental footprint or record greenhouse gas emissions from government departments. This government has failed to legislate a 60 per cent cut in Victorian emissions by 2050 and failed to fulfil an election commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 8.3 million tonnes over four years. Now we can add the much-touted climate change bill and climate change white paper to the ever-growing list. This is now the third year that a climate change bill has appeared in the statement of government intentions — the Premier first promised to table a climate change bill in his 2008 statement of government intentions — but each year the government has failed to deliver it.

The government has also failed on the commitment to prepare Victoria's workforce for a fast-growing green industry by neglecting to produce a promised green jobs action plan. Victorian businesses, families and environmental groups need to have confidence that the government will deliver policies that support and strengthen communities and business. Over the last three years we have had plenty of glossy reports to try to disguise the lack of a genuine strategy and approach.

The annual statement of government intentions should introduce an opportunity to promote a reform agenda and provide a prospect for greater improvement in the delivery of services, but what this statement has highlighted is that as the demand for services increases the Brumby government continues to fall short of expectations and to fail to deliver vital services for Victorian families.

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of the 2010 statement of government intentions. This is the third statement the government has put out. Victoria was the first state in Australia to introduce such a measure. It is based on some work done by a former Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair, in the Labour Party there, which proved very successful.

To a certain extent it is providential that I follow the member for Doncaster, because in her contribution she particularly stressed concerns about vulnerable youth and child protection, which are the issues addressed in the statement of government intentions that I wish to talk about initially. I do this in light of the work that the committee I chair, the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, has recently done in relation to juvenile crime, and the government's response to it, which was released this week. The point of that — and the government's policy clearly shows this — is that the best time to tackle juvenile crime is before it gets to the juvenile justice system by dealing with children and young people who have behavioural problems and putting in place appropriate support services to try to prevent them from ever getting to the juvenile justice system.

If we as a government can achieve that over the years — and it is not a perfect process, because it involves assisting quite young children — it will be a significant improvement. It will be very useful to ensure that children who are identified as having certain problems can overcome them and lead much more worthwhile and satisfying lives. That is an aim that all members of this house would strongly support.

I am referring to the section of the statement of government intentions entitled 'A Fairer Victoria', and particularly to the vulnerable youth framework. A great deal of work has been done on it, and it will be finalised later this year. It will ensure that we respond better to the needs of vulnerable young people from late primary school to adulthood. The steps the government intends to take to achieve this include providing not only vulnerable young people but also their whole families, if necessary, with help when they need it; ensuring vulnerable young people are engaged in education or

training or successfully participating in employment opportunities; delivering the ultranet, along with some other actions that are being taken by the Minister for Education, to ensure that young people stay at school, which will be very beneficial in that regard; and of course reducing disadvantage, promoting healthy and sustainable communities and minimising negative impacts on vulnerable young people through prevention and early intervention.

The finalisation of the vulnerable youth framework in 2010 will provide an extremely good plan for the direction of services by the government to ensure that we are helping the people in the community who are most vulnerable and who most need those services.

The other important initiative also identified under the heading 'A Fairer Victoria' is the new child protection initiative. As the statement says, under the new separation of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health there is a greater capacity to focus on early intervention to ensure that there is case management for every child in child protection and that children are identified as needing that protection early. The government has already announced a further investment of \$77.2 million to strengthen child protection and address the high level of growth in demand for its services.

This year, as the statement suggests, the government will focus on recruitment of additional workers to increase the capacity of the child protection system to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families. This will include at least 100 additional front-line workers to reduce workload pressures on front-line staff. Working in child protection is difficult. When I was on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee some years ago we looked at child protection services in great depth. Child protection workers often deal with children who have been severely abused and are in need of a great deal of support. I think it is essential to ensure we give that sort of support to those children, who have often been seriously abused one way or another, so I am very pleased with this government initiative.

The aims in this area that are outlined in this year's statement of government intentions include strengthening the partnership with community service providers by providing more than 70 new staff to assist and supervise children safely placed with their extended families and implementing a new \$3.8 million initiative to support vulnerable babies and children aged 0-5. This funding will provide for an early childhood development worker in each of the 24 ChildFIRST catchments, enabling stronger partnerships between

ChildFIRST and universal early childhood services such as kindergartens and maternal and child health services.

The return of these services, particularly the maternal health services, is very important. Members would remember that some initiatives of the previous government removed some of the access to maternal health services, particularly for young mothers. Over a period of years we have been building that service up again to ensure that young mothers, some of whom have very little family support to assist them with their babies, have the help they require. I will not go through all the initiatives, but a number of them relate to that area. I look forward to seeing them implemented as the year goes on.

Under A Fairer Victoria there is a commitment to more work for people with disabilities, particularly assisting people with disabilities to gain employment. Often that is a significant problem for people with disabilities. There is still quite a lot of bias towards people with disabilities and a lack of understanding about them. People often make judgements which are quite unfair, and many people in the community with a disability of some kind can make a very valuable contribution to the workforce. I look forward to seeing more work and money put into those sorts of elements to ensure that those people do have the right to a job like the rest of us.

There are also more activities occurring under A Fairer Victoria, including delivering for veterans and for Victoria's women. The Minister for Women's Affairs covered that latter area this morning, and they are great initiatives, particularly those encouraging leadership roles. It is very important for young girls at school to see women in leadership roles to make them realise they can achieve whatever their goals are as well, so having a strong leadership focus is extremely important for young girls and teenagers particularly.

Finally, I wish to move on to an area in which I have an interest, and that is the section on building active communities, in particular the Wheeler Centre for books, writing and ideas. As a former librarian I think the centre is a great idea. Melbourne is only the second city to be established, after Edinburgh in 2004, as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation City of Literature, and that means we can develop Melbourne in many ways to put us on the map in relation to being a cultural and writing centre.

The \$20 million Wheeler Centre was opened this month. It is located in the state library. I do not know whether all members have been to have a look, but I

suggest they do so, because it will do some terrific work in the future in relation to helping people with literacy.

I think it is a truism that it is not what you know in this community that does you harm, it is what you do not know, and certainly supporting library services and a centre such as this is important to enable the whole of the population to be well informed and to play a part in our democracy. The strongest democracies are those with the greatest participation, so anything any government can do to encourage that is welcomed.

There are many initiatives in the statement this year that enable that participation, and the more we enable people to be part of the broader community, to understand the world about them and to be a part of it, the greater democracy we will have, and our society will be fairer for all concerned.

There are some great initiatives in the annual statement of government intentions for this year. It is certainly an excellent tool for the community to assess what the government is doing for the year. Often people see governments as being secretive and not being open about what they intend to achieve during the year, and certainly the statement of government intentions is one way of making the community aware of what the government is doing this year. It gives the community an opportunity to assess the government's performance in the light of what initiatives are important to them. I welcome the annual statement and look forward to the government carrying out its intentions and making them a reality by the end of 2010.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I do not think the government has ever had any problem being open about what it intends to achieve; unfortunately it just has not been quite as open about what it has not achieved.

Here we go again: the annual silly season, squandering precious parliamentary debate time on the Premier's self-indulgent, self-congratulatory annual statement. In the whole document there is not one word about the real concerns of Victorian families.

It seems only yesterday that we were debating the 2009 statement, and in terms of parliamentary sitting days that is because it was only about three days ago. Perhaps as a consequence this year's statement has sunk without a trace. I suspect it has more to do with the lack of content in the 2010 statement than the recent debate on the 2009 statement, but there we go. It lasted less than 24 hours — it perhaps only lasted 12 hours — and it was treated with the contempt it deserved by the

people of Victoria. To my surprise the Brumby government has proven even more inept than the government of Steve Bracks and even more wedded to the notion that talking is the same as doing. What this statement should be about is actions, not intentions.

The Leader of the Opposition indicated that a coalition government would replace this particular piece of trite self-promotion with a statement on Victorian families, because that is what coalition members are in this place to do — to improve the state, to grow the state and to ensure that all Victorians share in the benefits.

This is the third annual statement, and hopefully it will be the last, because it is a perversion of the tradition of the Governor's speech. It is the Premier's failed attempt to don a cloak of respectability through the device of this attempt at a lofty statement. It is yet another example of the government's corruption of our political institutions and its intent to politicise and twist the Westminster system to serve the narrow partisan interests of the ALP and the narrow partisan interests of its mates. This government has only one intent: to use every trick and every manoeuvre in the book to say or do whatever it takes to cling to power in this state, regardless of the damage it does to Victoria.

The history of the statement is quite interesting. The first one of course was 52 pages and was titled *Delivering for Victoria*. Last year it was a considerably bigger document, but the name persisted, despite it being clear that the claim that the government was delivering for Victoria was totally unsustainable.

This year we have a new name; apparently now it is all about the future. I imagine that was a decision forced on the government because one would have to talk about the future, having so conspicuously failed to deliver, as claimed in the last two statements. But of course the people of Victoria will not forget that failure to deliver. They will not forget that John Brumby and his government could not deliver even basic services that are required for everyday life — the basic services in public transport, the basic services in health and the basic services of freedom to walk the streets without fear that you will come to some form of harm — despite having 10 years and record budgets to drive the delivery of those basic services.

Of course any review of the history of the statement should not overlook the fate of last year's statement. It languished on the notice paper — untouched from 5 February until the Leader of the House moved an ignominious notice of motion to read and discharge that particular order of the day. The government's manipulation of the Parliament should have ensured the

opportunity to debate the statement; it simply chose not to. We had 48 sitting days in 2009, none of them after midnight — and that was the first time that had been the situation for six years — and we considered only 95 bills.

Given that the government had the power to bring it on and plenty of time to do it, why did we not discuss the statement? It was simply because the Premier is only interested in his grand statements; he is only interested in spin. If the statement had come back for debate, it would have been clear that the government had failed to implement its agenda. It would have been clear that this was an exercise in hollow promises, and the hollowness of those promises would have been clear for all to see.

A couple of days before that discussion, on 9 December, I suspected that it might be the case that the statement would not fact come back and I would not have an opportunity to speak on it, so I made a members statement on the subject. I now want to review a few of the intentions that failed to get up. The member for Doncaster has talked about the failure to produce the promised ministerial statement on mental health. We have also had the failure to deliver the promised statement on early childhood development. We have not yet seen the green economy jobs action plan or the promised blueprint for regional growth.

There is also supposed to be an Council of Australian Governments agreement on health funding. If you think nothing else is urgent for the government, the state of our hospitals is surely something that should command its attention immediately, but there has been no delivery on that either. There has been no delivery on the future energy strategy or on the promised international educational strategy, which was revisited on the front page of the *Age* today with the headline 'India blasts Victoria on violence' — two failures encapsulated in one headline.

However, on a reading of the Premier's previous statement one would think a totally different outcome had been achieved — and there it is again, that word 'outcome'. I think the member for Benalla summed it up pretty well in his members statement this morning. That is why the Public Finance and Accountability Bill is such a shocker — it is a fuzzy, opaque way of measuring outcomes. They can be interpreted in any way you like.

Governments have to be accountable, and they need to be genuinely accountable. They need to set proper targets, they need to have proper benchmarks and they need to have proper reporting. This government will never do that while it can get away with dressing up as

a huge success the abject failure that was the 2009 statement. If government members were serious about this exercise, if they really believed their own spin, they would set themselves proper targets. They would include in the statement a schedule of parliamentary consideration. They would publish a forward government business program. They would set hard dates for the introduction of bills and hard dates for the commencement of second-reading debates. They would program adequate parliamentary time to debate bills properly without the guillotine. If such a process were set in place, it would allow timely community consultation and allow all members of the Parliament to participate in and contribute to the program.

There was not one word in the statement about the concerns of my community on the Mornington Peninsula. People in my community are sick and tired of the failure of the government over 10 years to implement an adequate public transport system on the peninsula — to provide a convenient, regular and connected system. They are tired of the continued failure to properly maintain our local roads and the failure to commence and achieve necessary intersection upgrades and the installation of traffic lights, a requirement of growing populations. My community is tired of the failure to take proper precautions for the fire season. I must say the Country Fire Authority through the local brigades in the Western Port region has striven valiantly, despite the government's best efforts, to prepare the peninsula for the fire season.

People in my community are tired of the failure of the planning system to deliver an urban environment that is consistent with the wishes of the residents and to prevent constant incursions into the green wedge. They are tired of the failure to understand that constantly undermining the integrity of the planning controls weakens the whole system. They are tired of the debacle that is the rollout of smart meters and the process that continues to work against the installation of photovoltaic cells and other forms of renewable energy. And they are tired of the constant physical assaults in the urban centres on the peninsula and in Frankston and the total failure of the government to bring violent crime under control. They are sick and tired of waiting hours for ambulances, waiting sometimes for days in emergency departments and of waiting for months and even years for elective surgery.

The Premier's statement is a cynical, self-indulgent, self-promoting and ineffectual exercise. It will do absolutely nothing to undo the neglect of the past 10 years, and it has been received with the contempt it deserves.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Education) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on the annual statement of government intentions. As Minister for Education, I am pleased that this government has been able to reiterate its absolute commitment to the provision of high-quality education that allows our young citizens to become active and informed lifelong learners. The initiatives that are contained within this statement build on many years of continual reinvestment in the education system which has yielded those results. Victorian students perform at or above the national average in literacy and numeracy.

The rollout of the recent 'My school' website reinforces Victoria's leadership position in education in this country. In the area of school education the statement outlines our next round of initiatives under the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development. It talks about our unprecedented schools rebuilding program, which is bricks and mortar on the ground for every school community and every community more broadly to see. Partnerships are also under way between the Victorian government and the commonwealth government.

We are now in the second year of our five-year school reform agenda, as outlined in the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*. During 2010 we will continue to drive further school improvement with a range of initiatives. In spite of those excellent results, we know there is always more to be done and more innovation that can be applied to our education system so that our students get even greater opportunities and those opportunities are shared broadly across our community.

2010 will be a very exciting year with the rollout of the ultranet, which is a 21st century online learning platform. The ultranet is going to transcend the four walls of the classroom and make access to a very broad range of curriculum resources available to people anywhere, any time. The connections between the school, the parents and the local community will be further enhanced as the four walls of the classroom are broken down and made transparent. The ultranet will be the next really interesting and exciting stage of innovation within education.

As part of this next tranche of initiatives we are building on our rural education strategy. We recognise that there are inequalities between rural and metropolitan access to education. We need to focus on attracting high-quality principals and teachers to rural schools and on supporting them. The training and professional development opportunities and scholarships plus the range of curriculum that will be

offered to rural schools will be further enhanced through this work.

The extended school hubs pilot program will further support students and families from low socioeconomic communities, providing out-of-hours learning programs and activities. The schools are at the heart of these communities and have a great place there, and they have the opportunity to address social disadvantage and help those young people increase their opportunities. Increasing community use of school facilities is a key goal.

Under the national partnerships for youth attainment, the youth career and transition programs are being expanded and increased. During 2010 we are also developing more programs for gifted and talented students.

We are currently establishing a special literacy and numeracy secretariat within the department. This is to focus all of the work that is already under way, and the national partnerships that have been signed have seen millions of dollars of extra funding into our schools so that we can enhance even further our literacy and numeracy work. The implementation of the national partnerships agreement to address disadvantage in low socioeconomic communities is under way. I cannot emphasise more strongly how important these additional resources that both the state and commonwealth governments are to supporting all of those activities and improving teacher quality in those areas so that those children get additional support.

The federal digital education revolution program has been important in providing extra resources for years 9 to 12, but we in Victoria have also ramped up our provision in this area and delivered high-quality, high-speed broadband to every Victorian government school. This will be enhanced even further in 2010. Most recently we have announced that we will be paying directly for internet provision in schools. In the past some of that had to come out of school budgets, so that has seen a multimillion-dollar injection of additional access funds into schools.

As has occurred in previous years, 2010 will see the continuation of Victoria's biggest ever school rebuilding effort through the Victorian schools plan. However, our effort has been magnified through the additional funding under the Building Education Revolution program. There has been \$1.9 billion from the Victorian government over the last four years, and coupled with the BER funding it has meant that now in Victoria over 1500 school building upgrades valued at \$205 million have been completed under the National

School Pride program, and 1253 government primary schools are receiving between \$250 000 and \$3 million for large-scale infrastructure projects under the Primary Schools of the 21st Century program. Putting these two programs together has seen an incredible effort in building and construction right across the state. People for generations will reap the benefit of this particular period in our history.

Let me in the time remaining take the opportunity to speak about skills reform, my new portfolio, which is intended to enhance the opportunities for our young people as they move from school to further education, training and employment. The \$316 million of additional funding over four years, providing an extra 172 000 training places, is a massive and, in a sense, generational injection of resources into the skills area. The reform package *Securing Jobs for Your Future* will see a removal of barriers to training and a reduction in skills shortages by increasing investment and creating a more flexible and responsive training system. That is something that is going to be welcomed by communities and will continue to add to Victoria's place as the community that has seen the greatest amount of new job development in our country, even in the context of the global economic crisis.

In 2010 we will also see the development of the tertiary education plan, which will improve accessibility to tertiary education and stimulate growth and participation rates. In particular we will look at the rural and regional participation and develop the capacity of our university and tertiary sectors to provide support to students right around our state.

Finally, I will mention briefly international education. This is a key priority for the government. Scholarships are one initiative, but we are continuing with the connections we have with the international community because Victoria is a great place to live, work, raise a family and study — and education, of course, is this government's no. 1 priority. The additional funding, the innovative initiatives and all our work in this space cement that as our priority. It is work that we will continue to be engaged in.

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — The annual statement of government intentions refers to families, fairness and the future, but the statement fails families in country Victoria. It certainly fails the fairness test, and it certainly fails any future test.

Ms Pike — They hate those new schools!

Mr WALSH — It is interesting that the Minister for Education would interject about schools. She should

have been at Lake Charm Primary School last Saturday and seen the absolute mess that it was in and the fact that they could not start school on Monday because it was not ready. We were told by the regional office, 'Just go swimming for a couple of days; don't worry about school'. That is an absolute disgrace. The consultants have made more money out of that school project than has been spent on the school.

When you talk about families it would be interesting to ask the families of Leitchville, where 80 people lost their jobs yesterday as victims of the Brumby government's water policy, whether the government's vision supports country families, because it does not. Those people are now out of work. The government should ask the farming families who farm more than 2 kilometres from what is called the backbone channel when they are told that they are no longer wanted in the irrigation industry whether there is much fairness in country Victoria for those particular people. It should just ask Cr Neville Goulding of the Gannawarra Shire Council what he thinks of the government. He attacked the Brumby government's water and conservation policy, saying, 'They have not put a cent back into the community and couldn't give a stuff about farmers in Victoria'. Where is the fairness for the people like Cr Neville Goulding of the Gannawarra council when it is the stated intent that the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project, or NVIRP as everyone calls it, will close down at least 60 per cent of the irrigation system in Victoria? Where is the fairness in that for northern Victorians?

The Premier of Victoria promised a new irrigation system when he announced the food bowl modernisation project. What he did not tell people was that the majority of it would be closed down. Where is the fairness in that? What the Premier needs to realise is that in Victoria you can either use the water for food production or you can take the water away to the city; you cannot have both. You cannot have the food produced and take the water away as well. That is the message that Melburnians will get to know when there is not the food that is needed and we have to start importing food.

