

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

(Extract from book 8)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

Professor DAVID de KRETZER, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. JENNY LINDELL

Deputy Speaker: Ms A. P. BARKER

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. J. M. BRUMBY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. R. J. HULLS

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

Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

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

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. L. WALSH

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

¹ Resigned 6 August 2007

² Elected 15 September 2007

³ Resigned 2 June 2008

⁴ Elected 13 February 2010

⁵ Elected 28 June 2008

⁶ Resigned 18 January 2010

⁷ Elected 15 September 2007

⁸ Resigned 6 August 2007

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 8 JUNE 2010

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

<i>Rail: passenger safety</i>	2083
<i>Government: employment and housing initiatives</i>	2084
<i>Public transport: passenger safety</i>	2085
<i>Schools: regional and rural Victoria</i>	2085
<i>Police: numbers</i>	2086, 2087
<i>Hospitals: regional and rural Victoria</i>	2087
<i>Hoon driving: government policy</i>	2088
<i>Regional and rural Victoria: infrastructure funding</i>	2089
<i>Anticorruption commission: establishment</i>	2090
<i>Police: achievements</i>	2091

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

<i>Member for Nepean</i>	2086
<i>Member for Bass</i>	2087

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2092
---	------

PERSONAL SAFETY INTERVENTION ORDERS BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2092
---	------

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION) BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2092
---	------

SUPPORTED RESIDENTIAL SERVICES (PRIVATE PROPRIETORS) BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2092
---	------

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

<i>Notices of motion: removal</i>	2092
<i>Orders of the day</i>	2095
<i>Program</i>	2095

PETITIONS

<i>Myrree: mobile phone tower</i>	2092
<i>Electricity: smart meters</i>	2093
<i>Planning: shire of Wellington</i>	2093
<i>Rail: Mildura line</i>	2093

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS

COMMITTEE

<i>Alert Digest No. 8</i>	2093
---------------------------------	------

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

<i>People trafficking for sex work</i>	2094
--	------

DOCUMENTS

ROYAL ASSENT

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

<i>Reporting dates</i>	2095
------------------------------	------

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

<i>Deakin University: Warrnambool course cancellations</i>	2097
<i>Returned and Services League, Essendon: 90th anniversary</i>	2098
<i>Peter O'Rorke, OAM</i>	2098
<i>Casterton: Australian kelpie muster</i>	2098
<i>Phyl Brown</i>	2098
<i>Economy: government claims</i>	2099

<i>WestLink: Greens opposition</i>	2099
<i>Ambulance services: Wonthaggi</i>	2099
<i>McGrath Foundation: charity football match</i>	2099
<i>Rail: Echuca car park</i>	2100
<i>Aboriginals: Wurundjeri land treaty</i>	2100
<i>Public transport: government performance</i>	2100
<i>Lara electorate: government initiatives</i>	2101
<i>Hoon driving: Evelyn electorate</i>	2101
<i>Clegg Road, Wandin North: traffic study</i>	2101
<i>Police: Yarra Ranges</i>	2102
<i>Yan Yean electorate: sports uniform grants</i>	2102
<i>Mildura Base Hospital: funding</i>	2102
<i>Mildura: trade training</i>	2102
<i>Point Cook Senior Secondary College: leadership program</i>	2102
<i>Rail: Sandringham line</i>	2103
<i>Nepean Highway–Bay Road, Cheltenham: red-light camera</i>	2103
<i>Black Rock Primary School: funding</i>	2103
<i>Rosemary Beth Rem</i>	2103
<i>Bayswater Secondary College: funding</i>	2103
<i>Arts: government performance</i>	2104
<i>Vera Sandstrom</i>	2104
<i>Indian community: citizenship</i>	2104
<i>Peninsula Link: Baxter overpass</i>	2104

PHARMACY REGULATION BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2104
-----------------------------	------

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2115
-----------------------------	------

APPROPRIATION (2010/2011) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2127
-----------------------------	------

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Sewerage: Portland West scheme</i>	2162
<i>WestLink: community consultation</i>	2162
<i>Rail: Shepparton–Numurkah–Cobram service</i>	2163
<i>Schools: cyberbullying</i>	2164
<i>Building Our Industries for the Future program: departmental evaluation</i>	2164
<i>Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay: funding</i>	2165
<i>Buses: Mornington electorate</i>	2165
<i>Small business: Energise Enterprise festival promotion</i>	2166
<i>Rail: Mooroolbark car park</i>	2166
<i>Buses: Doreen</i>	2167
<i>Responses</i>	2167

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Rail: passenger safety

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the brutal and life-threatening attack on a student nurse at McKinnon railway station on the night of 4 June 2010 and to the terrorised men, women and children who witnessed that attack. I ask: given that the Premier claimed last week that he is an ‘evidence-based politician’, when will he finally accept the evidence that violence is out of control on the public transport network and adopt yet another coalition policy — this time, to put 940 armed uniformed officers on railway stations after dark, seven days a week?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I know all members of this house would join me in condemning in the strongest possible terms the completely unacceptable and outrageous behaviour that occurred regarding a gang of young men at McKinnon last weekend. There is no place for that sort of behaviour anywhere in our state; there is no place for that sort of behaviour, by the way, anywhere in Australia. That sort of behaviour is completely unacceptable.

As they arrived, the police who attended that matter were able to arrest one of the individuals. They have been able subsequently to apprehend more of those individuals. There is detailed closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage available. That sort of behaviour offends every decent Victorian. It is completely offensive, completely repugnant, completely disgusting and completely unacceptable. In terms of resources which are available across the system, thanks to recent budget increases we have a record number of police across our state.

On this side of the house we build up police numbers, we do not cut police numbers. In addition to building up police numbers we have 250 transit police across the system. We have 76 premium stations which are staffed from the first train to the last train, with that number soon to be increased to 97. We have 500 authorised officers across the system, including 350 on the train system. We have established the 120-strong operational response unit. We have given police the strongest stop and search powers in the history of this state.

Anybody who looked at the evidence and who looked at the facts would agree that that is a significant improvement on where we were in the 1990s. In addition to that we have 400 police who are presently in the academy and will be graduating shortly. As a result of our commitment, we have 1966 additional police coming on line over the next five years, including 604 in the next 12 months. All of these things are designed to improve the safety of our system.

In relation to the evidence, as the honourable member referred to it, the number of crimes committed on public transport has decreased by 15 per cent over the past 10 years, despite an increase in public transport usage of more than 50 per cent.

The honourable member referred to a commitment in relation to protective services officers. That commitment was made on 9 November last year, and the next day this was said:

This announcement we have made is being funded out of the transport budget.

It is not being funded out of the budget of police.

That was the Leader of The Nationals. The next day there was a new policy about how it was being funded, and then the next day in *MX*, the Leader of the Opposition said that this would be paid for by slashing government advertising and that that would pay for it. This is Liberal-National party make-believe.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members might believe that that level of interjection is within parliamentary standards. I disagree totally. The level of interjection will cease. I ask the opposition for some assistance. I also ask government members for assistance.

Mr BRUMBY — As I have said, on our side of the house, every step that we have taken — record police numbers, the strongest police powers, more transit police than ever before — —

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr BRUMBY — All of these things — record police numbers, record — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for South-West Coast.

Mr BRUMBY — Record levels of transit police, record levels of authorised officers, the strongest stop and search powers in the history of the state, the operational response unit and, as I have said, a further — —

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr BRUMBY — A further commitment, fully funded, of 1966 additional front-line police in our state — all of these things are the appropriate steps for a government to take to get on top of this issue. What occurred was — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Narre Warren North and the member for Yuroke.

Mr BRUMBY — What occurred at McKinnon was completely unacceptable and, as I said, as a result of the increased police resources and the CCTV footage, those who perpetrated that violence are being apprehended, and they will be dealt with with the full force of the law.

Government: employment and housing initiatives

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — My question is also to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the Premier update the house on how the government is securing jobs and giving families the opportunity to purchase their first home?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the member for Geelong for his question. In last year's budget and this year's budget we in government said that creating jobs and creating the right environment for jobs growth and a strong economy were the top budget priorities for our state. I am pleased to say that over the year to April 2010 we have now seen 109 700 new jobs generated in Victoria. To put this into perspective, not only have more jobs been generated in Victoria than in any other state — it is 47 000 more than in New South Wales and 65 000 more than in Queensland — more than half all new jobs generated across Australia in the last year have been generated in Victoria.

We have seen jobs generated in Melbourne and in country Victoria — 16 755 new jobs were created in regional Victoria with a jobs growth of 2.5 per cent. In

the last week we have seen companies moving to regional Victoria. We saw the announcement of 200 jobs through Hofmann Engineering this week. This was described in the *Bendigo Advertiser*, in which it was said that this announcement:

... reflects the hard work done ... by the City of Greater Bendigo and the Victorian government over the past 18 months ... to secure this important deal. It's also a tribute to the strong relationship that exists between the City of Greater Bendigo and the state government.

As the member for Geelong knows, last week I was pleased to visit Geelong to make two major announcements. Firstly, Avalon Airport has been locked in and secured as the home of the Australian International Airshow until 2015. This event attracts more than 170 000 visitors, and that is locked in. I was also able to announce that Tiger Airways had chosen Avalon Airport for its third Australian base, acquiring five additional planes and creating a further 200 jobs in Victoria.

Honourable members will know that last week the Australian national accounts were released. They showed that Victorian state final demand has been strong — in fact the strongest relative to other states — at 6.4 per cent over the last year compared to the Australian average of 4.4 per cent. Might I add for the benefit of honourable members that this is very different from the recession which the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer predicted for our state. Growth is positive and recession is negative.

This morning members would have woken up to the 6.00 a.m. and 7.00 a.m. news to hear representatives of the Housing Industry Association talking about Victoria's leadership in terms of economic growth and housing affordability. The report of the HIA that was released yesterday shows that 10 of Australia's housing hot spots are in Victoria. Harley Dale of the HIA said:

If you're looking to construct a new home in Victoria it's actually more affordable than the equivalent cost would be in New South Wales and Queensland or in Western Australia.

Those who watch television might have seen Alan Kohler just the other week on the ABC, on 31 May, when he was talking about — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — Kohler — K-O-H-L-E-R.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Premier not to respond to interjections. I ask the member for South-West Coast for some cooperation and remind him that he is on a warning. I suggest to the Premier

that he has been speaking for some time. I ask him to conclude his answer.

Mr BRUMBY — Mr Kohler was commenting on the 6 per cent rise in housing approvals across Australia. He said that this was ‘entirely due to a huge rise in Victoria’. He went on to say that this was because of the government’s first home bonus. Alan Kohler was of course referring to the changes that were announced in this year’s state budget, which means you can get a first home owner grant of up to \$26 500 in regional Victoria.

Over the last 12 months Victoria has recorded the highest value of total building approvals of any state in Australia. For the last 24 consecutive months Victoria has had the highest number of actual approvals. I am pleased to say that we have also had the highest proportion of first home buyers of all states, with 26.4 per cent of all owner-occupied housing finance going to first home buyers. It has been 453 days since I was asked a question by the Leader of the Opposition about jobs or employment. The only comments he has made about this matter were to predict that our state would be in recession.

Public transport: passenger safety

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — My question is to the Premier. I refer him to the official Public Transport Safety Victoria incident reports, which record a litany of bashings, sexual assaults, unruly behaviour and gang attacks on Melbourne’s public transport system, and I ask: does the Premier stand by his claim on radio this morning that, ‘Well, um, the system has become safer and safer, there’s no doubt’?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — As I indicated just a few moments ago to the Leader of the Opposition, the investment that we have made in public transport safety, including all of the measures I mentioned before and the 3000 closed-circuit television cameras across the system, shows that the number of crimes committed on public transport has decreased by 15 per cent over the past 10 years despite an increase in public transport use of more than 50 per cent. Another way of putting this for the honourable member would be that patronage is up 50 per cent but the level of incidents and crimes is 15 per cent lower than when he was last in government.

Schools: regional and rural Victoria

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer to the Brumby Labor government’s commitment to make Victoria the best

place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: could the minister explain what action the Brumby Labor government is taking to give children in rural and regional Victoria the best educational opportunities, and is she aware of any challenges?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for Ballarat East for his question. The Brumby government is improving educational opportunities for Victorians right across rural and regional areas, making sure that every Victorian child has access to high-quality educational facilities. We know that in the past rural and regional Victorians were regarded as the toenails of the state, and that has been a ball and chain that anyone who was a member of the previous government has had to carry around for years. It was in fact that government, as we know, that closed down 300 schools and sacked 9000 teachers — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to the question as asked.

Ms PIKE — That approach in the past was very different from the one this government has been undertaking since 1999. The Brumby government has invested \$990 million in more than 430 schools in rural and regional Victoria — that is, nearly \$1 billion of dedicated funding in rural education infrastructure alone over that time. We have funded more than 40 rural replacement schools, connected schools to broadband internet, employed an additional 2000 teachers, and just in this most recent budget alone we have provided funding to secure the future of six small rural schools.

Whether it be in Maffra, Kyabram, Rainbow or Horsham, or the big regional centres of Bendigo, Mildura, Geelong or Ballarat, we have been investing. In the last sitting week I was very pleased to update the house about the investment in facilities in Wangaratta and to update the house on the support of the local Nationals member for the record capital investment.

We know that we need to continue to invest in these core services in a planned way; that is a much better approach than setting up some kind of billion-dollar slush fund which would mean that the education portfolio would need to compete with portfolios governing health, infrastructure and other community facilities. In fact, just going around and handing out money in an unprepared way to create more fever than Justin Bieber does would be a very inappropriate approach.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to the question as asked.

Ms PIKE — We do have a planned approach to investment in rural and regional education. You need to have a planned approach, because schools need to know where their future is and children deserve the very best facilities. I wonder whether De-Anne Kelly was the keynote speaker at The Nationals — —

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Speaker, I call for the mercy rule. Put her out of her misery!

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. Has the Minister for Education concluded her answer?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has not concluded her answer.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Can I suggest to members of the opposition that members are not at a football game. If any member of the opposition would like to leave the chamber, they should do so now.

Ms PIKE — We know that rural and regional schools would be hurt by The Nationals' regional growth slush fund, because it is not a planned approach.

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

Mr Dixon interjected.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Nepean

The SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124 I ask the member for Nepean to leave the chamber for half an hour.

Honourable member for Nepean withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions resumed.

Police: numbers

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Attorney-General's claims on 6 April 2010, following the opposition's commitment to fund 1700 additional police, that:

Mr Baillieu's pledge to fund part of today's announcement out of future surpluses was economically reckless, would also result in cuts to construction on schools, hospitals, roads, police stations and jobs —

and was from a 'magic pudding' and 'rubbery source of funds'. I refer the Premier to his announcement of 1700 additional police on 28 April 2010, when he said, 'We have funded this commitment in our budget' and, 'We've got the budget capacity to do this', and I ask: why should Victorians believe anything this government says?

The SPEAKER — Order! I will give the Leader of The Nationals the opportunity to re-ask the question. In the past I have asked that questions be succinct. I believe his question was overly long, and I ask him to rephrase the question in a more succinct manner.

Mr RYAN — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Attorney-General's claim on 6 April 2010, following the opposition's commitment to fund 1700 additional police, that:

Mr Baillieu's pledge to fund part of today's announcement out of future surpluses was economically reckless, would also result in cuts to construction on schools, hospitals, roads, police stations and jobs ...

And I refer the Premier to his announcement of 1700 additional police on 28 April 2010, when he said, 'We have funded this commitment in our budget'. I ask: why should Victorians believe anything this government says?

The SPEAKER — Order! I suggest to the Leader of The Nationals that the deletion of 10 words has hardly made the question succinct. I will call the Premier to respond to the question, but I advise the Leader of The Nationals that if he continues to go down the track of asking questions that are not succinct, I will call the questions out of order.

Mr K. Smith interjected.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Bass

The SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124 I ask the member for Bass to leave the chamber for 30 minutes.

Honourable member for Bass withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police: numbers

Questions resumed.

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for the opportunity he has afforded me. The last time police numbers were cut in this state a Nationals member was the minister for police and the Leader of the Opposition was the president of the Liberal Party. It was a double-banger!

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

The SPEAKER — Order! The question was clearly about opposition policy. I suggest to the Premier, though, that he confine his comments to current opposition policy.

Mr BRUMBY — Everything that we have promised on our side of the house in terms of police numbers we have delivered: 800 in our first term, 600 in our second term, 350 in our third term, plus an additional 120. The public knows that, election after election, every promise we have made on police we have delivered — every single one. I think a former member for Wimmera, Mr Bill McGrath — a Nationals member — was the last police minister who cut police numbers. He did not just cut them; he promised 1000 and then cut 800.

The SPEAKER — Order! I bring the Premier back to the question.

Mr BRUMBY — There is one other point I would make, if I can. The Leader of The Nationals said recently in relation to police and protective services officers:

... no reference was made to funding being provided through cuts to government advertising, and yet this is the furphy which has no foundation that this government has now produced. I challenge the government in the course of this

debate to bring forth into this house anything which tells the fact that we asserted at the time of announcing that program that we were going to use cuts in funding for advertising by this government as partial funding of that particular \$200 million program. That is what government members are now saying. It is a lie ...

An article in *MX Melbourne* of 10 November 2009 headed 'Query on opposition rail plan' quotes Mr Baillieu and states:

Slashing government advertising would free up money for platform patrols.

QED.

Hospitals: regional and rural Victoria

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the Brumby Labor government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister update the house on its investments to build world-class health services in regional Victoria and any challenges to these investments the minister may be aware of?

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for Macedon for her question and for her longstanding commitment to better health services in her local community. This government prides itself on providing every single hospital in every single year of its time in office with a funding increase. Every single hospital across the length and breadth of this state has received more support each and every year we have been in office. That is the approach we have taken — and this year's budget was no different — not just to recurrent funding but also to important capital works.

As I have said many times, and as everybody on this side of the house clearly understands, our challenge is always to make sure that the quality of our buildings matches the quality of the care provided by our dedicated staff. That is why, particularly in rural and regional communities, this year's budget built on a strong record of investment: a strong record of giving to country health the support that is necessary to keep buildings efficient and to give dedicated clinicians the tools, if you like, and the practical support they need to treat more patients and to provide better care.

During our time in office we have completed 87 capital works projects — that is, medical equipment, infrastructure and other redevelopment projects — to a total value of more than \$1.5 billion across rural and regional Victoria. That is just in rural and regional Victoria. There was a time when about one-third of that — in fact less than one-third of that — was spent

right across rural and regional areas. There are alternatives; there are challenges, if you like, because there are different approaches. The history of our state shows that there are different approaches. Not every government in this state has supported country health. Not every government and not every Treasurer have brought down a budget to provide strong support to every country health service in every single year. That is what this government has done, and that is what this government will continue to do.

But it is not just about capital works, as important as those are. There are now something like just under 71 000 additional patients being admitted to country hospitals this year compared to the levels in place when we came to office in 1999. There are something like 2894 additional nurses working across country hospitals on top of the levels we inherited back in 1999. There are 500 additional hospital doctors and almost 250 additional ambulance paramedics right across rural and regional areas. By any standard, and by any measure — —

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is quoting from a document, and I ask that the document, including the whole folder that he is referring to, be tabled in the house.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister if he is quoting from a document?

Mr ANDREWS — I am referring to notes.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is referring to notes.

Mr ANDREWS — Again, it is very clear what this government's approach is: that is, to make sure that we give to country communities — to doctors, to nurses, to allied health professionals, to paramedics right across country Victoria — the strong support they need to provide the best possible care.

There are three very good examples of our government's approach just in the last budget. There is strong support for the hospital at Coleraine — a small but proud and strong country community — and the support and funding from our government in this year's budget will see an important redevelopment at that health service. It is a great win for Western District Health Service, one that the service and the local community can be very proud of. Another great example is the \$25 million commitment in partnership with the Leongatha hospital to upgrade the health service there to stage 2 to build upon the investments we have already made there around residential aged care.

The biggest ever investment in country capital works in the health system this state has ever seen is the \$473 million in additional funding to rebuild the Bendigo hospital to give to the people of Bendigo and the state's north-west a modern, efficient, effective hospital that will grow capacity and give those clinicians and their patients the necessary fabric and infrastructure they need, not just for now but for many years to come.

Our position in relation to country hospitals — particularly the Bendigo hospital — is absolutely clear: we are providing strong support to invest in the things that matter for those working in our health system and those who rely upon it. The position of others is less clear. It would be better if across the community we had strong and bipartisan support for this important project.

The CEO has made his position clear. This delivers everything Bendigo Health Care Group sought: it delivers best value for taxpayers and it delivers their full service plan. His position is very clear, as is the position of the chair of the board, as is the position of senior staff who work there, as is the position of many in the media in that community. The position of one group remains very much uncertain. When it comes to one group, if they are not closing down hospitals, they are talking down hospitals.

Hoon driving: government policy

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the claim of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 4 July 2008, when he said:

The Liberals' call to crush cars is completely irresponsible.

I also refer the Premier to the claim of the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission on 22 January 2010, when he said:

... and our government will implement a new regime for repeat hoon driving offenders, which will result in repeat hoon offenders having their cars confiscated to be sold or crushed.

I ask: why should Victorians believe anything this government says?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I will correct the Leader of The Nationals again, as I did in the last answer. We need to get the facts right: it is this government that introduced hoon legislation because we wanted to send the loudest, strongest message to the community about how unacceptable hoon driving is. We introduced those laws with those first-stage

measures, and then we put in place tougher measures for those who offend again.

In relation to the crushing of vehicles, I made the government's view clear earlier this year. In January, I think, in the northern suburbs of Melbourne there was a terrible — horrific — accident that distressed many people across the community. I remember being interviewed by Neil Mitchell about that, and I said we had put in place the toughest possible laws in terms of hoon driving but that if we needed to go further to set an example to the community then we would examine that possibility, and that is exactly what we did.

I am not sure about the point the Leader of The Nationals is trying to make, but everything we have done in this space, and in related space like speed cameras, has been designed to drive down the level of fatalities in our state. We do not always get support on these things. We often get cynical people in our community who want a bob each way and who say, 'Yes, we want a lower road toll, but, by the way, we do not support speed cameras' or 'By the way we would rip them out here' or 'By the way we think there should be a big leniency, so that if you speed you do not actually get caught'. We have been absolutely emphatic about this matter — that is, we intend to drive the road toll down.

In relation to hoon drivers, it was our government — not a Nationals government and not a Liberal Party government — that introduced hoon driving laws. When it became clear after the further tragic waste of young lives through those accidents that we should take further steps, I foreshadowed that on radio, and we delivered. We have delivered every step of the way. Nothing would make me — and, I believe, every member of this house — happier than to again this year drive down the road toll in our state to below 300 and to continue to push it down to meet our long-term target of achieving below 200, but it requires additional resources, stronger penalties, speed cameras, tough hoon laws and a commitment in government to make the hard decisions — as we do.

Regional and rural Victoria: infrastructure funding

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — My question is to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. I refer to the Brumby Labor government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister update the house on the Brumby government's approach to growing regional Victoria and investing in

regional infrastructure, and are there alternative approaches?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — I would like to thank the member for South Barwon for his question. The member for South Barwon represents an area of this state that is indeed growing strongly. It is great part of the state. I know too that the member is a very strong supporter of this government's Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. As members of the house know, this is a \$611 million fund that is dedicated to supporting investment in regional infrastructure and to supporting regional communities and jobs. It is a dedicated fund that sits in addition to the investment that the Brumby Labor government is making in building and upgrading regional schools and hospitals right across the state.

If I can give the house a sense of how this fund sits in addition to our other activities of government, the 2010 state budget — a fantastic budget that delivered for communities right across the state — delivered \$618 million in funding for hospitals across regional Victoria. This included funding for the planning and development of a second hospital in Geelong's southern suburbs. Around \$73 million was provided for regional school rebuilding programs. The Regional Infrastructure Development Fund sits on top of these investments in schools and hospitals. This is a far cry from the days of the cuts and closures of the 1990s to schools and hospitals across regional Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — The Leader of The Nationals is attempting to interject. I know, Speaker, that you want me to ignore interjections, but I have been asked about alternatives by the member for South Barwon. There are some who think that, rather than having a dedicated regional infrastructure fund that is over and above those investments in schools and hospitals, it should instead be used for core education and health services — that is, regional infrastructure funds should be used for core education and health services.

You cannot pull the wool over the eyes of regional Victorians; they know that this policy would be a Trojan Horse for cutting key health services, key education services and key infrastructure, just like the cuts we saw in the 1990s. The Brumby government rejects this approach firmly. We have an approach that is investing in schools, investing in hospitals and investing in regional infrastructure to support jobs.

One great example of this is the one the Premier has already given to the house this afternoon. The Brumby

government, through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, is providing \$872 000 for vital roadworks to support Hofmann Engineering to establish in Bendigo, bringing 150 highly skilled jobs to Bendigo in the engineering and manufacturing industry which is going to be so important for the local community. However, we recognise that there is more to do in this area. That is why we will very soon be releasing our blueprint for regional growth, a plan that is about securing the regional and rural way of life.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — I am so pleased to hear the enthusiasm of those opposite for this forthcoming announcement! I am sure they will look forward to it as much as we do. What I can assure those opposite of, and what I can assure members on our side of the house of as well, is that we respect regional Victorians and because of this there will be detail that sits behind this plan. There will be policy that sits behind this plan.

As the member for South Barwon asked about policies alternative to ours, I think it is worth informing the house of some recent commentary on another policy that was released — a statement in a three-page press release.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister not to debate the question, which I believe she may be tempted to do.

Ms ALLAN — The member for South Barwon asked about alternative policies and approaches in this area, and there are alternatives, and those alternatives have received some public comment. Andrew Broad of the Victorian Farmers Federation said of this alternative policy that the detail was a bit sketchy. An editorial in the *Weekly Times* of last week said of the alternative policy that regional Victoria must be treated with more respect. It went on to say:

It's as though Peter Ryan has forgotten the most important lesson of Victorian politics: 'Don't take the bush for granted'.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will not use question time as an opportunity to attack opposition members.

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Speaker. Just for the record, I note that that was the *Weekly Times* editorial commenting on this approach.

As regional Victorians know, you have to respect and value the regions — and you have to release a policy. You have to release detail so that Victorians can be

assured we are not going to return to the days of cuts and closure.

I will finish with a comment published in the *Weekly Times* of last week. Even when the people responsible for developing this policy were quizzed they said there was 'no policy document, but the press release captured "the gist of it"'. There is no policy and the details are sketchy, as the Victorian Farmers Federation has already pointed out. This is not treating regional Victorians with respect. We on this side of the house will continue to invest in education, in health and in regional infrastructure services that are supporting jobs in regional communities right across Victoria.

Anticorruption commission: establishment

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his repeated statements over several years in government where he has ruled out the introduction of an anticorruption commission in this state, including in this house, when he said, 'I repeat: the government does not intend to introduce an independent commission against corruption'; and further to the Premier's announcement last week that he will now introduce 'a new integrity and anticorruption commission', and I ask the Premier: is there anything the Premier says about corruption that Victorians can believe?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — As I have indicated in the house previously, at the last election it was stated:

Matters involving allegations of serious criminal misconduct and corruption by public officers and local government will remain the responsibility of the state Ombudsman working with Victoria Police.

That was of course the policy of the Liberal Party. Since then we have had a one-page press release from the Leader of the Opposition saying he supports a new policy.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Premier to come back to the question as asked.

Mr BRUMBY — I announced in November last year that I would commission an independent review headed by a former head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Elizabeth Proust, and state standards —

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Warrandyte to cease interjecting in that manner.

Mr BRUMBY — As I have said to the house previously, Elizabeth Proust is someone who has

worked for different governments — for the public sector, for the private sector. Peter Allen is a former department head under our government and under the Kennett government. These are people whose views I respect. We gave them the widest possible terms of reference to look at all the arrangements in place in Victoria which have built up over time. Some of those arrangements, by the way — the arrangements in relation to the Parliament — have built up over 150 years.