Premier Brumby thinks that water is a magic pudding: you can promise water here, you can promise water there, you can promise a saving over here to someone else. It is as if he is driving around country Victoria and throwing out rose petals — a saving here, a saving there, a saving somewhere else. If you add up all those savings, which I have done, you realise the Premier has promised 520 000 megalitres of savings to other water users in Victoria. But if you look at the losses, you see the losses are less than 400 000 megalitres. If you

added that up, you would realise that he has promised more savings than there are losses. I do not know how that is ever going to be accounted for — or is the Premier just telling untruths to country Victorians?

On top of that, the Premier has opened up the water market for the federal government to come in and buy water. Not only has he given away more savings than there are losses, he is also letting Penny Wong, the federal Minister for Climate Change and Water, come in and buy the water that produces the food for Victorians and for the export markets. It is clear that those particular things done by the Premier led to the closure of the Leitchfield cheese factory yesterday.

Let us look at the northern Victoria regional sustainable water strategy, which supposedly sets out the strategy for water management in northern Victoria for the next 50 years. The Premier has been talking about savings all the time, but buried in that strategy document is a statement that NVIRP can go into the water market, buy water and call it savings.

The Premier cannot find the savings he needs through infrastructure projects so he is changing the rules again, as he does. He is changing the rules on the run to suit his own agenda and saying that NVIRP can buy water and call it savings. Where is the fairness; where is the future in that statement from the Premier? How dishonest is that? It is absolutely disrespectful to northern Victorians.

The Premier constantly talks about the respect agenda. Where was the respect agenda just before Christmas when this government sacked the Pyramid Boort Water Services Committee? That customer-elected committee, part of the Goulburn-Murray Water structure representing the interests of irrigators in that area, was unceremoniously sacked. There was no due process and no presumption of innocence in respect of what members of the committee may or may not have done wrong. There was, effectively, a kangaroo court, and the chair of Goulburn-Murray Water, with the blessing of this government, put out a press release saying he was sacking that committee. The people on the committee, elected by their peers, have been representing the interests of that community for a long time. In particular the chair, John Nelson, who has spent nearly 30 years representing the interests of irrigators in that area, was sacked without any due process and without any reason given. After 30 years of loyal service to the community John's reputation was absolutely trashed by this government when it sacked him and his committee.

Members of that committee have no redress. They cannot say anything because they have signed a code of conduct with Goulburn-Murray Water which means they cannot make public comments about issues. We have the government trashing their reputation in the media, and they have no redress because they have signed a code of conduct and are not allowed to talk about what has happened. So when we talk about respect, it is my view and the view of the people I talk to in my electorate that the only people who get any respect in Victoria are Labor mates. If you are not a Labor mate, you get very little respect in this state, and that is a very sad state of affairs.

If we talk about families, we should talk about the families of Bendigo, whose water is supplied by Coliban Water, one of the water authorities mentioned in the Auditor-General's report last year, that is effectively going broke. The Auditor-General's report talks about how Coliban Water is borrowing money to meet operational expenses. Anyone who has been in business knows that if you are starting to borrow money to meet operational expenses, you are going broke. You can borrow money for capital expenditure, but if you are borrowing money for operational expenses, you are going broke. Coliban Water is going to go back to the Essential Services Commission to try to reopen the pricing model debate so it can increase prices to cover the losses it is making. Gavin Hanlon, the chief executive officer of that water authority, was reported in the media as saying that it would not hurt families too much if Coliban Water put the prices up. I think it will hurt families when the water authority puts prices up, and the way this government has managed water in Victoria is a very sad state of affairs.

The Cain-Kirner era was noted for the fact that Victoria lost the State Bank, the power industry had to be sold off and the gas industry had to be sold off to pay off the debts of this state. It was a very sad state of affairs that occurred because of the mismanagement of the Cain and Kirner governments. The legacy John Brumby is going to leave this state is that country Victoria is going to be closed down because he is going to strip the water out of it. It is effectively going to be one great big empty space, overridden with vermin and noxious weeds and with very few people. Campbell Fitzpatrick, a Department of Sustainability and Environment official, recently made a comment about the people of northern Victoria being the first climate change refugees of Australia. I think the people of northern Victoria are going to be John Brumby's refugees of Victoria, not climate change refugees, all because of this government's water policy.

In closing I want to talk about the respect issue and the Minister for Agriculture. After the minister visited the Sunraysia district, Robin Letts, the editor of the *Buloke Times*, wrote in his paper:

Minister Helper was less than pleased by some of Sunraysia's reactions to the discussions. He sounded a little churlish when interviewed by the ABC.

Robin Letts went on to say:

... that tough-guy image which John and Tim try to project doesn't work so well for you.

meaning the minister — —

Try a little harder to live up to your role as an MP representing a rural electorate.

He went on further to say:

As things stand you are most likely to be remembered for closing down agricultural services at Walpeup, Stawell and other places.

We can talk about the Minister for Agriculture and whether he is standing up for families in country Victoria, whether he is being fair to families in country Victoria and whether he is trying to get a future for country Victorians. I believe he is not. We can talk to the people of Walpeup, we can talk to the people of Kyabram and we can talk to the people of Rutherglen about that subject, and now we can talk to the people of Leitchville, where yesterday 80 jobs were lost out of a population of only a little over 200. That community has been devastated, and it was a direct result of the poor water policies of the Brumby government.

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I rise to support and talk about the annual statement of government intentions. This is a great innovation that the government now produces every year. It gives a clear indication to Victorians of its aims and intentions for the coming year. The statement is all about transparency and accountability in terms of telling people what is going to happen. It tells them about priorities in terms of its Growing Victoria Together strategy, in terms of jobs, bushfires, bushfire preparedness and reconstruction, safe and secure communities, managing growth and change, and improving education and health. The statement also talks about the government's aims under its A Fairer Victoria policy, about building active communities, about climate change, water and the environment and, importantly, about legislation and regulatory reform.

I should note, following the previous speech, that the Labor government has done more for country Victoria than the then National Party in coalition with the

Liberals did during the Kennett era. We have really supported rural and regional Victoria over the last 10 years. I hope the member for Benalla takes note of that and of the enormous number of things that have been done in terms of schools, highways and so many things in rural Victoria.

My focus is on jobs. The Victorian government's focus is on jobs, and jobs are there for working families. This is a government that has delivered and will continue to deliver jobs for working families here in Victoria, whether that be in the centre of Melbourne, in the outer suburbs or in regional or rural Victoria. The number of jobs that are available in rural and regional Victoria has increased dramatically during the last 10 years. We are working to make sure those jobs continue to increase.

The statement of government intentions mentions that there will be another budget this year. In the first half of this year another five months of the 2009–10 budget is yet to be expended. Last year's budget promised to secure 36 000 jobs. What is the record so far? Last year 76 000 additional jobs were created, many of which were in rural and regional Victoria. We are ensuring that working families are supported.

Last year's budget was a positive one, and in the black. There were only two jurisdictions in Australia that were in the black, the other one being Western Australia. Not long after it brought its budget down it got into deep trouble. Particular Nationals in Western Australia promised everything but delivered nothing, which is pretty typical.

The jobs are here in Victoria, and having a resilient economy is very important for Victorians. One of the ways we have been achieving this is that we have had a vision for a number of years about our future and our productivity. The way to achieve productivity is to improve our skills. The Minister for Education just talked about schools and the planned school improvement measures outlined in the annual statement of government intentions. We have a wonderful skills improvement program, but it takes thought and long-term vision to put this into place; it takes several years to get things moving, as we are now doing.

In terms of infrastructure, the Victorian government sat down several years ago and said, 'We need to grow and to renew our infrastructure'. Members should be reminded about the greatest rail upgrade undertaken in Victoria; the rail infrastructure was neglected for nearly 100 years, but the regional rail infrastructure has been rebuilt in Victoria.

We are growing our infrastructure with, for example, the \$38 billion — not \$38 million but \$38 billion! — transport plan. After years of neglect during the Bolte government and years of neglect during the Kennett era we are now reinvesting in public transport infrastructure. We have already seen outcomes this year.

It is absolutely wonderful to see the grade separation of the level crossing at Springvale Road, Nunawading. Anyone who goes out there should drive over it. It is absolutely wonderful — and it opened ahead of schedule just last month. It provides safer and more reliable travel for train passengers and makes driving and walking easier and safer for drivers and pedestrians in that area.

Also this year we will see the completion of the north-east rail revitalisation project.

Dr Sykes interjected.

Mr STENSHOLT — Maybe the member for Benalla ought to go and talk to the previous federal leader of the National Party, Tim Fischer, about railways; he might learn a thing or two! The completion of the north-east rail revitalisation project is due this year — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Fyffe) — Order! This is an appropriate time for the house to adjourn for lunch.

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

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police: data security

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer to the fact that in July 2007 the commissioner for law enforcement data security (CLEDS) published 43 law enforcement security standards governing the management of law enforcement data held by Victoria Police, and I further refer to the finding of the Office of Police Integrity (OPI) contained in the report tabled today that ‘most of the protocols contained in the CLEDS standards are yet to be implemented’, and I ask: how does the minister justify the fact that more than two and a half years after the introduction of these standards — which are specifically designed to stop law enforcement data being distributed to criminals and to others not entitled

to receive it — most of them are yet to be implemented?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the honourable member for his question. Speaker, as you will be aware, the OPI this morning tabled a report about information security as it relates to the surveillance unit, and what the OPI points out is the way the surveillance unit operated essentially independently and the way that has come into the system. What the OPI makes very clear is that police have been making improvements and there is more to do. As Sir Ken Jones has made clear today, those substantial improvements are still being built upon. The commissioner for law enforcement data security — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAMERON — Let us remember — —

The SPEAKER — Order! Can I suggest to members of the opposition that the level of interjection is far too high.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question, which is about why 43 of these standards introduced in 2007 have not been applied under this minister’s watch, and the minister should answer that question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The minister — —

Mr Eren interjected.

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

The minister is being relevant to the question, which under standing orders is appropriate.

Mr CAMERON — Of course only one side of this house was in favour of a commissioner for law enforcement data security — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the minister. The minister will not come to the microphone and commence to debate the question in that manner.

Mr CAMERON — We have a commissioner for law enforcement data security, and that goes to the very question which the honourable member asked. There was one side of this house that was in favour of a commissioner for law enforcement data security. What the commissioner for law enforcement data security has done is put in place standards which are world best practice for police to work to. The issue when it comes

to the surveillance unit and the covert operations it does is that those covert operations are extremely important — for example, around — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast is warned. That level of interjection will not be tolerated.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Polwarth

The SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124, I ask the member for Polwarth to vacate the chamber for 15 minutes.

Honourable member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police: data security

Questions resumed.

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — What we have are standards that police ultimately have to attain to achieve world best practice. What the report points out around the surveillance unit and the way it operates, given the very sensitive and covert nature of its work, is that you have to very carefully balance the information you hold and the information you give to operatives and try to get that balance right.

What the report points out is what we do as a government, and that is that we work with the Chief Commissioner of Police to provide record resources and record numbers of police and staff. What the report makes very clear is the increases — —

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. The simple point is that if the 43 standards had been applied we would not have the problems to which the report refers. I ask that the minister answer the question I have asked him.

Mr Batchelor — On the point of order, Speaker, this is no point of order; under the standing orders a member is not permitted to use points of order to

simply repeat the question. We have heard this time and again. We have seen the Leader of The Nationals acknowledge that; he gets up and takes a point of order, pretending it is a legitimate point of order, but then he simply repeats the question, and that should be ruled out.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The minister was clearly discussing the OPI report that was tabled today, which formed part of the member's question.

Mr CAMERON — My job is to work with the chief commissioner to make sure that they have got the resources and the staff they need. When you have a look at the OPI report, at page 39 it talks about the large increase in the percentage of staff since 2005 and it talks about the increase in budget. As a result of the record budget that we provided, we see that record budget with the state surveillance unit and the work it does.

The OPI sums it up at the end, in the first sentence of his conclusion:

Since the issues that led to this report arose ... there have been significant improvements in information security ... at the state surveillance unit yet there is still more to be done —

and that is what police are doing.

Bushfires: preparedness

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the house on further improvements to the state's largest ever firefighting effort?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the member for Yan Yean for her question and for her very strong commitment, both as a volunteer and as a member of Parliament more generally, to the firefighting effort in our state. Today at Essendon Airport, with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I had the pleasure of welcoming a new partnership between the Victorian government and two major Australian companies. This partnership between the government — the CFA (Country Fire Authority) — and the companies will come in the form of new equipment and will further boost the state's firefighting effort.

I was delighted to be able to announce today that Westpac has donated its new fixed-wing aircraft, which is the Westpac FireWatch, which will be great for enhancing our fire surveillance and response capacity. It will operate on days of high fire risk, and it will patrol areas like the Dandenong Ranges, our coastal tourist areas and other bushfire-prone areas.

What makes this plane special is that it is equipped with EARS — the electronic aerial reconnaissance system. It captures the images of the fire through the wings and streams that information to fire controllers on the ground. This is great new technology; I saw it in practice today. It is very sophisticated and outstanding if you are tracking a fire and working out both where it started and the movement of the fire and where you need aerial and on-ground resources.

It will join our fleet of 204 available aircraft that can help with fire detection, firebombing and transportation. That fleet supports Victoria's Very Large Aerial Tanker, which was approved for service this year from 7 January. Members may have seen one of the trials with that tanker over the last weekend. It can hold 45 000 litres of water or 42 000 litres of retardant and can lay a continuous line 1.2 kilometres long and 30 metres wide.

Today we also welcomed the seven new trucks funded by Toll Holdings and its employees. Paul Little was there for this announcement. Toll matched dollar for dollar the money raised by its staff. I have often said of our state that I think we do partnerships — if I can express it that way — better than anywhere else in Australia. This is a great example of a partnership between a business and its employees and the CFA, government and emergency services to make our state as fire ready and fire safe as possible. I hope we see more of this in the future. I complimented the companies today — Westpac and Toll — on the leadership they have shown in supporting this effort.

With the money provided by Toll, as I said, the company matched what its employees put in. There were some beautiful stories about how much had been raised by Toll employees right across Australia: \$475 000 will go towards new and refurbished trucks at Horsham, Kangaroo Flat, Wangaratta, Mount Evelyn, Moe, Warrnambool and Geelong. That complements the record \$700 million which is going into this year's firefighting effort, which is by far the highest in our history: it is new resources on the ground, it is new appliances, it is more funds for the State Emergency Service, it is the upgrading of level 3 control centres, and it is the new national emergency warning system.

I should say in answering this question — I mentioned this today — that this Sunday marks the 12-month anniversary of the terrible fires that we had on 7 February 2009. There will be services and commemorations held across the state. I think it is the view of many if not most of the communities that were fire affected that they would like that commemoration to be low key. There will be an ecumenical service at

St Paul's Cathedral at 12 noon, and I know that many members of Parliament will be attending that service. The Prime Minister has declared Sunday, 7 February, a national day of mourning and the Australian national flag will be flown at half-mast.

I take the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Victorian Council of Churches and the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority to plan the service in Melbourne. As I said, that will be at 12 noon at St Paul's and it will be a multifaith service.

There is no doubt that the one-year anniversary of these fires will be a deeply painful time for many families across our state, but at the same time communities are moving forward. They will gain strength from our support for them through our thoughts and prayers on 7 February.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services: performance

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to today's Office of Police Integrity report, the most recent in a series of damning reports which catalogue the collapse of law and order management under his government, including systemic underrecording of crime statistics, a massive budget blow-out in the police business information technology services unit, a series of blunders at the police forensic laboratory and now a complete lack of accountability for and security of sensitive police information, and I ask: will the Premier now accept responsibility for this debacle and sack his incompetent police minister, or is this just more evidence that the Premier too is incompetent and out of touch?

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Minister for Health not to interject in that manner.

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Listening to his question in relation to systemic underrecording of crime, the forensic laboratory and IT system within Victoria Police, the only way you can interpret his question today is as a full-scale attack on the integrity of the police commissioner.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask members of the opposition, and particularly the member for Kew, not to interject in that manner.

Mr BRUMBY — The Leader of the Opposition started his question with a reference to ‘systemic underrecording of crime’. The government does not — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the members for Scoresby, Caulfield and Malvern not to interject in that manner.

Mr BRUMBY — As honourable members are aware, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition is aware, statistics on crime are collected by Victoria Police. They are also collected by the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) through its household survey. If the Leader of the Opposition is referring, as he said, to systemic underrecording, then there is no other interpretation for that than an attack on the integrity and independence of Victoria Police.

Mr Stensholt interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Burwood not to interject in that manner.

Mr Baillieu — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is clearly debating the question. What the Premier seems to be doing is confirming that the police minister knows nothing, does nothing and has no responsibility for anything.

Mr Wells interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Scoresby. As all members know, every member has the right to take a point of order.

Mr Hulls — On the point of order, Speaker, there seems to be a consistent course of conduct that has been entered into by the Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite to take points of order to either try and make foolish, half-hearted statements in this house or repeat the question. It may be the fact — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask members of the opposition to cease interjecting and to allow the Attorney-General to make his point of order.

Mr Hulls — Points of order are not to be used as an opportunity to try to repeat the question. The fact is that there is no point of order. Whilst the Leader of the Opposition may be embarrassed by his feeble statement this morning, he should not come to question time and try to make feeble points of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I suggest to the Attorney-General that to take an opportunity to make comments on a point of order and then make statements of debate is not appropriate. I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier was clearly responding to the question as asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BRUMBY — As I indicated yesterday in Parliament, there are statistics which are collected by Victoria Police and there are statistics which are collected by the ABS. On both counts those statistics show that over the last decade the crime rate in our state has declined by more than 20 per cent.

In relation to IT programs, if my recollection is correct I heard the Chief Commissioner of Police being interviewed in relation to that matter and he agreed that this was an operational matter for Victoria Police. That is what he said on radio.

An honourable member — What does he do?

Mr BRUMBY — What does he do? What does the police commissioner do?

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask for the Premier’s cooperation, and I ask members of the opposition to cease interjecting. The Premier will not be shouted down.

Mr BRUMBY — Our job is to provide the resources which enable police to do their job. Our job is to provide the budget for police. We have done that. We are providing the largest ever budget for police in both real and nominal terms. We have had more graduates go through the police academy than at any time in our history.

The SPEAKER — Order! I believe the Premier is debating the question.

Mr BRUMBY — We have more police than at any time in our history. The job of the government and the minister is to set the resource levels and to make the laws that let police do their job. We have seen significant changes to the law in this Parliament which have toughened up the laws in our state, whether it is the move-on powers, the powers in relation to knives, the fines for drunk and disorderly behaviour — —

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question, and I ask you to have him return to the question he was asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! The question did refer to the role of the police minister, which I believe the

Premier was discussing. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr BRUMBY — The record shows that there are record levels of resources and that in so many areas, including alcohol-fuelled violence, we have toughened and strengthened the laws. We have provided more police around task forces, and we have toughened up laws in relation to domestic violence. In all of these areas across the state the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has brought these proposals to the Parliament with the Attorney-General to change the laws to make our state safer. That is his job: to get the resources, to get the police and to put the legal framework in place.

If you compare our government and the position today with that of more than a decade ago, there is a profound difference. The laws that are in place are tougher and stronger, and there are more police measures and resources in place. As a consequence of that we enjoy a crime rate today which is 25 per cent lower than it was a decade ago.

Bushfires: local government

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — My question is for the Minister for Local Government. Can the minister inform the house how the government is working with local councils to support the bushfire recovery effort?

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Local Government) — I thank the honourable member for Seymour for his question, and I congratulate him on his appointment as the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Bushfire Reconstruction. He is a fantastic choice.

As the Premier indicated, on Sunday we will pause to reflect on the unprecedented natural disaster this state experienced on 7 February 2009, which caused so much death and destruction across Victoria and which was preceded of course by the fires in Gippsland. We all remember that Saturday morning of fierce northerly winds and furnace-like temperatures that were the portents of the day's events. Over 25 municipalities were affected by fire-related events that covered the corners of the state over January and February. The Premier committed at the time to standing with the bushfire-affected communities not just through the initial crisis but also as they travelled on the road to recovery.

As I have said many times in this house, on occasions of crisis people turn to their local governments as their first port of call. On every occasion local government

has stood tall — in terms of the initial response not only fire-affected councils but all those other councils across Victoria that made immediate and unsolicited efforts to support the fire-affected councils. Immediate practical assistance was offered by local governments, including in some instances the deferral and waiving of rates and interest payments, the preparation of supplementary evaluations and the waiving of building and planning fees in many of the fire-affected council areas, all of which provided direct relief to their communities. Other councils, which were not affected by the fires, immediately came to the support of their neighbouring councils with equipment, staff and resources as well.

As the house will recall, in early April the \$9.1 million community assistance grant package was announced to help councils support their communities as they recover from the 2008–09 bushfire season. This recognised the increased costs councils were facing in directly helping their communities recover from the bushfires. This funding was made available by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, and of course it is being jointly administered by Local Government Victoria and the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority. This initiative, of course, was very much welcomed by local government more generally.

Murrindindi shire experienced the greatest impact — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Green — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to the level of disrespect being shown by some members to the minister in relation to serious matters about bushfire recovery. They have been sitting there laughing for 5 minutes. People in my community have suffered for a year, and those members do not care.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr WYNNE — Murrindindi shire experienced the greatest impact of any Victorian council, including the loss of an estimated 20 per cent of its housing stock. At this point I would like to pause to recognise the very substantial contribution of the former mayor of Murrindindi, Lyn Gunter, who resigned from her position on the council last year. I think it would be acknowledged across both sides of the chamber that Lyn Gunter did a fantastic job in incredibly difficult circumstances, and her departure from the council is a loss to it.

The government of course acknowledges the unprecedented circumstances the council faces and

recognises the very significant challenges that remain due to the catastrophic effects of the bushfires in Murrindindi. Prior to Christmas the Premier announced a \$9.2 million assistance package that represents an unprecedented initiative on the part of our government to provide substantial support to the council over the next four years. The assistance package comprises \$3.2 million to offset the shortfall in rate revenue for the council and \$6 million for expenses associated with the bushfire recovery program. I know that assistance has been very much welcomed by the Murrindindi council. It will make, in our view, a real difference to the council and particularly to the community in the recovery process.

Finally, the Municipal Association of Victoria has been a crucial partner with the state and local governments, and we acknowledge the work it has done. Whilst we have had a relatively benign fire season thus far, I know that every council has worked assiduously to prepare for this season with the relevant Country Fire Authority and Department of Sustainability and Environment authorities. This has been especially the case for those councils which contain one or more of the 52 identified high-risk townships. We will continue to work with councils through this rebuilding process. I acknowledge the enormous contribution they have made to date.

West Gate Bridge: lighting

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Given the recent announcement by the Minister for Roads and Ports that he will spend \$20 million on fairy lights for the West Gate Bridge, will the Premier now overrule his minister and instead spend this money on supporting Victorian families?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — As the Leader of the Opposition is aware, we are spending \$1.3 billion on the upgrade of the Monash-West Gate freeways. That work is well advanced — substantially complete, in fact, in many parts at the moment — and I think anyone who has driven down the Monash Freeway would know that. All the work there will provide an increase in throughput and capacity of something like 50 per cent.

In terms of the announcement made by the minister in relation to the lighting, I am advised that the lighting on the bridge is more than 30 years old, that it has reached the end of its life and that it needs to be replaced to maintain safety for motorists. The upgrade of the bridge always, I am advised, included funding for new lighting to improve visibility and driver safety while also ensuring the status of the bridge.

I should say more generally in relation to this project that it will increase road capacity by 50 per cent, as I said. There will be five lanes in each direction on the West Gate Bridge. There will be additional lanes on Monash Freeway from Heatherton Road, new state-of-the-art freeway management to improve the traffic flow from Werribee to Narre Warren and of course the new ramps onto the West Gate Freeway itself.

As one of the improved safety measures we also have taken the opportunity to ensure that there will be permanent suicide barriers put in place. I think all members of this place know the history of this discussion. Over a long period of time in this place different governments have been given different advice about this issue. The advice we were given was that when embarking on this major redevelopment it would be an appropriate time to put in place permanent, secure barriers. That is what we are doing as part of this project. It is a major new redevelopment, which as I have said includes permanent suicide barriers.

Bushfires: recovery

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — My question is to the Minister for Community Development. Can the minister update the house on how the government is helping to rebuild bushfire-affected communities through the Community Recovery Fund?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Community Development) — I thank the member for Macedon for her question. Members are well aware that the Community Recovery Fund is an important element in a series of effective partnerships between the government and local communities affected by the bushfires. The Brumby government is playing an important coordinating role to help local communities rebuild their lives after the devastation suffered in February of last year.

Right up, we set up the bushfire donation and volunteer centre in response to the terrific number of Victorians wanting to volunteer and lend a hand. More than 20 000 Victorians registered in the first few weeks alone. We have a proud record of volunteering in Victoria. One in three adults volunteers in some way, in some capacity, every day of the week, every year in an ongoing fashion. The spontaneous show of support after the bushfires stands as a testament to this community spirit and strength. We have provided emergency grants of up to \$20 000 to local community groups to help coordinate this phenomenal volunteer effort. The Kinglake Ranges neighbourhood house is one of the many successful partnerships the

government and communities have entered into. In this instance the neighbourhood house has served as a resource centre and local hub for volunteering activities.

Together with the federal government we established the \$10 million Community Recovery Fund, of which \$3 million was set aside for local sporting clubs. We have worked in partnership with local clubs to identify and cost the rebuilding of 44 facilities. I can report that this full amount has now been committed. In addition \$2.75 million has been set aside for community grants and local projects. These grants will help support activities identified in the community-driven recovery plans, for the regeneration of community spaces and, for example, for the establishment of much-needed community newsletters to help residents stay in touch and share much-needed information.

Affected councils have also received a share of \$2.5 million for memorials and commemorative events in bushfire-affected areas. My thoughts are with those communities as we reflect on and commemorate the devastation of a year ago this coming Sunday.

The sum of \$1.75 million has also been set aside for the appointment of community development officers by the affected local government areas. I am pleased to report that all of the 14.5 full-time equivalent positions have been filled and those workers are out there on the ground at the local level responding to the needs of those communities. We have also earmarked \$4 million towards the reconstruction of community facilities. This money will be allocated in consultation with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority and local communities.

It is of great importance to this government that it assists members of local communities to rebuild their lives with dignity and self-determination. These resources are helping these communities to do just that.

Shire of Gannawarra: jobs

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the announcement by the Murray Goulburn Cooperative that it will close down its Leitchville plant, with the direct loss of 80 jobs, and to the comments of Gannawarra shire councillor Neville Goulding, who said that the Brumby government has ‘no interest in the area’ and ‘couldn’t give a stuff about farmers in Victoria’, and I ask: given that the loss of 80 jobs from Leitchville is almost 30 per cent of its population, is it not a fact that the Brumby government is forcing job losses and devastating farming families?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — It is a pity that the member for Swan Hill said that, because he knows it is not true — —

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — No, he just said it. He said it.

As I have indicated in the Parliament this week, one of the things that I am proudest of over the last year in Victoria is the record number of new jobs generated across our state. When we lose jobs, obviously that is something of great disappointment to me, and confirmation too that we have always to be vigilant to ensure that we build a state that is attractive to new investment so that we can get new investment and when industries do close — as regrettably they do from time to time — we can bring in new investment and hopefully replace those jobs.

In relation to Leitchville, it is my understanding that the company — this is Murray Goulburn cooperative — will continue to operate three dairy processing plants in northern Victoria. Obviously the closure in Leitchville is a terrible loss for the local community, but it does not signal the end of the northern Victorian dairy industry. In fact, in contrast to the question raised by the member for Swan Hill, the managing director of Murray Goulburn stated, in relation to the decision, that the company:

... continues to have confidence in the future of the northern Victorian and southern Riverina dairy industries, with the region still providing about 20 per cent of national milk production.

Of course he attributed the closure to the impact particularly of the drought and dairy prices.

In terms of support for the dairy industry, we have put in place a huge range of support mechanisms. They include obviously the \$2 billion food bowl modernisation project, which is without doubt the most strategically important project for Victoria’s food industry in decades. We have put in place the channel-deepening project, which enables the dairy industry to export its products more efficiently. We have put in place programs such as our Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, which has attracted new investment to that region. We have provided a \$40 million investment in the \$128 million Dairy Futures Cooperative Research Centre.

In addition to all that, we have provided something like \$400 million in drought assistance to communities since 2006. That has included \$168 million for water rebates for irrigators, \$24 million to enable farmers to receive a discount on their municipal rates, \$20 million

for the catchment management authority drought employment program, \$20 million for the small towns development fund and \$9 million for grants to businesses to keep employing apprentices.

In relation to Gannawarra shire, we have also worked with it in recent years. These projects have included \$666 000 for the development of the Cohuna and Tate Drive, Kerang, industrial estates; the construction of Kenny Road and Suttie Road, west end, through the Dairy Roads to Market program; the Leitchville town development program; and a range of others. I believe we have a strong record of supporting northern Victoria. I am told that if you look at the jobs growth that has occurred across the state over the last year, you find there has been significant job growth in northern Victoria, and we have an unemployment rate in that area today which is well below that of a decade ago.

Finally, the investments we are making in the food bowl are designed to secure the future of the dairy industry in what is an extraordinarily competitive global environment. This is designed to secure the industry's future for decades to come, and the policies and programs we have put in place do exactly that.

Bushfires: children's support services

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — My question is to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. Can the minister provide details of the progress of children's services being rebuilt in bushfire-affected communities?

Ms MORAND (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for Eltham for his question. As the Premier and other ministers have already said, there has been an overwhelming response from across Victoria and indeed across Australia following the Victorian bushfires last year. Those affected by the devastating fires are rebuilding their lives, their homes and their communities.

Members will recall that as part of the devastation of the bushfires there was the loss of schools, kindergartens, and maternal and child health services in Marysville and Kinglake and the loss of the primary school in Strathewen and the Flowerdale kindergarten. Schools and children's services are at the heart of communities. I visited the Kinglake community several times after the fires, and it was clear that parents placed a very high priority on getting their children back to school, back into kinder and back into child care as soon as possible. They recognised that what was

important was getting the children back into a normal routine as quickly as possible.

The reinstatement of health, education and support services has been a very high priority for the Brumby government and for everybody involved in the rebuilding and reconstruction of these communities. Relocatable and temporary schools, kindergartens, and maternal and child health services were set up quickly until new facilities could be rebuilt. In fact this has provided an opportunity in the rebuilding for enhanced services and also the opportunity to co-locate services that were not co-located in the past.

I am pleased to report on the construction of the Marysville Children's Centre, which is on track for completion in term 2 of this year. This centre will provide child care, kindergarten, maternal and child health services, and consulting rooms for other additional services. This will be a wonderful facility for the community in Marysville.

I am also pleased to report that agreement has recently been reached with the Flowerdale community to locate the kindergarten that was destroyed next to the existing Flowerdale Primary School, and that building will commence next term. Families in Flowerdale will be able to access the kindergarten, the maternal and child health and family services and a multipurpose room, all on the school site. Again this will be a fantastic facility.

In Strathewen the rebuilding will commence in term 2, and in Kinglake, where the school, kindergarten and the maternal and child health services facilities were lost, work is almost complete, from the planning and design stage, for a new facility in Middle Kinglake. A new children's centre will house kindergarten, maternal and child health services, family and support services all together under the one roof, co-located with the school. Again this will be a fantastic facility. The views of the people of the local community have been crucial to the development and design of these facilities, and we value their input into ensuring that their views are heeded and the sorts of services they need and deserve are being provided.

Finally, I pay tribute to the principals, the kindergarten teachers, the maternal and child health nurses, the parent committees, the parents, the neighbourhood houses and everybody who has been involved and has done so much to help in the rebuilding and healing processes in these communities.

Electricity: smart meters

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources. I refer to the report commissioned by the Ministerial Council on Energy that found that, in addition to Victorian families paying up to \$152 annually for smart meters they do not even have, they face electricity price increases of a further \$150 a year once the smart meters are installed, and I ask: given that the Auditor-General has warned of the very real risk that the families who are forced to pay for the smart meters will not get the benefit of them, will the minister now freeze the roll-out of this bungled project until a full and independent cost-benefit analysis has been completed?

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The distribution companies in Victoria are rolling out smart meters across Victoria at the moment. They started in September last year, and there are 2.5 million to be rolled out to homes and small businesses. It will take to about the end of 2013 to achieve that task. We will continue to do that. Although the Liberal Party promised to roll out smart meters right across Victoria at the last election, we will actually do it. Members opposite will never get the opportunity to do it because we will have already done it.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Minister for Energy and Resources not to continue down that track.

Mr BATCHELOR — It has been a technological advancement that the member for Box Hill was very supportive of. He said the opposition would do it.

Mr O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the question. There is a world of difference between a competent smart meter project and the minister's myki of metering.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask members to come to order. I will not allow the member for Malvern to take a point of order in that manner. The minister, to continue, confining his remarks to the question as asked.

Mr BATCHELOR — The rollout is occurring and will continue. There are a number of issues in relation to pricing matters. I have already announced that we will engage the Essential Services Commission in Victoria to undertake an equity examination and look at the needs of Victorian consumers.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Malvern, having asked this question, to have the courtesy to listen to the answer.

Mr BATCHELOR — It is this government that stands for fairness. We have done it all through our term, and we will continue to do it. We will continue to support and stand up for the vulnerable members of our community, whether they are in metropolitan Melbourne or in country Victoria. We will stand up for each and every one of them and ensure that the benefits that flow from the widespread installation of smart meters will flow through to those vulnerable members of our community in particular.

It is interesting to note that already the Australian Energy Regulator, which is an arm of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has indicated that, as the benefits accrue from the installation of smart meters, those benefits that accrue to the network area will be passed back to consumers through adjustments to the price determinations that are made over the years. The AER has already made that promise, and we will hold the AER to that commitment.

People in Victoria will know a number of things: we will complete this rollout and we will deliver to the homes and the families of Victoria the new technology that will enable them to control their energy use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The general statewide efficiencies that will flow from this will be captured by the distribution and network companies. The AER has already indicated that it is prepared to pass those back to households. Doing that will reduce price increases and help protect the vulnerable.

Bushfires: preparedness

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Can the minister outline to the house what steps communities, fire agencies and the government have been taking to respond to the risk of bushfires this summer?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the honourable member for Ballarat East for his question and the great interest he shows in relation to combating bushfire and preparing communities, including communities in his area, for bushfires.

This weekend marks the 12-month anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires, with the week before marking the anniversary of the Gippsland fires. What we saw on 7 February last year was an unprecedented

fire, the likes of which we had never seen before. As a consequence of that it has been necessary to prepare the state on the basis that we can have that sort of fire that we had never seen before.

This weekend we remember all those who died and all those who have been affected, whether they are family or friends. We remember all those communities and acknowledge the tremendous work of emergency services workers and volunteers during that period. I know that in the last year so many of them have been affected. That in itself is a tremendous sacrifice as a result of what they do across this state. We also remember all the people who were involved in helping communities. We remember the employers of those volunteers and all those organisations.

As a result of this new and unprecedented threat that we had not seen before, there has been enormous change. A new fire danger rating system has been put in place. There have been variations to the stay-or-go policy, with a clearer emphasis around leaving early as part of the prepare, act and survive message. We have seen so many more community meetings. There are community education and fire guard meetings, improvements in operational procedures, improvements to incident control centres and the one source, one message system. We have seen more sources when it comes to communications broadly through the media. Commercial radio stations and Sky TV are now emergency services broadcasters and there is the new national alert system as well.

We have already had 5000 fires so far this fire season — 200 in the last week alone. We have already seen 12 days which have been total fire ban days — one of them on the whole of the state — and we have seen two code red days. When you think of some of the bigger incidents this year and their potential, we have seen a tremendous response. For instance, at Mount Clear near Ballarat volunteers and others put down their tools on New Year's Eve to go and protect communities. We had fires at Cann River and Roses Gap in the Grampians, each having tremendous and life-threatening potential.

There have been two code red days — on 11 and 12 January. There were 240 incidents on the Monday and on the Tuesday; any fire that got away in those circumstances would have done tremendous damage. It is all those things and the additional resources that were put in place, some of which I have referred to, that have been so important in the preparation for the current fire season.

We have also seen the DC-10 air tanker, which was used in aggression for the first time on Sunday in the Sunset Country in the Mallee. We have also seen great examples of corporate citizenship, and the Premier set out two of those great examples today, in Toll and Westpac.

The emergency alert system is something which was led by the government, and Telstra and the Office of Emergency Services Commissioner helped bring it about. This is a tremendous new system which can give telephone alerts. We have seen it used three times in Victoria and 19 times nationally, sending out more than 50 000 messages.

The bushfire season is ongoing; we are only at the start of February. We all have to remain vigilant. We say to all those people across the state who have united to prepare, act and survive: what you are doing is fantastic. We say to them: continue that great work, because it is going to be important. We know as a result of 7 February 2009 that we face unprecedented threat, and we have to be capable of dealing with it. To all those people who have united across the state, the government says thank you and congratulations.

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

Debate resumed.

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — Before the break I was reminding the house, particularly the members of The Nationals, that the Premier has been the best Premier for regional and rural Victoria. We are talking about jobs, and this statement is a blueprint for a resilient economy and long-term growth. In fact there is nothing in this statement about the Blinky Bill and magic pudding economics of the opposition.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition that there was nothing in his statement about jobs. Jobs are the no. 1 priority in Victoria. I remind him as he leaves the chamber that he said nothing about jobs. He also had nothing to say about the outer suburbs, nothing about the need of jobs for working families.

The statement is an extensive presentation about jobs for Victoria. In this particular budget year, over the last 12 months, we have seen 76 000 extra jobs. The budget promised to secure 36 000 extra jobs, but there has actually been an increase of 76 000 jobs throughout the state. This plan continues that trend of securing jobs through infrastructure. I have talked about a number of

elements of that already, but let me continue in terms of jobs.

Jobs have been created through road infrastructure, and that will continue this year. I have spoken about improving productivity in Victoria by investing in infrastructure and skills. We have already duplicated road connections between Melbourne and the provincial centres of Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon. In this year's budget \$102.4 million was invested to improve the regional arterial road network, including the upgrade of the South Gippsland Highway between Sale and Longford.

The major road projects to be progressed this year include the further work on the M1 Freeway upgrade — that is \$1.3 billion, from memory — the Cranbourne-Frankston Road duplication, the duplication of the Vineyard Road in Sunbury, the Colac-Lavers Hill Road widening, work on the Bass Highway and the Yarra Glen truck bypass. There is also a whole lot of work that is about to commence. This is all about jobs. The creation of jobs for working families here in Victoria is what we see in this statement and what the government is intending to deliver this year. It is continuing with the good work that has already been done over the last 10 years. The Western Highway duplication is due to start. The Pound Road–South Gippsland freeway upgrade, the Plenty Road duplication in South Morang, the Kororoit Creek Road upgrade from Grieve Parade to Millers Road in Altona, the Dingley arterial upgrade between Springvale Road and Perry Road and the South Gippsland Highway upgrade at Cox's Bridge are all about to commence.