As members know, Elizabeth Proust reported last week. We responded to that by accepting her report, and, Speaker, as a consequence of that, you will see legislation to establish a judicial commission, which the Attorney-General, as members are aware, was already working on. That will be introduced later this year. You will see a new parliamentary integrity commissioner established and an exposure draft of that legislation before the end of the year.

Peter Allen will head up the transition to and business case for the new model, the Victorian integrity and anticorruption commission, over the next 12 to 18 months. This is Elizabeth Proust and Peter Allen's report — it is a 67-page report, and it is a lot thicker than a one-page press release, I can tell you that! It has a list — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — There was of course no submission from the opposition — from the opposition leader. Elizabeth Proust looked at all of these issues. As I said, we set this up with the widest possible terms of reference. I believe the recommendations she has made build on the raft of reforms we have put in place through this Parliament. Whether it be the strengthening of the parliamentary watchdogs by making the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman and others independent officers of the Parliament, or whether it be improvements to accountability and reporting or others of the raft of reforms we have made, this takes us into the next wave of reforms.

We have accepted the report, I believe, from two individuals who have been able to step back and take a wide-ranging review of the system. This will represent, therefore, the next wave of reforms to improve accountability and transparency in the state of Victoria.

Police: achievements

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer to the Brumby Labor government's commitment to make

Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family. I ask the minister to update the house on the hard work being undertaken by Victoria Police to tackle crime and the causes of crime and if he is aware of any comments that undermine that work.

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — Labor is the party that supports police — with a budget of \$2 billion. In the period from 1999 to the end of this year there will have been an increase in police numbers of nearly 2000. That will be the biggest increase ever over one decade in Victoria. We are building on that with the biggest increase over a five-year period in the coming five years, which is fully funded in the state budget. There is no double counting, no funny money and no sackings.

We had to have that large boost in police numbers, because when we came to government we found that The Nationals had worked with the then president of the Liberal Party to slash police numbers by 800. Since 2000–01 we have seen that record investment deliver a 25 per cent reduction in the rate of crime across this great state.

In the last 12 months there has been a 6.8 per cent reduction in the rate of street assaults. There was an 18 per cent reduction in street assaults in the city this summer compared to the previous summer. The police extensively used the banning notice regime which we put in place but which those opposite tried to frustrate. Police are now imposing fines for people being drunk and fines for people being disorderly. I believe police are using these powers to great effect. On this side of the house we join with police to congratulate local police on the work they do in their areas.

Members opposite claim that police are somehow manipulating crime statistics. It is a claim that Victoria Police says is mischievous and misleading; it is a claim it emphatically denies. That notion was backed up by the Ombudsman's report of last year, which was released after there had been a claim from those opposite of a systematic falsifying of crime statistics. The Ombudsman said that was not the case.

Reporting is done independently by local police, by individual police members based on their professional assessments. Today local police use a consistent system, and they have done so since The Nationals and the Leader of the Opposition joined to cut police by 800. Those opposite should come forward and say who are these individuals from the local police who are manipulating police statistics or they should apologise to local police.

If we have a look at Australian Bureau of Statistics figures and the comparisons between the states, we see that Victoria has the lowest rate of violent offenders of any state and the lowest reoffending rate of any state. We congratulate police on that, but we want to work with police because we want to see crime go down even further. That is why we have a plan for 1966 additional front-line police officers. We are doing that because we are Labor — the party that supports police.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Working with Children Act 2005 and the Child Employment Act 2003 and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the Attorney-General to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — The main objective of this bill is to improve the effectiveness of the working-with-children check scheme to ensure that a number of issues raised during the first three years of the operation of the act are addressed to provide greater clarity of the scope of the act, streamline the operation of the working-with-children check and enhance the exchange of relevant information to improve its effectiveness.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

PERSONAL SAFETY INTERVENTION ORDERS BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) introduced a bill for an act to make provision for a system of personal safety intervention orders, the use of mediation and other matters relating to the prevention and resolution of prohibited behaviour and stalking, to repeal the Stalking Intervention Orders Act 2008 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Electoral Act 2002 to increase electoral participation and for other purposes.

Read first time.

SUPPORTED RESIDENTIAL SERVICES (PRIVATE PROPRIETORS) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Community Services) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to regulate private supported residential services, to make consequential amendments to the Health Services Act 1988 and several other acts and for other purposes.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Doncaster) — Can I ask for a brief explanation of the bill?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Community Services) — The objectives of the bill are to update and strengthen protections for residents living in supported residential services, to streamline the regulatory frameworks and develop new stand-alone legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that notices of motion 32 to 47, 109 to 111, 191 to 200 and 223 to 239 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 6.00 p.m. today.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Myrree: mobile phone tower

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the proposal to erect a mobile phone tower in Myrree in north-east Victoria. The petitioners register their

concern that in the locality of Myrree and its surrounds there is a communication black spot — i.e., no mobile phone reception at all.

This has proven to be a serious problem for the residents during fire seasons as there is no communication in or out of the district once landlines are down. Residents are also disadvantaged in business and personally by not receiving a basic service which is available to other Victorians.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria draws to the attention of John Lenders, the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, that this situation be rectified by the erection of a mobile reception tower in Myrree.

By Dr SYKES (Benalla) (113 signatures).

Electricity: smart meters

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the Legislative Assembly's attention the Brumby government's mismanagement of smart meters, in particular:

the Auditor-General's finding that the project cost has blown out from \$800 million to \$2.25 billion, all of which will be paid for in higher bills;

the Auditor-General's finding that the electricity industry may benefit from smart meters at the expense of the consumers who pay for them;

the unfairness of many consumers and small businesses having to pay for smart meters before they are installed; and

findings by Melbourne University that many families will have to pay around \$300 per annum in higher electricity bills as a result of Labor's smart meters.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly require the Brumby Labor government to immediately freeze the rollout of smart meters across Victoria until it can be independently demonstrated that consumers will not be forced to pay for the Brumby government mistakes in the smart meter project.

By Dr SYKES (Benalla) (7 signatures) and Mr CRISP (Mildura) (14 signatures).

Planning: shire of Wellington

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the proposed amendment C33 to the Wellington shire planning scheme affecting the Port Albert region.

The petitioners register their opposition to Port Albert being included in the C33 amendment to the Wellington shire planning scheme on the basis that historical evidence and recent studies confirm that the Port Albert region is not at risk of freshwater flooding or salt water/tidal inundation.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria direct the Wellington shire to remove Port Albert from the C33 amendment.

By Mr RYAN (Gippsland South) (685 signatures).

Rail: Mildura line

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of the citizens of the region known as Sunraysia, primarily in the state of Victoria but including cross-border citizens of New South Wales centred on the city of Mildura, brings to the attention of the house the many promises to return the Melbourne–Mildura passenger train, without delivery.

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to bring forward the reinstatement of the said Melbourne–Mildura passenger train, especially in view of:

1. the many undelivered promises;
2. the urgent need to promote public transport in a global warming context;
3. the pressing need to connect remote Mildura to both Melbourne and the national rail network; and
4. the geographic distance now requiring a rapid service (very fast train) to be competitive.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (23 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Gippsland South be considered next day on motion of Mr WALSH (Swan Hill).

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

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Benalla be considered next day on motion of Dr SYKES (Benalla).

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 8

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) presented *Alert Digest No. 8 of 2010* on:

**Associations Incorporation Amendment Bill
Control of Weapons Amendment Bill
Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill**

Water Amendment (Victorian Environmental Water Holder) Bill**together with appendices.****Tabled.****Ordered to be printed.****DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE****People trafficking for sex work****Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) presented final report, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.****Tabled.****Ordered that report and appendices be printed.****DOCUMENTS****Tabled by Clerk:***Melbourne City Link Act 1995:*

M1 Corridor Redevelopment Deed Third Amending Deed

Melbourne City Link Twenty-eighth Amending Deed

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Road Safety Committee's report on the Inquiry into the Process of Development, Adoption and Implementation of Australian Design Rules*Planning and Environment Act 1987* — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Bayside — C104

Boroondara — C106

Brimbank — C86

Campaspe — C74

East Gippsland — C76

Golden Plains — C54

Greater Bendigo — C125, C140, C142

Greater Geelong — C206, C207, C211

Indigo — C21

Knox — C83

Manningham — C87

Maroondah — C68

Mitchell — C66

Moorabool — C55

Stonnington — C137

West Wimmera — C20

Yarra — C135

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 — SR 29*Building Act 1993* — SR 32*Forests Act 1958* — SR 30*Road Safety Act 1986* — SR 33*Transport Accident Act 1986* — SR 31*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rules 27, 29, 32, 33.**ROYAL ASSENT****Messages read advising royal assent to:****1 June****Environment Protection Amendment (Landfill Levies) Bill****Fair Trading Amendment (Unfair Contract Terms) Bill****Legislation Reform (Repeals No. 6) Bill****Planning and Environment Amendment (Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution) Bill****Radiation Amendment Bill****Therapeutic Goods (Victoria) Bill****8 June****Child Employment Amendment Bill****Education and Training Reform Amendment Bill****Education and Training Reform Further Amendment Bill****Health and Human Services Legislation Amendment Bill****Justice Legislation Amendment Bill****Prahran Mechanics' Institute Amendment Bill****Water Amendment (Entitlements) Bill.****APPROPRIATION MESSAGES****Messages read recommending appropriations for:****Control of Weapons Amendment Bill****Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill**

Water Amendment (Victorian Environmental Water Holder) Bill.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Reporting dates

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

That

- (1) the resolution of the house of 4 December 2008 providing that the Education and Training Committee be required to present its report on the inquiry into the potential for developing opportunities for schools to become a focus for promoting healthy community living to the Parliament no later than 1 July 2010 be amended so far as to require the report to be presented to the Parliament no later than 7 October 2010; and
- (2) the resolution of the house of 13 August 2009 providing that the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee be required to present its report on the inquiry into farmers markets to the Parliament no later than 31 August 2010 be amended so far as to require the report to be presented to the Parliament no later than 7 October 2010.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Orders of the day

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

That the order of the house making the resumption of the debate on the second reading of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 an order of the day for 9 June 2010 be read and rescinded and that the bill be made an order of the day for today.

By way of very brief explanation, this motion, if carried by the house, would simply allow for the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill to be debated today rather than tomorrow. It is very simple and straightforward, and I thank the opposition for leave.

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — I want to put on record that this change, which will allow the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill to be debated today, was proposed for the purpose that it will enable the two bills on the government business program aside from the appropriation bills to be dealt with today and allow a number of speakers to address the appropriation bills during the course of the day. A large percentage of the available time today will be concentrated on, firstly, the

budget and then, secondly, the Appropriation (Parliament 2010/2011) Bill. The motion is really just to facilitate that matter and to enable a number of speakers to address those two bills; it is done for that sole reason.

Certainly the opposition wants to make it perfectly clear that this is not to be seen in any way as a precedent for other bills. Two weeks is often a very tight time frame for an opposition to prepare for the second reading of bills, but certainly to enable the debate to continue on the budget the opposition is prepared to abridge that time to enable the superannuation bill to be debated today.

Motion agreed to.

Program

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

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, 10 June 2010:

- Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill
- Appropriation (Parliament 2010/2011) Bill
- Pharmacy Regulation Bill
- Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill.

The government business program sets out that this week is really the week for the finalisation of debate around the budget. The budget appropriation debate is an opportunity for members of the house to make a contribution in Parliament of a fairly broad and detailed nature, given the nature of the appropriation bill; therefore it is a time when a lot of individual members seek to speak. In organising the government business program this week we have recognised that desire of members of both sides to be provided with an opportunity to speak, and accordingly the government business program is small in order to accommodate that demand of members to speak on the appropriation bill. It is a good budget, and there will be lots of good speakers on it.

Also I would point out that given the arrangements that have been foreshadowed on the Parliamentary agenda, I have indicated that the house will sit late tonight; it will go on the adjournment at 11.30. If it is necessary, we will do the same tomorrow. It depends upon how many speakers we have been able to progress on the budget appropriation bill in order to satisfy the demand.

As the member for Kew foreshadowed in relation to the previous procedural motion, not only are we trying to provide that extra time for the limited number of bills to be debated this week, we have already reached agreement with the opposition to address the two other pieces of non-appropriation legislation today — the Pharmacy Regulation Bill and the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill.

That will enable us to have those two pieces of legislation largely dealt with and then have an uninterrupted run at the appropriation bill over the bulk of the remainder of this week. The only exceptions will be our having to deal with the parliamentary appropriation bill, and it is envisaged at this stage that that will be done on Thursday, subject to checking with the government's lead speakers. We will also be dealing with four second readings. That should not consume too much time in the government business program, again maximising the opportunity for members to make contributions to debate on the appropriation bill.

I say to all members who have not already done so that if they want to make a contribution on the appropriation bill, this is the week to do it and they should use the time available, because after 4.00 p.m. on Thursday the opportunity will no longer exist.

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — I largely agree with what the Leader of the House has indicated about discussions between the parties and the idea that the majority of debating time this week will be taken up dealing with the budget bill and to a lesser extent the Appropriation (Parliament 2010/2011) Bill, which does not usually attract the same number of speakers but certainly is an important bill.

I am also grateful that the government decided to include only two bills on the remainder of its government business program. It was a matter of some note that last sitting week, when there were four bills, those bills really cut into the debating time available for the budget. At the start of last sitting week I made the point that I thought having to deal with four bills was a bit ambitious. As a consequence, only about 25 of the 88 members of this house were able to contribute to debate on the budget bill. That only two other bills — the Pharmacy Regulation Bill and the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill, together with the budget bill and the Parliament appropriation bill — have been listed in the business program is a recognition that the government was being somewhat ambitious last week as to the number of bills listed, and that this is a more realistic program.

It is regrettable that we have four second-reading speeches that will eat into debating time, but hopefully they can be dispensed with quickly — my preferred option would have been to second read them on Thursday after 4.00 p.m., to enable the maximum time to be dedicated to the budget, but that is a matter the house will have to watch. That the government has limited the number of other bills on the government business program this week to the pharmacy and superannuation bills is a recognition that it needed to pare back, to enable most members to make their contributions to the budget debate.

I reiterate, as I said previously, that we are prepared to abridge time and have the superannuation bill dealt with today. Notwithstanding that it was listed for business only tomorrow, it was done in the exceptional circumstances that we wanted to maximise the time for continuing debate on the budget. Enabling as many members as possible, certainly on the opposition side, to have an opportunity to make their contribution by Thursday morning is important to the opposition. This was done in those circumstances and it should not be seen as a precedent. As I said, 14 days is an exceptionally short time for the opposition to gain an understanding of any bill, to get its briefings and to consult broadly with the community given our limited resources, and I certainly do not want to see it made a precedent for future bills.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I want to make a few comments on behalf of The Nationals. We are not unhappy with the government business program and will not be opposing it, because as has been highlighted by the member for Kew, we believe there is adequate time this week for debating the Pharmacy Regulation Bill 2010 and bringing forward by one day the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 so members who wish to contribute can have an uninterrupted run at the budget debate, as the Leader of the House said.

All members of The Nationals in this place have spoken on the budget bill, except for the member for Murray Valley, who has been waiting patiently for a fortnight and will be giving his last budget speech, because as we all know he is retiring at the end of this parliamentary — —

Dr Napthine — Bring him back.

Mr DELAHUNTY — 'Bring him back', the member for South-West Coast says. We are all waiting to hear him. He will probably want an extension of time, because I think he will be looking for a budget

allocation for the next 20 years to cover the shortfall for his electorate!

I am not sure how many Liberal Party members are yet to speak, but the government has many. We note the Leader of the House said that after negotiations and discussion with the opposition parties we will be sitting until 11.30 p.m. before we go on the adjournment tonight and that it could also be late tomorrow night.

On the government business program are those two bills that I mentioned, the budget bill and the Appropriation (Parliament 2010/2011) Bill — a very important one which pays the staff and — —

Ms Beattie — Rush it through.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I would think they would want to rush through the pay rise. The reality is that that bill is very important for the operations of this building, the staff here and the staff in our electorate offices. They are the interface between us as parliamentarians and the community at large, and I have no doubt there will be many staff watching on the web to make sure that bill goes through appropriately this week so they can be assured of payment at later stages.

A bill that I thought we might be debating this week is the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Licensing) Bill, but with the debacle going on out in the community I can understand why the government would want to let the dust settle before it brings that bill on for debate. I remind the government of that bill and many others.

The member for Rodney would be disappointed if I did not talk about the Water Amendment (Critical Water Infrastructure Projects) Bill, particularly after we have read in the *Age* today about the deception that has gone on in government circles. I am sure we will not debate those water bills because the government would be too scared to be put under the heat of the debating skills of the member for Rodney, the member for Swan Hill and others.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Lowan to come back to the government business program for this week.

Mr DELAHUNTY — The truth is we have only two bills on the government business program as well as the two appropriation bills. I think there is adequate time for everyone to contribute; therefore The Nationals will not be opposing this week's program.

Mr HODGETT (Kilsyth) — I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the government business program. We on this side of the house are not opposing

the program for this sitting week. As has been stated, there are four bills to get through by 4.00 p.m. this Thursday, 10 June. We heard the Leader of the House put the case that the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 be made an order of the day today, and as has been said we have allowed that to go ahead to enable the two bills to be dealt with today so that we can move on to debating the appropriation bills, otherwise known as the budget.

I make the point that this is not a precedent, but it will allow us to sit late tonight and if necessary tomorrow night to use the bulk of the debating time for members to make their contributions to debate on the budget. The reality is that having two bills on the government business program this week makes it a much better business program that will allow maximum time to be devoted to debating the budget. There are a number of speakers on this side of the house who wish to make contributions. We do not oppose the program and look forward to members making a contribution to the budget debate.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Deakin University: Warrnambool course cancellations

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — Deakin University offers a double degree in nursing and midwifery at its Warrnambool campus. I congratulate Deakin for offering this course at a regional campus, as it provides a great opportunity for country students, especially mature age students, to become nurses and midwives, who are in demand in our regional and rural health services.

However, recently Deakin University announced changes to the way this course will be delivered to its Warrnambool students. These changes are of genuine concern to the students. Under the new arrangements a Warrnambool-based sessional teacher, tutor and key support worker for the students will be dismissed. Students will now have to travel to Geelong for key practical and other compulsory classes. Lectures will be recorded in Geelong or Melbourne and delivered as i-lectures, and tutorials will be delivered online. Already some of the Warrnambool students have advised that these changes will make it much more difficult for them to complete their double degree, especially mature age students with young children. Students are very concerned about the loss of access to

local midwifery tutors and the difficulty of liaising with staff in Geelong and Melbourne.

I understand the need for Deakin University to run a cost-effective course, but I urge further consultation with the Deakin midwifery students on these proposals. I also urge the federal and state governments to put their money where their mouths are on health reform for regional Australia and be prepared to top up funding to ensure the effective and continued delivery of key health courses at Warrnambool and other regional university campuses. We know that people who are trained in the country are more likely to stay in the country and deliver essential health services there.

Returned and Services League, Essendon: 90th anniversary

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I would like to take the opportunity today to congratulate the Essendon RSL on 90 years of service to the returned servicemen and servicewomen in the Essendon area. The club held a very enjoyable function yesterday, which I had the opportunity to attend. The Essendon RSL started with a membership of 30, but by 1921 it had 3000 members, making it one of the biggest Returned and Services League clubs in Victoria. Since that time it has been very active, and even now, although the numbers are significantly less, according to the RSL it is still one of the most significant RSL clubs in terms of the sales of poppies on Remembrance Day and badges on Anzac Day. It holds services in Queens Park on both 11 November and Anzac Day and was significant in fundraising, particularly for families, widows and children, following World War I and World War II.

I congratulate in particular the president, Alex Top, the secretary, John Grant, and the committee on all the work they put into organising the function yesterday. There is no doubt that over the years the RSL has been a significant contributor to the Essendon community and particularly to those in need. I have no doubt that for many years to come they will continue to provide the same essential services to returned servicepersons and their families.

Peter O'Rorke, OAM

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — Volunteers are a vital part of community life, and last week, with over 1000 other people, I attended a funeral mass to celebrate the life of a great volunteer, Peter John O'Rorke, OAM, JP.

Peter's achievements were many. He was a highly regarded surf lifesaver and then an official for 33 years.

He was involved in winning football premierships and served as a goal umpire for 32 years. He joined the Country Fire Authority at 16 years of age and served as a fireman and in executive positions both locally and at state level and also operated the Westmere aircraft, performing over 3000 flying hours assisting CFA brigades. He had a lifelong interest in aviation and took part in the successful campaign to save Essendon Airport and the campaign for a helicopter rescue service for western Victoria. He was elected to local government in 1974 and served as shire president and mayor until 2004. In 1998 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his contributions to local government, surf lifesaving, the Country Fire Authority and numerous other community organisations. Peter was a passionate man who had integrity and who achieved much for Lake Bolac and western Victoria.

Casterton: Australian kelpie muster

Mr DELAHUNTY — During the coming weekend there are many events scheduled in western Victoria, but at the Casterton Australian kelpie muster, during the Pedigree working dog auction, we will see a dog sold which will bring the value of dogs sold since 1996 to \$1 million. The weekend's activities will also include the kelpie dash, the kelpie triathlon, the mutton mayhem, the stockman challenge and novelty events. The highlight is when the kelpies attempt to break the 2.91-metre record for the kelpie high jump. If you want to be anywhere this coming weekend, be at Casterton for the Australian kelpie festival.

Phyl Brown

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — I also wish to acknowledge the work of a volunteer in my electorate: a wonderful woman by the name of Phyl Brown, who lives in Gladstone Park. Phyl is a member of the Royal Children's Hospital splint team and has been making splints for the hospital for more than 20 years. Phyl has been volunteering in various roles at the hospital for the past 31 years. The hard work of Phyl and fellow core volunteers Dulcie Cedaro and Maria De Poi was recently recognised at the 2010 Minister for Health volunteer awards. These three volunteers have given up more than 14 000 hours of service to the hospital and have helped make over 250 000 splints. The splints, which are hand made, are used to immobilise children's arms whilst they are having intravenous therapy. The splint team aims to make splints that are gentle on children's arms rather than relying on the harder, plastic splints.

I take this opportunity to personally thank Phyl for her contribution to the health-care industry and thank all of those volunteers who commit valuable time to support others. Phyl may never see the results of the wonderful work she does, but I am sure all children who have those gentle splints lovingly made by Phyl — and every parent of those children — appreciate her.

Economy: government claims

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — This statement condemns the Brumby government and the Treasurer for continuing to mislead Victorians about the true state of the economy with hype and spin. The March quarter national accounts figures released last week by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that the increase in final demand in Victoria of 0.4 per cent in the quarter was below the national growth rate of 0.6 per cent and the third weakest among the states. However, all the Treasurer continues to do is misrepresent the facts with spin.

The Treasurer's media release last week on the national accounts data is a prime example. The Treasurer claimed:

Victoria had the best economic growth of any Australian state ... Victoria had a recorded economic growth (state final demand) of 6.4 per cent over the past year ... We have the best economic growth rate in the country and Victoria is the economic engine room of the nation.

The Treasurer really does need to go back to his Economics 101 textbooks to learn that growth in state final demand measures spending, including imports and excluding exports but unadjusted for inventories, while economic growth, as reported by an increase to gross state product, measures production, including exports but excluding imports. They are not the same thing. State final demand and state economic growth results are often very different.

WestLink: Greens opposition

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — Recent comments by a member for Western Metropolitan Region in the Council, Colleen Hartland, opposing the WestLink road tunnel project conveniently ignores independent reports by Sir Rod Eddington and the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission. These reports made it clear that Melbourne's dependency on the West Gate Bridge cannot be sustained over the longer term. Sir Rod Eddington indicated in his *East-West Links Needs Assessment* that reducing Melbourne's reliance on the West Gate Bridge and increasing road capacity across the Maribyrnong River were critical for Melbourne's west. Tackling

these two key issues and investing in projects such as WestLink will boost the region's capacity to open up new business opportunities and generate employment growth.

In his report, Sir Rod stated:

Analysis of increasing travel demand fuelled by population and commercial growth in the west shows that a failure to address these critical issues will effectively 'shut out' the west and entrench Melbourne's east-west divide.

That is why the state government announced plans to build the WestLink road tunnel in the Victorian transport plan.

Whilst Ms Hartland may describe the WestLink project as a disaster, the real disaster would be in failing to plan for the future needs of a thriving western region of Melbourne. And before I am accused of being pro-roads, let me make it clear that I am an ardent supporter of the \$4.3 billion regional rail link project, which will be constructed in Melbourne's west and create an extra 9000 passenger capacity per hour on Melbourne's metropolitan and regional rail networks.

Ambulance services: Wonthaggi

Mr K. SMITH (Bass) — I would like to commit the next 90 seconds to disclosing the flip-flopping Minister for Health as being a hopeless and incompetent minister who said he would wait for a business case from the local regional manager before deciding on where a mobile intensive care ambulance (MICA) single response unit (SRU) would be placed in the Gippsland area. He then totally ignored two separate business cases that were sent to him from that regional manager and put the SRU and the MICA unit in Morwell, where there was already one. He totally ignored the need for a unit to be put in the Wonthaggi area, where there is no doubt it would have saved lives.

The SRU has sat idle for five months, and there have not been enough MICA paramedics to man the service when it could have gone to Wonthaggi and been put to some immediate use — it would have saved lives. I say to members that any lives that are now lost in the South Gippsland area will be the minister's responsibility, because he alone made this decision and went against the advice that had been offered to him by the regional manager in the Gippsland area.

McGrath Foundation: charity football match

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — I was pleased to have been invited to join in the festivities at the charity match between the Greensborough and Bundoora football clubs on 29 May. The match was held at

Greensborough War Memorial Park and was aimed at raising money for the McGrath Foundation and promoting breast cancer awareness in the local community.

Since its relaunch in 2005, the McGrath Foundation now has two main objectives: firstly, to raise money to place breast care nurses in hospitals right across rural and regional Australia; and secondly, to educate young women to be aware of breast cancer. The foundation does a fantastic job and is most worthy of support. Approximately \$9000 was raised for the McGrath Foundation through various auctions, raffles and the sale of signed memorabilia and other activities run by the clubs on the day.

As well as raising funds, people of all ages were encouraged to have a check-up, and the work done by nurses and carers of those who battle breast cancer was highlighted. A pink Sherrin football was used in the match, and the Greensborough Football Club swapped its traditional colours to wear pink and white shirts. It is the first time the club has done so in its 105-year history, all for the cause of promoting breast cancer awareness.

I would particularly like to pay tribute to the Northern Football League and the clubs' volunteers, coaches, players and officials, who all pulled together to make the day work successfully. It is great to see local sporting clubs taking the initiative to promote such a worthy cause, and I was pleased to have been involved.

Rail: Echuca car park

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — I would like to raise the matter of the dilapidated, unsafe and embarrassing state of the Echuca railway station car park. I first raised this issue with the then Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky, in 2008 following many complaints from V/Line passengers trying to access the station from the car park. It is unlit, unsealed and riddled with deep potholes and ditches, which during the winter months in particular present real safety concerns for the many passengers, particularly the elderly now using the service. My office has received complaints of cars actually being bogged in the car park and having to be towed or dug out.

V/Line has acknowledged that patronage at the Echuca railway station has increased as the city's popularity as a tourist destination continues to increase. Following my previous representations I was informed by V/Line that the government had agreed to provide funding for the total redevelopment of the car park and that the work would be completed by the middle of 2009. But

here we are in June 2010 and not a single thing has happened. We are in the middle of another winter, and at the train station people are again being put at risk by the dark, muddy, slippery and dangerous conditions in the car park.

We are talking about a car park, and what we need is action. We need the Minister for Public Transport to do something. The car park needs to be levelled, sealed and properly lit — and we do not need further procrastination.