There is also the infrastructure, with jobs being created all around the place, such as in education, with the largest capital program in Victoria's history. It is planned that every school in Victoria will be rebuilt. Under the Victorian schools plan seven new schools will open in 2010, as well as many being upgraded.

The biggest rebuilding in health services has also occurred in Victoria, and it is going to continue in 2010. Projects include works at the Rochester Hospital, the Stawell Community Health Centre, the Ballarat Hospital emergency department, short-stay unit and mental health facilities, and stage 1 of the Western Hospital. The next stage of the redevelopment of the Box Hill Hospital is about to begin. I am immensely proud of that, having lobbied intensively and extensively with the member for Mitcham. He and I formed a great partnership on this, and now it will be coming through with hundreds of millions of dollars for the redevelopment of the Box Hill Hospital. It is the largest suburban investment in hospital infrastructure in

Victoria's history. That is as well as the upgrade of the Dandenong Hospital mental health service and the new facilities that will be opened in a number of hospitals this year, including at the emergency department of the Bendigo hospital, a new maternity ward at the Northern Hospital and the planning work on the Comprehensive Cancer Centre in Parkville, which is a combined exercise of the state and federal governments.

Let us turn to children's services infrastructure. There will be jobs going into the building of children's centres all around Victoria, and there will be the implementation of skills programs in our tertiary institutions, including the Heidelberg and Wangaratta technical education centres. I also know from my own personal experience about the Box Hill nursing school building, and I hope that will be opened shortly. Even in the area of prisons, jobs will be created with the Ararat Prison. There is new infrastructure in the sports and the arts. Jobs will be created in the building of the new stadium just across the road, other state sports facilities and the redevelopment of Melbourne Park tennis centre, which was announced just a few weeks ago as part of the Yarra Park master plan for the Southbank cultural precinct.

There is a whole range of things happening here in Victoria in terms of jobs. A resilient economy is being delivered in Victoria for Victorian working families. Jobs, jobs, jobs and a resilient economy will be delivered as part of the plan for Victoria this year.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — Today I rise on behalf of the Lowan electorate to speak on the annual statement of government intentions presented by the Premier yesterday in what was nearly a rerun of the statement of government intentions of last year. The Leader of The Nationals highlighted this when he spoke about the new blueprint which was in place for regional growth in Victoria. On page 9 this year's statement highlights that the government still has plenty to do. The reality is that the government promised to have it delivered by the end of last year. The people in the Lowan electorate, which I represent, are extremely disappointed that it has still not delivered for a lot of country Victoria.

While I am on that point I mention that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Regional Development Infrastructure Fund. In the bushfires that happened last year we lost a fantastic community facility, the Horsham Golf Club. It is looking for support from the commonwealth and state governments. When I heard the Leader of The Nationals say that at least \$144 million will have to be committed in this year's budget I put out my hand and asked the government for

its support for the Horsham community, particularly the Horsham Golf Club and all those people who use the facility. It is not only a golf club, it is also a great community resource. We need the government's support for the rebuilding program for that golf club.

I just touched on the bushfires. We all remember Victoria's worst ever natural disaster last year, Black Saturday and the Gippsland fires. Unfortunately and tragically 173 lives and over 2000 homes were lost. In my electorate of Lowan we did not lose any lives. Unfortunately, one young fellow by the name of John Smeets was badly burnt. With the support of his wife, the fantastic little community of Coleraine and the health services he is recovering well. We remember those people who died, we pray for the quick recovery of those who survived and we thank our emergency service personnel, especially our highly valued volunteers.

This week, as I said, is the anniversary of Black Saturday. It is a time for the people who were affected by the fires on 7 February last year to reflect. Their lives have been changed forever. During my time as a parliamentary representative for western Victoria we have had many bushfires with the loss of private and public property and of precious possessions. As I said earlier, the only person injured in the Lowan electorate was John Smeets, and thankfully he is recovering well. It is interesting to note that as a result of the support given to John by the Coleraine community he has now joined Apex and he and his wife are also involved in developing the Coleraine community. The Coleraine community helped John and his family; they are now putting back into that community.

I say to those who suffered through the bushfires across the state, especially people in my electorate of Lowan: you are not forgotten. I emphasise that to people who have been frustrated by the red tape associated with rebuilding. I spoke about the fact that 2000 homes have been lost. We lost about 12 homes in my electorate and at this stage only one has been rebuilt. There have been enormous problems with red tape. There is also a lot of concern — and this was highlighted by the bushfires — about the inequity of the fire services levy. There was no mention in the government's statement of intentions about resolving that issue in the next 12 months. As the Acting Speaker would know, it will not be resolved until after the next election.

I want to talk more about the Lowan electorate. The government's statement talks little about what is going to happen with roads. It speaks about the greater Green Triangle freight action plan, but as the member for South-West Coast said this morning, if we are going to

bring in these monster trucks we need to make sure the infrastructure is there. It is my understanding that there is not one passing lane on the no. 1 highway in Australia stretching from Portland to the South Australian border that meets the standard of 1.8 kilometres in length. For that matter, I do not think there are too many passing lanes along that road. Not only are there not enough passing lanes but the ones that exist do not meet the national standard of 1.8 kilometres. Road infrastructure itself is undulating and breaking up. I am talking about the Glenelg Highway, particularly near Casterton coming towards Hamilton. I have travelled that road regularly, as I travel many of the roads around western Victoria, and I know the infrastructure is crumbling, the shoulder is not sealed. For a state highway it is a disgrace. There needs to be more money spent on roads. As we all know, good roads cost money, bad roads cost lives.

There is also not much mention of hospital upgrades in the government's statement, and I see that the Minister for Health is at the table. There are two health-care facilities in my electorate that will be looking for support from the government and this statement of government intentions gives me hope that in the budget this year we might get support for the Coleraine or the Edenhope health-care facilities — or maybe both.

I want to talk about the fire warning system. Last night in the house I invited the Premier to come to western Victoria to hear the concerns about the implementation of that system. He needs to hear the concerns of not only tourist operators but a lot of small businesses that have been impacted by the way it is being implemented. It has turned into a media circus and it does not give us answers in country Victoria.

I also want to talk about an opportunity for the government to support a youth and community bus project in Horsham. This project is a joint initiative of Wimmera Uniting Care and Grampians Community Health and is the dream of a young fellow by the name of Justin Amor. Justin has had his own health problems but has risen above them to walk the Kokoda trail. He left the region to get himself a good education but returned to provide great leadership for our youth in western Victoria. I am pleased to say that the ACE Radio Network, with the support of Geoff Handbury, has provided strong financial support for this project. We are now looking to the state government also to put its support behind the project.

Another point I want to make to the government is that the impact of liquor licence fees on small businesses in country Victoria has been enormous. In my area we are losing businesses. We have lost a bed and breakfast, we

have lost some small stores, and hotels are on the market. The owners are all sick of increasing costs and of the government having its hands in their pockets. I point out that as a result of these increased fees country Victoria will lose businesses and jobs; we will lose the opportunity for musicians to ply their trade and the opportunity for entertainment.

The Premier spoke in his annual statement about job services and a fair go. I want to speak about youth affairs. The government's statement has ignored the skyrocketing rate of unemployment among our Victorian youth. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that the average unemployment rate among Victorians aged 15 to 19 has increased by 27.5 per cent from 2008 to 2009. Young people are doing it tough.

The government's statement is a sad reflection on the Brumby government's failure to prioritise the needs of our young people. The government's policies are responsible for many of the difficulties our young people face. Jobs are difficult to find and training costs have increased — for example, I highlight the government's decision to increase the cost of TAFE education. Since July 2009 the minimum fees for diplomas and advanced diplomas have increased by a massive 309 per cent. The ministers responsible for youth, for education and for school development all sat on their hands when the federal government wiped out the youth allowance which gave students right across Victoria, particularly country students, the opportunity to get a higher education. We all know that the cost of higher education is a major barrier to their development, but those ministers did nothing. They did not pick up a phone; they sat on their hands and again did nothing to help our youth.

At page 53 the government's statement talks about the vulnerable youth framework, but it is 18 months since the original discussion paper was released and in that time four ministers have not been able to coordinate the final document, let alone coordinate the services for these vulnerable young people. Our youth workers are frustrated. There is something very wrong when a lack of coordination between the minister's offices and government departments prevents Victoria's young people from receiving the services they desperately need.

Veterans are covered on page 58. We hope the government will take on the coalition policies of not sitting on Remembrance Day and of supporting the upgrade of the shrine's website.

The area of sport and recreation — and I do not have enough time to go through it all — is covered on page 62. Victoria has a reputation as the sporting capital. It has good facilities and great supporters, but sport and recreation opportunities have diminished and costs have increased. There is increasing obesity, and there are increasing health problems and a failure to capture an active lifestyle. In this statement the government has missed the opportunity.

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution in response to the statement of government intentions brought down by the Premier on Tuesday. It is appropriate today, World Cancer Day, that we pause to reflect on a key feature of the statement and a key priority for our government — that is, the implementation of the Victorian cancer action plan. It is important in itself, but it is also reflective of the priorities, the dedication and the partnerships we have been focused on in terms of providing better care and also supporting our dedicated clinicians and researchers right across health, not just in cancer, in the important work they do. It is a great example of the investments and the policy drive that our government has shown over its term in office. But I will come back to cancer in just a few moments.

From the health portfolio point of view there are other highlights in the statement of government intentions, such as elective surgery and a whole range of important capital works projects. They are important in that they provide dedicated clinicians with physical infrastructure that matches the quality of the care they provide each and every day, but they are also important in terms of driving economic activity and jobs. They serve in some way to provide a small — and perhaps even larger than that — stimulus to certain regions in our state. The statement goes through a number of those.

I will talk about elective surgery for a moment. The statement makes very clear that as part of the 2009–10 budget we were able to secure funding of \$45 million for a further 9000 episodes of elective surgery during this calendar year. That is very important: 9000 extra Victorians will get their surgery faster than they otherwise would have. It is important to me, it is obviously important to them and it is important to the Victorian community at large.

That comes on top of a substantial effort in partnership with the Rudd government the previous year when, in a combination of effort by the commonwealth government as part of its elective surgery reduction plan and a substantial contribution by this state government on behalf of Victorian taxpayers, we were able to see 13 000 additional episodes of elective

surgery — 13 000 more Victorians getting their surgery faster than they otherwise would have in the previous period. That is about maintenance of effort, it is about continuing an important partnership, it is about making sure that we give our health services the resources they need to do that extra surgery and deliver those improved outcomes and it is about making sure that we are standing shoulder to shoulder with health services right across our great state. That is what we have been doing and, as outlined in the statement, that is what we will continue to do throughout 2010.

Elective surgery is a very important part of our overall health system. It is not just about additional funding for additional activity; it is also about equipment and capital works. There are many other important projects that we have delivered and are in the process of effectively delivering for communities across Victoria that will also boost the elective surgery capacity of our system.

I am sure honourable members are aware of today's significance in that, as I mentioned, it is World Cancer Day. This morning I missed the speech by the Leader of the Opposition.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! It was excellent.

Mr ANDREWS — The Acting Speaker is of the view that it was excellent; I had heard that it was as shrill and empty as the Leader of the Opposition is.

Dr Napthine — You are wrong. You are wrong!

Mr ANDREWS — The member for South-West Coast indicates I am wrong.

Dr Napthine — It was a damn good speech. It was a very good speech.

Mr ANDREWS — We will come back to him and his questions yesterday in just a minute. His speech was as shrill and as empty as he is; that is what I was told. Anyway, let us not digress. What we can all agree on, regardless of that assessment about its tone and character, is that it included no new policy, no plans, no action and, quite frankly, no idea about the challenges that face our state and no idea about how to put in place a positive agenda to address those challenges today and in the years to come.

Mr Wells — Without dodgy figures.

Mr ANDREWS — We will come back to dodgy figures in just one moment! Today is World Cancer Day. I missed the Leader of the Opposition's speech

because I was out at Monash Medical Centre in the south-eastern suburbs announcing — —

Mr Weller — A photo opportunity, was it?

Mr ANDREWS — The member for Rodney would characterise it in that way, but I was announcing \$15 million in additional cancer research grants, and a celebration of that fact with the dedicated clinician researchers — —

Mr Weller interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — The member for Rodney is only too happy to turn up for photos when I visit his electorate. I might be up your way tomorrow — you won't be coming? You won't be posing for photos?

Mr Weller — I'll be in Leitchville.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The minister will speak through the Chair.

Mr ANDREWS — The member for Rodney has only been too happy to pose for photographs with me in the past — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! I would like members of the opposition to desist from their interjections, and I ask the minister to not be so provocative in his attacks on the opposition.

Mr ANDREWS — There is nothing funny about \$15 million of additional research grants to some of the world's best cancer researchers, and I was proud to stand with them today to celebrate their achievements and in anticipation of the great work they will do through the strong support of this government to celebrate the breakthroughs and the lives they will undoubtedly save. It was an important event, and let us not have any of this nonsense about photos and things of that nature.

The grants for World Cancer Day were funded under our Victorian cancer action plan. That gives me great pride. It gives the clinician researchers who receive those grants great pride, and they will do fine work because that is their record. Delivering against the Victorian cancer action plan is clearly a key feature of the statement the Premier delivered and will be a key priority for our government in the years to come.

It is important that we all acknowledge that, noting that cancer is a challenge for all of us. It is everybody's business; it is a key priority for our government, and the

statement of the government intentions properly reflects that.

In terms of a whole range of other measures, we are committed to properly delivering each of the capital works projects in small country towns, in larger regional centres, in Melbourne's outer suburbs and indeed in the centre of Melbourne. We are committed to delivering a range of upgrades at the Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre, the Royal Children's Hospital and at the Warrnambool hospital: all sorts of different projects that are critically important both in terms of health service provision and also jobs and economic stimulus in a number of different parts of our state. The statement of government intentions speaks to that as well.

It is undoubtedly a year of action in health, and one that we will continue, as we always have, to provide to our dedicated clinicians and health services throughout the state, the resources and proper support they need in terms of resources and policy to continue to do the important work they do for communities across the state each and every day.

Yesterday the house heard a number of members opposite talk about an FOI application, about apparent inconsistencies or problems with waiting lists and data at Western Health. It is important to make two points: firstly, Western Health is a fine health service and has been provided with record support by this government: the best part of 150 per cent more funding and capital works too numerous to mention. That is an important point to make. Secondly — and there is a bit more work to be done on this — it would appear at first glance that some members have alleged a whole range of hidden waiting lists and things of that nature based on an FOI application.

There are a number of different reasons why a patient might come off the waiting list, one of which is that they have had their surgery — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The member for Scoresby!

Mr ANDREWS — To misrepresent the people who have come off the list and suggest they have had their surgery as part of some sort of a hidden list is an absolute disgrace, and the members for South-West Coast, Caulfield and Doncaster ought to hang their heads in shame. You have been sprung over this — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The minister will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr ANDREWS — We will have more to say about it in coming days. Rather than this manipulation from this policy-free zone opposite, we will not be deterred in providing support to our health sector and, in turn, to providing world-class care to patients right across the state. That is what the statement of government intentions speaks to, that is our record, that is our commitment, and that is what we will continue to deliver for communities right across Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! If the minister wants to go and argue about it, I suggest he does it outside. I ask him and opposition members to make up their minds: if they want to stay in the chamber, they can stay; otherwise they can argue outside. The member for Gippsland East has the call.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — Thank you, Acting Speaker, for your protection. This is an interesting debate and has been so ever since the statement was introduced on Tuesday. As I indicated when I spoke about the government's first statement of government intentions, it gives members the opportunity to outline what they think of the government's agenda for the year, as we have seen from many of the presentations today. It also gives members the opportunity to outline the failings of the government over the past 12 months, or where they think the government's agenda is wrong. It is a good opportunity, and I will make a few comments on it.

The government has outlined a fairly detailed number of areas: jobs, bushfires, safe and secure communities, managing growth and change, education, health and a fairer Victoria.

I want to touch on some of those in a bit more detail, but I would like to home in on an issue that occurred over the summer period when the opposition put out a policy statement about returning cattle grazing to the alpine areas. I support that position. When the legislation was debated earlier, I strongly opposed the government's position in this place.

I have concerns with some of the detail in relation to the policy announcement. There appear to be a fair few covenants or restrictions on what may be implemented, and I have made public statements about that, but I think it is important that we deal with those things.

The statement of government intentions outlines some of the government's road funding priorities, and I will speak a bit more about those later.

Education is incredibly important for my constituents. We have been working for a number of years to develop an education plan for our region, and particularly in Bairnsdale we have been attempting to get the government to fund a very important school in the area, the Bairnsdale Secondary College. The whole school has gone through a very difficult period. It was one of the old split campuses and is going through a regeneration process at the moment.

The plan has been developed with support from a range of different agencies. Already at the site are a TAFE, a special school, the Bairnsdale Secondary College senior and junior campuses and kindergartens, and the Shire of East Gippsland also has a major facility at the site. The regeneration project, which looks at bringing all of those together, is a great opportunity to improve the education outcomes in that area.

Another issue is that the government recently announced a ports future strategy. Sand management at Lakes Entrance is a very important issue in my electorate, and that strategy will be important for the region economically and for tourism and safer boating more specifically. Gippsland Ports has gone through a lengthy process of looking at opportunities for replacing the dredge *April Hamer*. It has come up with a very good strategy for doing that and is very pleased that with the change of minister it will come under the oversight of the Department of Transport rather than the Department of Sustainability and Environment. It is very grateful that that announcement has been made and looks forward to progress going forward. Funding for the replacement of the *April Hamer* is incredibly important for my constituents. A suction hopper dredge will substantially increase the safety and the functionality of the process.

An issue about which the government has made a lot in the statement of government intentions is water and the water grid. That is an important issue in my electorate, because a large portion of Melbourne's current water supply comes out of the Thomson catchment, but recently the government has qualified the environmental entitlements for the Thomson catchment and removed the environmental entitlements for consumptive use in Melbourne

That could have a negative and major impact on the Gippsland Lakes. There is a lot of concern about the sorts of decisions that have been taken. I understand that everyone needs to share some of the pain, if you

like, associated with water shortages, but it is absolutely essential that the government does not believe that environmental water entitlements are the easiest to grab. You cannot relax water restrictions in Melbourne before you deal with environmental entitlements, which have to be put back before Melbourne has water restrictions eased, because that will have a long-term detrimental effect on the Gippsland Lakes; but that must be done.

In my view we need to give greater consideration to improving the tenure of environmental entitlements; if there are to be reductions, the reductions should be borne by all — consumptive users, irrigators and the environment. The load should be shared. There may be provisions where in times of crisis you can take environmental entitlements, but they must be repaid so that when the run-off becomes more regular, greater flows are delivered back to those rivers because of the sacrifices made during the low times.

There is a lot in the statement of government intentions about safety aspects and making Victoria safer. We have major problems in some regional centres. It is very disappointing that there have been a large number of incidents in some areas, some of which receive fairly significant publicity — in Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale in particular.

It is very disappointing for our local community that violent incidents have occurred. They are often alcohol related, and it is absolutely essential that the community deal with that. Increased policing is one way of dealing with it, but there are not sufficient police in those areas to provide a presence that could lead to a reduction in the level of violent and antisocial behaviour.

There are also infrastructural ways of dealing with it. I have had discussions with police and the East Gippsland Shire Council about closed-circuit television (CCTV) to make sure there is an evidentiary trail when something goes wrong, then you can pin it on those who have done the wrong thing and make it simpler to process the evidence. It also acts as a deterrent. If someone knows they are probably going to be recorded doing something stupid, they are less likely to be stupid in the first place. To make our communities safer we need increased policing resources and also to adopt strategies like the use of CCTV, but as a community we also need to be more proactive, to work with shire councils and others to reduce some of that behaviour.

Another very important area of concern is disability services. I do not think the government has done anywhere near enough to make sure that the support and integration aides are in our schools and

kindergartens, and that respite is available to people with disabled children and others under their care. It is important that we continue to improve disability services.

In the statement of government intentions the government has made much of Victoria being the fairest state. How we deal with the most disadvantaged in our community is a test. Whilst there are enormous challenges in providing adequate funding and resources for this, it is something we cannot walk away from.

We cannot walk away from the young people in our community who have been abused as children, and we cannot walk away from the people who unfortunately have disabilities and need more support. I do not think the government has done as well as it should have in this area. It is essential that there be more assistance and support for people with disabilities.

Mental health is another major problem right across Gippsland and needs much higher levels of support. With those words, I thank the house for the opportunity to make this presentation.

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I rise to speak in support of the statement of government intentions, and in so doing I indicate that I think this is only the second time that the Parliament has been provided with the opportunity of an appreciation of the government's agenda for the coming year.

Dr Napthine — It is actually the third.

Mr PALLAS — The third; I stand corrected. It is not an attempt as a document to exhaustively identify all the business that the Parliament must concern itself with during the next 12 months, but it provides Parliament with the opportunity to see the key issues that the government, in forewarning both Parliament and the community, sees as the key components of its agenda going forward.

The strategy is an important opportunity to promote Victoria and Victoria's agenda. It is also critical that the Parliament should have an opportunity to see the statement as a matter of substance that necessarily needs to be addressed in substantial parliamentary deliberations.

I also direct attention to a number of issues that are identified in the statement of government intentions that are of particular interest and concern to me. Last year our road toll was 290; in 2001, when we introduced the Arrive Alive road safety strategy, that figure was 444, which equals a 35 per cent reduction in the road toll. Importantly, what this tells us is that the strategy we

have put in place is working. It is making a difference to Victorian communities and families and ultimately, whilst it is a subservient consideration, to the effective functioning of our economy.

We cannot simply sit back as a community and feel self-satisfied or in any way smug about the achievements we have made to date. We need to do more. This year in its Arrive Alive second action plan the government will deliver the second of three components that will make up this strategy. One of the key components of the second action plan will be targeting driving under the influence of drugs. There will be tougher new penalties, including an automatic three-month licence suspension and fines of at least \$350, which will be introduced to Parliament in the coming months.

We must acknowledge that whilst most young drivers take their driving responsibilities very seriously, there remains a small section within this age group who do not and who continue to ignore the consequences of their actions. The Brumby government will continue to explore new measures to protect this vulnerable group of road users.

As I have said before in this place and in public, the reduction in our road toll from 444 to 290 provides 154 reasons for Victorians to have confidence that the strategy is working, but it also provides 290 reasons why we need to do more. Arrive Alive 2 is two years into achieving its aim of a 38 per cent reduction in our road toll by 2017. That translates into saving 100 lives every year — that is, 100 fewer obituaries and 100 fewer families torn apart by loss and waste.

It is in road safety that we see the human implications of the things we do in this chamber, and I hope we can all feel some satisfaction that the laws we have put in place have helped save lives and prevent unnecessary grief and loss to families. One of the things we sometimes forget is exactly how far we have come in this state. In 1970, 1061 lives were lost on Victorian roads. We have seen our road toll drop from about 9.2 deaths per 100 000 people at the start of the Arrive Alive strategy to the current 5.34 deaths per 100 000 people. That is the best figure in terms of loss of life per 100 000 head of population for any state in this country, so we have come far. But what it does mean is that as a community there is more to do, and the government recognises that obligation.

The government's approach is and will continue to be that we need to look at road safety in a holistic sense — that is, in a threefold agenda. Firstly, we need safer cars; secondly, we need safer drivers; and thirdly, we

need safer roadside infrastructure. There is not one magical emphasis for how to continue to drive down our road toll. Each and every constituent part of that objective gets us to where we want to be. As I said, in 2009 Victoria recorded 5.34 deaths per 100 000 head of population compared to 7.36 for the rest of the country. Arrive Alive 2 is two years into the making, and our aim is to reduce the road toll by a further 100 lives over that 10-year period up until 2017.

At chapter 4.4 in the statement of government intentions there is a reference to legislation that delivers the Victorian transport plan. The legislation will help deliver \$38 billion of the Victorian transport plan as efficiently and in as timely a way as possible. Infrastructure is one of those areas where having high levels of bipartisan engagement and support as a state is becoming increasingly important. I see no gain whatsoever in carping about and second-guessing the important investments we need to make in transport infrastructure. Investment in the transport infrastructure area is essential to cope with the growing demands of our population and our economic challenges, in particular our freight task.

Some of the investments we have made in transport infrastructure have been put into projects that rarely fire the community's imagination. These projects might be essential, but to most in the community they are unspectacular. They do not pull a crowd, but they propel our economy. I am talking about things like the Dynon port rail link and the associated improvements in rail access to the port. This was one of the most extensive projects the government undertook in 2009, yet while the freight industry was certainly appreciative, selling the benefits to the community was a much harder task. Similarly, the multimillion-dollar Geelong rail access improvement project and much of the work carried out on the regional rail network went under the community's radar. The most extensive upgrade to Victoria's freight network ever undertaken — the channel deepening project — attracted the community's interest perhaps and legitimate concern, but it was ultimately delivered ahead of budget and in accordance with our stated objectives in terms of environmental management.

This year will see the government deliver more of these sorts of essential but sometimes unspectacular projects to ensure exports get to port, produce gets to market and supermarket shelves are stocked. Victoria's dependence on manufactured exports and agricultural exports means we have a high reliance on a well-developed freight network. Freight movement is not a magic wand; it is a highly complex and infrastructure-intensive process that will demand

increasing investment and government attention. To help with those demands, the government will introduce legislation that will aid the development of the state's port and freight network. This will give legislative effect to relevant strategies identified in Port Futures and Freight Futures.

Only the government has a plan for freight in Victoria, which is why we released Freight Futures — the first comprehensive freight strategy in the state's history. It is a long-term strategy that is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. It also prepares us for both the economic and the population growth challenges to Victorian's quality of life that we will have to contend with. The Freight Futures strategy includes a principal freight network; connecting freight activity centres; planning and development of a metropolitan freight terminal network; a plan to divert trucks from residential streets in the west; and high-productivity freight vehicles.

I also want to turn just briefly to the government's infrastructure investment. Since 2000 the Labor government has invested more than \$25 billion in infrastructure to ensure that Victorian families and businesses have the right facilities in the right places to protect and enhance what is currently a world-class lifestyle. We have invested \$3.5 billion a year under this government, and our spending on major projects delivered by Major Projects Victoria since 2000 is \$4.2 billion. That means 10 000 jobs have flowed as a consequence of that sort of investment. Our projects create jobs, like the 320 construction jobs created at AgriBio, the Centre for AgriBioscience. The new Melbourne Convention Centre will also boost our economy by \$197 million over the next 25 years.

As a government we know that this statement of legislative intent is a demonstration of our overriding conviction that the sum of our hopes and aspirations outnumbers our fears and trepidations. As a government we recognise that we have an infrastructure challenge, and that challenge is being addressed in projects such as the M1 and the M80 upgrades, where billions of dollars are being directed into the upgrade and improvement of facilities for which the opposition had no strategy at all. This government has a clear commitment, and I commend the statement to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn).

Debate adjourned until next day.

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 2 February; motion of Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission).

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission) — It gives me great pleasure to sum up the debate on the Accident Compensation Amendment Bill 2009, and I want to do a few things: address some of the comments that I understand were made by members during the debate and recognise and thank those whose work has gone into preparing what has been an extraordinarily complex piece of legislation, supported by a very long and exhaustive process of consultation.

I want to thank Mr Peter Hanks, QC, who led the review. This has been the most comprehensive review of Victoria's accident compensation laws that we have seen in this state's history since the accident compensation scheme for workplace injuries was established in the 1980s. I thank Peter Hanks, QC, for the very comprehensive review he conducted for the government and the report he provided, which in turn has formed the basis of the legislation we are debating today.

I acknowledge and recognise those at the accident compensation secretariat who supported Peter Hanks in his work and all of those who made submissions and participated in the stakeholder reference groups and the various working parties. I acknowledge the Accident Compensation Act review team, members of which were involved in drafting the bill, and obviously all of those at the Victorian WorkCover Authority and WorkSafe, including chief executive officer Greg Tweedly, chair Elana Rubin and the board members, but also David McQueen and Linda Timothy, who were the directors of the program that drafted the legislation, the team, led by Penny Dedes, who did much of the drafting through the VWA. Many legal and policy officers were involved and did sterling work; I want to recognise and place on the record our gratitude and thanks for that.

A couple of issues were raised during the debate. I understand that some members — possibly the member for Scoresby and other members — raised concerns about increasing the proportion of pre-injury average weekly earnings that would be paid to an injured worker as part of their weekly benefits from 75 per cent to 80 per cent, and said that this may somehow operate

as a disincentive for workers returning to work. We believe this is an appropriate measure and an appropriate change to the threshold to recognise the balance between the need to provide adequate compensation for injured workers while at the same time providing the best mechanisms for facilitating the re-entry of those injured workers into the workforce when that is appropriate. It will always be a judgement call as to what the right balance is, but we think that this is the right time to make that adjustment from 75 per cent to 80 per cent.

I understand that access to redundancy payments and the impact that has on the calculation of entitlements has given rise to concerns that this may in fact involve double dipping by injured workers. We would simply make the point that it is very important that we put injured workers on the same footing as workers who are not injured in the workforce but also find themselves having access to a redundancy payment. That is the bottom line. It is about making sure that an injured worker is treated no differently, in as many cases as we can establish, from a worker who does not suffer injury but who also unfortunately has been made redundant.

Finally I want to address the issues relating to the house amendments that have been circulated as part of this bill, and explain the rationale for those. These amendments were circulated after the second-reading speech that I gave to the house and I will go through them one at a time.

Clauses 308, 319 and 350(8) each contain typographical errors that need to be amended. In one instance a bracket was replaced with a numeral, and that needs to be amended so that the correct section 108(4) is referenced rather than '10894'. In another instance an additional numeral led to a reference to section 1114(2) rather than 114(2). In another instance 'division 3A' needs to be re-referenced as 'division 3AA', and in a further instance an 'or' was used instead of an 'and'.

One substantive issue which needs to be addressed through the house amendments is a reference in a transitional provision arising out of the so-called Norris amendment, which referred to serious injury applications. That transitional provision should have referenced proceedings for damages to ensure existing claims are properly covered by the amendment. Where there was a reference to a serious injury application, it should have been to proceedings for damages.

There are also some consequential amendments that need to be clarified so that correct sections are

referenced and cross-referenced. In one instance the transitional provisions in relation to the new return-to-work division need to be clarified so that it is absolutely clear that the new return-to-work obligations commence on or after 1 July, as was the intention of the legislation when it was introduced in the Parliament and as I outlined in the second-reading speech.

We also need to correctly reference appropriate subsections that applied before 3 December 2003. We need to ensure that the correct operation of new subsections 98C(3AA) and 92C(3AB) are appropriately referenced. That is the change to clause 54(5). Again, that is to make sure that all of the lump sum entitlement calculations for injured workers suffering psychiatric injuries before December 2003 are calculated from the correct dates. In each instance these house amendments are necessary to ensure that the legislation operates in the manner intended upon its introduction to the Parliament.

Again I thank all honourable members for their contributions. This has been a long process of consultation. It has been an extensive drafting exercise by parliamentary counsel but it has also involved a huge amount of work by the team at WorkSafe and at the Victorian WorkCover Authority, and I want to put on the record my appreciation and gratitude for the skill, expertise and enthusiasm they have brought to this very complex project. I also want to acknowledge all of those organisations that have made submissions as part of the process of public consultation. Matters relating to accident compensation and workers compensation are controversial and passionate issues — people have strong views about them. I appreciate the breadth of perspectives that different organisations have brought to this discussion. I also appreciate the goodwill and constructive way in which people have engaged in the process.

I want to acknowledge also those members who have made contributions as part of the debate in Parliament, particularly the members for Scoresby, Northcote, Shepparton, Burwood, Bayswater, Williamstown, Rodney, Clayton, Ferntree Gully, Keilor and Mildura. I thank all members for the spirit in which the debate has been had, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — The passage of this bill has been a disgrace; there is no question about it. It shows quite clearly that the minister is not on top of his

portfolio. We requested a mid-January briefing on this bill. We were told that it could not happen and it would not happen, then all of a sudden we were informed that we were going to have a briefing at 8.00 a.m. on the Monday prior to the first sitting week of Parliament and that the bill had to be dealt with in that particular week.

What sort of opportunity does that give the opposition for consultation — to be able to get out to the industry groups and relay what the government is trying to tell us? We had that sort of situation where it was rushed into the house, and then whilst opposition members were up on their feet debating the bill, 50 minutes into the debate the government suddenly handed around two pages of amendments. That was an indication that the legislation was sloppy, it was unprofessional and that the people who were drafting it were hurried and rushed.

This is the same minister who sent his public servants out to do special memo and English classes. We know that the Hanks report was finished in August 2008. The government responded in June 2009, almost 12 months later, and it started drafting the legislation then, or about then. However, we could not have the briefing, as I said, until 8 o'clock on Monday of this week.

The government has had roughly six months to draft this piece of legislation. In six months they could have had the decency to allow the opposition some time. To rush the bill in and to then introduce two pages of amendments 50 minutes into the debate is nothing short of disgraceful.

Not only does the finance minister not have a clue about what is going on but obviously the parliamentary secretary has no clue either, because she had concluded her speech and had no idea that there were amendments —

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.

Clauses 1 to 194 and circulated government amendments 1 to 22 as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 33, after line 10 insert —

() In section 114 of the **Accident Compensation Act 1985** —

- (a) in subsection (8), **omit** “within the meaning of section 93CA(1)”;.
- (b) in subsections (9) and (13)(c), **omit** “within the meaning of section 93CB(1)”..

2. Clause 33, after line 26 insert —
 - (b) in section 114B —
 - (i) in subsections (1)(a), (1A) and (2), **omit** “within the meaning of section 93CB(1)”;
 - (ii) in subsection (3), for “93CC(1)” **substitute** “93C(1)”;
 - (iii) in subsection (3), for “93CB” **substitute** “93B”;
 - (iv) in subsections (3), (4) and (5), **omit** “within the meaning of section 93CB(1)”;
 - (v) in subsection (5), for “93CC(1)” **substitute** “93C(1)”.
3. Clause 54, page 89, line 28, after “sustained” insert “on or after 3 December 2003 and”.
4. Clause 54, page 90, line 11, after “sustained” insert “on or after 3 December 2003 and”.
5. Clause 54, page 90, line 17, omit ‘force.’ and insert “force.”.
6. Clause 54, page 90, after line 17 insert —
 - (3AC) In relation to a relevant injury sustained before 3 December 2003 —
 - (a) a reference to an amount in dollars referred to in subsection (3)(b) is a reference to the corresponding amount in dollars applying at the time of the injury under section 98C(2)(b) as then in force in respect of permanent impairment;
 - (b) a reference to an amount in dollars referred to in subsection (3)(c) is a reference to the corresponding amount in dollars applying at the time of the injury under section 98C(2)(c) as then in force in respect of permanent impairment.
 - (3AD) In relation to a relevant injury sustained before 3 December 2003, a reference to an amount in dollars referred to in paragraph (b) or (c) of section 98C(2) is a reference to the corresponding amount in dollars applying at the time of the injury under that paragraph as then in force.”.
7. Clause 191, page 326, line 29, omit “10894)” and insert “108(4)”.
8. Clause 191, page 328, line 28, omit “1114(2)(ii)” and insert “114(2)(c)(ii)”.
9. Clause 191, page 330, lines 2 to 6, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
10. Clause 191, page 330, line 7, omit “(2)” and insert “(1)”.
11. Clause 191, page 330, line 13, omit “(3)” and insert “(2)”.
12. Clause 191, page 330, line 18, omit “(4)” and insert “(3)”.
13. Clause 191, page 336, line 12, omit “3A” and insert “3AA”.
14. Clause 191, page 336, line 14, omit “3A” and insert “3AA”.
15. Clause 191, page 337, line 32, omit “in” and insert “to — “.
16. Clause 191, page 337, line 33, omit “respect of a claim given, served or lodged — “ and insert —
 - (a) claims given, served or lodged on and after the commencement date;
 - (b) section 105 medical certificates given, served or lodged after the commencement date.”.
17. Clause 191, page 338, lines 1 to 8, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
18. Clause 191, page 338, line 33, omit “in respect of a claim — “ and insert “to section 105 medical certificates given, served or lodged on or after the commencement date”.
19. Clause 191, page 339, lines 1 to 6, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
20. Clause 191, page 339, line 16, omit “section 156(2) or” and insert “sections 156(2) and”.
21. Clause 191, page 339, line 32, omit “(3)” and insert “(2)”.
22. Clause 191, page 339, line 34, after “date” insert ‘as if in section 115A(2) for “period specified in subsection (3)” were substituted “employment obligation period within the meaning of section 194(1)”’.

Bill agreed to with amendments.

Third reading

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! As the required statement of intention has been made under section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act 1975, the third reading of the bill is required to be passed by an absolute majority. As there is not an absolute majority of members of the house present, I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

TRANSPORT INTEGRATION BILL*Second reading***Debate resumed from 3 February; motion of Ms KOSKY (then Minister for Public Transport).****Motion agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****MAGISTRATES' COURT AMENDMENT
(MENTAL HEALTH LIST) BILL***Second reading***Debate resumed from 3 February; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).****Motion agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****WATER AMENDMENT (ENTITLEMENTS)
BILL***Council's amendment***Returned from Council with message relating to amendment.****Ordered to be considered next day.****OFFSHORE PETROLEUM AND
GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE BILL***Statement of compatibility***Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and Resources) 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 Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Bill 2010.

In my opinion, the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Bill 2010, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The bill, which replaces the Petroleum (Submerged) Lands Act 1982, establishes a regulatory framework governing petroleum exploration and recovery, and the injection and permanent storage of carbon dioxide and other prescribed greenhouse gases, in Victorian offshore waters. The framework is substantially consistent with legislation developed by the commonwealth in the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006.

Human rights issues

The bill raises issues regarding a number of charter rights, which are discussed below. It is however important to keep in mind that many of the bill's provisions are likely, in practice, to regulate corporate entities (rather than natural persons), and that corporate entities do not enjoy human rights under the charter (section 6(1) of the charter).

(i) Adverse administrative decisions relating to petroleum and greenhouse gas titles issued under the bill

The bill provides for the minister to grant, extend, vary, suspend, cancel, revoke or terminate a range of titles relating to petroleum exploration and recovery, and the injection and permanent storage of greenhouse gases (see the simplified outline of the bill at clause 4(4)). The provisions relating to the administration of these titles potentially engage the charter rights to fair hearing, the right against self-incrimination and the property right.