Aboriginals: Wurundjeri land treaty

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — Last Sunday, 6 June, marked the 175th anniversary of the signing of the treaty between John Batman and Wurundjeri elders for rental of around 200 000 hectares of land. Local historian Rex Harcourt argues persuasively in his book *Southern Invasion, Northern Conquest — Story of the Founding of Melbourne* that the site is along the Merri Creek in Northcote.

On Sunday I joined Rex Harcourt and Alexander Romanov-Hughes from the Port Phillip Pioneers Group and local residents, including Peter Bodin, to inspect the site located behind a stonemason's yard. The area is untended, and the only remnant is a concrete block that once bore a plaque to mark the significance of the location.

Despite what one may think of Batman's intentions and the legitimacy of the signatures, the treaty was the first and so far only attempt by European settlers to negotiate a treaty with the local custodians of the land. Two months later Governor Bourke issued a proclamation declaring the treaty void on the legal concept of terra nullius, which meant that the British Crown owned the whole of Australia and therefore neither the Wurundjeri elders nor Mr Batman had any authority to negotiate the use of the land. Terra nullius was itself declared invalid by the Mabo decision, which coincidentally had its 18th anniversary last Thursday.

I have spoken with many local indigenous elders, and there is no doubt that commemorating the treaty is a delicate matter that must be approached with sensitivity. Peter Bodin is keen to organise local residents to renew the site respectfully. I will give them and the local indigenous groups all the support I can to ensure that the lessons of the past at this particular site are not forgotten.

Public transport: government performance

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — The government's announcement of the delayed arrival of new trains and

yesterday's new timetable debacle has been capped off today with another disaster on Melbourne's rail network. The new Minister for Public Transport is clearly out of his depth. Train faults were reported as being behind some of last night's chaos, and again today train faults caused chaos on the Sandringham line. Why has the minister not enforced a proactive approach to train maintenance? The Sandringham line went into meltdown during the peak morning train times, with three trains cancelled, leaving commuters stranded on platforms.

The Liberal candidate for the Assembly electorate of Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown, was at Windsor station to meet train travellers to discuss their public transport needs as the disaster unfolded in front of him today. Hundreds of passengers were stranded at Windsor station alone. Another report came in from Prahran station where approximately 150 passengers were detained from a Sandringham-bound service.

The Brumby government's promise of a better service for all as a result of the new train timetable has been exposed as yet another election-year fantasy. It is an utter insult for Melburnians and V/Line travellers to sit down in front of the television at night and be exposed to a taxpayer-funded advertising spree promoting this government's achievements in public transport. Add the above scenario to the brutal assault by a gang of youths at McKinnon station on Friday night, and Victorians can get a good overall picture of Labor's legacy on public transport service: 11 years in office, three public transport ministers, violence out of control, and late and cancelled trains. They are paying more, getting less, going slower, standing up with a myki in their pockets — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Lara electorate: government initiatives

Mr EREN (Lara) — Recently I was delighted to open stage 3 of the capital works project at Lara Secondary College. Students at the school now have the best facilities that any parent could hope for, with facilities for performing arts, food technology, science, design arts and general purpose classrooms. This is a great example of the Brumby Labor government's commitment to providing every child with every opportunity to grow, learn and flourish in their education.

Another school that is flourishing in the area of book reading is the Thomas Chirnside Primary School in Werribee, which I visited recently. The Premier will be

pleased to know that the children at Thomas Chirnside are taking on the Premier's reading challenge with great enthusiasm and enjoyment, and are well on track to meet their reading goals. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the students on their great work.

Another great achievement for the Lara electorate has been the groundbreaking Corio-Norlane neighbourhood renewal program; I was thrilled to attend the ceremony recognising its great work recently.

A lot of work has gone into this area and the Brumby Labor government has invested more than \$39.5 million through this program since 2002. This includes \$34 million in 800 public housing upgrades and 600 external improvement works. Other achievements include the creation of 600 jobs and 750 training opportunities, just to name a few. This program is truly a testament to the great things that can be achieved when people are united by a common cause for the greater good. As the local member, I am very proud of the achievements that have been gained through this program and congratulate one and all.

Hoon driving: Evelyn electorate

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Increasingly I am being contacted by residents in my electorate complaining about hooning. Some of the streets where it is happening are Hereford Road in Mount Evelyn, Meadowgate Drive in Chirnside Park and Clegg Road in Wandin.

Hooning threatens not only other drivers and the hoon driver themselves but also families and children, and it causes a high level of fear, particularly amongst our senior citizens. Many have called the hoon hotline, but unless they can obtain registration details — which is virtually impossible, given the smoke from the vehicles and the speed at which they travel — they are told nothing can be done. The hoon hotline is another piece of Labor spin — mirrors and no substance.

Clegg Road, Wandin North: traffic study

Mrs FYFFE — Clegg Road in Wandin North and Mount Evelyn has experienced a substantial increase in the volume of traffic, creating problems with impatient drivers overtaking in a dangerous manner and driving at excessive speeds. Residents also report drag racing on this narrow single-lane road. I call on the minister to request VicRoads to carry out a study with a view to improving safety for both residents and motorists.

Police: Yarra Ranges

Mrs FYFFE — In the Yarra Ranges we have excellent police who work extremely hard, but they are handicapped by a lack of resources. I have reports of only one officer being on duty in the watch-house at night when the rules say there should be two. I also have reports of police vehicles not being available to cover the whole area of the Yarra Valley, and now I have read in the *Herald Sun* of 7 June that the number of crimes reported by police are 50 per cent less — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Yan Yean electorate: sports uniform grants

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — Today I want to commend the following clubs for their foresight and initiative in making applications for uniform grants under the state government's Our Club, Our Future sporting uniform grants program. The successful clubs have been the Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club, the Whittlesea Bowls Club, the Epping Football Club, the Plenty Valley Netball Association, the Whittlesea United Soccer Club, the Northern Districts Softball Association, the Mernda Football/Netball Club, the Westfield Leisure Walkers, the Whittlesea Football Club and the Yarrambat Junior Football Club.

This is a fantastic program. Victoria boasts a strong tradition of involvement in grassroots sport, with clubs contributing greatly to the identity of our many towns and communities. There is a great sense of pride in pulling on the team colours. But many in our community, whether they be on fixed incomes, whether they be in families or whether they be older people, sometimes find it difficult to afford to stay involved in sport, so this is a fantastic program. I encourage other clubs in my electorate to submit applications when the third funding round opens late in June. I will be pleased to support any clubs that submit applications.

I am very proud to be part of a Labor government that supports and stands up for community sport, whether it is by providing money for stadiums, which I think we have done well across the state, or by doing things as simple as helping people have uniforms so they can be involved in sport.

Mildura Base Hospital: funding

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Mildura has outgrown its hospital, yet on 14 May the Treasurer visited Mildura and said, amongst other things:

...and the priority always is for where there's a growing population or the facilities are just not working.

Then on 27 May the Premier, during questions without notice, stated:

I am also proud to say that Victoria is home to the four fastest growing inland cities in Australia; I am talking about Mildura ...

et cetera.

Given these two statements, everyone in Mildura wants to know what the plan is and when this government will deal with the population-driven congestion in the areas of accident and emergency, maternity, post-op and mental health. The plans have been done. The project has been estimated. It has been overlooked in the budget, and it is not on any forward estimates that I can see. Can the Premier, the Treasurer or the Minister for Health tell us what is happening?

Mildura: trade training

Mr CRISP — On another matter, the Mildura regional trade training centre school consortium has revamped and submitted its application to the commonwealth after last year's disappointment. Last year the state was caught napping and Victoria did not gain a fair share of the available funding from the commonwealth. This year I urge the state government to use its much talked about cooperative federalism to ensure that the trade training aspirations of Mildura's youth and the trade needs of regional Victoria are met.

Point Cook Senior Secondary College: leadership program

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) — I rise today to recognise and pay tribute to a terrific group of school leaders from Point Cook Senior Secondary College. Point Cook Senior Secondary College is a relatively new school in the rapidly growing community of Point Cook. It opened in 2008 and continues to go from strength to strength.

Recently the school leaders joined me here at Parliament. This was part of a special leadership development program that the school leaders were undertaking. This program was organised by their fantastic teachers, Anna and Zane. The leadership program is an initiative that involves meeting people, talking, reflecting on and learning about what leadership means in a variety of different contexts. It was terrific to spend some time with this energetic group of young people. The student leaders shared their insights about the challenges of playing a leadership role in their school community and how they were

using their talents to build a school culture that was inclusive, respectful and responsive to the realities of being a young adult.

What struck me most about the leaders of Point Cook Senior Secondary College was their authenticity. They were genuine, in touch and diverse. They reflected the school community they represented. They reminded me of how much of a privilege it is to be part of a community in which young people aspire to take leadership roles. The year 11 student leaders are Siarn Beattie, Naomi-Jade Laou, Fraser Argus and Alana Worthing. The year 12 school leaders are Jason Denton, Sophie Mellor, Jaime Cardillo and Amanda Bobadilla. I wish to formally recognise them and thank them for their contribution to the school community.

Rail: Sandringham line

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — In the words of the shadow Minister for Public Transport, Sandringham line commuters are paying more, getting less and going slower. I call on the Minister for Public Transport to investigate the reason for the more than half-hour delay for Sandringham line commuters, many of whom would have been late for work, lectures or medical appointments as a consequence of the failure of the Brumby government to provide a reliable public transport system.

Nepean Highway–Bay Road, Cheltenham: red-light camera

Mr THOMPSON — Another issue confronting the Sandringham electorate is the traffic lights at the intersection of Bay Road and the Nepean Highway. There has been continuing incompetence on the part of the government to address this issue in a capable way. Two years ago the Brumby government said it could not provide the data relating to the intersection in terms of the number of people who were fined making a right-hand turn. After a great hue and cry on the part of many people in my electorate and my having raised it aggressively within this house, the government ultimately worked out that in the 21st century they could provide data on a monthly basis as to how many people had been fined. Over \$5 million has been extracted from the local Bayside community, but there is still a continuing reluctance on the part of the government to provide data on a monthly basis.

Black Rock Primary School: funding

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Finally, I wish to draw to the attention of the house an issue raised in the *Age* newspaper last week which highlighted Black

Rock Primary School and an application for a gymnasium which was processed as an application for a school shed — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Rosemary Beth Rem

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — I wish to pay tribute to Rosemary Beth Rem who passed away on Monday, 31 May. Rosemary Beth, a proud and passionate Gembrook resident, made herself known to me as a community advocate as soon as I was elected in 2002. She was heavily involved in the Kurth Kiln Regional Park in Gembrook as a member of the Friends of Kurth Kiln. Rosemary Beth was also an active member of the Gembrook township committee, the Gembrook Business Group and the Gembrook Craft Group. She was an expert basket creator, a protector of our environment and history, mother of Alecia and grandmother of Cienna.

When my children and I moved to Gembrook I asked Rosemary Beth to become my children's carer. When I was working, Rosemary Beth would be at our home diligently and compassionately caring for my children. Detail was important to her when looking after the kids, and she very much enjoyed sharing stories and helping the children learn craft and do their homework. Archie, Ashleigh and I thank Rosemary Beth for her care. We were privileged yesterday to celebrate her life at the Gembrook community centre with many of her family members and friends.

Rosemary Beth was cared for beautifully by the staff at Wantirna palliative care in the last few weeks of her life, and I was fortunate that I was able to express my thanks and say goodbye on 31 May. On behalf of the Gembrook electorate, I thank Rosemary Beth for her contribution to our community.

Bayswater Secondary College: funding

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — It takes a special type of arrogance to suggest that a person has no understanding of an issue they have been closely involved with over a long period of time. The Minister for Education has suggested that I have no understanding of the economics surrounding the long-overdue funding of Bayswater Secondary College. What I do understand is that the project was promised in 2006 by the former Labor member for Bayswater, hoping to win the school community's support. Then, after losing the election and his position, he went to ground. My community has not heard a single peep out

of him since. A person who truly believes in a cause and who is truly passionate about outcomes fights on, regardless of title. There have been 11 years of contempt for the outer east by this flip-flopping government and a former member who will not fight for what is right.

Members will recall the 'No tolls' promise and 'Tolls are good — prove us wrong'. I cannot wait for November.

Arts: government performance

Mrs VICTORIA — Recently we saw even more evidence of the Brumby Labor government's contempt for the arts in this state. The Premier and his temporary Minister for the Arts seem content passing the buck to the federal government if it means they can avoid adequately funding the Victorian College of the Arts. Until they change their view, those in the Labor Party are doomed to become irrelevant bystanders as a Baillieu government steers Victoria's arts community toward greater prosperity.

Vera Sandstrom

Mrs VICTORIA — A big congratulations to Vera Sandstrom of Ringwood, who this week will celebrate her 105th birthday. It was a pleasure to spend the morning with this spritely lady earlier this week and hear some of the fascinating stories of her life. I wish her all the best for the coming year.

Indian community: citizenship

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — Since the last sitting week of Parliament I have had the pleasure of being invited by the City of Brimbank and the City of Melton to their citizenship ceremonies. Those two municipalities always have a large number of new citizens at their ceremonies. What has been significant at the ceremonies of recent times is the change of the types of people who are becoming Australian citizens. Whereas in the past the majority of people who resided in Melton and Brimbank were from Asia, now the majority are people from India.

From speaking to and congratulating these people after the official ceremony I know that a lot of recent arrivals in the Indian community are isolated. Some have been students who have stayed here for two years, so they have been able to apply for and have been successful in getting permanent resident status. It has been a long and tortuous journey for them. The reason I mention it here is that that community needs more embracing by our neighbours, by our community and by their own

neighbours. People should get to know them and not leave them to be isolated in their own communities. People in the broader community should mix with them and develop them, as these people have so much to offer our country.

Peninsula Link: Baxter overpass

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — On Sunday in my electorate the community of Baxter had a protest rally about the Brumby government's intention to put an overpass through the middle of the town. The Baxter community is supportive — very supportive, in fact — of the Peninsula Link, and it has even supported the fact that it has to go through the middle of the town. What they do not support is an overpass that the Brumby government is going to force on them that will split the community in two forever.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The member's time has expired. The time for members statements has also expired.

PHARMACY REGULATION BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 6 May; motion of Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health).

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — The purposes of the Pharmacy Regulation Bill are, firstly, to provide for the regulation of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots in Victoria; secondly, to establish the Victorian Pharmacy Authority to manage the process of registering these premises and licensing persons to conduct these operations; and thirdly, to prepare, issue and police standards with respect to these premises and the licensed operators. The Liberal-Nationals coalition understands the reasons for and supports the legislation.

I wish to advise the house that my brother, Bernard Naphthine, is a registered pharmacist and owns and operates a pharmacy, but I have no involvement or pecuniary interest in that business.

Mrs Maddigan — He's the good Naphthine, the Labor one.

Dr NAPHTHINE — There are a number of those. Unfortunately he does not support the Labor Party any more after what they did to the Barwon Heads bridge, which absolutely disgusted him and disgusted the community at Barwon Heads.

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

Dr NAPHTHINE — The context of this legislation is that as of 1 July 2010 a national scheme will operate for the registration and accreditation of 10 health professions across Australia, including pharmacy, and to deal with complaints against them. As a result of agreed national changes the Pharmacy Board of Victoria, which currently registers pharmacists in Victoria, will be abolished. May I place on record, on behalf of I think everybody in this house and all Victorians, our thanks to current and past board members of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria, which has served the pharmacy profession and indeed the wider community of Victoria with distinction.

But the Pharmacy Board of Victoria has a second function. That function is to license and regulate the operation of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots. This bill will create a new entity called the Victorian Pharmacy Authority to take over these roles and provide a framework for these regulatory functions to continue. Stephen Marty, the registrar of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria, advised me that as at 7 June the registrants of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria comprised 5502 general registered pharmacists, 494 non-practising registered pharmacists, 471 provisional registrations and 628 students, and that with respect to premises there were 1213 pharmacies, 79 hospital pharmacy departments and 34 depots.

In a note to me he pointed out that ‘the ownership of pharmacies’ and approval of premises was specifically excluded from the’ intergovernmental agreement, which brought those 10 health professional groups into a national registration scheme. He also stated:

It was therefore proposed that the current provisions of the Health Professions Registration Act 2005 ... should continue the current arrangements to protect the public and to ensure standards with respect to pharmacies and pharmacy departments are maintained.

He also said that the bill before the house largely provides for part 6 of the former Health Professions Registration Act to continue except for the introduction of the annual licensing of owners and annual registration of premises compared to the current situation of once-only approvals.

I now want to go through some of the specific clauses of the bill. Clause 5 refers to ‘Ownership of pharmacy business’. Clause 5(1) makes it clear that to be permitted to own a pharmacy business you must be a registered pharmacist, a company owned or controlled by a registered pharmacist or pharmacists, or a

company that has the structure of a friendly society or mutual company.

Clause 5(2) restricts a registered pharmacist or company owned by registered pharmacists to owning no more than five pharmacy businesses within Victoria. Clauses 5(3) and (4) clarify that friendly societies or mutual companies that own pharmacies must be not for profit and must return income for the benefit of members or shareholders.

Clauses 20 to 23 relate to the establishment of pharmacy businesses. They provide for a notice of intention to establish a pharmacy business, the establishment of a pharmacy business and the establishment of a pharmacy department. The provisions in clauses 20 to 23 will apply to anyone looking to establish a pharmacy business, department or depot.

It is important that I refer to clause 29. Clause 29 makes it a legal requirement for a registered pharmacist to supply, compound or dispense medicines only from a pharmacy business or department that has been approved by the Victorian Pharmacy Authority to be established under this legislation. Later I will refer to comments I have received from a local pharmacist which raise some issues about community pharmacy delivery with respect to clause 29.

Clause 30 is an important provision in the bill. It requires that a registered pharmacist must personally supervise a pharmacy or pharmacy department at all times that it is open for business. Clause 30(3) defines ‘personally supervised’ to mean that a pharmacist must be present on the premises. I think this is an important provision to ensure quality control in the dispensing of medicines and advice given to people who are receiving prescriptions and those who are purchasing medicines, because we know while medicines can provide enormous benefit when taken in the appropriate recommended dosages and under the supervision of a doctor and pharmacist, they can have serious untoward side effects. It is absolutely essential that qualified and trained pharmacists are responsible for the correct advice and dispensing of medicines at all times.

Clause 34 protects the use of the terms ‘pharmacy’, ‘pharmacy practice’ and ‘pharmacy business’. These are important protections for the community so that it can have confidence that when those terms are used they signify the responsible dispensing of medicines and drugs and that there is a qualified pharmacist on the premises, involved in the premises and behind any dispensing that takes place.

Part 3 of the bill is about licensing and registration. This deals with some of the new aspects of the bill with respect to the annual operation of the licence and the registration. It is fundamentally a two-stage process. Division 1 of part 3 refers to licensing — that is, a pharmacist, a company made up of pharmacists or a friendly society has to apply for a licence to operate a pharmacy business, department or depot. There has to be an application for a licence to operate — that is the first stage. The second stage is an application for registration of the premises for the pharmacy business or department. The bill outlines the process for both, including the grounds for refusal, the conditions that may be applied and the fact that this is an annual licensing process and that there is an annual fee involved with the renewal of those licences.

Clauses 53 to 62 relate to notifications, investigations and panel hearings and to grounds for revocation of licences and/or registrations. This will provide the new Victorian Pharmacy Authority with the legislative power to conduct investigations where complaints have been received and to ensure that people who are licensed to operate these pharmacy businesses, departments and depots, the premises on which they are operated and the way they are operated meet the appropriate standards in terms of safe and effective delivery of drugs and medicines.

To protect the people involved, clause 62 provides for the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to review any decision of the Victorian Pharmacy Authority so that there is that check and balance. If people who are involved in the industry are aggrieved or concerned about a decision of the authority, they can take that matter to VCAT.

Part 4 of the bill refers to the enforcement provisions, which are pretty standard in this sort of legislation. Part 5 refers to the establishment of the new Victorian Pharmacy Authority. I note in part 5 that in addition to the licensing and registration responsibilities of the authority there is also a requirement of the authority to issue standards in relation to the operation of pharmacies, pharmacy businesses, departments and depots.

Clause 87 in part 5 refers to the membership of the authority. It says that people will be appointed by the Governor in Council on the nomination of the minister. In other words, they will be government appointees through the Governor in Council. Among the appointees there must be three persons who are registered pharmacists, one appointee must be an Australian lawyer, and one must be a person who is not

a registered pharmacist. They will be appointed by the Governor in Council for a term of up to three years.

I draw the house's attention to clause 90(2) on page 55, which is interesting:

The minister may only recommend a member who is a registered pharmacist for appointment to the office of chairperson or deputy chairperson, unless the minister considers that it is necessary for the good operation of the authority to recommend a member who is not a registered pharmacist.

That seems like a fairly convoluted way of saying, 'The minister can appoint who they like as chairperson or deputy chairperson'. If we are looking at the use of plain English, why not just say, 'The minister may appoint who they like as chairperson or deputy chairperson' rather than going through this pretence of saying the minister must appoint a registered pharmacist — except when the minister thinks it is not necessary! As I say, it is a bit of convoluted English.

I also now refer to clause 102, and I am getting through this bill much faster than I thought —

An honourable member — Just slow down.

Dr NAPHTHINE — I will — I have more to say!

Mrs Maddigan — It's such a good bill; that's why.

Dr NAPHTHINE — It is fundamentally because it is a repeat of the legislation that already exists — apart from annual licensing — and there is broad support for this legislation.

Mr Helper — I have never heard of you being this stuck for words.

Dr NAPHTHINE — No, and I have 15 minutes to go! But an important issue is the Victorian pharmacy fund, established under clause 102. Clause 102(1) says:

The authority must establish and keep a fund to be called the Victorian Pharmacy Authority Fund.

Clause 102(2) says:

All fees, fines and penalties paid or recovered by the authority under this act must be paid into the fund.

I will be interested to hear the minister respond in relation to this provision. I thought that in most legislation where penalties could be imposed, most fees, fines or penalties went to consolidated revenue. It is interesting that according to this bill, fines under this legislation will go into the Victorian Pharmacy Authority Fund rather than into consolidated revenue. I would seek clarification from the minister in his

summing up as to whether that is an accurate interpretation.

An honourable member interjected.

Dr NAPHTHINE — I understand that the advisers in the box are indicating my interpretation is correct. I also refer to some notes provided to me by Stephen Marty, the registrar of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria — and I appreciate Stephen's advice on this and his prompt response to my questions. His response says:

An analysis of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria's financial statements for 2008 and 2009 indicated that 60 per cent of the board's receipts and expenditure was attributed to its pharmacist registration and accreditation function and 40 per cent to its premises function. This figure has been submitted to and accepted by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency ... as the basis for the transition of assets and liabilities at transition.

Therefore 40 per cent of the board's assets and liabilities will remain with the Victorian Pharmacy Authority which is the successor at law to the Pharmacy Board of Victoria in the —

current —

bill.

In relation to the Victorian Pharmacy Authority Fund — and given the advice provided to me by Stephen Marty — what we are saying is that 40 per cent of the current net assets of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria, which will cease to exist on 30 June this year, will be transferred into the new Victorian Pharmacy Authority Fund and 60 per cent will go to the national body, which is concerned with the registration of pharmacists.

The figures I have been able to see in the annual report of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria, as at 30 June 2009, show that at that time \$2.1 million in net assets was held by the Pharmacy Board of Victoria. Given that this year's operations would have delivered perhaps a neutral or slightly positive result, one would suggest there would be about \$840 000 to perhaps \$860 000 retained by the Victorian Pharmacy Authority Fund, which would give it a fund to start the operations of this new authority.

I think the house would be well advised to have a look at the schedule on page 77, which outlines the matters to be considered with respect to applications under part 3 of the bill, which concerns licensing and registration. The schedule outlines a range of matters that should be considered by the new authority when considering whether pharmacists or organisations are appropriate for licensing and whether premises are appropriate for registration. I think it provides the

pharmacy industry with some advice and direction on those matters.

I want to refer to some of the comments I have received on this legislation from local pharmacists and from some peak bodies. Norm Ferrier, Bachelor of Pharmacy, in an email to me dated 20 May says as follows:

The new legislation is very closely based on the old pharmacy board regulations in the matters it covers.

The proposal to set up the Victorian Pharmacy Authority should not cause any problems for pharmacists, except for the possible inconvenience of having to deal with both the Pharmacy Board of Australia as well as the Victorian Pharmacy Authority — two entities covering matters that were covered by the Pharmacy Board of Victoria.

For the sake of efficiency it is a shame that the new Pharmacy Board of Australia did not take on responsibility for all matters previously covered by the Victorian pharmacy board.

Before I quote the rest of the email, that point is one that was made by a number of people who contacted me and the opposition — that is, that there is concern within the industry because under the current arrangements the Pharmacy Board of Victoria looks after registration, premises and the licensing of those premises and now people will have to deal with two bodies. Instead of having a national system that is going to create a simpler system, it seems we will have duplication in Victoria.

Perhaps there needs to be a further round of health reform that would ensure that we have a national agreement about the registration of premises, the number of premises that can be operated and who is able to operate pharmacy businesses in Australia, rather than having a situation where across Australia we could be facing different rules in different states of Australia, which would be going back to the bad old days when we had different railway gauges. In 2010 we should be moving to have a uniform system across Australia.

We are now setting up a uniform registration system for health professionals, but we are setting up individual state systems with regards to the licensing of pharmacy premises, the number of premises that are able to be owned and the registration of those premises. That is the point being made by Mr Ferrier and many others.

Mr Ferrier then referred to another matter:

There is one scenario that was not covered in the old act and would seem to not be covered in the new legislation.

That is pharmacists who conduct medication reviews in clients' homes and nursing homes. The legislation implies that a pharmacist can only practise as a pharmacist in properly licensed premises, that is to (a) dispense or compound

medicines and prescriptions and (b) to counsel and supply drug information.

The ability to visit a person's home to review their medications and counsel them is a grey area and can only be done by the invitation from a doctor presented through an operational pharmacy. I have long believed that a pharmacist should be able to practise as a pharmacist in regard to function (b) [counsel, advise, review and supply drug information] without being tied to an existing pharmacy. I had hoped new legislation would cover this matter.

That is a matter I raised previously in my contribution. It is a valid point that Mr Ferrier raises. I think we need to have a more flexible system so that pharmacists can visit people, particularly older people in our community, many of whom are on medication, in their own homes; pharmacists should be able then to provide advice, assistance and support regarding the medication programs within their own home rather than requiring an older person to go to a pharmacy. But that does not seem to be covered well in this legislation. I ask that that matter be looked at during the passage of the bill to the other place.

I refer to an email I received from David McLean from D and J McLean:

I didn't see the point in a national organisation that covered some aspects of our profession on a national basis, but left other aspects conspicuously out. Specifically, licensing, and even more so, ownership of pharmacies.

It says further:

... we wholeheartedly support the restrictions on the number of pharmacies a pharmacist can own, from the point of view of maintaining a personal supervision of them. And, while ownership provisions remain state based, irrespective of variations between states, the simple truth is that, while you may be restricted to owning say three or five pharmacies in a state, you can do this in every state. The point I made to the review is, how can you maintain personal supervision of a number of pharmacies in a number of states?

It may be difficult to maintain that supervision in even one state, impossible in a number. To me, this is a compelling reason why the complete regulation of pharmacies should be enacted at one level of government.

This emphasises the need for a national approach in terms of licensing, the registration of premises and the ownership of premises rather than just having the registration of the accreditation of pharmacists at national and state levels but having the other aspects done on a state-by-state basis.

Mr McLean highlights a number of particular aspects regarding clauses that I suggest the minister at the table, the Minister for Agriculture, note closely and pass on to the Minister for Health. I suggest the Minister for Health address these issues if he has the opportunity

when he is summing up on this bill. If he does not have the opportunity when he is summing up, I suggest the Minister for Agriculture ask the Minister for Health to respond to me so I can convey to Mr McLean the answers to the concerns he raises in regards to specific clauses. Mr McLean also says:

Clause 58(b) talks about no right to legal representation, however 58(c) says a licensee may be accompanied by a lawyer???