Fair hearing — section 24(1)

Section 24(1) of the charter provides that a person who is party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. In *Kracke v. Mental Health Board & Ors (General)* [2009] VCAT 646, Bell J found that the term 'civil proceeding' has a broad meaning extending to administrative proceedings that are determinative of private rights and interests. However, he also noted that the entire decision-making process in question (including reviews and appeals) must be examined in order to determine whether the fair hearing right in section 24(1) is satisfied.

As I have indicated, the bill provides for decisions regarding the extension, variation, suspension, cancellation, and revocation of titles issued. These decisions are taken by the minister, or a delegate of the ministry, (in some cases on the advice of expert advisory committees established under part 9.2 of the bill). Where the effect of an adverse decision would be determinative of an individual's private rights and interests, the right in section 24(1) may be engaged. This could be the case, for example, where a title is cancelled that may be considered to be proprietary in nature, or where the effect of a decision to cancel a title would prevent an individual complying with a contractual obligation dependent on the cancelled title.

However, in my view, the right is not limited because the process set out in the bill for determining the administrative decisions in question — when viewed as a whole — satisfies the requirements of section 24(1). In particular, under chapters 2 and 3 of the bill, before certain adverse decisions are made, a consultation process is mandated, providing affected persons with an opportunity to make written submissions in response to the proposed decision that must be taken into account by the minister (see for example clause 258); a person affected by a decision made by a delegate of the minister who is dissatisfied with the decision is entitled to have the decision reconsidered by the minister (clause 765); such a person is entitled to reasons for the reconsideration decision (clause 765(5)(b)); and all decisions of the minister under the bill are subject to a right of review by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal, thereby affording affected persons an oral hearing before an independent and impartial body (clause 766).

Right against self-incrimination — section 25(2)(k)

Section 25(2)(k) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence must not be compelled to testify against himself or herself or to confess guilt. Pursuant to clause 778 of the bill, when certain applications are made (for approval of key petroleum or greenhouse gas operations, or for the grant of a greenhouse injection licence), if the minister believes on reasonable grounds that a person has information or a document that is relevant to the minister's decision, the minister may, by written notice, require the person to provide this to the minister. Clause 780 provides that requested information or documents must still be produced even if this may tend to incriminate the individual or expose him or her to a penalty. However, clause 780(2) provides a full immunity against both direct and indirect use of the information obtained against the individual in any criminal or civil proceedings (other than proceedings regarding failure to comply with a request for information, or proceedings regarding provision of false or misleading information).

In my view, it is unnecessary to decide whether this statutory abrogation of the common-law privilege against self-incrimination and its replacement with a full immunity limits the right in section 25(2)(k). This is because, in this context, any limitation is clearly justified because the full immunity ensures that there is no possibility that an individual could be compelled to assist in his or her own conviction for an offence (or liability for a civil penalty), and further ensures that there is no adversarial relationship between the individual and the state when the individual is required to provide the information to the minister which might otherwise attract the application of the self-incrimination right.

Property right — section 20

Section 20 of the charter provides a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law. At least some of the titles which the minister may confer under the bill might be said to be proprietary in nature. Accordingly, provisions of the bill which provide for the cancellation or revocation of such titles may engage the titleholder's section 20 charter rights. For example, clause 163 provides for the termination of a life-of-field petroleum production licence if there has been no recovery operation for five years, clause 180 provides for the revocation of a petroleum retention lease to the extent to which it relates to a block not taken up, and clauses 481–485 address grounds for cancellation of greenhouse gas titles, including

non-compliance with conditions, directions and other provisions of the bill. However, these deprivations are in accordance with law and therefore in my opinion do not limit section 20 of the charter because in each case the deprivation is expressly and clearly authorised under the terms of the bill. Moreover, as indicated previously, a right of review regarding these decisions lies to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal, providing a valuable safeguard against arbitrary exercise of the powers.

(ii) Ministerial directions relating to petroleum and greenhouse gas operations, safety zones, and 'areas to be avoided'

The bill gives the minister power to issue binding directions to titleholders regarding any matter in relation to which regulations may be made (clauses 623(2) and 629(2)), as well as in relation to specific matters regarding petroleum and greenhouse gas operations identified in the bill (for example, directions to petroleum or greenhouse gas titleholders regarding the commencement of works or operations, work practices, insurance and the maintenance and removal of property under parts 6.2 to 6.4). Under part 6.6, the minister is empowered to prohibit entry or presence of vessels in designated petroleum and greenhouse gas safety zones, and schedule 2 designates certain waters as 'areas to be avoided'. These provisions potentially engage the right to be presumed innocent, the right to freedom of movement, the right against arbitrary interference with privacy or home, and the property right under the charter.

Right to be presumed innocent — section 25(1)

Section 25(1) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law. This right requires that the burden of establishing guilt is borne by the prosecuting authority. Accordingly, placing an onus on a defendant to rebut the existence of an element of a criminal offence is likely to engage the right. The bill makes it a criminal offence to fail to comply with ministerial directions (made under chapters 2, 3, 6, parts 7.1 and 8.1 or regulations made under the bill) authorised by the bill. However, clauses 627 and 633 afford a defence of having taken reasonable steps to comply with a direction. In accordance with section 130(1) of the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, this imposes an evidential onus on the defendant. This means that the defendant must present or point to evidence that suggests a reasonable possibility of the existence of facts that, if they existed, would establish the defence. The prosecution must then rebut the defence beyond reasonable doubt. It is unnecessary to decide whether an evidential onus limits the charter right in section 25(1) because, in my opinion, any limitation on the right is reasonable and demonstrably justified under section 7(2) of the charter for the following reasons.

It is well established that the right to be presumed innocent is not absolute and can be limited, provided that limitations are kept within reasonable limits and are not arbitrary or disproportionate. In this case the limitation serves the important purpose of rendering prosecution an effective mechanism for ensuring compliance with the petroleum and greenhouse gas regulatory regime. In my view, in the heavily regulated sphere of petroleum and greenhouse gas operations, it is fair and reasonable to require a defendant, who chooses to operate under the regime, to keep a record of steps taken to comply with a direction and to be required to produce this in order to justify non-compliance with a direction and to

discharge the evidential onus in respect of the defence. If the defendant has done so, discharging the requisite burden should not prove difficult. Conversely, it would not be practicable to place the full burden of establishing that reasonable steps were not taken on the prosecuting authority since knowledge of the commission of such steps will be within the defendant's possession. To do so would threaten the efficacy of prosecution as a compliance mechanism. Finally, it is important that what is at stake for a defendant is conviction for a regulatory offence carrying only financial penalties and no serious societal stigma or imprisonment.

Freedom of movement — section 12

Section 12 of the charter provides that every person lawfully within Victoria has the right to move freely within Victoria. A number of provisions in part 6.6 of the bill provide for the designation (by notice published in the *Government Gazette*) of safety zones of up to 500 metres distance around a petroleum or greenhouse gas well, structure or equipment into which certain vessels may not enter without a ministerial consent. Such safety zones will be put in place while specific operations are conducted in the designated area. Schedule 2 permanently designates certain waters, where offshore facilities are located, as 'areas to be avoided'. The owner or master of a vessel who enters these zones without authorisation commits an offence. Clause 674 further empowers certain authorised persons to require a vessel to be taken outside an 'area to be avoided' or to be taken outside a safety zone, and clause 675 makes failure to comply an offence. These provisions limit the right to freedom of movement, however, in my opinion the limitations imposed are reasonable and demonstrably justified under section 7(2) of the charter for the following reasons.

First, the right to freedom of movement is not an absolute right and may be subject to reasonable and objectively justified limitations. Secondly, the designation of the safety zones and 'areas to be avoided' is essential to avoid the catastrophic consequences of a collision between certain vessels and offshore facilities. These consequences include loss of life, serious damage to the environment, and interruptions to petroleum and greenhouse gas operations. Thirdly, the areas in which freedom of movement will be restricted are very limited and no greater than is necessary, on the best available expert advice, to ensure collisions are avoided. Designated safety areas are, moreover, temporary. Finally, there are no less restrictive means available to achieve the objective of the measures. In particular, provision is made in the bill for exemptions for certain vessels (as well as for applications for ministerial consent to enter a safety zone or area to be avoided), and it is intended that these will be granted in respect of smaller vessels not posing a collision risk.

Right against arbitrary interference with privacy or home — section 13(a)

Section 13(a) provides that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy or home unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Clause 677(1)(a) of the bill provides that authorised persons may board a vessel on the basis of reasonable belief that it has been or is about to be used in contravention of the safety zone and 'areas to be avoided' provisions discussed above. Clause 677(1)(b)(iv) provides for the search of such a vessel for documents relating to the vessel and its movements. Where the vessel boarded or searched is engaged in regulated petroleum or greenhouse gas activities, there may be a

question as to whether the right to privacy is even engaged. However, in those cases where section 13(a) is engaged, in my opinion, any interference with the right will be neither unlawful nor arbitrary and accordingly the right is not limited. This is because boarding and searching vessels is an essential compliance mechanism for achieving the important regulatory objectives that I have just discussed. There are also important safeguards in place to protect against arbitrary exercise of the powers. In particular, clause 677(2) provides that the powers can ordinarily only be exercised in accordance with a warrant issued by a magistrate on reasonable grounds and on the basis of information on oath or affirmation (pursuant to clause 682) or with the consent of the master of the vessel, and only in certain limited circumstances of seriousness and urgency can they be exercised without a warrant or consent (under clause 683).

Property right — section 20

Part 6.4 of the bill provides for the issue of remedial directions to former titleholders, including a direction requiring the removal of property brought onto an area that has been vacated by any person engaged in the activities authorised by a title. If the direction is not complied with, the minister has the power to take action under clause 638 or 645 to remove and dispose of the property in question (by sale, auction or otherwise). This power engages the property right in section 20, but in my view the right is not limited because the deprivation is expressly and clearly authorised under the terms of the bill. Moreover, the bill provides a number of safeguards against the arbitrary operation of the provisions. In particular, before the powers are employed, the minister must first have provided the owner with a written direction to remove the property and a reasonable period to comply, and after disposal, any proceeds (less costs incurred by removal and sale) must be paid to the owner.

(iii) Enforcement powers

Part 6.5 of the bill contains powers of enforcement, including petroleum project and greenhouse gas project inspectors' powers of access, inspection and entry. These powers engage the charter right against arbitrary interference with privacy or home.

Right against arbitrary interference with privacy or home — section 13(a)

Inspectors' compliance-monitoring powers include a power to access any structure, vessel, aircraft or building in the offshore area that the inspector has reasonable grounds to believe has been, or is to be used, in connection with relevant operations; a power of entry on reasonable grounds that they contain relevant documents; and a related power to inspect, take extracts or copy such documents (clauses 649 and 658). Where those structures, vessels, aircraft or buildings comprise work areas, there may be a question as to whether the right to privacy is even engaged. In some cases, however, the areas may include residential areas which constitute an individual's home, or where a reasonable expectation of privacy may arise so as to engage the right in section 13(a).

However, in my view, the right is not limited in such cases because any interference is neither unlawful nor arbitrary. This is because the interference is specifically authorised by the terms of the bill, it is only authorised to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with the petroleum and greenhouse gas regimes, and it is accompanied by adequate

safeguards. Most importantly, pursuant to clauses 650 or 659, entry to residential premises is only permitted with the consent of the occupier or pursuant to and in accordance with a warrant issued by a magistrate (under clause 653 or 662 on reasonable grounds supported by information on oath or affirmation). Moreover, since inspectors will be public authorities pursuant to section 4 of the charter, they will be bound by section 38(1) of the charter to employ their general enforcement powers in a charter-compatible manner.

(iv) Data management and gathering of information

Chapters 7 and 8 of the bill address data management and gathering of information requirements for persons engaged in petroleum and greenhouse gas operations. It is provided that the minister may direct that a person carrying on such an operation be required to keep records and comply with regulations regarding data management. Provision is made for compelled provision of information to the minister and his or her inspectors. This raises an issue regarding the charter right against self-incrimination.

Right against self-incrimination — section 25(2)(k)

Clauses 722 and 745 provide that the minister, petroleum project inspector or greenhouse gas project inspector may, by written notice, require a person to produce documents or information (or even to appear in person to give evidence orally) relating to an operation. Clauses 725 and 748 provide that a person is not excused from providing information and evidence or producing a document under clauses 722 or 745 on the ground that such documents or information might tend to incriminate the person or expose them to a penalty. However, a full use immunity is provided in clauses 725(2) and 748(2) rendering the information provided (and any information, document or thing obtained as a direct or indirect result) inadmissible in criminal or civil proceedings against the person, other than proceedings regarding failing to comply with a request for information or proceedings regarding provision of false or misleading information, documents or evidence. In my view, for the reasons given above, it is unnecessary to decide whether this statutory abrogation of the common-law privilege against self-incrimination and its replacement with a full immunity limits the right in section 25(2)(k) because any limitation is clearly justified.

(v) Occupational health and safety

Schedule 3 regulates occupational health and safety (OHS) at facilities located in offshore areas relating to petroleum and greenhouse gas operations. Certain of the powers provided to OHS inspectors raise issues regarding the right against self-incrimination, the right to be presumed innocent, the right against arbitrary interference with privacy or home, and the property right in the charter.

Right against self-incrimination — section 25(2)(k)

Clause 80 of schedule 3 empowers OHS inspectors to require certain persons, whom they believe on reasonable grounds are capable of complying, to answer questions or produce documents or articles reasonably connected with the conduct of an inspection. Clause 81 of schedule 3 provides that a person is not excused from answering an inspector's question or producing a document or article on the basis that doing so may tend to incriminate him or her or make them liable to a penalty. However, it also provides that the answer, document

or article produced (and any information, document or thing obtained as a direct or indirect consequence of the answering or production of the document or article) is not admissible in criminal or civil proceeding, other than proceedings regarding failing to comply with a request or proceedings regarding provision of false or misleading information. In my view, for the reasons given above, it is unnecessary to decide whether this statutory abrogation of the common-law privilege against self-incrimination and its replacement with a full immunity limits the right in section 25(2)(k) because any limitation is clearly justified.

Right to be presumed innocent — section 25(1)

Clause 104(5) of schedule 3 provides that, in respect of the OHS offences set out in schedule 3, any conduct engaged in on behalf of an individual by their employee or agent, within the scope of actual or apparent authority, is taken to have also been engaged in by the individual, unless he or she establishes that he or she took reasonable precautions and exercised due diligence to avoid the conduct. This places an evidential onus on the defendant in respect of an element of this vicarious liability offence. In my view, it is not necessary to decide whether reversing this evidential onus limits the right to be presumed innocent since, in my opinion, any limitation is clearly demonstrably justified under section 7(2) of the charter for the following reasons. First, as I discussed earlier, the presumption of innocence is not an absolute right and admits of exceptions provided these are kept within reasonable limits. Secondly, the presumption of fact is rationally connected with the practical realities of employer-employee or principal-agent relationships in the context of this offence. Thirdly, it is reasonable and not unduly onerous to require individuals operating under this OHS regulatory regime to, for example, maintain adequate documentary or other records of reasonable precautions and due diligence undertaken in respect of their employees and agents (which could then readily be produced to discharge the onus imposed), and it would be conversely difficult for the prosecution to discharge a legal onus in respect of the element in question. Finally, clause 104(6) of schedule 3 specifies that a conviction under section 104(6) cannot result in imprisonment.

Right against arbitrary interference with privacy or home — section 13(a)

The facilities to which the entry and search powers in schedule 3 relate include accommodation facilities (such as platforms, rigs, or seismic boats), however clause 58(2)(b) provides that an OHS inspector may only exercise powers of entry and search in respect of residential premises with the occupier's consent. In the heavily regulated context of petroleum and greenhouse gas facilities, outside of residential areas, discharge of the entry and search powers in schedule 3 may well not even engage section 13(a) of the charter. However, to the extent that the powers do so, in my opinion, any interference with privacy will be neither unlawful nor arbitrary, and therefore will not limit the right. The entry and search powers are vital to achieving the important purposes of ensuring compliance with OHS laws, investigating contraventions of OHS laws, and investigating accidents or dangerous occurrences. Further, OHS inspectors will be public authorities pursuant to section 4 of the charter and accordingly, to the extent that the privacy right would be engaged, inspectors will be legally bound by section 38(1) of the charter to employ their general enforcement powers in a charter-compatible manner.

Property right — section 20

Clauses 62, 63 and 64 empower OHS inspectors, who have entered a facility or vessel under their entry powers, to seize material or data believed on reasonable grounds to be evidential material relating to the suspected or intended commission of an OHS offence. These powers engage the property right in the charter, however in my opinion the right is not limited because the deprivation of property is specifically authorised under the bill. Further, safeguards are provided to prevent arbitrary exercise of the powers, including that the powers can only be exercised in accordance with a warrant issued by a magistrate on the basis of reasonable grounds (clauses 62(4), 63(4), 73, and 74), a receipt must be given for things seized (clause 70(1)), and a limit of 60 days is imposed for retention of a seized item without further authorisation from a magistrate (clauses 71 and 72).

Conclusion

For the reasons given in this statement, I consider that the bill is compatible with the charter.

Peter Batchelor, MP
Minister for Energy and Resources

Second reading

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In a carbon-constrained world, carbon capture and geological storage technologies are required to offset the continued use of Victoria's fossil fuels.

The Brumby government is therefore pleased to introduce legislation today that creates a framework to regulate petroleum activities and facilities and the injection and permanent storage of greenhouse gases in Victorian offshore waters.

This bill will provide investors with a clear signal that Victoria is committed to the development of carbon capture and storage in Victorian coastal waters. It will also give the community confidence that injection and storage operations will be undertaken in a manner which minimises risks to public health and the environment.

In accordance with the terms of the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, all states have undertaken to maintain, as far as practicable, common principles, rules and practices. Therefore, like the commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, this bill will create a system of titles for petroleum exploration and recovery and the injection of permanent storage of carbon dioxide and other prescribed greenhouse gases.

This bill addresses policy differences in the management of long-term liabilities associated with the underground storage of carbon dioxide and other prescribed greenhouse gases existing under Victorian and commonwealth legislation.

The bill also seeks to balance the rights of this new storage industry with the rights of the petroleum industry in a manner that encourages investment in both industries.

I now turn to the key provisions of the bill.

Role of the Crown

Like the Victorian onshore Greenhouse Gas Geological Sequestration Act 2008, this bill establishes that the Crown owns all underground geological storage formations within Victorian waters. This will allow the Crown to grant exclusive rights to explore for geological storage formations within specific areas of Victorian waters, and where a suitable geological storage formation is identified, to undertake greenhouse gas injection and monitoring operations.

Governing authority

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (NOPSA) will be the body responsible under the bill for performing functions relating to:

- the promotion of occupational health and safety of persons engaged in petroleum operations in offshore areas;
- the investigation of accidents and incidents occurring in relation to offshore petroleum activities; and
- advising and making recommendations to the relevant ministers and authorities in relation to occupational health and safety matters.

Management of competing resource use

The bill requires the minister to assess the impact of greenhouse gas operations on petroleum exploration operations or petroleum recovery.

Where proposed injection operations pose a significant risk to petroleum exploration operations or petroleum recovery operations, the minister may, except as I will describe below, approve the proposed operation if he or she considers it in the public interest to do so, notwithstanding that risk.