Clause 62 — I am profoundly worried about the powers given to VCAT, having seen some of its decisions! There are no guidelines on how VCAT would review a decision, and I feel even I would be better placed to review some decisions than VCAT (or rather some members appointed by VCAT, who have no expertise in a particular matter they sit on).

Clause 78 has obviously been written by a lawyer for the benefits of lawyers. As far as I can understand —

and I challenge members to read clause 78, because it is interesting —

subclause 1 says you can excuse yourself from dobbing yourself in, then subclause 2 says you can't, then subclause 3 says you can again if you're smart enough (or guilty enough) to know this at the start!

For the record I refer to clause 78 on page 49 under the heading 'Protection against self-incrimination'; it says:

- (1) It is a reasonable excuse for a natural person to refuse or fail to give information or do any other thing that the person is required to do by or under this Act, if the giving of the information or the doing of that other thing would tend to incriminate the person.

That seems clear enough until you read the next subclause:

- (2) Despite subsection (1), it is not a reasonable excuse for a natural person to refuse or fail to produce a document that the person is required to produce by or under this Act, if the production of the document would tend to incriminate the person.

One can argue that is purely about documentation production. But then the next subclause states:

- (3) If a person claims, before producing the document, that production of the document would tend to incriminate them, the document, is not admissible in evidence against the person in criminal proceedings.

I am a humble veterinarian and the person writing to me is a humble pharmacist, but we challenge the lawyers to explain exactly how you should interpret clause 78, and I would appreciate it if the minister could respond to that.

I refer to two other comments that have been received. One is from the Australian Medical Association, which has some concerns with the legislation. It has stated:

The Pharmacy Regulation Bill 2010 is predominantly administrative, with the consequential changes necessary to adopt the national law. However, the bill continues with the anticompetitive provisions in existing legislation that allow only pharmacists to own pharmacies (with limited exemptions).

Pharmacy ownership regulations are an anachronism. No other health profession has reserved the exclusive right to the commercial benefits of running a health care business. Restricting ownership restricts access to health care.

Owner restrictions are a contributing factor to the lack of pharmacy outlets co-located with medical centres, or other locations more convenient to patients. Allowing non-pharmacists, including medical practitioners, to own pharmacies where there is a clear community benefit, would be a sensible addition to the bill.

The association suggests those changes. I note its concerns, but the coalition does not agree with them. We support the legislation as tabled in the house.

Indeed the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has written to David Davis, shadow minister for health and ageing in the Legislative Council, on 13 May and stated:

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has reviewed this document —

referring to the Pharmacy Regulation Bill —

and as the content reflects part 6 in the current Health Practitioner Regulations Act it is the intention of the guild to advise the minister that we support the passage of the bill in its current form.

In another letter to the minister on the same date, the guild said:

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has reviewed the bill and supports this legislation which continues to ensure the highest standards of community pharmacy across Victoria.

I will leave it to the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to have the final word.

The coalition supports this legislation. We think it is important in providing safe pharmaceutical standards and for the dispensing of medicines and the supply of drugs to the community. We think it is legislation that warrants support, but we urge that we have a national approach to the licensing and registration of premises so that we do not have in this case the state-by-state anomalies that have bedevilled us since Federation in 1901.

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — For once I am filled with admiration for the member for South-West Coast,

who manfully soldiered on for another 15 minutes after finding himself wordless after the first 15 minutes. I say, 'Well done!' to him for that. I am also very pleased to hear that the coalition — the Liberals and The Nationals — support this fabulous piece of Brumby government legislation in the health area.

The member for South-West Coast raised an issue concerning clause 102. To respond to that, the wording of that clause is the same as the wording that already exists in the Health Professions Registration Act of 2005. Penalty units go into consolidated revenue and fees and penalties remain with the Victorian Pharmacy Authority. I hope that clears up that issue for the member for South-West Coast.

I am very pleased to speak on the Pharmacy Regulation Bill 2010. As has already been noted, this bill is mainly technical in nature. It comes about as a result of commonwealth legislation. The bill creates an ongoing framework for the regulation of the ownership and operation of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots. It establishes a new Victorian Pharmacy Authority (VPA) to deliver this regulatory function, which will ensure continued public protection in pharmacies. The authority will have a five-member board, comprising three pharmacists, a lawyer and a community member. It is anticipated it will be chaired by a pharmacist, and the appointments will be for three-year terms.

As background to this, I advise that on 26 March 2008 the Council of Australian Governments signed an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to establish a national registration and accreditation scheme for health professionals, known as the national scheme. The national scheme will commence on 1 July 2010 for 10 health professions, including pharmacists, and hence this legislation is going through the Parliament now. The IGA does not, however, cover the licensing of pharmacy premises and pharmacy ownership restrictions. It states that these matters will continue to be the responsibility of individual states and territories. The Pharmacy Board of Victoria currently performs this regulatory role under the Health Professions Registration Act 2005, and I would like to join the member for South-West Coast in thanking the members of the board for all of the work they have done until now in this area.

Consultation was undertaken and 10 written submissions were received, including from the Pharmacy Guild of Victoria; the Australian Friendly Societies Pharmacies Association; the pharmacists division of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia; Medicare Australia;

and the Victorian branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. A response from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia states:

I refer to the Pharmacy Regulation Bill 2010 which is currently before the house and which provides for the regulation of pharmacy businesses (community pharmacies), pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots and establishes the Victorian Pharmacy Authority.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has reviewed the bill and supports this legislation which continues to ensure the highest standards for community pharmacies across Victoria.

We have appreciated the efficiency of the officers of your department in providing the opportunity for briefings and consultation. We look forward to continuing to work with the Brumby government, your department, the community and members of the health profession in delivering the highest standards of pharmaceutical care.

This bill, as well as having the support of the Liberals and The Nationals, has the support of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

Once again, as was mentioned briefly by the member for South-West Coast in his contribution, the Australian Medical Association has a slightly different approach to this legislation. In essence it says it believes pharmacies should be able to be owned by a broader range of health professionals, including doctors, so that doctors can set up a pharmacy and operate the pharmacy as part of their medical practice. There is a range of reasons why that has not happened in the past and why it is not supported at the moment. The bill will maintain the status quo in relation to the ownership of these businesses.

I would like to talk about pharmacies in supermarkets. I know that in previous years and following previous reviews of these particular pieces of legislation it has been mooted that pharmacies may be located in supermarkets, and I would like to address that specifically in my contribution. The bill does not contain a specific provision expressly prohibiting pharmacies from being located in supermarkets. The VPA is given the power to refuse an application, however, to approve premises as a pharmacy business if the premises are freely accessible to persons from other premises where a business or activity other than that of providing pharmacy services is carried out — for example, a supermarket.

It is noted that the Pharmacy Board of Victoria has never approved an application for a pharmacy business to be located within a supermarket. In addition, the pharmacy location rules under the National Health Act 1953 prescribe location-based criteria that must be satisfied in order to establish a new pharmacy or

relocate an existing pharmacy. The rules are an outcome of the fifth community pharmacy agreement made in 2010 between the Australian government and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. The agreement maintains the existing prohibition against supermarkets operating pharmacies within their stores.

To sum up, in effect this legislation came about because of commonwealth legislation to license health professionals. As a result of that, state legislation is required to allow the ownership and operation of individual pharmacies. Under this legislation ownership is by pharmacists who are required to operate and own the pharmacy businesses.

In general it is very important to have this level of oversight of pharmacies. Pharmacies are an integral part of our health system, particularly in Victoria, where many consumers regularly go to pharmacies for specific health advice, particularly if they cannot get an appointment at their doctor, hospital or wherever else. It is important that pharmacies are regulated to the very highest standards. It is a protection of the public that we are absolutely committed to. The Pharmacy Regulation Bill is an important piece of legislation that will continue to protect the public, as the Pharmacy Board of Victoria has done for many years. As I said, the bill is supported broadly within the industry and broadly within this Parliament.

In summary I note that there are minimal changes to the costs that will be imposed on the pharmaceutical sector as a result of this bill. Under the legislation to establish the national scheme in Victoria, funds obtained by the Pharmacy Board of Victoria for premises regulation are able to be set aside prior to commencement of a national scheme and transferred to the VPA. This is a very important but technical piece of legislation. It maintains the status quo to a large degree but it also maintains protection for all Victorians who use pharmacies. I support this very important piece of legislation, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution to the Pharmacy Regulation Bill. The Nationals in coalition are supporting this bill. The purpose of the bill is to provide for the regulation of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots and to establish the Victorian Pharmacy Authority (VPA). The bill has been prepared as a result of the recent changes to introduce a national registration scheme for health professionals in Australia. While the national scheme will regulate the registration of pharmacists, it will not regulate pharmacies. The bill will retain the regulation of pharmacies within the state jurisdiction. Currently

pharmacies are regulated by part 6 of the Health Professions Registration Act 2005, and a significant part of the bill is modelled on the current legislation. The bill also establishes the Victorian Pharmacy Authority, which is the responsible body for registering the premises of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots. The authority will also license persons to carry on pharmacy businesses or pharmacy departments.

The bill seeks to regulate the ownership and operation of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and pharmacy depots and establish the VPA as per the intergovernmental agreement to create a national scheme for registration and accreditation of health professionals. The commonwealth act to register health professionals does not cover premises and ownership. The state body will have the power to grant registration of premises on an annual basis for the payment of fees. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal will continue to review the jurisdiction of the new body and it is expected that the running costs of the new body will come from the annual registration fees. This is all part of the long list of steps that have been involved in getting us to national registration.

I note that the pharmaceutical benefits scheme is a federal scheme but what happens inside the doors of a pharmacy is a state issue. I also note the contribution of the member for South-West Coast, who said that we still have not quite finished this job. If we are going to hand over these powers to the commonwealth, perhaps we should have also looked at what happens inside the doors of pharmacies from a commonwealth perspective.

For Victorians in regional areas, access to pharmacy services is absolutely vital. Pharmacy services in country Victoria are of importance, whether it be the local chemist, pharmacy departments at hospitals or pharmacy depots. Recruitment and retention of pharmacists, whether they be in hospitals or at the local chemist, are also vitally important.

The Pharmacy Board of Victoria has given us some statistics. In particular I note the differences between this and an earlier document, which was the Victorian Pharmacy Authority's consultation paper regarding controls on who may own, run and operate pharmacies in Victoria in 2009. The number of pharmacy depots in Victoria in 2007–08 was 46. I note now that in 2010 it has declined to 34. Pharmacy depots are vital for isolated communities and are becoming even more vital as members of those communities age and lose the ability to travel as well as they would like to. The way a pharmacy depot is approved is contained in the

legislation. Clause 48, which refers to the registration of a pharmacy depot, states:

The Authority may register a pharmacy depot if it is satisfied that —

- (a) the applicant is a licensee who will provide pharmacy services in respect of those premises; and
- (b) the premises of the pharmacy depot provide secure storage for prescriptions and medicines; and
- (c) the applicant will have suitable arrangements at the pharmacy depot to ensure that —
 - (i) client records are kept confidential and secure; and
 - (ii) conversations at the pharmacy depot can be conducted between a registered pharmacist and the person to whom the medicines are dispensed; and
 - (iii) the conversations are able to be conducted in confidence; and
- (d) the person who will operate the pharmacy depot will be at least 18 years of age.

Again that does not seem super onerous. However, in regional Victoria we have had a decline in the number of pharmacy depots, so something is not working right. The member for South-West Coast said that pharmacists who had been in touch with him had been confused about clause 78. They said the provision would scare people off from running pharmacy depots. Pharmacists would have difficulty in understanding all their responsibilities. The requirements of the bill might just be too hard.

Despite all the options that some people in this state might have, there are many who do not have very many options, particularly those living in the more isolated parts of regional Victoria. Your local shop could be everything: it may well be the post office or the newsagent; it might be the pub or it might be that the shop has a packaged liquor outlet. These are often the last identification measures of a community, and they are also often used as a pharmacy depot, so they are vital service points for a community. I doubt if there are big dollars in having a pharmacy depot. It is something those small shops in isolated communities do as a service for their community, yet some of them are still under threat.

Many of them have a packaged liquor licence, and most cannot afford the licence price hikes that are out there. Some will close as a result, and communities will lose a service and become even more remote than they are now. If you lose your shop, your post office or your packaged liquor outlet, you risk losing the pharmacy depot services. Currently this government is putting

those small communities under a great deal of pressure in order to screw a few more dollars out of country people but without knowing the full consequences. Clearly the government needs to sort out the small packaged liquor outlets.

Returning to national registration, there are cross-border issues that should be resolved by this legislation, the example being a pharmacy in one state wishing to be a pharmacy depot in another. I had a recent experience in my electorate where such occurred. It was not possible for a pharmacy in one state to offer a depot service to another state despite it being a matter of only 10 or 20 kilometres away. It just could not be done. I hope this legislation will correct that, but my concern is that the requirements for qualifying as a pharmacy depot still remain embodied in the state legislation.

I have great concern that we will not resolve this interstate issue despite having put a lot of work into the health professionals area and the registration, and I hope the minister in summing up can clear this up. Because depot registration remains with the state but the qualifications are national, we may not have achieved what we planned to do.

Pharmacies are vital for our communities, whether it be the local chemist, the hospital pharmacy or the pharmacy depot, so let us not do anything to impede the ability of pharmacy depots in regional Victoria to continue to fulfil that vital role they perform in supplying valuable and in many cases life-preserving medications that are so needed. Country people deserve equality of access to pharmacy services. Pharmacy depots fulfil that role, but I cannot help but wonder why their numbers have declined across the last three years.

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I am pleased to support the Pharmacy Regulation Bill 2010. This is just one of a number of bills relating to health professionals that seek to establish national registration and accreditation as a result of COAG (Council of Australian Governments) agreements. It is one that all parties in this place, perhaps with the exception of the member for Mildura, support. The fairly extensive public consultation process that the government engaged in generally received very strong support from some of the major agencies including the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Victoria; the Australian Friendly Societies Pharmacies Association; the pharmacists division of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia; Medicare Australia; and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Victoria branch.

I want to touch briefly on the importance of pharmacies in the community. I guess this is one area of health professionals that a lot of us take for granted in a way. The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee earlier in this session of Parliament did an investigation and reported to Parliament on the abuse and misuse of benzodiazepines and opioids, and during that process the committee talked to a large number of pharmacists, and organisations representing them, as well as drug companies and other people involved in the area.

It pointed out the importance of pharmacies to a community, and therefore I am very pleased that the bill insists that pharmacies be pharmacies and not part of supermarkets. We saw as part of that investigation pharmacies located in supermarkets, and it was quite surprising that the whole nature of the pharmacy was changed by its being located in a supermarket.

People very strongly respect pharmacists, who provide a very useful service. You can go to your local pharmacy and hear the pharmacist talking to people who come in with general health queries that the pharmacist can answer. This means people can get an answer and advice very quickly without having to go through a longer process to make a more costly doctor's appointment. Pharmacists are very useful in the dispensing of drugs. I have heard pharmacists query scripts given out by doctors when their knowledge of the drugs has led them to believe the doctors may have made mistakes in prescriptions, which has proved to be so in some cases.

The pharmacist's role is a really crucial role between medical practitioners and the community, and for residents needing assistance with minor medical treatment, but we undervalue them. Our committee found that they are under huge pressure these days not only from the demands of many people trying to sell drugs to them — I mean legal drugs — but from people attempting to misuse drugs.

One of the things the committee found in the investigation was an increasing threat to pharmacists by people trying to get legal drugs for an illegal purpose. Drugs are very habit forming; for instance, people can become addicted to benzodiazepines in as short a period as two weeks. There is perhaps a belief in the community that if you have a drug prescribed for you, it is safe, but that is very far from the truth. All drugs need to be administered carefully and under the prescribed regulations laid down for their issue.

In relation to pharmacies, I believe this legislation, whilst not changing things dramatically, reinforces the importance of pharmacies. It was interesting that the

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee raised an issue for the Minister for Health in relation to people using the word 'pharmacy'. There was some suggestion that it was a restriction of freedom of expression for 'pharmacy' to be able to be defined in a certain way.

In his response the Minister for Health made some really good points. In relation to the restriction on the use of 'pharmacy', 'pharmacy department' and 'pharmacy business' it is his view, and I share it, that it is essential to the operation and integrity of the scheme. In his view:

... consumers of these services should be entitled to a high level of confidence that when they attend a pharmacy business they are accessing a regulated provider of pharmacy services which is subject to the scrutiny of the regulatory authority described ...

in this legislation and under the Victorian Pharmacy Authority. That relates back to what I was saying before: that people trust people or businesses that call themselves a pharmacist, a pharmacy or a pharmacy department. To use those terms in any other situation would give other businesses an authority they should not have and which could be quite dangerous to the community.

This is a good bill. The restriction on the use of the word 'pharmacy' is a great protection for people, and I am also very pleased that there is no change to the location of pharmacies; they still cannot be in supermarkets.

We have made changes to very long-established regulations in relation not only to pharmacists but other health professionals for whom we have passed bills in this house in the last few years. There has often been conflict between the regulations operating in different states, which have caused problems particularly in towns along the borders of those states, so improving the schemes so that they become national schemes with the agreement of all states and territories is a strong step forward. I am glad all parties support the bill, and I look forward to its having a speedy progression through both houses.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I rise on behalf of the Lowan electorate to speak on this very important Pharmacy Regulation Bill 2010.

As we know, this bill has three main purposes: firstly, to regulate the ownership and operation of pharmacy businesses, pharmacy departments and depots; secondly, to establish the Victorian Pharmacy Authority, which will have the same functions as the current Pharmacy Board of Victoria; and thirdly, to make other consequential amendments to the act.

It was interesting to read when studying this bill that the national scheme will not regulate pharmacies. As we know, back in 2005 the Health Professions Registration Bill was debated in this house, and at that stage the aim of that bill was to protect the public by providing for registration of health professionals and for a common system of investigation into the professional conduct, professional performance and ability to practise of registered health practitioners. That was the aim back in 2005; that bill replaced 12 separate acts with one act to cover health professionals. It is very important that we have some consistency across the various health professions. Health professionals play a very important role, and nowhere more so than in my electorate of Lowan.

The Lowan electorate, as you well know, Acting Speaker, is the largest in the state; it is about half the size of Ireland. It is 34 500 square kilometres in area, which is equivalent to the combined electorates of 76 of the other 87 members of this house.

There are many hospitals, bush nursing centres, pharmacies and pharmacy depots in my electorate. I will come back to the issue of depots; I know the member for Mildura spoke in great detail about them.

Mr Stensholt interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — Some of the statements I hear from the other side are amazing!

That was back in 2005. Things progressed, and in July 2006 the Council of Australian Governments, or COAG, agreed to establish a national registration and accreditation scheme for the nine health professions: medical practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, dental care providers, chiropractors, osteopaths, optometrists, psychologists and physiotherapists. That scheme achieved a common system of registration of all those professions right across Australia. But this bill does not address registration; it relates to the licensing of pharmacies.

While this bill deals with many of the regulations that have been changed — we now have a new national registration scheme for health professionals in Australia — the national scheme we have adopted here in Victoria, along with all the other states and territories, will regulate the registration of pharmacists but will not regulate pharmacies and, importantly, pharmacy depots.

It is also interesting to note that the bill establishes a new Victorian Pharmacy Authority, which will be the body responsible for registering the premises of a pharmacy business, a pharmacy department or a

pharmacy depot. The authority will also licence persons to carry on a pharmacy business or a pharmacy department.

I heard the member for South-West Coast speak about the duplication we now have, whereby registration of pharmacists will be done nationally but registration of businesses will be done by the new Victorian Pharmacy Authority. That authority, which is made up of three people including a pharmacist, can only register a pharmacy or a depot; the entity must be controlled by a pharmacist or a company whose board includes pharmacist members. It will be interesting to see whether the transfer of information from the national system to the state system involves any trip-ups and whether people who are licensed to run pharmacy businesses or pharmacy departments are appropriately licensed by the national process.

I have sent this bill out to pharmacists in my electorate, of whom there are many, and I note that all of them are reasonably happy with it. The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has made its comments known to the opposition; the guild is not overly concerned about the changes that have been proposed in this bill.

It is interesting to note the observations of the member for South-West Coast about the number of pharmacists we have registered here in Victoria. As at 7 June 2010 there were 5502 general registrants, 494 non-practising registrants, 471 provisional registrants and 628 students. My understanding is that not all students have to be registered, but I am sure that all would want to be registered during the process. When one looks at the figures for pharmacies, there are 1213 licensed pharmacies in Victoria, 79 licensed in-hospital pharmacy departments and 34 licensed pharmacy depots.

I am proud to say I was brought up in the little township of Murtoa, where there was a pharmacist, Mr Bob O'Day, whose wife is still alive. Unfortunately Bob passed away many years ago. He ran pharmacies in Murtoa, Minyip and Rupanyup. They were taken over by Mr Des Lardner, who still operates a pharmacy in Dimboola. Along with all the pharmacists in my area, Des plays a very important role in assisting the community — not only in the provision of medicines but also in giving advice in many cases.

Des continued to run that little pharmacy in Murtoa. It is now a depot operated by another company, and I know that the people of Murtoa and Rupanyup really value the opportunity of being able to have a telephone conversation, have their prescription faxed in and have their medication provided to them later in the day at

Murtoa or Rupanyup; Murtoa is a 25-minute drive from Horsham, and Rupanyup is a further 10 minutes away.

Services are being provided out in some of these remote areas. Right across my electorate there are many pharmacies, including the Amcal and Horsham Healthwise pharmacies in Horsham and the James Dean pharmacy in Hamilton, and along with many others they provide a very important service. Importantly, they provide pharmacy depots that provide medication.

I will now talk about the operation of a pharmacy depot. On page 30 of the bill clause 48 says:

The Authority may register a pharmacy depot if it is satisfied that —

- (a) the applicant is a licensee who will provide pharmacy services in respect of those premises; and
- (b) the premises of the pharmacy depot provide secure storage for prescriptions and medicines —

and that is totally understandable. It goes on to say that client records are to be kept confidential and, importantly — and this is the point I wanted to highlight — that:

...

- (iii) the conversations are able to be conducted in confidence; and
- (d) the person who will operate the pharmacy depot will be at least 18 years of age.

This will give some confidence to the people who will come into the depot that the records are kept secure and confidential; and, importantly, that the people who you are dealing with are over the age of 18 — I do not see a real problem with that — and that it is subject to a properly approved process.

As we know, in Victoria a pharmacist can operate only five separate pharmacy businesses, but under the act friendly societies are allowed to operate pharmacy businesses, many of which are in country Victoria. I know some of them are in a place called Willaura and provide a good service there.

Clause 5 specifies who can own a pharmacy business; it says:

- (1) A person must not own or have a proprietary interest in a pharmacy business unless the person is —
 - (a) a registered pharmacist; or

- (b) a company registered under the Corporations Act —
- (i) whose directors are all registered pharmacists; and
- (ii) in which all the shares and the beneficial and legal interest in those shares are held by registered pharmacists ...

So there is fairly strict criteria around the ownership of pharmacies.

Pharmacy depots and the pharmacists — the people themselves — play a very important role in my electorate. I am pleased to not oppose this legislation, because I think it is another step forward, although there are some concerns about the duplication caused by the national registration of pharmacists and the state registration of businesses.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission).

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 is a bill to amend the public sector superannuation and judicial pensions legislation to remove provisions which the government considers to be incompatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, and to enable ambulance service employees who transfer to the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) to retain their defined benefit superannuation. As the second-reading speech makes clear, the bill arises from a review of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, which the government commissioned.

The opposition parties were told in the briefing by the government that a review was undertaken by an external lawyer. We have requested a copy of that review from the government, but it has not been provided to us nor has it been made public. The upshot is that Parliament is being asked to decide on the merits of this bill on the bald assertion that there is some legal advice that says the charter act requires that the law be changed in the way the bill proposes. This is yet

another piece of legislation brought before this Parliament that is being driven by the 2006 act rather than by considerations of good policy.

As I say, the upshot is the particular issues raised by this bill are not being decided on their merits but on the bald assertion that they are required for consistency with the 2006 act. Some of the results contained in the bill are reasonable, some are questionable and some are policy decisions which are being disguised as legal matters.

As someone who trained in the law and practised as a lawyer, I am very proud of the role that lawyers can play in society, proud of what the law has done and continues to do to uphold rights and to protect liberties over the ages. However, there are limits to what the law can achieve; those limits should not be transgressed and laws should not be used as an excuse, and rights phrased in abstract and poorly worded terms should not be used to justify absurd or unjust outcomes.

That is not to say the law is not of vital importance for upholding justice. Indeed one should not get involved in the law unless one is passionate about preventing and remedying injustice. I certainly admire the sincerity and dedication of those many young lawyers who are keen to play a role in areas such as pro bono work or working for community legal centres or for human rights centres. All good lawyers want to uphold rights and uphold justice.

However, any notion that the 2006 charter act or a bill of rights is an embodiment of human rights or is a good way to protect and enhance rights or to achieve a better society is sadly mistaken. One of the few sensible decisions to come out of the Rudd government in Canberra is to not proceed with the proposal for a bill of rights at a national level. One must commend the good sense on this issue of people such as Bob Carr and John Hatzistergous, who have seen the threat to democracy and the threat to the rule of law that is posed by a bill of rights and by charter legislation such as that which we have in Victoria.

We are told that the measures in this bill have a total estimated cost of \$44 million in present value terms, so it has been a very expensive piece of legal advice that the government has obtained and a very expensive piece of legislation that comes before the Parliament. It seems to be justified solely on the basis of legal advice. There certainly has been no reference to a business case that supports the changes contained in the bill; no reference to an assessment of their policy merits; no reference to consideration of what else could have been done with \$44 million — how much better could our

police have been equipped to fight crime; how much better could our corrections service be equipped to keep tabs on those on extended supervision orders to stop them escaping and putting the community at risk; how much could be spent to improve our hospitals or our public transport or our schools system or any other area of government activity.

Where is this measure budgeted for as a government policy initiative? I cannot find it on searching the recent budget papers, yet presumably this has been decided on as a policy initiative of government. It may be said that \$44 million is a very small sum compared with the billions of dollars of unfunded defined benefit superannuation liability that the state has. But, nonetheless, \$44 million, if it is a correct estimate of the cost, is a real cost to government. Some of the provisions in this bill may well be meritorious provisions, but they need to be assessed and justified in comparison with alternative uses of the funds and, as I say, not simply done because some piece of unreleased legal advice allegedly says that they should be done.

If the measures in this bill can be justified as good policy, then they are welcome. But we should not be doing it just because someone says the 2006 act requires it. Ministers need to recognise that the 2006 act is not a set of Ten Commandments handed down on tablets of stone from on high. At best, they are eight and a half commandments of the current Attorney-General handed out on reproduction plastic tablets. The Attorney-General has taken the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — which itself is not a set of Ten Commandments delivered from on high but is simply an outcome of negotiation and compromise — and then dropped a few of the commandments from the international covenant that he did not like and made up a few commandments of his own to put into the 2006 act.

At present in Victoria the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act is being used, as it were, as a bogeyman to frighten public servants, small children and perhaps ministers as well. They are told that if they do not do what is required of them, the charter will come and eat them up. As a result the Attorney-General has induced his colleagues in the government to spend tens of millions of dollars, perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars, hiring additional public servants and in-house lawyers and paying for lots of expensive external legal advice in order to write piles of manuals on how to comply with the charter. You can find the manuals scattered across departmental websites — no doubt there is a lot more as well being spent on advice to tell public servants whether or not what they propose to do transgresses the charter. We have had the

Victorian Government Solicitor's Office boasting that it was able to hire an additional 30 lawyers, primarily because of charter-related work.

If the charter induces public servants or the government to treat Victorian citizens properly — in the way that they should be treated, in the way a good government should treat citizens without a charter and without need for a charter — then that is a benefit. However, if that benefit is achieved it comes at enormous cost and complexity as well as with bad legislative outcomes and policy. To make matters even worse, I suspect that any such beneficial effect of the charter bogeyman is likely to wear off over time as public servants realise that the world does not come to an end if they defy the charter.

Out in the rest of the world the charter is not achieving beneficial results for Victorians. The charter is certainly not helping them get their cases heard more quickly in court. Indeed, it may well be slowing down our courts because of the number of charter arguments that are being raised and are being considered, sometimes at great length, by the courts or by VCAT (the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal).

The charter certainly does not keep Victorians safer on the streets or on the trains, and it may well be having the opposite effect if it is getting in the way of good decision making — if the fear is that one cannot put accused persons on remand because the delays until trial are too long because there are too many lawyers employed in the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office working on charter issues and not enough lawyers being employed in Victoria Legal Aid, the Office of Public Prosecutions or in supporting the courts, or if the charter is leading to the conclusion that one cannot ban criminal bikie gangs because that may infringe charter rights.

As I alluded to, the charter we have in Victoria does not even accurately reflect the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, so the charter cannot in any way be regarded as a touchstone of human rights or of justice. It is simply what the Attorney-General and his associates have decided they want to bring to Victoria as law.

Let us have a look at some of the failures. The charter fails to comply with article 2 of the covenant requiring direct remedies for charter breaches. It expressly asserts a right to abrogate rights which the covenant says may not be abrogated, even in an emergency. It gives the right to abrogate the right to life, the right to freedom from torture, the right to freedom from slavery and servitude, the right not to be imprisoned for a

contractual breach, the right against retrospective conviction and the right of recognition before the law as a person.

Under the covenant none of those rights can be abrogated, even in a state of emergency. Other rights, unless there is an express right of derogation granted by the covenant, can only be abrogated in times of emergency and surrounded by various safeguards. But our charter does not do that. Section 7 gives the government the right to trade off one human right for another under a set of open-ended criteria which we have seen time and again in the statements of compatibility brought before this house and used to justify just about anything the government wants. Of course if it ends up before the court it can be a bit more restrictive than that, but we see that the charter is failing comprehensively in this Parliament in providing any sort of assurance — even for those who seek, as a desirable policy objective, conformity with the international covenant.

In effect section 7 is the *Animal Farm* section in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act. Just as in *Animal Farm* we find the expression ‘All animals are born equal but some animals are more equal than others’ everybody has the human rights set out in the charter, but some of those rights are more rights than others.

Let us look at some other departures from the charter, and I cite these departures not necessarily saying that they are bad things — some of them may be good departures — but to prove that one cannot hold up the charter as if it were the be-all and end-all of what amounts to human rights when it does not even comply with the international covenant. The right to compensation if one has been a victim of unlawful arrest or detention, which is set out in article 9(5) of the covenant, is not provided for in the charter. The obligations of a penitentiary system to aim for the reformation and social rehabilitation of prisoners in article 10(3) of the covenant is not set out in the charter. The right of juveniles to always be segregated from adult offenders is not in the 2006 act.

The 2006 act allows for far greater restrictions on media access to trials than is permitted by the covenant. It allows any law to prohibit the publication of court judgements, whereas article 14 of the covenant means that except in specified circumstances, court judgements are to be made public.

The legislation fails to provide for compensation for wrongful conviction, as is required by article 14(6) of the covenant. The legislation fails to provide for respect

for the liberty of parents and legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in accordance with their own convictions. It fails to prohibit the use of propaganda for war or advocacy of national, racial or religious hate that constitutes incitement. It fails to recognise the family as the natural group unit of society. It fails to provide a child with the right to be registered immediately after birth and to have a name, and it allows citizens to be deprived of the right to vote, which is conferred on them by article 25 of the covenant.

As I said, I cite these examples to point out the significant departures between the charter act in Victoria and the international covenant on which it is said to be based. Some of the omissions and departures may be justified; others seem to simply reflect the policy, prejudices and inclinations of the Attorney-General. To have this range of departures undermines the credibility of the 2006 act as a touchstone for human rights or for justice and therefore undermines the credibility of saying simply on the say so of the 2006 act that amendments such as those set out in the bill before us should be made.

Let us look at some of the provisions of the bill. It amends superannuation regimes in relation to emergency services, the parliamentary scheme, the Police Regulation Act scheme, the transport scheme, the SERB and state superannuation schemes, and the pension entitlements of Supreme Court judges and associate judges, County Court judges, the Chief Magistrate and the solicitor-general.

It enables same-sex partners to become eligible for a domestic partner’s pension, even if the former member became entitled to benefits before the commencement of the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Act 2001 or the Constitution Amendment (Judicial Pensions) Act 2008, as the case may be. It allows members to continue to contribute to defined benefit superannuation schemes, and thus increase their benefit entitlements until age 75 or as otherwise permitted under commonwealth superannuation law.

It counts towards scheme membership of various schemes parental leave of up to 12 months for each confinement. It limits the right of superannuation boards to require medical examinations to those circumstances which are necessary for the purposes of the legislation. It allows scheme members to register the names of persons considered to be dependants, other than a partner or child, and allows other persons to lodge claims to be a dependant of a deceased member. It sets criteria to be applied by superannuation

boards in allocating dependant benefits amongst multiple claimants for the one entitlement.

It requires the content of a medical report following an examination to be made available to the scheme member unless prohibited under sections 26 or 27 of the Health Records Act 2001. It restricts the capacity of superannuation boards to pay benefits to another person when the member has become incapable to those cases where the member is incapable of managing their financial affairs.

For schemes that provide child pensions, the bill allows children with a disability as described in section 8(1) of the commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986 who wholly or partially rely on the member for financial support to receive a pension as an adult child in the case of the death of the member. It further provides that a member may register the name of a child, and that a person who is not registered may also lodge a claim. It requires that at least two medical reports must be considered in assessing any application.

Where applicable the bill repeals the provision that provides a reduced benefit for a spouse or partner more than five years younger than the scheme member. It specifies criteria that must be considered in allocating benefits amongst multiple spouses or partners. It removes the exclusion from eligibility for children born when a member was 60 years of age or older. It repeals the provisions in the Police Regulation Act 1958 that provide for a reduced disability pension if the member becomes ill due to what the act describes as their own 'vicious habits or misconduct' and in the State Superannuation Act 1988 where the disability was due to the member's own fault.

The bill repeals provisions of the SERB scheme that provide for reduced benefits for employees who joined the service with pre-existing risk factors. It allows SERB members to obtain lump sum benefits at age 60 rather than at age 65. It removes from the State Superannuation Act 1988 the waiting period before a person can qualify for a disability pension after returning from leave of absence without pay. It requires the use of a formula based on an actuarial assessment in converting a State Superannuation Act partner's pension to a lump sum.

As I indicated at the outset, a number of these amendments seem quite reasonable. For example, making clear that a superannuation board can request a medical examination only when that is required for the purposes of the legislation seems common sense. It may well have been implicit anyway, and there is certainly no objection to making it explicit. The setting

of criteria governing some decisions that need to be made by boards may also make sense, to reduce uncertainty and give guidance to the boards.

There are other provisions that raise policy considerations which have certainly not been addressed in the second-reading speech, such as in granting additional pension entitlements to persons who have already retired; the merits of removing limitations such as an actuarially reduced scale of benefits when there is a significant age discrepancy between partners to a relationship; and the merits of removing a provision that can reduce the amount of disability pension or benefit entitlements if a disability is self-inflicted, either deliberately or through reckless conduct.

A particular issue has been raised with us by the ambulance union and the Police Association of Victoria in response to our consultation on the bill. This is a particular issue to which I believe the minister and the government need to respond. They point out that the bill will count towards membership of various schemes, including the emergency services scheme, parental leave of up to 12 months for each pregnancy, or each 'confinement' as the legislation expresses it.

However, the unions point out that under fair work legislation and under the relevant industrial instruments their members can be entitled to take up to 24 months parental leave as a mixture of paid and unpaid leave. They quite reasonably ask why there is this discrepancy and whether the bill should cover parental leave of up to 24 months, or 104 weeks, which is what they are entitled to under the industrial regime that applies to them, rather than just up to the 12 months provided for by the bill.

That seems to us a reasonable issue for them to raise and is one that I believe the government needs to address in its response to debate on the bill. Perhaps it would be appropriate for the minister to sit down with the unions, talk through this issue and listen to what they have to say, and attempt to achieve a fair and sensible outcome.

As I said at the outset, this bill has been driven not by the policy merits of the various changes that have been made but by a review that the government felt obliged to undertake as a result of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. The upshot is that the provisions in the bill are not being justified on their policy merits. They may or may not have policy merit, but they have been justified simply on the bald assertion that they are required by the 2006 act, on the basis of legal advice to which this Parliament and the public do not have access.

I would certainly reiterate the opposition's request to the government that a copy of that legal advice be made available to us and indeed be made public so that we, the Parliament as a whole and the community can assess the merits of what is being said to justify this legislation and can at least form some judgement about whether or not even the legal grounds for the changes that are being made are justified or the extent to which the government is departing from the legal advice it has obtained.

In the upshot the opposition will not be opposing this bill, but I reiterate that legislation such as this should not be justified simply by reference to a flawed charter act; it should be justified on the policy merits of the legislation. This bill is yet another demonstration of the folly of the Attorney-General and the current government proceeding down the path of crafting a distorted and inaccurate version of the international covenant and trying to make what it claims to be a touchstone of human rights in Victoria but which in fact is likely to result in as much injustice as justice.

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — I am very pleased to rise and speak in support of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill now before the house. The bill brings a number of acts into line with the principles of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The acts include the Emergency Services Superannuation Act, the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act, the Police Regulation Act, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act, the State Superannuation Act, the Superannuation (Portability) Act and the Transport Superannuation Act.

These acts all relate to superannuation and were reviewed by the government to ensure compatibility with the charter of human rights. The bill therefore amends, as required, various provisions contained within the acts. I want to take this opportunity to commend the work undertaken by the government to give the charter this opportunity to again ensure fundamental human rights are observed in Victoria, which was the first state in Australia to introduce a charter of human rights. However, we have not just stopped there; we have always remained vigilant to ensure that its intent is carried out.

This bill will make a number of amendments, including a provision to make same-sex partners eligible for a reversionary pension even if the superannuation fund pensioner was already receiving a pension when the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Act 2001 amendments came into effect on 23 August 2001. It also will allow for members to nominate their dependants and amend the definition of 'spouse' in the

Police Regulation Act to include same-sex couples such that same-sex couples have the same entitlements as heterosexual couples to a reversionary spouse pension. It will also extend their contributory service in defined benefit schemes beyond age 65.

It will amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act and the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act to provide for 12 months parental leave per confinement to count as service. This includes death and disability cover. It will remove the adjustment to reversionary partner pensions for partners who are more than five years younger than the former member, and it will also amend the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act to ensure that orphan children of former members are entitled to an orphan pension regardless of the age of the member when the child was born.

The Police Regulation Act, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act, and the State Superannuation Act are also amended such that the partner of a member is entitled to a benefit regardless of the age of the pensioner when they commenced their relationship. It will also repeal sections of the Police Regulation Act and the State Superannuation Act, which allow for reduction of a disability pension where the member brought on the sickness as a result of his or her fault.

It will remove the medical classification provisions in the State Superannuation Act and the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act. Finally it will amend the State Superannuation Act to remove the waiting period for a person to be covered by death and disability insurance after they return from leave without pay. These are all very important changes that will protect Victorians' interests and their fundamental rights.

The bill also will amend the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General Act 1972, the Constitution Act 1975, the County Court Act 1958, the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, and the Supreme Court Act 1986 to allow same-sex partners of pensioners to receive reversionary pensions in similar circumstances to the superannuation acts as described above.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress that all of these provisions designed to bring the rights of same-sex couples into line with the rights of heterosexual couples are of critical importance not just for same-sex couples but for all of us, because to treat people differently merely on the basis of their relationship reflects poorly on us all. These basic human rights must be upheld and respected at all times. Labor has not merely paid lip-service to this key objective; we have delivered fundamental reform,

amending nearly 100 acts to remove discrimination against any person because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This included changes to the distribution of property and wills, and the right to be recognised as the next of kin for medical treatment and so on. All of these changes and more have ensured that in Victoria all people are treated equally.

Members opposite — and we saw it again today — are constantly seeking to undermine the charter of human rights and its intent, but for those of us on this side of the house, our commitment to protect fundamental human rights, as does this bill before the house, remains clear and consistent. I therefore commend the bill to the house.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of the Ferntree Gully electorate to speak on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill. The primary purpose of this bill is to amend the public sector superannuation and judicial pension legislation to remove provisions which the government considers to be incompatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and to enable the ambulance service employees transferring to the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority to retain their defined benefit superannuation.

Before I began my contribution the member for Box Hill said a lot about the operation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Time and again this government introduces legislation accompanied by massive tomes in the form of statements of compatibility with the charter, which deal with why particular pieces of legislation the government has introduced should breach its own charter. Government members seem to spend more time focusing on employing bureaucrats and paying for legal advice to justify breaching their own charter than in following the charter. That just demonstrates the folly of this government with respect to the operation of the charter in this state.

This is a government that set out to hold itself up as being at the pinnacle of the recognition of human rights of Victorians and in ensuring they were going to be protected. Yet every time the government introduces legislation we see breaches of the charter. At great expense, because of legal costs, the government sets out to demonstrate why it needs to breach its own charter to introduce legislation in this state. That is demonstrated in amendments in this bill which show that the bill is more about working with and fixing the charter than it

is about good public policy. Our purpose as legislators in this place is to ensure we develop good public policy which is focused on taking this state forward and not policy which is concerned with ensuring that the government is meeting the needs of its own human rights charter. It is clear from this and previous other pieces of legislation that have come before it that the government's focus is not public policy in this state but the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

This bill seeks to change a number of provisions with respect to the operation of superannuation schemes in this state. Before I go through some examples I want to refer to an issue raised by the member for Box Hill regarding employees engaged in our emergency services. As the member for Box Hill pointed out, there are provisions with respect to continuity of service under superannuation schemes for an employee who takes parental leave of up to 52 weeks. As some of the emergency services unions have pointed out, under their respective enterprise agreements there is capacity for employees to take leave of up to 104 weeks, or two years. There may well be a discrepancy in the operation of the superannuation schemes — as has been mentioned — and the operation of their enterprise agreements. I think it behoves the minister and the government to sit down to consult with and speak to the concerned representatives of those unions and their members and to explain how the operations of these provisions will be in accordance with the provisions of those enterprise agreements.

As I said, we should be focusing on public policy; we should not be focusing on fixing the government's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. That is clearly an issue for this government. I believe the minister in summing up should explain to the house how that issue will be remedied.

The bill seeks to make a number of amendments in relation to superannuation, principally to the Emergency Services Superannuation Act, the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act, the Police Regulation Act, the Transport Superannuation Act, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act and the State Superannuation Act. It will also make variations to the pension entitlements of Supreme Court judges and associate judges, County Court judges, the Chief Magistrate and the solicitor-general. As we can see there are broad changes within the provisions of this bill. The bill also enables same-sex partners to become eligible for spouse or domestic partner pensions, even if the former member became entitled to benefits before the commencement of the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Act 2001 or the Constitution Amendment (Judicial Pensions) Act 2008.

Some issues need to be put on the record. As the member for Box Hill has already articulated, the Liberal-Nationals coalition will not be opposing this bill. However, this bill will cost over \$44 million over the life of the various funds, and that is a significant cost. Again, as the member for Benalla has rightly pointed out, that cost will be borne by the taxpayer. I also refer to the issue of the merits of granting extra pension entitlements to persons who have already retired.

This is an interesting provision, because it will provide additional pension entitlements for people who are no longer working. I think that issue needs to be the subject of further debate. There is also the issue of the merits of removing various other limitations, such as the reduction of benefits for partners who are more than five years younger than the member concerned or for people who have self-inflicted disabilities. I make no comment other than to say simply these are policy issues which should be subject to broader debate within the Victorian community; and it is important they be taken up as part of a broader policy debate.

In the small amount of time allocated to me I want to reiterate that the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities points to a government that is driven by an ideological agenda. This government is not focusing on public policy, fixing law and order, fixing public transport or on providing the best health or education systems in this state. This is a tired government which has been in power for 11 years and which is more focused on fixing its ideologically driven agendas, including the charter of human rights, than worrying about fixing those things that people throughout Victoria, including in my electorate and others, say we need to be focusing on.

There are elements of this bill that are going to be providing benefits to employees and those who have standing in this state; we do not object to that. I highlight the fact that people in my electorate and people who speak to the Liberal-Nationals coalition tell us they want the government to focus on those issues that affect them. They want this government to focus on issues that are paramount to the daily needs in their lives — that is, law and order. I understand it is important we ensure that legislation is current, relevant and up to date. In regard to legislation such as this, it is important we make those changes. But this government has dropped the ball. This bill is a demonstration of a tired government that is no longer focused on the issues that affect people in this state.

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to support the Superannuation Legislation

Amendment Bill 2010. The issue that lies at the heart of this bill, which is the rights of individuals within our society, is dear to my heart. My loathing of bigotry in all its forms and my desire for all persons to be treated equally within our society originally engaged me in the political process. I strongly believe all persons should be treated equally before the law. The issue that originally drove me into politics was racism, but I believe other areas of discrimination are equally abhorrent and reprehensible. This bill particularly relates to the desire to ensure that people are treated equally before the law.

This bill, as has been discussed by other speakers, seeks to amend a number of acts of Parliament to ensure that they are consistent with the principles in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. Those acts include the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986, Parliamentary Secretaries and Superannuation Act 1968, Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968, Police Regulation Act 1958, State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979, State Superannuation Act 1988, Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989 and Transport Superannuation Act 1988.

In addition the bill seeks to amend the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General Act 1972, Constitution Act 1975, County Court Act 1958, Magistrates' Court Act 1989 and Supreme Court Act 1986 to allow same-sex partners of pensioners to receive a reversionary pension in similar circumstances to those in the superannuation acts.

I will touch upon that briefly. Like I am sure many other members of Parliament I have become aware of the many persons who live in our society in same-sex relationships. Persons living in same-sex relationships should be entitled to superannuation rights just as any other citizen is entitled. I am pleased those provisions lie in this bill to ensure that reversionary pensions will be available to persons living in same-sex relationships. That is a very worthwhile change.

If you turn to the basis of the revisions to the various acts to ensure they are consistent with the principles in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities I have listed, you find that the first one that strikes you and that relates to the bill is the recognition of equality before the law. With the indulgence of the house, I will read from the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities:

People have the right to recognition before the law.

People have the right to enjoy their human rights without discrimination. People have the right to equality before the law and equal protection of the law without discrimination.

Measures taken to assist people who are disadvantaged because of discrimination will not constitute unlawful discrimination under the charter.

I think that is an excellent statement of values, which I hope underpins the beliefs of all members of this house. I would be horrified if there were persons who did not believe there should be equality before the law, that people should be accorded equal protection under law and that people should not be discriminated against. However, from a Labor member's perspective I strongly support this:

Measures taken to assist people who are disadvantaged because of discrimination will not constitute unlawful discrimination under the charter.

That is an important caveat in a sense because positive discrimination to redress imbalances within society is not itself considered unlawful and actions to achieve it are not considered to be unequal. Sometimes it is necessary to take action to assist those who are disadvantaged in such a way that action is not accorded to all members of our society.

The bill takes a further step along the path of ensuring equality before the law; it relates to the provision of privacy and reputation:

A person has the right not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with and the right not to have his or her reputation unlawfully attacked.

This is an important provision of the charter and relates to various superannuation schemes, particularly in relation to medical examinations. Unreasonable medical examinations would be an aspect of the operation of the law that members in this house would hopefully feel unanimously about in terms of people not having to undergo unreasonable medical examinations.

The third aspect of the charter that is dealt with in this bill concerns property rights. The charter states in relation to property rights that a person must not be deprived of his or her property except in accordance with the law. In that context 'property' has a broader meaning than simply, say, goods or chattels that are owned by people, including entitlements of future superannuation benefits as a member and as a beneficiary of a superannuation death benefit.

In this context the right is a broader one and relates to superannuation benefits, particularly revisionary partner pensions for partners who are more than five years younger than the former member. There is in some cases discrimination against persons in those circumstances. I believe this is again a positive

development whereby the property rights of a person should not be reduced because of the age of a person.

There is also other aged-based discrimination that is dealt with by this bill, particularly in relation to the ability to continue to make contributions into defined benefit schemes beyond the age of 65 as permitted by commonwealth law.

Again, without going through the bill clause by clause, I believe this is an excellent piece of legislation, which builds on a commitment to ensuring equality of access to rights in our society.

This is something very close to my heart, and I am very pleased that this bill particularly deals with the issue of same-sex partners and revisionary pensions, because I firmly believe superannuation pension rights should be equal for all members of our community, regardless of their sexual orientation, particularly those who have been in loving, long-term relationships. I note that some American conservative commentators ironically enough support extension of rights to same-sex partners — I can think of one in particular — on the basis that this provides more stability and family values within society. Sadly those views are not shared by all members of our community.

This is an excellent piece of legislation, which will advance the rights of individuals. One aspect of the bill I did not touch upon is the amendment of the Emergency Services Superannuation Act to allow Ambulance Victoria employees who transfer employment to the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority to retain their membership of the Emergency Services Superannuation Defined Benefit Fund. This seems a reasonable piece of legislation to protect the rights under defined benefit schemes for individuals who transfer employment from Ambulance Victoria to the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority. This is a sensible piece of legislation.

This bill, as I stated, will ensure that the rights of individuals are held equally. I note the obsession, it seems to me, of some members of the opposition with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act and the view they have regarding particularly the act and obviously the charter the act has generated.

I think this obsession is unwarranted. One thing I would state is that the requirement for bills to deal with their responsibilities under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act has provided, beyond anything else, a very useful mechanism for analysing pieces of legislation and their impact. Apart from the benefits that

accrue under the charter itself, I have noted that often enough opposition members have afforded themselves the opportunity that has arisen from the explanations that are provided within the second-reading speech process relating to the charter in order to launch attacks on government bills. However, I think that the charter provides an interesting framework for analysis of pieces of legislation.

Setting aside the benefits which accrue to Victorian citizens by the protection of the charter, I find the obsession and attacks on the charter somewhat interesting, considering the use the charter regularly made by members of Parliament in analysing legislation.

However, returning to the bill, it is an excellent piece of legislation, which I commend to the house.

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — I rise to contribute to the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Preston, who does see the world through different eyes and does give another perspective to life that might be different from that of a simple country boy from Benalla. You do not always need to agree with the member for Preston, but it is an exercise in broadening one's horizons.

I would also like to compliment the member for Box Hill who, true to form, did a very clinical assessment of the bill and identified some pluses and some question marks about the bill. Similarly, the member for Ferntree Gully's contribution was again a pragmatic contribution. Both the member for Box Hill and the member for Ferntree Gully raised issues about the basis underpinning this bill being under the guise of the charter of human rights and about the government then appearing to spend a lot of time justifying why the human rights provisions were being challenged or not complied with.

From my perspective, as I read it, the general terms of this bill enable more people to access the superannuation benefits of deceased superannuation beneficiaries. That includes same-sex partners and partners in general, regardless of when their relationship commenced.

The bill also repeals sections of the Police Regulation Act 1958 and the State Superannuation Act 1988, which had allowed for the reduction of a disability pension where a member brought on a sickness as a result of his or her own fault.

On whatever night it was — it might have been Sunday night — I happened to watch *Underbelly* on the telly, and we saw a classic example of where — —

Ms Beattie interjected.

Dr SYKES — I advise the member for Yuroke that I had some spare time; not a regular event, but I had some spare time. The relevance of that program to this bill is that it had a situation where a corrupt cop set up a workplace accident that appeared to result in back and neck injuries that were going to enable him to exit the force just prior to him being nabbed for his corrupt activities. That is a situation where it would appear, as portrayed there, that someone was deliberately creating an environment where they would have a disability and they were going to be entitled to benefits as a result of that. Under the previous provisions of this legislation had it been established that that so-called accident had been caused in part by that cop's fault there may have been a limitation on the benefits. This bill will enable a corrupt cop such as that to presumably get full entitlements. If that is what will happen, I would see that as a shortcoming of this bill.

The obvious implications of the bill, as I interpret them, are that with the easing up of limitations on access to superannuation entitlements there is the potential for what we might colloquially refer to as a gold-digger marrying an older partner, knowing that there is going to be easier access to their pension in the event that that person dies. The other concern I have — and it was raised by the member for Ferntree Gully and the member for Box Hill — is that there is an increased cost as a result of these provisions. The cost has been estimated at \$44 million. I suspect that will be an underestimate based on costings done by this government, but it does raise the question: is that appropriate or has the balancing act got out of kilter?

A particular interest of mine is the issue of children with a disability and how aspects of this bill relate to those children. I would have to say that whilst I see reference to this issue in clauses 87, 90, 91 and 92, I would really appreciate the minister in his summing up addressing the concern I am about to outline. It relates to the situation where there are ageing or ill parents of children with a disability and those parents have become the carer. If that parent was, for example, to be a beneficiary of the state superannuation fund and that parent pre-deceased their child, then I would be interested to know what the situation would be in relation to entitlements for the child with a disability.

I will add a personal component. This issue was brought home to me in a very heart-rending way just last week when I attended a carers' meeting at Nagambie. When I arrived at the meeting venue, a very frail 43 kilogram lady was struggling to manually put a wheelchair-accessible platform back into her vehicle. I

helped her do that and found it quite difficult myself. As I spoke to her, she explained why she was having difficulty. She said that she had had radical cancer surgery and that she was now in remission but she did feel a little weak and had numbness in her arms. Later, as I was helping her negotiate another challenge, she explained to me that when her cancer had been diagnosed three years earlier, she had actually put off the cancer treatment — the radical surgery that was required as a matter of urgency — because she was unable to get respite care for her disabled child.

That lady, as the sole carer of her adult child, had put herself under enormous emotional and physical pressure because she wanted to do the best thing for her child with a disability. Fortunately she got through that life-threatening circumstance, but clearly a cloud hangs over her head as to whether her cancer will recur. In the event that a person like that was a beneficiary of the state superannuation fund, what would be the provisions for that child with a disability? I know this scenario was repeated throughout many circumstances and it is a major worry for people who are caring for adults or children with a disability. They are getting older and the system does not give them confidence that their child is going to be adequately cared for. If there is not access to superannuation and such to provide the financial support, then the future for those children with a disability is bleak.

I would appreciate it if the minister, in summing up, could touch on that point and seek to reassure me that those circumstances are adequately covered in this new legislation so that those people who truly do need the financial support and financial comfort of being able to access the pensions of their parents can do so and their needs can be adequately met.

I just wanted to touch on those aspects of the bill. The member for Box Hill covered the broader issues in his contribution. It would be fair to say that the coalition is generally supportive of the direction in which this bill is going, although, as the member for Ferntree Gully indicated, there are doubts about the genuineness of why the government is going down this track and whether it is simply ideologically driven or whether it has been thought through properly. The reason I raise that is we have had a number of bills come before this Parliament that seem to be ideologically driven. They get passed because the government has the majority. Then two or three years later — or sometimes it is only a matter of months later — we see the bill coming back to Parliament because it was not right in the first place.

I guess it would be fair to say, given that we have the Minister for Consumer Affairs at the table, that the

recent episode of the liquor licensing fees is a classic example of poorly thought out legislation driven by, in that case, a financial imperative to fund liquor licensing enforcement — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! The member for Benalla will come back to the bill before the house.

Dr SYKES — I am putting my concerns in context, Acting Speaker. I hope this bill is well thought through and that it is not simply ideologically driven. I hope we are not going to have a repeat of that situation I have referred to, where this bill would need to be returned for fixing up in a few weeks or months.

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. Although there are not a lot of members in the house at the moment, I fear that after the contribution of the member for Benalla that I might bore them senseless — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! The member for Yuroke will come back to the legislation.