The minister cannot approve greenhouse gas operations over existing pre-commencement petroleum titles or existing post-commencement petroleum production

licences unless the petroleum titleholder has agreed, in writing, to the carrying out of those greenhouse gas operations.

Regulation of activities relating to petroleum

The bill re-enacts the existing system currently in place for regulating activities relating to petroleum. This includes activities for permits, retention leases, production licenses, infrastructure licences and pipeline licenses.

The bill also re-enacts the existing process under which applications for petroleum exploration permits or renewals of petroleum exploration permits, retention leases or renewal of petroleum retention leases can be made. The minister will be able to determine whether or not a petroleum exploration permit or retention lease or renewal for both, should be granted.

Like the Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, the bill provides a process by which applications can be made for a petroleum exploration permit and retention lease. Separate application processes will be set out for a work-bid petroleum exploration permit, a cash-bid petroleum exploration permit, special petroleum exploration permit, and holders of a petroleum exploration permit or petroleum production licence.

The bill also authorises the minister to grant a petroleum exploration permit and retention lease subject to such conditions as he or she thinks appropriate.

Regulation of activities relating to injection and storage of greenhouse gas substances

The bill will facilitate primarily large-scale commercial carbon storage activities. Like the Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, the bill establishes a system of titles for the injection and permanent storage of carbon dioxide and other prescribed greenhouse gases.

These are:

- a greenhouse gas assessment permit;
- a greenhouse gas holding lease;
- a greenhouse gas injection licence;
- a greenhouse gas search authority; and
- a greenhouse gas special authority.

The bill provides flexibility as to the duration, size and conditions associated with such permits, leases and licences.

The bill also makes provision for the surrender of greenhouse gas titles and cancellation of greenhouse gas titles.

Registration and dealings in petroleum titles and greenhouse gas titles

The bill provides for the creation and maintenance of a register of petroleum titles, greenhouse gas titles and greenhouse gas search authorities. The bill also includes provisions which establish the requirements for approval and registration of transfers and dealings with these titles. The bill provides transitional provisions to ensure that the existing register containing registration details for petroleum and greenhouse gas titles and greenhouse gas search authorities remain in force.

The bill establishes a regime for managing transfers of petroleum titles and greenhouse gas titles. As an example, a transfer of a petroleum title and greenhouse gas title is of no force and effect until it has been approved by the minister and an instrument of transfer is registered.

Like the Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, this bill also establishes a process that is to be applied by the minister when determining whether to approve or refuse the transfer of these titles.

Importantly, the bill:

- empowers the minister to issue directions to holders of petroleum or greenhouse gas titles or authorities or former holders of titles or authorities in relation to the removal of fixtures and the restoration of the environment in respect of the Victorian offshore area;

- requires consent of the relevant minister to access restricted Crown land; and

- requires compliance with the:

- Environment Protection Act 1970;
- Dangerous Goods Act 1985;
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006;
- Coastal Management Act 1995;
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998;
- Water Act 1989; and
- National Parks Act 1975.

Operational requirements

The bill provides a range of measures to ensure that petroleum and greenhouse gas injection and storage

activities are carried out in accordance with agreed operational plans.

The bill gives the minister power to direct persons to:

plug or close off, to the satisfaction of the minister, all wells made in any vacated area by any person engaged or concerned in those operations;

provide, to the satisfaction of the minister, for the conservation and protection of the natural resources in the vacated area; or

make good, to the satisfaction of the minister, any damage to the seabed or subsoil in the vacated area caused by any person engaged or concerned in those operations.

Management of potential liabilities following surrender of licence

The Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 makes provisions for the commonwealth to assume certain long term liability in respect of greenhouse gas operations. The commonwealth act transfers all liabilities (including common law liabilities) from an injection operation to the Crown 15 years after the commonwealth minister is satisfied that a carbon storage operation can be closed.

This bill will differ from the commonwealth approach and will provide that common-law liabilities remain with the operator after surrender of the licence.

This position is consistent with the Victorian Greenhouse Gas Geological Sequestration Act 2008 and the approach taken for other earth resource industries and waste disposal industries more generally, the Australian Regulatory Guiding Principles for Carbon Capture and Geological Storage endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources and Queensland's Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2009.

Enforcement

The bill provides a range of offences, penalties and enforcement provisions to ensure that petroleum operations and carbon storage exploration and injection operations meet community expectations for the protection of public health and the environment and that titleholders' rights are respected.

The enforcement provisions in this bill also differ from those in the commonwealth legislation. This is primarily due to the fact that the commonwealth legislation enforcement provisions have been drafted in

accordance with commonwealth legislation which includes the Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995. The enforcement provisions for this bill have been drafted in accordance with Victorian legislation which includes the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Sentencing Act 1991.

Rights of petroleum titleholders

In mirroring commonwealth legislation, the bill will give existing petroleum interests the right to apply for a greenhouse gas holding or injection title over their title areas. Their interests are protected by an 'impacts test' designed to minimise any adverse effects from carbon storage interests.

Regulations

The bill provides the underlying framework from which detailed regulations specific to petroleum operations and greenhouse gas injection and storage will be developed. Work on these regulations and guidelines will commence once the commonwealth has developed its regulations. The commonwealth has advised that it expects the regulations to be finalised towards the end of March 2010.

The Victorian regulations will be consistent as far as is practicable with the commonwealth regulations. Victorian supporting regulations and the role of other existing Victorian legislation will be used where necessary to ensure that environmental or health risks associated with offshore greenhouse gas and storage activities are appropriately addressed.

Conclusion

The creation of clear legal rights for offshore greenhouse gas and storage, as well as an efficient and credible regime for its assessment, approval and operation, are necessary preconditions for investment in this potential new industry.

In introducing this bill, the government is determined to provide a framework to facilitate a nationally consistent approach to the regulation of the offshore underground storage of carbon dioxide and other prescribed greenhouse gases in Victoria. This bill seeks to ensure that all aspects of offshore petroleum and carbon storage activities are conducted sustainably and in an open, transparent and consultative way which meets community expectations.

The need for urgent action in addressing climate change, and the significant role that this bill is likely to play in developing one of the available methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, will contribute

substantially to enabling Victoria to meet its climate change mitigation responsibilities, at the same time enabling the ongoing use of the State's fossil fuel resources.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern).

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I move:

That the debate be adjourned for two weeks.

Given the sheer volume of the bill — or as the member for South-West Coast points out, the two volumes — and the importance of this potential industry, which the opposition certainly acknowledges, it would be appropriate that a longer lead time be available for consultation with industry and other affected and interested groups.

On that basis I would seek the agreement of the minister that, either through amending his motion or through giving an undertaking before the house, this bill will not be on the government business program for the next sitting week. As the minister is also the Leader of the House, I would hope he is in a position to at least know what the government's business program will be and to give that sort of undertaking. I would ask him to do so in a spirit of goodwill.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until Thursday, 18 February.

LIQUOR CONTROL REFORM AMENDMENT (ANZAC DAY) BILL

Statement of compatibility

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) 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 Liquor Control Reform Amendment (Anzac Day) Bill 2010.

In my opinion, the Liquor Control Reform Amendment (Anzac Day) Bill 2010, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The main purpose of this bill is to amend the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 in relation to the supply of liquor on Anzac Day.

Human rights issues

The bill raises two human rights issues.

Section 20 — property rights

Clause 13 inserts a new section 15A which restricts the supply of liquor on Anzac Day morning permitted under various types of licences and permits issued under the principal act. It applies notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the licence or permit itself. This has the effect of altering the conditions and rights of existing licence-holders.

Section 20 of the charter provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with the law. Although 'property' may include statutory rights such as licences, the alteration of a licence will not amount to a deprivation of property where the licence-holder did not have a reasonable expectation of the lasting nature of the licence. Section 58 of the principal act expressly states that the director, at his or her own initiative, may vary a licence or BYO permit in accordance with the principal act, including varying the times at which the licence authorises the supply of liquor and imposing new conditions or removing conditions on the licence.

Accordingly, the provision does not result in a deprivation of property for the purposes of section 20 of the charter. Even if it did, any such deprivation would be 'in accordance with law' for purposes of section 20.

Section 24 — right to a fair hearing

As various clauses in the bill result in minor changes to the scope of licensing decisions made by the director of liquor licensing under the principal act, I have given consideration to whether the licence and permit system, as contained in the principal act, protects the right to a fair hearing in section 24 of the charter. Section 24 provides that a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. Divisions 4, 5 and 6 of part 2 of the principal act set out the application process for the granting of licences and permits, including the powers and obligations of the director in determining applications. In deciding whether there is a breach of the right to a fair hearing, the process must be considered in its entirety, including any available rights of appeal or review.

Considering these various procedures in this manner, I have concluded that they accord individuals their right to a fair hearing. In reaching this conclusion, I have placed particular weight on the fact that there is an opportunity for individuals adversely affected by a decision to seek a review by VCAT. Furthermore, any contested applications are referred to the liquor licensing panel for a recommendation (section 45) which is bound to give the applicant and each objector a reasonable opportunity to be heard (section 46) in a public hearing (section 163).

Conclusion

I consider that the bill is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and that no provisions in the bill limit human rights.

Hon. Tony Robinson, MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs

Second reading

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Brumby government is committed to protecting the solemn observance of Anzac Day, to ensure that this day, so significant for all Australians, is commemorated appropriately and respectfully. In August 2009, we committed to introducing restrictions on trading by licensed premises on the morning of Anzac Day, and this bill delivers on that promise.

The focus on Anzac Day morning is the dawn services and marches which are held state and nationwide to commemorate those brave men and women who have served our country. The community believes and expects that Anzac Day is a time for us to show our respect for those persons and to remember the sacrifices that they made. The community does not support inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour or disturbances to these commemorative activities early on Anzac Day morning, which is why we are introducing a restriction on the supply of liquor beyond 3.00 a.m. on Anzac Day. As a result, licensed venues such as nightclubs, pubs, bars and late-trading venues across the state will be required to close their doors at 3.00 a.m. A 3.00 a.m. closing time will balance the commercial interests of industry and provide sufficient time for patrons to leave a venue and make their journey home prior to the community gathering for Anzac Day commemorative services.

The government is committed to protecting appropriate Anzac Day celebrations and events; therefore, the bill contains limited exemptions designed to allow these to take place. Importantly, the RSL and any sub-branch of the RSL will be exempt from the trading restrictions to ensure that commemorative events held at RSLs are not affected.

Since the bill is directed at protecting the sanctity of Anzac Day, there are a number of other exemptions for activities which will not have an impact on the commemoration of Anzac Day by the community.

There will be an exemption for the supply of liquor to residents or guests of a resident of a licensee or licensed premises, as this is not considered to disturb the public commemoration of Anzac Day.

The Anzac Day restriction will not apply to the supply of liquor to airlines for consumption by and sale to passengers aboard aircraft or to the supply of liquor by duty-free retailers. Victoria has an international

reputation as a destination of choice, and it is important therefore that this bill does not restrict the servicing of aircraft and the sale of liquor by duty-free outlets. However, the supply of liquor at bars and restaurants at Victorian airports will not be permitted, unless a temporary limited licence is granted for what will be an appropriate commemorative activity.

Pre-retail licensees may also continue to supply liquor on Anzac morning. Since pre-retail licensees cannot sell or supply liquor to the general public, these licensees are not considered to pose a risk to the appropriate commemoration of Anzac Day.

This bill provides a fair balance between the protection of commercial interests of licensed venues and the sanctity and solemn observance of Anzac Day in Victoria.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 18 February.

SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

The SPEAKER — Order! This is the last sitting day before Dr Stephen O'Kane, Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, takes his leave from the Parliament of Victoria. I would like to express my gratitude to Stephen for the leadership that he has given the department over the past five and a half years. He has overseen many organisational changes, and he leaves the department in a much stronger position to adjust and adapt to the challenges of the ever-changing environments of communications; information technology; physical, intellectual and data security; corporate governance; human resources; infrastructure delivery; and financial disclosure regulations. His focus on the importance of people and their development within the organisation means that he leaves a great team of parliamentary staff who I know will also miss his support, advice and counsel.

Stephen's commitment to the Parliament and to his staff has been unstinting. The quality and timeliness of his advice to me, as one of the presiding officers, has always been forthright, analytical and considered. The Parliament has been extremely well served by Stephen. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I thank him sincerely for his efforts and wish him well for the future.

CONDOLENCES

James Bernard Maher, AO

The SPEAKER — Order! On 17 December 2009 James Bernard Maher, AO, died at the age of 82. His was a remarkable life of service — to his family, his religion and his union, the SDA (Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association). A committed trade unionist, his major achievements included his leading role in ensuring shop assistants were the first workers to have employer-paid 3 per cent superannuation contributions. His support for equal pay saw the SDA as the first union to establish a dedicated women’s policy unit.

The last time I spoke to Jim was in early December last year at the launch of the book that celebrates the SDA’s 100-year anniversary. So much of that history was Jim’s history. Joining the union in 1968, he served for 18 years as state secretary of the Victorian branch from 1971 to 1991. In 1970 he also became the national president. Under his leadership the SDA rejoined the ALP in 1984. It was then, in the mid-1980s, that I first met Jim at his home at Bonbeach in my electorate.

My experience of Jim is more as a local community member than as union powerbroker — his commitment to and involvement in his local church, his enjoyment of a good game of cards at the Kingston U3A (University of the Third Age) and his devotion to his wife, Fran, and his wider family and friends.

His funeral just before Christmas at his local parish church, St Joseph’s in Chelsea, was testament to a man of great integrity. It was a church full of family and friends from politics, union, church and the local community.

I extend my condolences to Fran and to all those who grieve the loss of a great Australian, James Bernard Maher, AO.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing).

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

St John’s Elsternwick Cricket Club: liquor licence

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, and I am pleased to see he is in the chamber. The matter is in relation to a liquor licensing problem, and the action I seek is that the minister address the outrageous increase in liquor licence fees for small sporting clubs and take responsibility — I cannot believe he is leaving the chamber — to ensure that applications for a variation of licence are dealt with properly and more promptly.

The St John’s Elsternwick Cricket Club in my electorate wrote to me expressing amazement in relation to two issues. Firstly, it received a notice for the payment of \$397 for the renewal of its liquor licence, even though it says it would not sell more than \$300 worth of liquor over the four-month cricket season. The renewal fee has gone from around \$50 a few years ago to \$93 in 2008 and then to this extraordinary charge of \$397 in December 2009.

Secondly, because the club was given a new space in the new Caulfield Park pavilion, it was obliged to apply for a variation of licence. This it did in September last year, but it had not received the variation by the end of last December. The club was absolutely shocked that it was being asked to pay a liquor licence fee by 1 January, 2010, which would not apply to its new premises but only to its old premises. The liquor licence would therefore be just a useless piece of paper.

After I took steps to assist the club, in January it finally received a variation in licence for its new premises. However, now, with only one month of the cricket season to go, it is still being asked to pay this massive \$397 fee when the club, as I said, estimates that it would sell only about \$300 worth of alcohol during the entire cricket season of four months.

As club members only have a social drink after their match, they say:

For small clubs like ours, where the after-match gathering is primarily a short social interlude, it is a crippling impost.

One would think a responsible government would want to encourage and support small sporting clubs, and the obvious responsible drinking which is practised by the St John’s Elsternwick Cricket Club should be commended.

Housing: Cranbourne electorate

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — The matter that I raise before the house today is for the Minister for

Housing. As members would be aware, almost one year ago the federal government announced its \$6 billion package for social housing, of which Victoria has secured \$1.67 billion. I call on the Minister for Housing to update the house on the progress of Nation Building and Jobs Plan projects in the electorate of Cranbourne and to report on the progress of the maintenance works that are under way in my electorate.

This is a welcome investment from the Rudd federal Labor government as there is a real shortage of affordable housing right across the state. This investment builds upon the record \$510 million investment of the Brumby government to increase social housing.

In my own electorate we can see very clearly the impact of a booming housing market and an increasingly tight rental market on low-income families. In suburbs such as Cranbourne, Carrum Downs and Skye many low-income families are simply priced out of the market. Many families are resorting to insecure forms of accommodation such as rooming houses, caravan parks and crisis accommodation. This type of accommodation is inappropriate for families, who need good-quality, long-term accommodation.

In addition, there are a range of individuals and families, from those with high needs to those with low income, who are waiting for public housing. The stimulus package provides opportunities to build public housing in my electorate as well as housing that is owned and managed by the community sector.

There is a great demand in my electorate for social housing that is well located, safe and, of course, affordable. Social housing tenants pay no more than 30 per cent of their income on rent. Subsidised rents for tenants ensures that they are not in housing stress and that families can afford to spend money on necessities other than rent.

I call on the Minister for Housing to update the house on the progress of the Nation Building and Jobs Plan projects and to expedite the Nation Building and Jobs Plan projects in the electorate of Cranbourne.

We need to carefully consider the location of all new social housing built under the stimulus package to ensure that there is a high degree of diversity within communities and that these communities are sustainable. Cranbourne is an area of high growth and provides an increasing opportunity for Victorians.

Social housing needs to be located in areas that are close to shops, community facilities, public transport — —

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

Housing: Mildura electorate

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is an explanation of Mildura's entitlement to social housing and what sorts of social housing projects are planned for Mildura.

Social or affordable housing is a vital part of my electorate and a regular source of work for my electorate office. The commonwealth stimulus package includes money for housing, and it is needed. Mildura has its problems, and so do other communities within my electorate. Robinvale has a long history of problems with regard to overcrowding and inappropriate buildings being utilised for housing. Government investment in Robinvale is needed. Hopetoun and Murrayville communities both have independent living projects that are desperately in need of support. Independent living units for senior residents free up the housing stock for families as well as meeting the social needs of seniors. A small amount of money invested in these projects provides a large return to government.

Turning back to Mildura, we need to know what options the minister is exploring so the community can understand and provide input into this process. The old Mildura Base Hospital site is one option, but it would be unwise to have it as the only option. The minister provided some money to look at the possibility of using the hospital site for the accommodation of older people or apartments for key workers, such as visiting doctors and specialists. The minister should have alternatives for Mildura.

The action that I seek is that Mildura residents be made aware of those alternatives for social housing beyond the Mildura Base Hospital project. Social housing is important, and to have all the eggs in one basket is not wise. Certainly the Mildura community needs to know what options are on the table for social housing and when the minister will make them known to the community of Mildura.

Bushfires: Strathewen hall

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I raise a matter for Minister for Planning. The action I seek is for the Minister for Planning to assist the Strathewen community to resolve some planning issues so it can rebuild its community hall to the expectations of the community in 2010.

The Strathewen hall was destroyed by the fires on Black Saturday. The hall had served as a focal point for the community since 1902. My constituents used it for the annual school concert and for many other important activities. The existing allotment is just over 1000 square metres, which is a quarter of an acre, and enjoys existing use rights as a community hall for the purposes of rebuilding, but the site is inadequate because of its small size. The hall is not large enough to cater for today's requirements. Planning provisions require septic systems that need a larger area than is available, and there is absolutely no on-site parking. Those issues really need to be addressed.

Prior to the fires, on behalf of the hall committee I had made representations to the council and the minister regarding car parking as it has been an ongoing issue for some time, with the main concern being safety. The hall is situated on a narrow, winding road that leads into Strathewen and people just park along the side of the road. Imagine getting out of your car with kids and getting back to the car after a night at the hall. It would be fraught with danger. Of course in 1902 it was not really necessary to worry about parking and fast-moving traffic near the hall.