Ms BEATTIE — In my contribution on the legislation I will make no reference to the TV show *Underbelly* and I will make no mention of gold-diggers. However, on the point of gold-diggers, I must say that I feel personally offended because the member for Benalla talked about couples where one partner was older than the other and suggested that if one partner was somewhat younger than their partner, they would be classed as gold-diggers. I might reveal to the house that my husband is actually younger than me, so I am not sure if in the eyes of the member for Benalla I am classed as a gold-digger or a cougar.

Dr Sykes — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Yuroke is misrepresenting the presentation I made. I ask the Acting Speaker to bring her back to the bill and to not misrepresent the point that I was making.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! There is no point of order, but I remind the member for Yuroke to keep her comments to the bill before the chamber.

Ms BEATTIE — I shall now turn my mind to the bill rather than the comments from the member for Benalla. The primary objective of the bill is to amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986, the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968, the Police Regulation Act 1958, the State Employees

Retirement Benefits Act 1979, the State Superannuation Act 1988, the Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989 and the Transport Superannuation Act 1988 to achieve consistency with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Many of us in the house are aware that superannuation is, if you like, a bit of a moving feast. Superannuation is something of a minefield, particularly for women, because superannuation funds have always been open to men but many funds would not accept women. Certainly that was the case in a lot of the public service acts. Within the lifetime of many members of this house a woman had to relinquish her job upon marriage. For that reason many women did not even talk about their marriages so they could keep their jobs. It is a moving feast, particularly for women. You will see figures, Acting Speaker, which show that superannuation funds hold much less for women than they do for men, and I particularly want to highlight that.

I have talked about the primary purpose of the bill. The secondary purpose is to amend the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General Act 1972, the Constitution Act 1975, the County Court Act 1958, the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 and the Supreme Court Act 1986 to allow same-sex partners of pensioners to receive reversionary pensions in similar circumstances to those that apply under the Superannuation Act. I talked about women's superannuation in particular, but most superannuation funds around that time would not even have recognised same-sex partners as being legitimate partners at all. This is another step in the right direction so the Parliament and the legislation are not poking into the bedrooms of people. This bill acknowledges that relationships between people are mature and have many facets.

The bill also amends the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986 to allow Ambulance Victoria employees who transfer their employment to the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority to retain their membership of the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme defined benefit scheme. I must say that is an excellent purpose of the bill, because we want to keep Ambulance Victoria employees who are in the defined benefit fund in the ambulance service. We do not want to see them transfer because they might suffer a loss of superannuation.

I have touched on same-sex couples and on the judicial pension schemes that are relevant. We all owe a debt to former High Court Justice Michael Kirby for his championing of superannuation rights for same-sex

couples. It is not easy for a former high-profile member of the judiciary to reveal their personal relationships, but Michael Kirby did that, and many people owe him a debt of gratitude.

The bill also amends the definition of 'spouse' to include same-sex couples. Same-sex couples have the same entitlements to reversionary spouse pensions as heterosexual couples, and that is absolutely right and as it should be. It also extends the contributory service in defined benefit schemes beyond age 65, and that is permitted by commonwealth law. As I said earlier in my contribution, superannuation is a moving feast, and we know that not everybody retires at 65, nor should they if they wish to extend their working lives. People over 65 can make a fine contribution. They should not be required to retire at 65, and we know they may wish to alter their arrangements at that time.

The bill also removes the adjustment of reversionary partner pensions for partners who are more than five years younger than the former member. A very important aspect is amending the legislation to ensure that an orphan child of a former member is entitled to an orphan pension regardless of the age of the member when the child was born. That is very important and reflects the changing nature of families. When people take in a child it is their wish that the child be recognised as their child and have all the benefits that go with being their child, regardless of who their birth mother and father were.

All in all I commend the minister for bringing in this bill. It may be criticised. Some people may suggest that the proposed rise in the age should be accompanied by a rise in the maximum benefit, but it also fixes up some benefits. We know that at one time when you went on leave you could not acquire the same benefits, but the bill allows a member who is on parental leave to pay a superannuation contribution in order that their service be counted, as it should be. The Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission has obtained expert advice in this area, and there has been consultation. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. Its purpose is to amend public sector superannuation and judicial pension legislation to remove provisions which the government considers to be incompatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and to enable ambulance service employees transferring to the ESTA (Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority) to retain their defined benefit superannuation.

Australia's retirement income has three main components: superannuation, the age pension, and private savings and investments. A commonly held view is that retirees need 60 per cent of their pre-retirement income to live comfortably. The age pension currently provides just 25 per cent of average male weekly earnings, which is extremely low and should be addressed by the commonwealth government. With an ageing population the pension is likely to remain very low as the financial burden becomes too much for the government to bear. With that in mind we need to encourage people to provide for their own retirements to take the pressure off the pension system so those who truly need it will not have their pensions held down at subsistence levels.

The current level of 9 per cent compulsory superannuation contributions assumes an individual's working life of 40 years, based on average weekly earnings, will produce a 60 per cent retirement income. Superannuation is particularly important for women, who often prioritise the financial needs and wants of their families over their own financial security and are more likely to sacrifice earnings, savings and investments to meet the needs of others. As a result women tend to have significantly lower superannuation balances than men, primarily due to their wage levels and work patterns around children.

It is projected by the Office for Women in Queensland that by the year 2019 men, on average, will have accumulated double the superannuation that women, on average, will have accumulated. Fifty per cent of women who have either retired or will retire in the next 10 years have less than \$20 000 in superannuation, and 20 per cent have less than \$5000. Women are two and a half times more likely than men to live in poverty in their old age because they have contributed far less to their superannuation. In 2000 across Australia there were 106 000 poor single women over 65 years compared with 40 000 men in this group. Interestingly, this inequality has not been addressed by any government.

Turning to the bill in detail, I see it is noted that members will be permitted to continue to contribute to defined benefit superannuation schemes and thus increase their benefit entitlement until age 75 or as otherwise permitted under commonwealth superannuation law.

Older people frequently struggle financially at a time when they need every cent. Medical bills skyrocket, the older we get, as our bodies begin to break down. It would be nice to think that we live in a state where our hospital waiting lists were minimal, and those in need

of urgent surgery did not have to wait long and painful months or years before being treated. However, that is not the case. As a result our elderly citizens sometimes find themselves in the position where their only choice is to pay for their own surgery through reverse mortgages, to hasten the process and break the cycle of pain and anguish. It is not just the medical bills that are of concern. Food, a necessity, is sometimes unaffordable when you are on a basic pension. We have all heard the reports in the media about our pensioners resorting to eating cat food because they cannot survive on the pension. If we can prevent future generations from enduring a similar fate, we must do so.

The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 allows scheme members to register the names of persons considered to be dependents other than a partner or child and allows other persons to lodge claims to be a dependent of a deceased or retired member. Where someone gains power of attorney over the superannuant by reason of mental incapability, the board is empowered to pay the benefit to a retired member's guardian or administrator. This appears to be a remarkably fluid process that perhaps does not go far enough to offer strong protections against future claims being made by alleged dependants.

For example, a second wife of five years, or a husband for that matter, who may be competing for a greater share of the superannuation entitlement of their partner than a previous wife, or husband, of 35 years, may seek to register her — or in the case of a husband, his — adult children from a former relationship as dependants. As superannuation benefits can be quite sizeable, I imagine there would be a few people interested in claiming a share of what may appear to be a small fortune.

While the board is given full discretion under the bill to take into account the nature of the relationship of the retired member, with reference to duration of the relationship, the time since the relationship ended — if it ended — financial dependency on the retired member and any other factors the board deems relevant, if the retired member is experiencing a slow demise in their mental acuity and is no longer able to make their own decisions, it would appear to be very difficult for the board to determine the veracity of the claimed provision of care by the dependants.

Photos, friends' testimonials and phone bills showing frequent calls made do not necessarily equate to caring. For instance, repeat phone calls could be to harass the retired member for money. Friends might be told they will get a 'cut' if they say the right thing to the right people, and in relation to photographs — we are always

told to smile for photos even when we have just had a fight with the person standing next to us. I think this area requires tightening up to ensure that those motivated by greed find it as difficult as possible to seize control over the hard-earned superannuation of those who may be vulnerable.

In the minister's second-reading speech he says:

Any current member with a medical classification will now be entitled to full benefits, consistent with the charter principle of equality before the law.

He does not even draw a breath before going on to say, in the very next sentence:

This amendment will not affect existing pensioners.

In other words, you are equal if you satisfy the time line requirements; but if you do not, the Labor government's view is 'stiff cheddar'.

The bill goes on to remove the exclusion from eligibility in relation to children born when the member was 60 years of age or older. This is one amendment I am pleased to see, because it is absolute nonsense that children of older parents are denied access to any benefit simply because they were not born by a certain date; a parent loves their child regardless of their age or how long they have known the child in comparison with any older generations of children that may exist from past relationships. For example, most parents generally want their assets divided equally between their children after the parents die.

The major problem with Australia's superannuation system is that for it to have the best chance of working properly, you need to possess all of the following characteristics. You need to be male, to have worked continuously for 35 years, to have had a single job, to have made voluntary super contributions throughout your entire life, to know a lot about managing your super, the tax system and investing and to have paid more than 15 cents in the dollar on your personal income. You need never to have divorced, never to have suffered a serious illness, not to have relied on a financial adviser who receives commissions for advising you to join a super fund that charges high fees, and to be confident that the super rules are not going to change too much.

While the government's concern with this bill is clearly to align superannuation legislation with its highly political charter of human rights, I believe there are far more pressing issues facing people trying to build a future for their retirement which have not been addressed in any meaningful way by the state government, or by the commonwealth government for

that matter. That said, the bill does touch on a few important issues for dependants and regarding access to entitlements. For that reason I will not oppose this bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr STENSCHOLT (Burwood).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

Sitting suspended 6.28 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

APPROPRIATION (2010/2011) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 May; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Premier).

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Doncaster) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill. Is it not a cynical election-year budget? It is a spendathon without substance, vision or ideas to back it up. It features the usual array of hollow, half-baked announcements we have come to expect from this government. It even has some sweeteners, which will be funded only for one year. How convenient it is that this also happens to be an election year!

The budget contains promises deceptively announced but funded out of forward estimates beyond 2013–14. It has some good ideas, but it is a pity that none of those ideas originated in the offices of the government. Clearly Labor ministers are in a contest to see how many of the coalition's policies they can pilfer before the November election.

Listening to the Treasurer hand down his cynical, pre-election budget and gazing at the smirks of Labor ministers and backbenchers occupying the seats of this Parliament, I had an overwhelming sense of déjà vu. I had seen such self-gratifying spin before, and it suddenly dawned on me: this was reality mimicking television; this was a government using episodes of the *Hollowmen* as a template to govern this state.

As members know, the *Hollowmen* is a comedy which inspires no confidence in our political system. It essentially outlines the daily operations of a political office in Australia. The humour is derived from watching advisers manipulate and spin policy to such an extent that they can no longer differentiate, even for themselves, political spin from reality — and this is what Labor's budget represents.

It represents a government whose policies and actions are removed from the actual impact that they have on

families and communities across the state. The numerous hollow men in the Premier's office are more interested in scrambling to cover up the latest Labor Party scandal than they are in policies to improve the lives of Victorians.

One particular line from an episode of the *Hollowmen* springs to mind. Tony, the Prime Minister's principal private secretary, is lamenting the dearth of a budget centrepiece and he says:

So we've got the slogan, we've got the ad, we've got the report —

and Murph. says:

\$100 billion.

to which Tony replies:

We just need an idea.

This is a government no longer able to come up with ideas. This is the government that thinks up the propaganda before it thinks up the policy. Even the clever scriptwriters from the ABC could not dream of such a fiasco as what we have witnessed with the Windsor Hotel development and the government's sham consultations. No amount of self-promoting government advertisements will fix the fact that our multi-billion-dollar public transport system does not work, nor will it ensure access to an ambulance when you need it. Budget cost blow-outs totalling almost \$11 billion have marked Labor's time in government, yet our roads remain congested, our hospitals do not have enough beds and our water supply remains unreliable.

I want to spend some time in this debate on my important shadow portfolios. I will start with environment and climate change; in respect of that area, this budget is a *Hollowmen*-style budget like no other. True to form, it was leaked almost comprehensively to the media before its presentation, and the government's announcement about free entry into national parks was exposed as a pre-election farce. In the PAEC (Public Accounts and Estimates Committee) budget estimates hearings early last month the Premier proudly touted that from 1 July entry to national parks would be free. He then backtracked to clarify that this so-called free entry to national parks would be funded for only one year. It will come as no surprise to members that this free entry would occur in an election year only.

Even more outstanding was that despite a decade of drought, devastating bushfires and growing levels of waste and pollution, Labor has reduced spending in the last year on sustainable water supply, waste

management, pollution and clean air. Not only are we spending less on such important measures but Labor's attempt to report on outcomes on key environmental targets, such as the government's greenhouse gas emissions, how the government is tracking on its renewable energy target and the protection of native species, is quite abysmal. Precious budget space is taken up by measures which record useless targets for bureaucratic output and deadlines.

Remarkably this budget continues to ignore the urgent need for increased fuel reduction burns in Victoria. Despite advice from senior bureaucrats, legal representatives and communities, the Premier has not only failed to increase the current 130 000-hectare fuel reduction target but he has even refused to set a target in this year's budget. Without any action from the government, Victoria will be left dangerously unprepared and exposed to the threat of bushfires in the future.

In April Australians saw an extraordinary display of political hypocrisy. It was one of what appears to be a bottomless pit of broken promises by Labor governments. Remember how the Prime Minister said climate change was the great economic and moral challenge of our generation? Now the federal government has well and truly deserted the climate change debate, and Victoria is placed in an interesting position. But this budget shows the Premier's willingness to follow in the footsteps of his Labor mates in Canberra and also to abandon leadership in this important area. Environment Victoria tarred the budget as a 'missed opportunity' and Friends of the Earth lamented that it was 'light on in terms of pivotal issues of climate change'.

We have been expecting a climate change bill for almost four years, and the long-promised and overdue white paper is still missing. While we welcome the *Jobs for the Future Economy* report as a step in the right direction, we fear it will end up like so many government strategies motivated by media pressure and poorly implemented. We feel that regional Victoria has been disregarded; for instance, the Latrobe Valley, which will be significantly affected by state and federal decisions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, is all but forgotten. There is no transition plan that promotes jobs and industries in that region.

But forgetting local communities appears to be a recurring theme across all areas of government policy. In terms of community services and mental health, this is the budget of a government that is more interested in protecting and enhancing the careers of its members than in protecting and serving the community. This is

the budget of a government that continues to stand by a minister regardless of their abilities and competence. In fact it appears there is no outcome bad enough or enough repeated poor outcomes to tip this government's scales away from job security for mates and towards good governance and responsible leadership.

Also at the PAEC hearings the Minister for Community Services was asked time and again about the number of times her department complied with statutory requirements in completing best interest case plans, only to have her repeatedly avoid replying to the question. However, even before her PAEC hearing had finished she had called a press conference. It turned out that the minister did have the answer after all — and what an answer it was! She revealed that best interest case plans were not being appropriately prepared for neglected and abused children. It was revealed that these plans were not being completed in not 10 per cent of cases, not even 50 per cent of cases but in 80 per cent of cases. That is 1100 children who have had their neglect and abuse proven by the court and who have not received a best interest case plan completed in an appropriate time frame. Non-government members of PAEC have requested the committee to recall the Minister for Community Services to explain her actions and her disrespect for the committee as well as to answer the question she refused to answer when she was before the committee.

What about the budget specifically? The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) said about it:

Today's disappointing budget continues the Victorian government's approach to letting problems reach crisis point ...

Take disability services as an example. In 2008 the Minister for Community Services, under pressure from the disability sector, undertook an independent pricing review of disability services. Because she did not like what it showed, the minister refused to release the PricewaterhouseCoopers report until she was forced to do so by a coalition motion in the upper house calling for the production of documents. It made for interesting reading. The report found that the gap between the cost of providing day services and the funding received from the government was \$15 million per annum, and 13 out of 18 agencies reported weighted unit costs greater than the available funding. There were also significant gaps in supported accommodation and respite services. It was good to see in the budget some funding to address the gap in supported accommodation unit prices, but there was nothing to address the funding gaps in unit prices for day or respite services. National Disability Services said:

... this budget does not address the chronic underfunding of day services ... It makes no commitment to undertake further analysis of respite funding for disability services ...

Carers Victoria said:

... there is very little for caring families to celebrate.

It went on to say:

... this government has failed caring families yet again.

While the minister trumpets what increase in funding there is for disability services, a recent update from the commonwealth shows that this year Victoria will receive an extra \$38.7 million from the commonwealth government. More than half the increase in funding is from the commonwealth government, despite the state government trying to take credit for it all.

For some time now this government has been claiming leadership on mental health. However, with some analysis it becomes clear that funding for mental health services has actually declined massively in this term of government as a proportion of overall health spending. At exactly the same time as the government appointed a dedicated Minister for Mental Health, the proportion of funding for mental health services declined under her leadership. This was only reinforced by the recent Council of Australian Governments meeting. Do members remember the COAG meeting? It was held just the week before the Premier announced that 'Victoria cannot and will not support the commonwealth deal', and that 'We are not going to be bullied into a position that is wrong for the states'. That was before he did agree and was bullied into a position that was wrong for this state. What did the Premier settle for? This government thought it was fine that just 2 per cent of all the additional funding for health services went to the mental health sector.

Following the release of the Victorian budget an exasperated Pat McGorry, the current Australian of the Year, said:

... despite acknowledgement that the [mental health] system is in a mess, by both state and federal governments, neither seems to be committed to solving it or investing in it.

He also said that 'people with a mental illness are being left even further behind's.

In fact the VCOSS analysis shows a decline in effective mental health spending of 2.9 per cent from this year to next year. It says:

... the lack of any significant investment in mental health services for a second year undermines the achievement of the strategy's key priority areas.

Of the new funding in the mental health budget, 76 per cent is in years three and four and the vast majority of that is for the government's long-awaited mental health bill. People with a mental illness are again going to see little benefit from this government's budget. In terms of drugs and alcohol, this year's budget will continue Victoria's performance as the state spending the least per person on hazardous and harmful drug use — another track record for this minister of which she should not be proud.

I would now like to comment on the new services that this budget will deliver for Doncaster residents. Perhaps Hansard can note the silence in the chamber, because it represents what this government has delivered in new promises for my electorate this year — absolutely nothing. All we have is more recycling of previously announced promises accompanied by only partial funding. In previous times I have highlighted the lack of funding this government allocates to community services and youth services in Doncaster. Like people in the rest of our community, Doncaster residents had hoped the government would recognise and remedy this deficiency. We received no new funding for projects, just confirmation of oft announced but yet to be delivered services. Yet again we have been treated to spin over substance.

Even where this government has promised to fulfil a election promise, the reality has fallen well short of the pledge. Take for instance the funding for the long-awaited upgrade of Box Hill Hospital. Despite promising a new hospital just before the last election in 2006, this government in December 2009 finally announced \$407.5 million of funding. It was much less than the estimated \$850 million it was said to cost to fully upgrade this ageing facility, and it was \$250 million short of the government's initial promise made four years ago. The budget has revealed a \$100 million-plus funding black hole.

This project has been allocated only \$20 million this year, and the budget papers show that \$297 million will be rolled out by 2014, leaving a \$110.2 million shortfall that has yet to be allocated. But in the fine print it states that that funding will be provided beyond 2013–14. Construction is meant to continue into 2015, but the present budget papers obviously do not look that far ahead. As a result, residents have been promised an upgraded facility, but the government is still looking for \$100 million to deliver it. That is not good news for Manningham residents, who deserve better. Interestingly this was to be a brand-new Box Hill Hospital. In fact the government's own budget papers describe the Box Hill Hospital funding as a new

emergency and surgery block — quite a shift from the grandiose promises made.

Doncaster residents fare little better when we come to public transport. Long-suffering commuters, who have access only to buses as public transport, have endured overcrowding and congested roads. Under the much-vaunted Doncaster area rapid transit system our services are being upgraded, but it has been a very slow process. The services that will ultimately be delivered come nowhere near the recommendations of Sir Rod Eddington to provide rail-equivalent bus services to Doncaster commuters.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, Victorians have a government so devoid of ideas that it is a little like life mimicking art, or at least episodes of the *Hollowmen*. Just like any episode of the *Hollowmen* this budget simply highlights the cynicism of members of the Brumby government and their desire for cheap political gain. Clearly they are part of a government that is not to be trusted, but we have come to expect this from a government more interested in glossy pictures and protecting incompetent ministers than in substance and impact on families and communities. There is murmuring about a series 3 of the *Hollowmen*. Let us hope for the sake of us all that this government is no longer in power when it goes to air.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — I am delighted to join the debate this evening on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill. What a great budget it is: a great budget for Bendigo, a great budget for Victoria, and, most importantly, a great budget overall, because it continues this government's record in creating jobs for Victorians right across the state.

I put on record my strong congratulations to the Treasurer and his team and everyone else who worked so hard in framing a budget that is about moving from the period of great challenge that we have come through with the global economic downturn. It is absolutely evident that as a result of measures put in place in last year's budget carrying through to this year's budget, Victoria is well placed to move to a period of stability, hopefully notwithstanding some of the current international issues, where we continue to see jobs being created right across Victoria.

The forecast in last year's budget, which was against the backdrop of the global economic downturn, was that 35 000 jobs would be created over that financial year period. As we know and as has been updated over the past 12 months, nearly 100 000 new jobs have been created in Victoria. That represents half of all the new

jobs created around Australia, so it was no surprise that a number of commentators endorsed the budget and the government's work in creating jobs around Victoria.

One of the key endorsements for the budget came from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which said:

... business has achieved something of a short-odds trifecta from this state budget ...

That is no surprise when you consider not only that a significant number of jobs were created over the past 12 months, which were forecast to be created as a result of this budget but also that this budget has been able to deliver tax cuts as well. That is quite remarkable when you consider the period we have gone through and the challenges that governments around the world have had in framing their budgets against the backdrop of economic downturn and recession. We have been able to deliver a budget in surplus that creates jobs and delivers tax cuts to businesses as well. As I said, that positions Victoria very well into the future.

The contrast here is that people like to talk down governments just for the sake of it. But that can get pretty embarrassing, as we saw from the shadow Treasurer's comments in April last year when he predicted that Victoria would go into recession. He attacked the Treasurer for not being sure where he got his facts from when it appeared that the rest of the world was in recession except for Victoria. His comments do not make any sense; in April last year he said, 'One would say a recession is inevitable'. What does not make any sense is the fact that having made that comment, the member for Scoresby is still the shadow Treasurer. What is clear is that because of the work resulting from last year's budget and moving through to this budget, Victoria is in a very strong position.

As I said, it is a budget that is about creating jobs and supporting businesses. Particularly in my portfolio of industry and trade there is a package of \$16.4 million, which is about supporting businesses to increase export opportunities, looking at how we can support businesses to invest in new equipment and technology, to create more jobs and to put on more people in local communities, and to support businesses to increase export and job opportunities.

One of the other initiatives I want to touch on in particular is the first home owners bonus. This budget delivers a significant boost to the first home owners bonus for newly built homes in regional Victoria, which now has the best first home owners bonus of anywhere in the country. People can buy their first home, a newly

built home, in regional Victoria and receive \$26 500 in government support. That is really going to help further drive people to move to regional areas. It does not matter whether you are in the north-east, in central Victoria, in Gippsland or in the south-west, it is going to continue to drive people to move into regional areas. I certainly highly recommend it; regional Victoria is a great place to live. We are seeing people vote with their feet and move into regional areas.

This is a great boost for the housing and construction industry, and that is equally as important with this initiative. It is about encouraging people to look at moving into regional Victoria to continue that strong population growth, because that not only brings jobs and economic opportunities but also about supports construction industry jobs, which really underpin many parts of our regional economy.

The budget is a great one for regional Victoria. It is bringing to book the \$4.3 billion regional rail link for regional Victoria. This is a transformational project that builds on this government's work in investing in the regional rail project, a project that was bitterly opposed and continues to be attacked by the Liberal Party and The Nationals.

The project has really delivered fantastic improvements to the rail corridors of Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Gippsland. It continues our investment in rail freight. We brought back the rail freight network after the failed privatisation experiment by the previous government, and we invested in the gold and silver line upgrades. The north-east rail revitalisation project, a \$500 million-plus project, is investing in rail in the north-east. The regional rail link continues this record.

This project is transformational, because it will deliver the dream that regional communities along those corridors have had for a long time — which is, of providing a dedicated rail line for regional rail into Melbourne, separating it from the suburban system, providing for increased capacity, providing for increased services and providing for a smoother passage into Melbourne.

The benefits of this project will only come well after it is completed, but already regional Victorians can see the potential. It will be a great project. It is another fantastic job-creating project, so it was a shame to see the federal Nationals criticise and talk it down. It is another rail project that The Nationals have not supported, which is a great shame.

The budget also provides for a whole range of regional school upgrade projects. It also provides for

\$618 million in hospital projects around the state. This is a significant figure, because it represents more than double the capital spend on hospitals in regional Victoria between 1992 and 1999. That is such a shameful record, where hospitals were left to run down, nurses were sacked and services were wound back. We have turned that around and now in one budget are delivering \$618 million for regional hospitals.

I would like to spend a fair bit of time talking about what a great budget this is for Bendigo; as has been acknowledged, this budget is fantastic for Bendigo. The Bendigo Business Council has said this budget is 'good news for Bendigo and good news for business' — and it was certainly spot-on in making those comments.

The budget delivers significantly in education. It delivers \$8 million for further works at Bendigo Senior Secondary College, which is a fantastic school; that funding will provide for a significant expansion and redevelopment of the college.

It also provides \$27 million for the completion of the Bendigo education plan; it will come as no surprise to members to know that that project has also been opposed by the Liberal Party and The Nationals. The Bendigo education plan is rebuilding all four junior secondary colleges in Bendigo — Eaglehawk, Weeroona, Bendigo South East and Crusoe colleges. This is a significant investment. All up, there is \$91 million across those four schools — a fantastic investment in education, yet it is being opposed by members opposite. It is a great shame they have opposed such a significant investment in schools in Bendigo.

There is funding for a number of smaller projects, including the upgrade of the Goornong fire station, and funding for a critical road project at the Specimen Hill and Calder Highway intersection — and I thank the Minister for Roads and Ports for that investment; it is a dangerous intersection, and it is great to see that that project will be built.

I would like to spend most of my time now talking about the massive \$473 million that is going to build Bendigo's new hospital. This comes on top of \$55 million that was allocated in last year's budget, taking to \$528 million this government's investment in Bendigo's new hospital. What are we going to see as a result of this investment? We are going to see a 50 per cent increase in inpatient beds. We are going to see a helipad located at the hospital to provide faster transport for critically ill patients, eight operating theatres, an expanded emergency department, triple the number of chemotherapy chairs, a new radiotherapy

bunker, significant investment in new mental health facilities and an integrated women's and children's facility.

It is predicted that this is going to create hundreds of jobs during construction. It is going to be a major transformation of Bendigo's health services. It is a project that I am absolutely proud to say that we on this side of the house have supported and backed all the way through. A huge amount of work has been done by the Bendigo hospital, the health department, the health minister and the government in having this project as part of the 2010 budget. The Bendigo hospital has indicated that the \$473 million allocated to the project will deliver everything needed to build Bendigo's new hospital. I emphasise that, because once again there have been people who, for their own political purposes, have wanted to talk down and criticise this investment, and who have tried to belittle it and what it means for Bendigo. I think it is a great shame that the Liberal-National party coalition has tried to talk down this massive investment when it is going to make such a significant difference. That \$473 million represents the largest regional hospital project ever in Victoria's history. It represents the third largest hospital project in Victoria's history statewide, behind the statewide services of the Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre and the Royal Children's Hospital currently under way.

The important thing, though, is that the people of Bendigo know there is a very clear difference between the two parties on this matter. There is the \$473 million commitment, with the \$55 million last year — the \$528 million commitment — that we have made on this side of the house to build Bendigo's new hospital. Compare that to those opposite who oppose, oppose, oppose getting the investment in Bendigo's new hospital. I will put into *Hansard* the evidence of this opposition's position. Last year when then shadow health minister Helen Shardey was asked about the commitment to Bendigo's hospital, she said on ABC radio that it is not a project that they have given a commitment to at an election.