The hall committee has been discussing with the adjoining land owner the transfer of additional land to the public hall so that the size of its site can be increased, but the zoning applying to the land is incompatible with its use. The public hall committee is now in the early stages of planning to rebuild the facility, and the minister is involved at this early stage in enabling them to utilise the adjoining land that under the current planning provisions is not able to be used for a hall. It would be great if the hall committee could have some certainty in its consultations with the community and its planning for a new facility that will meet the needs of the community into the future.

Again I ask the Minister for Planning to take action to ensure that these planning issues are resolved, as this would be greatly appreciated by the Strathewen community.

Bulleen Road–Golden Way, Bulleen: traffic lights

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports. The action I seek is for the minister to investigate providing funds to install traffic lights at the T-intersection of Bulleen Road and Golden Way in Bulleen.

Bulleen Road between the Eastern Freeway and Templestowe Road is a very busy and dangerous stretch of road, and something needs to be done before someone gets hurt or killed. As I have said on many occasions, crossing the T-intersections along this stretch of road is as easy as trying to nail jelly to a tree — and the worst is the intersection with Golden Way.

I have raised this issue with the minister on previous occasions. The response from his office shows that either his advisers are out of touch or VicRoads staff have their heads in the sand. I received a letter from the minister's office after I raised the issue in Parliament in 2007. The letter was written by Cressida Wall, the chief of staff for the Minister for Roads and Ports and says in part:

VicRoads has given careful consideration to the safety concerns of residents in this area, keeping in mind the importance of achieving a balance between the need for access to Bulleen Road and the need to avoid adverse impacts on the amenity of the local area.

... it is considered that the installation of traffic signals at this intersection would encourage through traffic from nearby areas to use Golden Way as a short cut to access Bulleen Road.

I, together with many residents, disagree with that conclusion. The letter goes on to say:

This would not only impact on the safety and amenity of Golden Way and the adjacent local streets, but would also significantly increase the number of vehicles turning right at the intersection, contributing to further delays.

That statement is wrong. It is a very dangerous intersection, and the minister must provide the funds to install traffic lights at that location. The residents are calling for them. They have called me and written to me, and they email me on a weekly basis in an effort to make sure that traffic lights will be installed. It is impossible for drivers to make a right-hand or left-hand turn during peak traffic times. It is absolutely impossible to cross this T-intersection.

I urge the minister to look at this intersection himself and not provide me with another response written by some bureaucrat at VicRoads or some adviser. I would like the minister to consider this request. I would like him to come to see the intersection for himself and perhaps try to exit Golden Way and move onto Bulleen Road to see if it is possible. It is a dangerous intersection, and I urge the minister to provide funds to install traffic lights.

Racing: picnic clubs

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Racing. The action I seek relates to country picnic racing clubs. I have recently heard disturbing reports that Racing Victoria Ltd (RVL) and Country Racing Victoria (CRV) have imposed conditions on picnic racing clubs regarding their access to state government funding. It is alleged that picnic clubs are denied access to government funding if they do not meet certain conditions set by RVL and CRV. As I understand it, these conditions state that picnic clubs must have \$20 000 in the bank and must take \$10 000 at the gate at each race meeting. These two conditions are apparently a measure to ensure that clubs remain viable, which is understandable. However, if the reports suggesting that these clubs be denied access to state government funding are true, I find this very disturbing.

Country picnic racing clubs such as the Hanging Rock club in my electorate not only provide regional and rural communities with a great day out but also contribute to the very social fabric of their communities. To have conditions put on them excluding them from access to government funding because of standards set by independent racing control bodies is ridiculous and something I find very hard to believe. I therefore call on the Minister for Racing to ensure that support is available to country picnic racing clubs, no matter what their status with RVL and CRV.

Princes Highway: eastern upgrade

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports. The action I seek is for the Princes Highway east of Bairnsdale to be given the government's highest road funding priority for Gippsland. This section of the highway requires substantial upgrading and improvement because of major safety problems with it. It has extensive narrow, winding stretches, rough and poor surfacing, very high rates of heavy vehicle transport use and — something I find most disappointing — among the highest accident and fatality risk rates when compared with similar roads in the state.

The section of road I am talking about stretches from Bairnsdale to Lakes Entrance, runs up to Orbost and on to the border with New South Wales. It is a very important piece of highway. It is the no. 1 highway in Australia, yet this section of road has had very limited major upgrades over recent years. Some people in the community are calling on the government to spend in excess of \$200 million for the next stage of the Traralgon to Sale duplication. In my view the Princes

Highway east of Bairnsdale should come in as a much higher priority for eastern Victoria. The money required to be spent on the duplication would provide very limited improvements in safety and travel times, while a similar amount of money spent on the Princes Highway east of Bairnsdale would improve safety on that road out of sight.

Unfortunately this section of highway is not a federally funded road. That must be addressed; we need to ensure we get state and federal funding. I call on the minister to make sure that this section of road is put at the highest level of priority for funding for that region. It is a very important road for the area. The majority of my constituents are very keen to see the upgrade. Some of the areas have had plans for improvement for in excess of 15 years; in some areas there have been plans to straighten sections of road, but that has not happened.

As I indicated earlier, this section of road has disappointingly had some major accidents and fatalities. There are a number of intersections where significant problems occur with high traffic volumes, high speed and very poor road conditions. I call on the government to make sure that this section of road is funded to improve the safety outcomes.

Mobil Yarraville: retrenchments

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation. The action I seek is that she coordinate support and assistance for a group of retrenched workers based at Mobil's operations in Yarraville. I was contacted by a representative from ExxonMobil earlier today and advised that unfortunately the company will cease to continue its operations to blend and package lubricants at the Yarraville site.

As a result of this decision the company indicated it had informed staff this morning that there would be a loss of some jobs in the manufacturing, sales and technical support areas. These job losses will not be immediate but will take place within the next 12 to 18 months. In all about 100 employees across Mobil's operations will be made redundant, with about 35 of these associated with the Yarraville operations.

A formal statement from Mobil's lead country manager, John Dashwood, stated that:

Over the next 12 to 18 months we will be ceasing the direct sale of finished lubricants to customers and will move to a business where Mobil-branded lubricants will be imported from ExxonMobil's global supply network and marketed through distributors. These changes do not directly affect any other parts of ExxonMobil's upstream or downstream operations in Australia or New Zealand.

The Yarraville lubricant blend plant and used oil analysis laboratory will be closed. Our fuels storage and distribution operations at Yarraville will continue.

Notwithstanding the company's decision, this will be an extremely tough day for those people affected by this announcement. Having represented working people for most of my professional life, I can understand that many of Mobil's workers in Yarraville will be feeling pretty empty and insecure today.

I am advised that the company will look at opportunities for workers to be redeployed within the company's other operations. It will also provide counselling services for its workforce and engage an outside employment agency to assist workers with future employment opportunities. The company has also advised me that it offers very generous redundancy payments under their various industrial agreements.

Critically, those who lose their jobs may have to reskill to find new work. The state Labor government introduced a retrenched workers training entitlement on 1 January last year. This entitlement guarantees government-subsidised training places for those workers who are made redundant and need to retrain. I am sure this type of initiative would be of great interest to any worker who finds themselves in the unfortunate position of being retrenched through no fault of their own.

In the circumstances I seek the minister's support and assistance to determine what arrangements can be put in place through her department to help these Mobil workers in Yarraville through a very difficult period and to discuss their future options. Naturally I expect the company and relevant unions will also do everything they can to support the workers in the coming weeks and months.

Planning: Abbotsford development

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning. The matter concerns the proposed redevelopment of the Honeywell site in Victoria Street, Abbotsford. The action I am seeking from the Minister for Planning is that he meet with residents from both sides of the Yarra River to hear their concerns and ultimately champion their opposition to this unacceptable overdevelopment. I am pleased the member for Richmond, who is the Minister for Local Government, is in the chamber; he has said he is well and truly aware of this issue and the concerns raised, by his constituents no doubt, and mine.

The current Honeywell building is adjacent to a bend in the Yarra River which is a beautiful natural area used

every day by hundreds of Victorians, including walkers, cyclists, runners and people enjoying the local recreation amenity. I note that the main Yarra bike and walking path runs between the river and the Honeywell site. With the encroachment upon the natural grounds of this development, that in itself will impact upon that amenity.

A planning application has been lodged for the redevelopment of the Honeywell site by the developer, Hamton. Their current plan is to demolish the present and relatively small 2-storey building and to construct an 11-storey monstrosity, more than double the height of the current design development overlay in the area. It will contain nearly 600 luxury apartments with restaurants, boat jetties and even a rooftop bar.

Such an enormous and unsympathetic overdevelopment will dwarf the surrounding area and encroach upon the prescribed setbacks, destroying not only the amenity of local residents on both sides of the Yarra River but also the enjoyment of people from all over Melbourne who use the area on a regular basis. Many local residents on both sides of the Yarra River have expressed fears that a rooftop bar could become a magnet for the type of alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour which has been escalating out of control around Victoria. More people, cars and noise would also impact on the animal and bird habitat.

The current proposal would add significantly to local traffic problems. I am unaware of any provision for or guarantee of adequate parking, schools and other necessary amenities provided by government. We have already seen the government overdevelop the Kew Cottages site without making provision for necessary services in the local area.

Accordingly I call upon the Minister for Planning for his support. I look forward to the support of the Minister for Local Government being reflected by the planning minister in championing the opposition to this complete and utter abomination on the Yarra River.

Public transport: Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, and I ask him to investigate the future transport needs of residents in the most rapidly growing parts of my electorate, in particular Mernda, Doreen and Epping.

Firstly, let me take the opportunity to congratulate the new minister on his appointment only two weeks ago. Not only has he been extensively riding the system to acquaint himself personally with commuters' concerns

but he has already met with me to discuss the transport needs of the Yan Yean electorate.

There are myriad reasons that so many families are moving to the outstanding communities in the outer north of Melbourne. We have a fantastic environment that retains our beautiful red gums and a great network of parks abutting the Plenty River and Merri and Darebin creeks. We have four new award-winning schools built by our government, greatly improved existing schools and quality private schools.

In health the north is served by three of Victoria's newest and best hospitals — the Northern, the Austin and the Mercy. As a government we are investing strongly in job-growing infrastructure through the relocation of the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market to Epping and the rail freight hub to be established between Donnybrook and Beveridge.

In public transport the \$650 million rail line extension from Epping to South Morang will not only deliver improved rail services but also resolve decades-old road congestion problems. New bus services and improvements have been rolled out to Epping North, South Morang, Mernda and Doreen.

I am proud that it is a Labor government that champions and delivers to the northern suburbs, unlike the Liberal Party that sniggers and sneers at our way of life in the great outer suburbs, particularly in the north. I think Liberal Party members would need a map, compass and global positioning system to find the north. Epping residents will never forget the slur cast on the suburb by a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place, Richard Dalla-Riva, who described Epping as a bare, barren place. Liberal Party members show contempt for our growing communities by refusing to support raising additional revenue from the windfall profits of developers, which is necessary to pay for much-needed transport and community infrastructure in these communities.

No political party can ever sit back and say it has done enough, so I am constantly looking at ways to improve the lives of my community. It is imperative to keep up with the transport needs of growing suburbs, so I take pleasure in inviting the new Minister for Public Transport to see firsthand the great lifestyle that families are choosing by moving to Yan Yean and to investigate ways to improve public transport in the area to keep the outer north the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Responses

Mr HULLS (Minister for Racing) — I want to respond to the matter raised by the honourable member for Macedon. She is a great supporter of racing and in particular of picnic racing. Hanging Rock is in her electorate, and anyone who has been to races at Hanging Rock will know it is a sensational race meeting. She said she had heard disturbing reports that Racing Victoria Limited (RVL) and Country Racing Victoria (CRV) had imposed conditions on picnic race clubs regarding their access to state government funding. Those disturbing reports have come from a media release put out by the shadow Minister for Racing, the member for South-West Coast, in which he says picnic clubs are 'being denied access to state government capital works funding' unless they meet certain financial criteria.

The fact is that yet again he has told lies in this place. It is untrue, he knows it is untrue and his nose is growing longer than Pinocchio's on a daily basis, because the fact is that it is just completely wrong to be claiming that clubs are being denied access to state government funding because of conditions imposed by RVL and CRV. The shadow minister would have known that is a complete lie had he just checked with Racing Victoria, because he would have been told that no such conditions have been imposed upon picnic clubs.

We on this side of the house are absolutely passionate about country racing. In fact we have put more money into country racing in this state than any previous government. Unlike the Kennett government, of which the shadow minister was a member, the government led by former Premier Steve Bracks and Premier John Brumby has done more than any government in living memory to support and promote country racing, and that includes our vibrant picnic racing industry.

I am certain that the honourable member would be aware of the government's Living Country Racing program, which was launched in 2001 and provides much-needed capital funding directly to country and picnic racing clubs and their communities. Since 2001 the government has allocated funding for 331 projects at Victorian country racing clubs across all three codes with a total value of \$3.96 million. Furthermore, the government is committed to this important funding program until at least 2012.

The clubs singled out for mention by the member for South-West Coast as clubs that are at risk, clubs that are about to close, include Omeo, Buchan and Tambo Valley, which are in the electorate of the member for Gippsland East. He says these clubs have been denied

funding under the state government program and are about to close. I advise the house that in 2006 Omeo received \$16 000 for a toilet and shower block; Buchan received more than \$24 000 for four projects, including purchasing kitchen equipment; and Tambo Valley received more than \$29 000 for four projects, including installing running rails and modifying starting gates.

In addition can I say — and I am sure the honourable member for South-West Coast is perfectly aware of this — that in 2004–05 and 2005–06 the government provided further capital works funding worth \$11.5 million to country racing through its Racing Community Development Fund. But wait, there is more. I am also certain that the honourable member is aware that in 2006–07 and 2007–08 the government established the racing industry development program has provided \$20.6 million to support capital investment at Victorian country racecourses and a range of industry development projects.

I am sure he would understand that as recently as November 2008 the government announced the largest ever funding commitment by any government in Victoria's history for Victorian rural and regional racetrack infrastructure projects. The Regional Racing Infrastructure Fund is an \$86 million package over four years.

I conclude on this note: the honourable member for Macedon need not be worried. We will continue to support country racing and in particular picnic racing, so she need not be worried. She said she was worried and concerned. I ask the shadow minister to stop running around the state telling porkies. He knows he is telling lies. He knows it is an absolute load of nonsense. He has been caught out yet again. He has no credibility whatsoever in the racing industry. He ought to get his facts right. He ought to pick up the phone, ring Racing Victoria Ltd and find out what the truth is, because the media release he has put out is absolute nonsense. It is absolutely untrue, but worse than that, he knows it to be untrue. He has no credibility.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — The member for Cranbourne raised a matter for me in relation to the stimulus package, to provide me with some advice and seek action in relation to this very important building program in his electorate. I am pleased to say, as I have reported to the house on a number of occasions, that this is a unique opportunity for us to achieve both an economic and a social outcome as 4500 units of public and social housing are being built over the next two years. Two-thirds of that housing will be built in the Melbourne metropolitan area, and one-third of that housing we expect to be built

in regional Victoria — and I will come to the member for Mildura's question in a moment, because it deals with regional Victoria.

In the electorate of Cranbourne 50 units of public and social housing are planned, with a total investment of \$14.6 million. Of that investment, \$3.6 million has already been spent. I am pleased to advise the house that in Cranbourne, 6 units are already finished, 11 dwellings are under construction, and another 20 are under contract. Five families have already moved into their properties, and some of them are in four or five-bedroom units. Of these 50 units, 19 will be owned and managed by housing associations. Many of those properties will be delivered by Community Housing Limited — an organisation I know you are aware of, Speaker — which is highly experienced in tenancy management and providing good-quality low-cost housing.

The member for Cranbourne also asked me about maintenance. As the house would be aware, \$99.2 million has been allocated to be spent across Victoria over the next two years to bring forward maintenance and repairs on at least 5600 public and social housing homes. So far we have completed work on 3100 houses. In the electorate of Cranbourne a total of 81 homes will benefit from the maintenance program at a cost close to \$1.2 million.

I am pleased to advise the house that about \$500 000 has already been spent on maintenance, ranging from major upgrades to properties which may potentially have been at the end of their economic and physical life through to minor works such as paving, carpeting and renovation of bathrooms, kitchens and so forth. All of these works dramatically improve the quality and amenity of those houses. It has been particularly important in providing employment within the building industry and creating the significant multiplier effect that you get when you invest in housing with the supply chain also benefiting from that investment. Cranbourne is simply one of the examples of where we are achieving not only a fantastic economic outcome but also a great social outcome.

In touching on the member for Mildura's request, I am certainly very happy to advise the member formally in writing — indeed, I invite him to come and get a briefing from my department — about Nation Building activity that is going on in his electorate. As I indicated, we intend to spend the funds right across both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. Certainly Mildura is one of the places where investment will be occurring.

I indicate to the member that I have had a number of representations regarding the Mildura hospital. I am happy to provide him with further detailed advice about our thinking around the Mildura hospital. As he knows, it is a complex problem because there have been a number of propositions put in relation to the Mildura site.

I have an active engagement not just with the member for Mildura but across the state, because I think it is important that the Nation Building stimulus package is properly spread across both metropolitan and regional Victoria because both the economic and social outcomes are so profound — two great wins.

It is fantastic that we have this wonderful historic partnership with the Rudd federal government. There is \$1.3 billion that is being spent in this area. I thank the member for Mildura for his interest in public and social housing, and I would be happy to arrange a detailed briefing for him from officers of the Nation Building projects on works that are being undertaken in his electorate.

The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs detailing her concerns in relation to licensing variations for the St John's Elsternwick Cricket Club in her electorate. I will make sure the minister is aware of that matter.

The member for Seymour raised a matter for the Minister for Planning seeking support for expediting the rebuild of the Strathewen Hall. It is critical that these halls in fire-affected areas get rebuilt, and I am sure the minister will take up that matter as well.

The member for Bulleen raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports in relation to the T-intersection of Bulleen Road and Golden Way, which I know very well. In fact my sister lived just two doors off the corner of Bulleen Road and Golden Way for — —

Mr Kotsiras — Doesn't she live there now?

Mr WYNNE — No, not any more. She lived there for 35 years and raised her family there.

Mr Kotsiras — She's gone?

Mr WYNNE — She has. She has gone down to Edithvale, to the Speaker's part of the world.

I will make sure the minister is aware of the request in relation to traffic lights.

Mr Kotsiras interjected.

Mr WYNNE — It's a poor church, my family!

The member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports seeking his support for the further upgrade of the Princes Highway east of Bairnsdale. I will make sure the minister is aware of that.

The member for Williamstown raised a matter for the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation seeking support for a reskilling and retraining package in relation to potential job losses from the Exxon Mobil organisation in Yarraville in his electorate.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Planning regarding a very large development on the Honeywell site. As the member indicated, the site is in my electorate. I indicate to the member that I share similar concerns about this very significant proposed development — in my view, overdevelopment. However, as the member is aware, that matter is currently under consideration by the City of Yarra as the responsible planning authority for the site. But I indicate clearly what my position is: it is an overdevelopment.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking the minister's support and advocacy regarding public transport needs in her electorate, particularly in the Maroondah–Epping corridor. I will make sure the minister is made aware of those representations.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.12 p.m. until Tuesday, 23 February.