We then saw that followed up by a member for Northern Victoria Region in another place, Damian Drum, who wrote in a letter to the editor that appeared in the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 22 May 2009:

I and the coalition have not as yet stuck our hand up to say we would build the new hospital.

Finally, it was reported in the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 15 March 2010 that the current health shadow minister, Mr David Davis, did not make a commitment to a new hospital in Bendigo should the Liberal Party win the

state election in November. He would not commit to funding without seeing plans for the development.

Can I say that the plans are in, the budget is in and yet we still have opposition from those opposite to Bendigo getting a new hospital. There is a very clear point of difference here. The Brumby Labor government is getting on and working with the hospital and the Bendigo community to deliver this most important project that is going to serve not just Bendigo but also the wider region for many more decades to come. All of this is at risk from those opposite, who have not put on record their support. Their comments indicate they oppose Bendigo getting this massive investment in a new hospital.

I think that presents to the people of Bendigo further evidence. We have seen opposition from the Liberal-National party coalition to all the major projects that have been delivered for Bendigo. Whether it be the duplication of the Calder Highway to Bendigo, whether it be the fast rail link to Bendigo, whether it be the Bendigo schools plan and the rebuilding of four new schools, whether it be delivering vital water through the goldfields super-pipe to Bendigo or whether it be the Bendigo hospital, the Liberal Party's record in Bendigo has been to oppose every single major project that was about making sure we had the infrastructure in place to support Bendigo's needs into the future.

Acting Speaker, as you can see, despite the opposition of those opposite, the Brumby government has ignored that approach and rejected that approach. This budget continues our very strong record in major capital infrastructure projects that are about building a better Bendigo for many decades to come.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — In joining the debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill I will commence by saying I have listened with a great deal of interest to the comments made by the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. I want to take her to task on three particular issues she mentioned. I hope she stays in the chamber for just a few minutes to listen to the comments I wish to make. Firstly, I want to bring to her attention some issues in relation to comments made by the shadow Treasurer. He referred to chart 6 in his contribution, which was included in *Hansard*, which shows quite clearly that in 1992 there was a huge debt of over \$30 billion in the state of Victoria, which over the seven years the coalition was in government was reduced to \$5 billion by about 2000–02. The graph shows that the debt structure is estimated to rise to over \$30 billion again by 2014.

This chart is headed 'On the debt rollercoaster', and that is what we need to be well aware of: we had this huge debt in 1992; the coalition government came to power; it transferred the debt structure into a plus by reducing that massive debt to under \$5 billion; and on estimates provided by the Treasurer we see it is going to go over \$30 billion again. I think that needs to be taken into account with all the comments that have been made by the minister.

Secondly, I want to take issue with the minister's comments about the development of rail services in country Victoria. Whilst I applaud the fact that the north-eastern rail line is being upgraded to a standard gauge track with over \$500 million funding being provided, of which over half is from the federal government, there was no real response to my representation for reinstatement of the passenger rail service from Shepparton through Numurkah to Cobram. It is an issue that I have worked on assiduously in recent years to have the service reinstated, without a positive response being provided by the government.

Thirdly, I want to take issue with the minister's comments in relation to the funding being provided to the Bendigo hospital. She made great play of the fact that over \$500 million, if you take into account funding from last financial year, will be spent on redevelopment of a new hospital at Bendigo.

I remind the house and remind the minister that there are two hospitals in my electorate of Murray Valley, at Yarrowonga and Numurkah, and we are still waiting for stage 2 funding for them to be redeveloped. Stage 1 was finished in 2006. Four years have gone past and we cannot get funding for stage 2 of those two hospitals. I will refer back to that issue later in my contribution.

Having made those comments, I indicate to the house that over the years I have worked hard across my electorate of Murray Valley to get positive responses and positive results in terms of developments. As I see it, the challenge is in highlighting to the state and federal governments the special needs of country people. We have been able to achieve many positive outcomes in Murray Valley through making representations to successive governments; we have seen developments take place.

We have seen the development of the performing arts centre at Wangaratta, which is a fantastic result for Wangaratta. I acknowledge — and certainly the government has taken credit for — the funding it provided for that project. There have been state-funded developments and redevelopments in some schools in

my electorate. Recently the stage 1 and stage 1A redevelopment of the Wangaratta High School were officially opened. At the technical education centre at Wangaratta \$8 million has been spent, and the stage 1 development for the Wangaratta West Primary School was also completed. Those projects have been funded mainly by the state government and not under the federal government's BER (Building the Education Revolution) scheme.

Continuing developments are required, and I will be working hard to make sure we get our share of funds — not only from the current government but from successive governments — to see that we get appropriate funding in country Victoria and across my electorate of Murray Valley.

Recent announcements I must mention are the H. P. Barr Reserve in the rural city of Wangaratta, a mecca for sportspeople, and the showgrounds redevelopment, which will cost \$3 million, with funding approved and being provided by the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, who announced that \$1.2 million for it would come from three departments. There are a range of other sport and recreation developments connected with the Australian Football League which are also positives as far as I am concerned. Over a number of years I have been trying to get such developments across the electorate.

In all this, however, there are a number of disappointments. I looked through the budget papers to see what funding would be provided in the next financial year for my electorate of Murray Valley. One of the issues of concern I had raised with the Attorney-General over the last couple of years was the dilapidated state of the Wangaratta courthouse and the need for major renovations and an overhaul. Currently the third courtroom and the Sheriff's Office are closed. The courthouse is a magnificent building, built in the 1930s. What I have sought from the Attorney-General is a full investigation of and funding for the redevelopment of that magnificent building to enable the provision of the highest standard of court facilities within the rural city of Wangaratta.

It is disappointing that the response I have had from the minister to date is that it will be looked at in a review of all courts across Victoria. The disturbing thing is that we have not had a positive response saying, 'We will provide funding for that'. The minister has been well aware that the building has been deteriorating over the past couple of years, and little money has been spent on bringing it up to a better standard.

Moving on to another issue, I note the building used by the dental service provided by Northeast Health Wangaratta is in a dilapidated condition. It was operating out of an old house beside the hospital with two dentist chairs. The service is now located in the former nursing home facility at the Northeast Health Wangaratta base hospital, with four chairs operating. However, the dental services waiting list for people on reduced incomes and low-income families in Wangaratta is in a deplorable state. New facilities and a large number of chairs are needed so that the large range of people who need dental services can get them. Funding is needed not only for the service costs and the redevelopment of the new facilities but also to ensure there are dentists available to provide the services for the people on the long waiting list in Wangaratta.

I mentioned at the start of my contribution the Numurkah and Yarrawonga hospitals within my electorate of Murray Valley. These are great facilities. The hospital and health services provided by the Wangaratta, Yarrawonga, Cobram and Numurkah hospitals are of a very high standard in trying and difficult circumstances. However, here we have the situation of the Yarrawonga hospital and the Numurkah hospital: stage 1 of the redevelopment was completed in 2006, and we have been waiting for funding for stage 2 of both hospitals. At Yarrawonga it is estimated the cost of the redevelopment for stage 2 is between \$8 million and \$10 million, and at Numurkah hospital it is estimated the redevelopment will cost up to \$14 million. Yet we see the announcement by the government of the provision of massive funding for Bendigo. I believe we need to look at hospital services right across the state of Victoria and where there are needs, such as in my electorate of Murray Valley.

An interesting aspect of these projects is that both hospitals have been told they will have to redevelop their plans to go onto stage 2. Because the hospitals have been applying for four years for funding, both now have to look at redeveloping those plans for redevelopment through to stage 2.

A further issue of great concern to me is the closure of the greyhound racing meetings at Avian Park in Wangaratta. This followed the relocation of the Wangaratta harness racing meetings to Shepparton. What I perceived there was a lack of support on the part of the Minister for Racing for those two racing clubs to continue operating in north-eastern Victoria. This has left a hole in the facilities provided for the racing codes. Those involved in or wanting to be involved in greyhound and harness racing now have no facilities close at hand in north-eastern Victoria to enable them to do so.

This is an important issue. I believe the Minister for Racing allowed the harness and greyhound racing boards to override the decision, whereas he could have made sure there was an appropriate investigation and appropriate consideration of the issues relating to the facilities operating at Avian Park. I believe that in future years we will see the redevelopment of those two sets of facilities — for greyhound racing and for harness racing — once again in Avian Park, Wangaratta. There is an absolute need for those two codes to be available so the people interested in them can compete at Wangaratta and will not have to travel large distances to be involved.

We also have problems with the Wangaratta Turf Club. Race meetings are being diverted to locations that are closer to Melbourne or to bigger centres. Midweek race meeting dates which are not so appealing are being offered to country areas, including more remote places such as Wangaratta, while more attractive dates, such as weekend dates are offered for meetings in places close to metropolitan Melbourne.

While the Minister for Roads and Ports is at the table, I want to mention the replacement of the bridge over Lake Mulwala between Yarrawonga and Mulwala. We have been successful in getting bridges over the Murray River between Victoria and New South Wales in my electorate; the bridge at Tocumwal was replaced in 1989. I said at that time it was the first bridge over the Murray River that had been constructed for 50 years and that if we went on at that pace, I would be dead before the next one was built. But in 2004 the bridge at Howlong was opened; in 2005 the bridge at Cobram was opened; and in 2006 the bridge at Corowa was opened. That bridge across the river provides excellent access for people travelling between the two states.

What is really needed now is a firm commitment from the minister to replace the bridge between Yarrawonga and Mulwala, and to reduce the 2020 timescale for the completion of that replacement bridge. The minister has indicated this in correspondence with me. I think the consultation period of three years, which is currently being undertaken, should be reduced so we can get earlier plans for the replacement of that bridge, because its condition is deteriorating.

An increased and large amount of traffic, including large trucks, uses the bridge to travel to Belmore Street, which is the main street of Yarrawonga. The deterioration in the condition of the bridge is causing enormous problems, and that needs to be taken into account.

There are other issues I would like to mention, but time precludes me from being able to cover everything I would like to raise in my contribution to the appropriation bill debate. I want to highlight the difficulties for primary producers across my electorate, where for 8 to 10 years they have had dry seasons and drought. Whilst the area had some nice rain in the earlier part of last season, there is a long way to go in getting primary producers back into a position where they can operate effectively and profitably, and are able to get appropriate returns for their work.

I am also concerned about the changes being implemented with the introduction of four national parks in the northern part of the Murray River and Ovens River regions. Murray River parks which are being developed right along the Murray River will encompass most of the river frontage land and will be to the total detriment of the people who are now handling those Crown land areas. Overall the conditions in those parks could deteriorate badly because of the lack of support from Parks Victoria.

In terms of the budget generally, whilst I acknowledge there have been some developments across Murray Valley, which I appreciate, there are many areas of concern, as I have mentioned in my contribution, where the government could and should have made major announcements.

There could have been an even spread of the government's finances. It should run the state in an economical manner, and we should not have the situation that Victoria will face in 2014, where its debt will be similar to that which was inherited in 1992. Future governments — it appears the next one will be a coalition government — will need to come into power to change that situation and bring Victoria back to where it can operate on a more economical basis, so the economy can work more effectively through making the state profitable.

Whilst I understand the problems that have been created by the world financial crisis, which is an issue the government has leaned heavily on, I believe we need to look at these changes, maintain some growth and profitability and look at the economy, which is operating effectively, and particularly support people who are operating in businesses that are suffering badly, as I see it, because of many of the actions that have been taken by the government regarding a range of issues where government taxes have increased. But it is not taking account of the important part being played by people who are the wealth creators in this state and the difficulties they experience.

We need to take an absolutely clear account of the important part being played by people in country Victoria, particularly primary producers, associated industries in primary production across the state of Victoria and other industries, and the nature of the contribution they make to the state's economy.

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I rise to speak in support of the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010. I congratulate both the Premier and the Treasurer for what I think is a continued demonstration of the government's preparedness and commitment to governing not just for a street, suburb or town but for the whole state.

What we have been able to see in this budget is the continuing demonstration of the resourcefulness of what effectively is a non-resource state. The state of Victoria has and continues to have an outstanding economy in the context of the national economy. It does so in the context that it is not endowed with natural resources that other states have. In the same context, having dealt with the trials of the global financial crisis and having been able as a community to have continued the process of tax cuts to business in light of the economic downturn, it is clear this is a government committed to jobs; this is a government that recognises it has a social responsibility to improve not just the economic infrastructure of the state but the overall wellbeing of its citizens. As the Minister for Major Projects, it warms my heart to know in the context of this government's performance we are seeing the largest infrastructure program in the state's history.

Since 2000 this government has invested more than \$30 billion in infrastructure, and in so doing, what we have been able to ensure is that Victorian families and businesses are provided with the necessary wherewithal not only to appreciate and to go about their lives and enjoy their amenities but also to recognise that they deserve the right facilities in the right places to protect and to enhance what is, in the current context, a world-class lifestyle.

Let us not forget that in this 2010 budget the government is investing \$9.5 billion in delivering capital projects right across Victoria. That will secure something like 30 000 jobs in the next financial year and is in addition to the 93 500 new jobs that were created in Victoria during the last financial year, many of which were the direct result of proven infrastructure investment — infrastructure investment that recognised the need to grow the whole state but also to recognise, in making those investments, that we had to

substantively enhance the wellbeing of the community at large.

The 2010–11 budget has committed to an average net infrastructure investment of \$7.7 billion over the coming three years. Put into context, the previous government made investments of about \$1 billion compared to about \$3.5 billion per average under the Bracks and Brumby governments, effectively spending more than three and a half times as much in terms of our commitment towards growing capital infrastructure and the net and collective wellbeing of the community.

Turning to the budget and its direct impact upon my portfolio of roads, and more generally in terms of its effect upon transport, this is a good news budget for transport. It delivers a record \$6.4 billion for better roads and public transport, including new trams, more stations and road projects, and designed to reduce transport congestion, to increase capacity, to secure Victorian jobs and also to enhance and build the state's economy for the future.

There are two key projects that deserve particular mention — the Peninsula Link project and the regional rail link project. These projects in themselves effectively constitute in the vicinity of \$5 billion worth of investment. They are critical towards the wellbeing and effective mobility of Victorians and demonstrate that as a government we have an integrated transport strategy.

This is a government that is committed to and recognises the needs of commuters whether they be in the far south-east of metropolitan Melbourne or rural commuters who are looking to find a way in on the regional rail lines, whether they be from Geelong, Ballarat or Bendigo to metropolitan Melbourne.

Mr Ingram interjected.

Mr PALLAS — I will come to the good news for the Gippsland area in due course as a consequence of the wonderful intervention by the member for Gippsland East, but I want to make it clear that as a government we govern for the whole state, and in providing over \$4 billion effectively in cooperation with the federal government through the regional rail link, we will be able to shift about 9000 people extra per hour through the city loop, and that is a substantial net advantage for any travellers, wherever they are coming from, in their capacity to move through the metropolitan rail link system.

From a government point of view, \$49.2 million is being committed in terms of improving the road network. It will inject a continuing commitment from

the government into enhancing and building our Victorian transport plan.

Many people — many doomsayers — say that this is just a plan; everybody has a plan. Contrary to those doomsayers, the naysayers, the knockers, this is a plan of substantive action happening now. This government, through this budget, has collectively brought to book \$10.3 billion of real action — \$10.3 billion of committed projects under way in the delivery stage.

The important thing about all of that is that in the 18 months of a \$38 billion plan, since its announcement, we have been able to show quite transparently that 12 years of planning, 12 years of delivery contemplated by the Victorian transport plan is actually happening now. In relation to my portfolio, this is about investing in roads right across the state. It is about reducing congestion; it is also about improving safety; and it is about connecting communities.

This is a budget that reflects the fact the government has more than quadrupled its road funding over the past seven years. Victorian motorists and road transport operators have been the direct beneficiaries of these investments — prudent and well focused, delivering improved amenity, better connections, better economic opportunities and ultimately jobs for Victorians.

The boost in funding that we have been able to put in place has helped in the construction of projects such as the Hallam bypass, the Craigieburn bypass, the Pakenham bypass, EastLink, and most recently the Deer Park bypass. The government has invested more than \$7.8 billion in our road network since 1999, including more than \$4.7 billion into the metropolitan road network and more than \$3 billion into the regional road network. In the metropolitan area that has constituted something like 62 completed arterial road projects totalling more than \$2.1 billion, including most recently the \$140 million Springvale Road rail separation, which was completed just five months ago, which has also brought a huge boost to the efficiency of one of the key arterial roads in the eastern suburbs of metropolitan Melbourne.

But in regional Victoria in the last 10 years, this government — a government that governs for the whole state — has delivered 59 major projects worth over \$2 billion. Major regional arterials like the Princes Highway east, Princes Highway west, the Calder Highway and the Goulburn Valley Highway have had substantial upgrades. The most recent of these — the duplication of the Calder Highway between Melbourne and Bendigo with the completion of the sections

between Kyneton and Ravenswood — was completed in April last year.

Stage 3 of the Geelong Ring Road opened last June, providing a 23-kilometre high-quality freeway link between Geelong's western outskirts from the Princes Freeway at Corio with the Princes Highway at Waurin Ponds.

This year's budget builds on these achievements — and it does more than that, because the work goes on. The work is in building the best transport network in the country; the work of ensuring that the community, regardless of what their postcode is, gets the best opportunities to go about their economic opportunities, or indeed, for that matter, to enjoy the lifestyle that this great state offers.

This year we will be spending \$129.2 million in upgrading rural roads, including \$76.9 million in upgrading and delivering section 4C of the Geelong Ring Road.

Victorian motorists are already reaping the benefits of the completed 23-kilometre section of the ring-road from Corio to Waurin Ponds, which has gotten rid of traffic having to negotiate something like 29 traffic lights down Latrobe Terrace. I understand there are many great fans of this wonderful road link, and in building these vital links, we recognise that the people of Victoria insist on the government doing more, and we will rise to that challenge.

I should also point out that the total expenditure to date on those Geelong Ring Road-related projects is something like \$618 million, so a quite significant investment has been made by the government in that region.

Work is under way, to the tune of \$759 million, on Peninsula Link — a project that will help create about 4000 direct jobs, slash travel times and also improve travel safety.

The project will link Carrum Downs to Mount Martha on the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. It will be a 25-kilometre, four-lane roadway that will effectively ease the bottleneck in Frankston.

New metropolitan road projects are under way as a consequence of this great work and, from a government point of view, we are pleased to see that \$35 million will be allocated to improving Hallam Road between Pound Road and Ormond Road. That will be a perfectly timed commitment, but demonstrates from the government point of view that we continue that vital work in terms of the provision of metropolitan road

upgrades — for example, the \$25.6 million upgrade to duplicate Clyde Road in Berwick, adding an extra lane in each direction between High Street and Kangan Drive; and \$35 million has been allocated for Princes Highway east between Traralgon and Sale, so the work in terms of regional roads and the development of their connectedness is so critical to this state.

When you think about it, the government has delivered freeway-style, quality roads linking Melbourne to Geelong to Ballarat to Bendigo and to Traralgon — and the work continues.

In the next four years one can anticipate that that work will continue all the way to Sale. From a government perspective, whether it be the work continuing to Sale, the work continuing to Winchelsea, the work continuing to Stawell, the capacity enhancements on the Western Highway to the South Australian border or indeed the upgrade of the quality road to Shepparton, this is a demonstration of a government building the quality upgrades in the network right across the board.

I do want to speak about the great benefits this budget brings to my electorate of Tarneit, a community that is bursting with opportunity and one that is grateful for the government's continuing commitment to education and enhancing the regeneration of our educational facilities and building new ones. There is \$3 million for the regeneration of the Glen Devon and Glen Orden primary schools. There is \$9 million for stage 1 building of the Tarneit 10–12 secondary school. The budget also delivers on the Victorian transport plan and the support the government has given to increasing high-growth areas and improving public transport access by ensuring that Hoppers Crossing railway station is a premium station. The construction of the dual track link of up to 50 kilometres from West Werribee to Southern Cross station via Sunshine will include the construction of a new rail line from Werribee to Deer Park, new stations at Tarneit and Wyndham Vale and a duplication of track between Sunshine and Kensington. It will allow regional rail services to run express into Melbourne and reduce congestion on the metropolitan line.

This budget builds for the future. This government is setting about the hard work of delivering on our plans to give Victorians job security, the best hospitals, schools, a safer state and a secure water supply, as well as transforming our transport network, unlike those opposite, who oppose everything and who have no plans, no policy and no idea.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I would like to make some comments on the Appropriation

(2010/2011) Bill. I wish to highlight some of my concerns about the budget and make the point that it has the look of an election-year budget — one that hides much and reveals very little. This is an approach that should not be supported by members on either side of this Parliament.

The determination of the government on the accountability and public disclosure contained in the budget papers over the life of this government is of real concern. We need to make sure that the budget papers as presented to Parliament contain clear indications of the expenditure, of the appropriation of taxpayers money and of how much money is allocated to projects. This is of particular concern because the Labor Party when in opposition made it very clear that it did not support what the then government was doing about the way the budget papers were presented. I make the point that we seem to have another *Animal Farm* moment in this place where the government is guilty of the same issues that it criticised when in opposition — that is, criticism of the clarity of budget papers and what is contained in them.

I will speak to an example of that. It is good that the Minister for Roads and Ports is at the table because recently we had an incredibly important announcement in my community on funding for sand management at Lakes Entrance. This is something that Gippsland Ports has worked on for a significant number of years. In the last regional statement \$31 million was allocated for the sand management trial, which included a range of steps: the hire of a suction hopper dredge; the replacement of the old dredge *Sandpiper* with the *Kalimna* in 2007; installing sand shifters under the entrance; and looking at the way forward to best manage the sand at the entrance at Lakes Entrance.

Because of the work that had been done over a large number of years one would have expected that this was clearly articulated in the budget papers when they were presented a month or so ago now. When Gippsland Ports, others and I looked at the budget papers we could not see that in there, but between the time the budget papers were presented and now that money has been made available. It was actually in the budget but was not necessarily clearly articulated. I probably used that as an example — —

Mr Pallas interjected.

Mr INGRAM — It was a very positive announcement, as the minister is saying; I do not question that. This is something that is critical for my community. We must manage the entrance not only for the commercial fishing industry and the recreational

boating industry but also so that the bar at Lakes Entrance is safe. There has been an incredible amount of work done, and studies have been undertaken to get that right. They have replaced the old, ageing *April Hamer* with the new management regime, involving a suction hopper dredge, which picks the sand up like a big dump truck, takes it away, dumps it and keeps the sand away from where the waves break on the bar. That will allow tourism, visitors, recreational boaters and people travelling up and down the coast to use our port; it will enable the large rig tender vessels and the large commercial fishing vessels to come and unload at our port. Over recent years we have seen the bar deteriorate. That has cost our region a significant amount of money and most of those dollars go to New South Wales, Tasmania or other ports, where the boats are unloaded, refuelled and reprovisioned. That is very important. I am glad to see that the funds were contained in this budget, even though after a fair bit of scrutiny I could not find them.

Another interesting item, which apparently is in the budget, is the soon to be announced Victorian regional blueprint. It is flagged in the budget but it takes a fair amount of investigation to find any sum allocated to that program. Like many other regional MPs in this place, I am looking forward to that. I am sure there will be some good projects that probably should have been in the budget but will be in that regional blueprint. We are looking forward to it, but I make the point that as a matter of principle the government should be accountable for the expenditure of taxpayers money, and as a matter of principle that expenditure should be presented and debated in this Parliament first rather than being rolled out in an election year.

I would like to focus in my contribution on my electorate. The budget has a number of small projects, but it is ultimately disappointing apart from the \$9.1 million over four years for sand management. That is an incredibly important project, but other than that, there are just some smaller projects.

I would like to look to the future. As it is an election year, today I presented correspondence to both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition to outline what I believe are some of the important infrastructure projects going forward in a range of areas for my region. I will go through some of the projects I have been working on with the community. A lot of community groups and agencies have been developing them over the last few years. They will be ready to be funded and should be funded for the benefit of my community in the next term of Parliament.

There are projects in the health field like the proposed rebuild of Bairnsdale hospital for which master planning is currently being undertaken. The Bairnsdale Regional Health Service is the largest hospital in my electorate. It is an important regional centre and has a very large catchment area. It is incredibly important to upgrade that facility to ensure that people have the health care and facilities they need.

There is a dispute going on at the moment over consulting suites in my area between the consulting specialists and the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service. The hospital has decided to charge the specialists fees for the use of the consulting suites. In my view that facility should be rolled into the master planning to ensure that there are new high-quality facilities for consulting specialists. We need to find a way forward so that there are incentives for health professionals to practise in regional areas and not be charged fees for the use of some of these facilities. A really good model has been developed there, but it is being put at risk because of the cost of providing the facilities and hence charging fees to the specialists. That issue needs to be resolved.

Another issue which has had a lot of publicity recently is the provision of ambulance paramedics in Gippsland East. I have been doing a lot of work with my community over recent years, but there are a couple of particular hot spots in our region which have shortfalls in paramedics and MICA (mobile intensive care ambulance) paramedics. Heyfield is an obvious case. It is totally backed by ACOs (ambulance community officers). It is important that we get the right spread and mix of paramedics and MICAs across the region to ensure that they have the capacity to respond to the needs of my community.

In education I have done a lot of work with Bairnsdale Secondary College; it is very important to make sure that we have the appropriate facilities for secondary college education in Bairnsdale. There is a major project that is examining the possibility of a full rebuild on the one site. This is part of a regeneration project. It is an incredibly important school that for a number of years has been left out for a range of reasons, and it is well past its use-by date. That regeneration project includes a new preschool and children's centre at Bairnsdale.

Toorloo Arm Primary School, a small school near Lake Tyers, missed out in this budget. That is very disappointing, because it has been part of the Building Futures program but has missed out in a couple of budgets. It is incredibly important that it be funded in the next budget. It should have been funded in this

budget. It is important that the school be built so that the facilities that are so badly needed are available there.

One of the most important road projects in my region that needs funding is the Princes Highway east of Bairnsdale. This is the no. 1 highway in Australia. It is not an AusLink road or a RONI, which was the old expression for a road of national importance. It is very substandard in many places and needs significant funding to improve safety and ensure that people travelling that road can go about their journey and arrive safely. There are narrow, winding sections of road without shoulders, and it is incredibly important for the region that the road be made safer. The accident figures on the road are very high for the miles travelled on it; the accident and fatality rates are high, which means it needs significant work to be done to improve its safety.

There are a number of tourist roads in the area. Over a number of years we have tried to get funding for roads like the Barry Way, Bonang Highway, Omeo Highway and Benambra-Corryong Road. These roads on their own do not necessarily have the traffic volumes to get them to a condition where they warrant funding in the statewide priority list, but if you build the roads, people will come. They are important tourism links, but because of sections of gravel roads, there is limited tourism traffic on them. They go through some spectacular areas and link large population centres to the coast, back inland and across to Albury-Wodonga and Corryong, and into Canberra. They are also important tourism links for those communities. We need to find a way of funding these types of road infrastructure projects to ensure that tourists can utilise those spectacular natural highways.

In tourism, funding is needed for the implementation of the Man from Snowy River tourist drive. Currently a scoping study, funded by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, is being completed by East Gippsland Shire Council. This is a very important project; it is a baby of mine, and we have done a lot of work over a number of years. The Minister for Tourism and Major Events, who is at the table, will probably have an interest in that, and hopefully we can find a way to implement the project.

Funding is needed for the completion of the icon walks project, which is a great coastal walk in the Croajingolong National Park. These are important tourism infrastructure projects in my area. We have a large area of spectacular national parks. Parts of this project have already been funded; a number of the smaller walks have been funded. Finalising the big

walk by putting in the infrastructure is important for the tourism industry in my area.

In community infrastructure, the Bairnsdale courthouse needs an upgrade for waiting and meeting rooms, and we need a major function or performing arts centre in East Gippsland — something we do not have there now.

In infrastructure, we need extra train services and improvements to parking and traffic flows at Bairnsdale. The increased patronage on the Bairnsdale train line has been extraordinary. When the trains are unloading at and leaving the station, there are high traffic flows, and major work needs to be done at the Bairnsdale station to cater for that. Everyone agrees there is a problem in that the station area is well past its operational efficiency.

We need natural gas extensions to Lakes Entrance and Orbost. These towns are on the pipeline from Sydney to Melbourne but are not connected to natural gas. Considering that most of the natural gas for Sydney and Melbourne comes out of Bass Strait, there are some real inequities. At Lakes Entrance people can see the gas blowing off on the oil rigs out on Bass Strait, but those communities do not have access to natural gas for efficient heating.

As I indicated before, a commitment to ongoing funding for sand management at Lakes Entrance and a replacement of the *April Hamer* dredge are needed. The completion of the Bastion Point boat ramp is an important project, the process for which has so far taken about 25 to 30 years yet it is essential to the tourism industry going forward.

The Gippsland Lakes are an incredibly important asset for our region, and major funding is needed for the future directions and action plan. The MID 2030 strategy for Southern Rural Water is another important project in our region.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Community Development) — I am very pleased to speak on the Appropriation (2010/2010) Bill 2010, for which previous budgets have laid a very strong foundation for where we are placed today in Victoria. This appropriation bill certainly builds on the fine achievements and investments in the business sector and social infrastructure so that the entire community is able to prosper.

The budget has been well received by those from the business sector right through to those from community organisations, by families and by people in local neighbourhoods. That paints a picture of the

responsible nature of this budget and the terrific work the Brumby Labor government is doing to strengthen Victoria's communities and tackle disadvantage, whilst at the same time ensuring that we have concerted jobs growth and business investment growth. Unlike its predecessor, this government has long understood the value of social inclusion and is making sure that its economic and social goals work together and in alignment. This budget is certainly further proof that we are helping more Victorians to access the opportunities and services they need to be able to achieve a good quality of life and to prosper in employment.

Let me point to some examples of where that is true. The budget delivers tangible benefits for some of Victoria's most geographically isolated communities by committing a further \$22.8 million over the next four years to the Transport Connections project to provide reliable transport links to services, employment and to other members of the community. This program has been designed to concentrate on rural, regional and interface areas in Victoria to maximise the transport assets that exist in those local communities and to invest in innovative ways to better utilise those facilities to increase transport options for those communities. This arises from the Victorian transport plan. We have dedicated \$80 million over a 10-year period for Transport Connections. That is very serious money, and we are intent on ensuring that transport access, which fosters opportunities for employment, training, access to health services and access to each other for community members, is afforded to all parts of Victoria. Hence this program has been expanded into the forward estimates period. This will mean that the existing 32 projects that cover 57 regional, rural and interface municipalities in Victoria will be able to continue and that we will deliver the program to an additional six areas.

These projects have delivered over 500 initiatives that improve transport access to many communities across Victoria. It is about assisting those communities to access jobs, training, further education and medical facilities. To give an example of the types of innovative ways that are available to better utilise existing community transport assets, a local bus company and two taxi operators worked together to trial a new route connecting Timboon and Cobden residents to Camperdown so that they could access V/Line services. These are innovative initiatives that are driven and owned by the community and which very much rely on partnerships that are forged at the community level — partnerships involving individual local community members, community organisations, local governments, state government, local businesses and, in this case, involving Timboon and Cobden taxi operators and local

bus services. These are very good improvements on the ground in terms of access to transport, and that is just one taste of the importance of Transport Connections to many members of the community across Victoria and the high esteem in which it is held.

Transport connections is not just about accessing training, educational or job opportunities, although those things are very important. It is also about community members staying in touch with each other. That is very important, especially for people who do not have their own private means of transport. More often than not these alternative modes of transport are the important social links that many people use to become fully, or at least more, integrated into community life. The spin-off benefits of such a program are enormous, and although they are not always tangible, they are nevertheless very important to people's health and resilience and certainly to the resilience of local communities.

The program is designed to complement traditional public transport services rather than replace them, and importantly the focus is to help people stay involved in their local community. In this budget the Brumby Labor government also gives valuable support to Victoria's not-for-profit and community sectors by investing a further \$2 million to increase the uptake of some very important tools. These tools will assist not-for-profit organisations to cut through red tape and thereby save time and resources, enabling them to deliver what they are in the business of delivering — much-needed services. We need to contemplate the importance of the not-for-profit sector to Victoria and Victorians. The sector is relied on by government to deliver services on its behalf.

A sum in the order of 7 per cent of the state's budget is allocated to the not-for-profit sector, which is made up of many community service organisations, to deliver services on behalf of the government. It makes sense that we are able to back up the support we provide by ensuring that there is an increase in the uptake of, for example, contemporary ICT practices throughout the sector, improving access to relevant training, professional development and legal assistance. These are fundamentally important to equip the not-for-profit sector to deliver services and represent communities, which is the business they are in.

The additional funds we are providing will go towards the production of plain English guides to regulation, including up-to-date information on recent regulatory reforms. This further funding is on top of \$13.9 million that the state government has already delivered as part of its commitment to strengthening community

organisations. In 2002 the state government responded to calls and inputs from the not-for-profit sector to assist in a range of ways to make life and the sector's business much easier. Our government has responded squarely and very confidently to the requests from the not-for-profit sector through its commitment to the government action plan, Strengthening Community Organisations.

We need to also appreciate that many parts of the not-for-profit sector are heavily reliant on volunteers. As we know, the nature of volunteering is changing quite significantly and it has been for some time, which means that there are new challenges facing the not-for-profit sector when it comes to its ability to continue to deliver services to the community and the individuals who rely very heavily on many organisations at the coalface, if you like.

The Brumby Labor government is determined to support community groups, because it recognises the enormous support they give to so many Victorians. Community groups are integral to our strategy to build stronger communities to ensure that all Victorians enjoy a high quality of life, no matter where they live. It is the case that no matter where you go in Victoria, the resilience of a community can often be measured by how integrated the local community organisations are into the life of the community. I know that Victoria is in a relatively healthy place when it comes to the presence of the not-for-profit sector in the most remote communities, in the most isolated communities and the most disadvantaged communities, no matter where those might be in Victoria. We are very keen to keep extending support to that sector.

This year's budget also makes a long-term commitment to the Corio-Norlane community initiative, which is a regeneration project. We have outlined a 15-year vision to enhance and rebuild transport infrastructure and tackle public safety, improve access to more job opportunities and housing, and also improve lifestyle for families in the community, so it is really building on community assets. Phase 1 of this vision includes a commitment of \$2.2 million for community assets in the area. This is a forward-looking and strategic commitment that will ensure the Corio-Norlane community can seize the opportunities of growth into the future.

Corio-Norlane is not the only area to benefit from infrastructure upgrades, which have been a very strong feature of this government. We are continuing with our commitment to assist local communities to grow the infrastructure that is required on the ground, either by way of new infrastructure where none currently exists

in growth areas or by replacing old and run-down infrastructure in existing communities. This budget allocates an additional \$4 million in grants for community infrastructure across the state, with priority given to growth areas.

We understand the challenges that are facing many of our growing communities. One of those key challenges is ensuring that we have the infrastructure facilities in place at the time the communities are growing. What are the reasons for that? On the surface it is about being able to house the services that should be available and are made available through this government to local communities, but more than that it is about how we can deliver those projects differently in an innovative, multipurpose use way so that those infrastructure facilities become community hubs which generate much activity and social engagement and interaction, which are all very important markers of a resilient community.

Not only will we continue to provide funds for community infrastructure but we will do it so it is delivered by forming partnerships with either local governments or the federal government and community organisations on the ground, and we will ensure that the infrastructure that is delivered is able to provide the services and facilities that are required and called for by those local communities.

The multipurpose centres are not just about the services that are provided from them but also about lining them up with sporting pavilions and libraries and keeping community members involved in community life and connected to one another. All that really does contribute very strongly, as I said earlier, to the resilience, health and wellbeing of a community. I am very proud that we are moving squarely ahead in delivering on those key priority areas for community structure.

I would like to spend just a short while commenting on the budget and what it delivers for the good people of my own electorate of Mill Park, especially in the areas of health and education. We continue to see significant funds going to the upgrading of existing schools. Thomastown East Primary School is one such school which will benefit from the school improvement program. The Northern Hospital is undergoing yet another expansion. This time round it is an expansion of its intensive care unit capacity and catheterisation laboratory, which will assist with the growing demand for those services, especially in the growing Whittlesea catchment area and beyond. That is the area in which the residents of the Assembly electorate of Mill Park reside.

These are terrific outcomes continuing to grow on the investment of the past few years. I am very pleased to note that we have not let up, and we will continue to ensure that there is sustained, robust investment into the future for the people of Mill Park and for the beneficiaries of the community development.

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010. This is a budget that has all the features of a last gasp of a dying government. It is a government without direction, a government whose past failures have finally caught up with it, a government that knows within its heart that it is about to be held accountable by the Victorian people at the ballot box for its failures. The evidence that this government has lost its way can be seen in the almost daily announcements that its long-held policy positions — policies defended in this place day in, day out — have been ditched.

We have heard members of this government saying, 'We don't need more police officers', then they turn around and say, 'The opposition has promised more police officers. Tell you what, we do need more police officers'. It would be unparliamentary to say the Premier lied, so I will use the Watergate terminology of Ronald L. Zeigler: it was an inoperative statement when the Premier said, 'We don't need more police officers', because apparently we do. You just have to look at some of the areas where this government has tried to adopt coalition policies in recent months. With suspended sentences it has tried to copy us, with hoon drivers it has tried to copy us, with liquor licensing fees it has tried to copy us, with police numbers it has tried to copy us, and it has done so most recently with an independent anticorruption commission.

The Premier used to like to think of himself as being a conviction politician. What a sad, pathetic fall from grace we have seen from this man. We now have a Premier who has become the political equivalent of a cover band, playing poor imitations of coalition originals. The member for Broadmeadows is now the Björn Again of Victorian politics; he is the Captain Spalding of Victorian politics. It is a pathetic end to a political career. This man, who once held himself out as being a conviction politician, is now jettisoning everything he once held dear in the shadows of an election in a desperate panic to grab onto power.

In the brief time available, I cannot go into the budget in any great depth. Many of my colleagues, including the member for Scoresby, have already gone in great depth into the macro-economic failings of this budget. I would therefore like to touch on some of the issues in this budget that are of concern in my shadow portfolio

areas and also in my electorate of Malvern. As the shadow Minister for Gaming, I took the opportunity last time the house sat to describe exactly how badly this government had bungled the allocation of gaming machine entitlements. This is financial incompetence on an almost criminal scale. To give away 27 500 10-year gaming entitlements for the paltry sum of \$981 million is absolutely disgraceful.

I will just briefly refer to the house a selection of headlines that describe the government's performance in giving away these pokies licences — these public assets — at fire sale prices: 'You lose again — pokies chiefs hit jackpot as licences sold cheap', from the *Herald Sun* of 12 May; 'Victoria pokie auction a \$1 billion lemon', from the *Australian Financial Review* of 12 May; 'Disappointing result for pokies auction', from ABC Online, 11 May; 'Taxpayers short-changed in pokies fire sale', from AAP, 11 May; and 'Pokies auction delivers worst of both worlds', from the *Age* of 14 May. I could go on because there is a litany of headlines that describe how badly this government has short-changed and ripped off Victorian taxpayers with its monumental incompetence: to throw away between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. That could have been spent on hospitals, on fixing up the public transport system, on water infrastructure, schools or tax cuts, but that is a concept that is foreign to this mob. The lost opportunity of this government's incompetence alone deserves to be recorded at the ballot box on 27 November with a change of government.

In terms of gaming, I noticed there was no press release from the Minister for Gaming in relation to this budget. I think it is about the third year in a row the minister has had nothing positive to say about his own government's budget. In fact the only initiatives in relation to problem gambling that were delivered in this budget were from the coalition. As part of the government's compromise on some legislation last year relating to the casino there are a number of very important problem gambling initiatives that are coalition initiatives will be funded in this budget through this bill. These include \$2.1 million over three years to a joint venture of the University of Melbourne and Monash University, the Gambling Research and Treatment Centre for world-leading research into risk and protective factors associated with problem gambling, as well as a randomised controlled trial of treatments for problem gambling; a minimum of \$1.4 million to fund 20 new Gambler's Help positions to train gaming venue staff in identifying and assisting problem gamblers; \$500 000 this year to establish the Community Advocacy on Gambling project; and the restoration of \$15 million to the problem gambling communication campaign. These coalition initiatives to

tackle problem gambling are dealt with in this budget. There are no initiatives from Labor. All the positive news and initiatives in tackling problem gambling come from this side of the house, and for that the government stands condemned.

I now turn to address liquor licensing in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs. It is extraordinary that the budget papers record that there will be a 25 per cent cut in the level of liquor licensing inspections and enforcement actions that are taking place. The budget papers record that they will fall from 32 744 in 2009–10 to 25 000 in 2010–11, so there will be 7744 fewer enforcement and compliance actions in the next financial year. At the same time the government is jacking up liquor licensing fees by tens of millions of dollars. Is that not just an allegory for the way this government conducts itself, ‘Charge them more, do less’? No wonder the streets are not safe to walk down — because we have a government that is actually reducing its level of enforcement as it is upping the fees it charges small business.

As recently as yesterday we saw the government slide out a press release late in the day — it did not send it to the *Age*, it did not send it to 3AW — announcing that there will be another backdown on liquor licensing fees, this time in relation to the fees for bed and breakfasts, gift shops and florists. We all know that bed and breakfasts, gift shops and florists are hotbeds of alcohol-related violence. We know the reason it is not safe to walk down King Street at 2 o’clock in the morning is all the alcohol-fuelled violence caused by florists, gift shops and chocolate shops —

Mr Burgess — Assaulted by a wreath!

Mr O’BRIEN — Absolutely. As the member for Hastings points out, you might be assaulted by a wreath. This has always been one of the greatest examples or demonstrations of how this government’s liquor licensing changes are all about a tax grab. It is not about alcohol-related violence. This is about a genuinely risk-based system. Why would you increase the fees for bed and breakfasts by nearly 600 per cent since 2008? The answer is that you would not. You would do that only if you wanted to grab millions of extra dollars.

We know the government is increasing liquor licensing fees by about \$20 million this year. We know the government is also spending \$20 million on fairy lights on the West Gate Bridge. I will leave it to the Acting Speaker to work out if there is a link between those two. But certainly there is no more enforcement of liquor licensing laws coming out of this government,

because its own budget papers show that the enforcement actions are dropping by 25 per cent.

Let me turn briefly to energy, as the shadow Minister for Energy and Resources. Before I return to one of my favourite subjects, smart meters — which I know the member for Hastings is always very interested in as well — I will refer to energy concessions. We all know that the cost of energy is increasing for a variety of reasons. We know that this places a heavy burden on many family budgets. You would think the government would be providing appropriately for those families who need concessions to ensure that they are properly funded. What do the budget papers say about how concessions on electricity mains are funded? Let me make a comparison of two years. At page 112 budget paper 3 states that in 2008–09 the number of households in Victoria receiving mains electricity concessions was 747 347. The target for the next financial year is 780 000. So we are seeing an increase of 32 000 households that will be receiving electricity mains concessions, but the amount of money that the government provided for these concessions in 2008–09 was \$69 million. In 2010–11, with 32 000 extra households, it is \$68 million. How can you provide electricity concessions for 32 000 extra households but have it cost the government \$1 million less?

Are these the same geniuses who are behind myki? Are the same geniuses behind smart meters and behind fast rail? Are these the same geniuses who are ensuring that tradies are being paid exorbitant rates down on the desalination plant? How are we supposed to take with any seriousness a budget paper that says 32 000 extra households are receiving electricity concessions, but it costs the government \$1 million less?

This question was asked at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee by one of its esteemed members — Acting Speaker Sykes, you may be familiar with the member concerned. The government promised that it was going to take on notice and answer that question. I am not a member of the PAEC, but my understanding is that there has certainly been no public explanation by the government of how that has occurred. That question remains a live one, and the minister has an obligation to answer it.

I will speak very briefly on smart meters, because I then want to spend the last couple of minutes speaking about my electorate. The issue of smart meters has become an absolute debacle. At the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, when going through these budget papers, essentially the only contest between the Minister for Energy and Resources and coalition members of the committee was: had the budget blown out by half a

billion dollars — which was the generous figure — or was it by \$800 million? That is the realm we are talking about: has this government wasted only half a billion dollars or \$800 million on smart meters?

All Victorians are now paying for smart meters that most of them do not have, and when they do have them, they do not work because the government has now imposed restrictions on time-of-use pricing, which, the government said, was to be a fantastic consumer benefit in the use of smart meters. Apparently it is such a benefit that consumers are not allowed to have access to it until after the election. It makes you wonder how much of a benefit it really is.

On top of all that the government has been saying, ‘Smart meters are terrific, because the way we have organised it consumers will get access to all this terrific information that will let them know how much energy they are using and how much it is costing them, so they can be more in charge of their own energy usage’. Then we find out that the smart meters cannot be read by the consumers. The consumers need a separate in-home display unit, which they have to pay for themselves and which is not even available yet. Or they need access to a web portal, which again is not available yet. So smart meters, which consumers are paying for, are not functional, and when they are functional they will not do what the government said they will. These are the smart meters? I would hate to see the dumb ones!

In the last 2 minutes I would like to briefly discuss the Malvern electorate. Unfortunately I can do it comfortably in 2 minutes because there is almost nothing in this budget for the Malvern electorate. I suspect this government takes more money from my electorate and the people of Stonnington through stamp duty than it takes from just about any other electorate in the state. It would also take tens of millions of dollars each year from my electorate’s businesses in payroll tax.

But do we see any sort of return coming back to Malvern, any acknowledgement that the people there work hard, pay their taxes and deserve a fair share? Absolutely not. Has one of my schools been the beneficiary of any funding under the Victorian schools plan? Of course not — not this year, not any year. This is a government that neglects kids on the bases of electoral margins and postcodes rather than educational merit. So much for equality under a Labor government!

This government has done nothing in relation to road noise. Yes, it found some money to fund Monash Freeway noise barriers in the marginal seats of Mount Waverley and Burwood. But the government would

have you believe that the need for noise protection stops when you get to Malvern. That shows that this government has been in office for too long; it has forgotten it is supposed to govern for all Victorians. It thinks governing is about looking after its own interests and forgetting everyone else.

The Victorian public is a little bit sick of it. After 11 years it has woken up to it, which is why this government is on the run. That is why we see backflip, backdown, turnaround and reversal, day in and day out. It is on the run, it has panicked, and the Victorian public is going to see through it. I look forward to this being the last time I have to speak in this house on a Labor government budget.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It is a pleasure to contribute to the debate on the budget. Before I start to speak about its detail, I want to acknowledge the good work done by the Treasurer and the Premier and in particular by the staff in both of their offices, across ministerial offices and across government — the people who work long and hard to put together this document, which is again a great Labor budget.

This budget secures the state’s AAA credit rating. It does that by ensuring that we have a budget surplus for forward years. It invests heavily in infrastructure, in jobs and in education and training so that people are skilled up, educated and ready to contribute to the Victorian economy to ensure our future prosperity; and it also invests in community safety, particularly in police numbers, which I will come back to shortly. It also invests, importantly, in health.

It is worth noting that the budget we are debating comes on top of the reforms that were announced as part of the Council of Australian Governments negotiations, where the Premier was able to negotiate a great deal for Victoria. In fact the commonwealth will invest an additional \$935 million in health and hospitals over four years. As part of that deal we get to retain the management of our hospitals, which is important for local people. That will mean that around 150 000 people will be able to be treated through our hospitals more quickly, and on top of that just under 34 000 additional patients in our hospital system will receive their elective surgery quicker than they otherwise would have over the next four years. That is a great outcome. As people have said, it is almost two health budgets in one, and that is important to remember.

In health, locally for me one of the great announcements in this budget is the \$69 million to be allocated to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and

Wellness Centre located at the Austin Hospital in Heidelberg. The Austin Hospital is not in my electorate, it is in the electorate of the member for Ivanhoe, but it is certainly the hospital that the people in the north-east of Melbourne turn to for their public health needs. Some of the people in my electorate would seek services from the Northern Hospital as well — it is another great hospital. The Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre is a fantastic facility that will be able to provide cutting-edge treatment for people who have cancer and the very best facilities for clinical research into cancer.

As members have mentioned in this house before, and I have spoken at length about this, every week around 500 Victorians are diagnosed with cancer. The government has developed a cancer action plan that aims to increase the survival rates of people who are diagnosed with cancer by another 10 per cent by 2015. It does that by tackling some of the risk factors that contribute to cancer as well as investing in cancer-fighting technologies and new facilities.

That is exemplified by the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre at Heidelberg. That centre will be for people from right across Victoria. Importantly, it will consolidate a number of existing cancer services under the one roof, creating a critical mass of cancer research and treatment.

Nearly 2000 extra Victorians will receive their oncology and radiotherapy treatment at the centre once it is completed. That fantastic facility is being developed out in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The government has already committed \$25 million to that project in a previous budget, which was matched by the federal government and by Austin Health. It is a great example of state and federal governments working together with the local community to provide a fantastic facility to fight the horrible scourge of cancer.

As an aside, but importantly, it is worth noting that the combined \$25 million that was allocated earlier plus the \$69 million in this budget will together create around 320 jobs during construction on that site, which will be a fantastic result on its own.

Education remains the Brumby government's top priority. Not only have we met our commitment to renovate, extend or rebuild 500 government schools by 2011, but this budget actually surpasses that figure. A school building package worth \$271 million will mean 553 projects have been funded in the term of this government and will see students being able to be educated in fantastic modern facilities.

The budget includes a \$469.5 million boost for education and early childhood development to make sure that every child has the best start in life. It also provides \$82 million over five years for building better childhood facilities. Importantly it provides \$63 million over five years for a massive 3590 kindergarten places and \$14 million for capital works at preschools and child-care centres. One area in particular I wanted to highlight is early childhood intervention services. We have some great service providers in my local area: Kalparrin in Greensborough and Education Program for Infants and Children and Norparrin in the nearby area. Many members would be aware of the work of Taralye in the eastern suburbs, an organisation that works with children with hearing impairments. Those early childhood intervention services have received a \$38.4 million boost, which will ensure that each child who receives assistance through those early childhood services receives a funding boost for their care of around 40 per cent over the next four years. They are going to receive a better quality of care from those services. That is a fantastic outcome for the families involved.

In terms of police and community safety we have in this budget delivered funding to ensure an additional 1966 front-line police over five years. There is \$561 million to recruit, train and employ 1700 additional police. The budget is also investing just under \$74 million over four years to redeploy 200 police to the front line and \$38.4 million to release 66 police officers to front-line roles from a Ballarat telephone service. Between the time that this government came to office in 1999 and 2006 we have had 1400 police added to the police force in Victoria, and we are on our way to meeting our commitments for the additional 350 police that we promised at the last election. On top of that are the additional 120 police that have been committed to, as well as an additional 50 transit police to tackle alcohol-related crime and public transport safety respectively. We have seen Victoria's crime rate fall by over 25 per cent since 2000–01, and the boost that is included in this budget will see the number of front-line police increase by 30 per cent. Across all those key service areas we have seen massive increases in funding.

I will return to education. A great local school in my local area, Norris Bank Primary School, has benefited from the federal government's Building the Education Revolution program by being allocated \$2 million to build new learning spaces. Those facilities are very close to being opened. It is a wonderful facility. The school has already done some fantastic work with its library area. This budget funds another \$500 000 to upgrade other parts of the school. It will mean that the

children who go to that school will be educated in fantastic facilities. They already have excellent teachers and staff at that school. That is an example of Labor governments working cooperatively at the federal and state levels to ensure that local school communities have the facilities they need to educate their children properly.

The budget papers set out a range of things in detail, but what they do not set out in detail is the biggest risk to the Victorian economy. The budget papers fail to set out what presents as, in my view, the very serious risk to the Victorian economy — that is, the shadow Treasurer, the member for Scoresby, sitting across the table. I just want to detail a few of the amazing things that the shadow Treasurer has been saying. I think people will understand why he presents as one of the biggest risks to the Victorian economy. On 7 May last year the shadow Treasurer said:

Everyone else is in recession but apparently not Victoria. The economic indicators contained in the budget are optimistic in the extreme and are predicated on Victoria not entering recession and benefiting from a fast recovery.

In December last year he also said that the Victorian economy was in recession on a population-adjusted basis.

While the economy was going through that phase of the global financial crisis and the government was working hard to ensure that it was protected from the crisis as much as possible, we had the shadow Treasurer irresponsibly trying to talk down the Victorian economy. In fact Victoria did not go into recession. Thankfully we were able to see off that financial storm. The shadow Treasurer also, infamously, caused a panic in the financial markets when he suggested Members Equity Bank might be obtaining a government-backed bailout. Of course he did not check his facts and had to be corrected by company executives.

He also made a number of false claims on the budget surplus. I do not think he did that intentionally; I think he just did not get the figures right. On 11 March at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon he said the midyear surplus was \$1.2 billion at this time last year. When it was pointed out to him by a journalist, or it might have been the government, that that figure was incorrect, he came out and corrected his figures and said it was \$46.2 million this time last year. In actual fact the figure was a \$85.9 million. The man who aspires to be the Treasurer of this state is getting basic accounting figures wrong.

It goes on. We have also had the shadow Treasurer saying of Labor's budget last year that it would not be

able to deliver those 35 000 jobs that it said it would. He said it was based on a 'house of cards' and 'Labor governments just simply cannot be trusted when it comes to promises on jobs'. The budget that talked about delivering 35 000 jobs actually helped deliver around 100 000 jobs in Victoria. Most of the job growth in Australia over the last 12 months has been centred in Victoria. Again the shadow Treasurer has been proven wrong.

But it goes on. On 4 May last year the Leader of the Opposition said that the financial situation Victoria found itself in was such that we may be threatening the state's AAA credit rating. The next day the shadow Treasurer said on these forecasts Victoria's AAA credit rating was now under serious threat.

However, of course, as we know under this government Victoria has always had a AAA credit rating — and it continues to have such.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

Sitting continued on motion of Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission).

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — We have seen on a number of occasions that the shadow Treasurer has been found either not to have understood information or maybe to have misrepresented information in his haste to try to score some political points.

He also quite infamously made a botch of the opposition's health policy by essentially guessing what the receipts of the gaming auction would be and basing the opposition's only visible health policy on that. The \$1 billion hospital beds promise was based essentially on guesswork and demonstrates again that the biggest risk to the Victorian economy is the shadow Treasurer, Kim Wells. He is sort of the Barnaby Joyce of Victorian politics. At least Tony Abbott lived up to his motto and took real action and moved Barnaby out of the finance portfolio!

The Victorian Liberals and The Nationals are economic frauds. When you look at the issue of police, you remember that the Leader of the Opposition was the president of the Liberal Party and the Leader of The Nationals was part of the previous government that promised extra police but cut 800 police. Labor has promised extra police every term and has delivered. The Liberals are law and order frauds. When it comes to education they closed 300 schools and sacked teachers. Six months out from an election they do not have a detailed policy — education frauds. In health, their policy amounts to a press release issued on

18 April which, as I said before, was based on guesswork. It is the \$1 billion guess made by the shadow Treasurer.

In government the Liberals shut hospitals and sacked nurses. People in my area well remember the attempts to run down and sell off the Austin Hospital. The fact is that people do not trust the Liberals or The Nationals.

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Speaker, when in opposition the Labor Party promised family-friendly sitting hours. There are a number of young parents in the house at the moment who are being forced to stay in the chamber till the early hours of the morning. In terms of broken promises, I think that is an outrageous failure — —

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

Mr Thompson — A failure to fulfil a commitment on the part of the Labor Party to look after young parents in the chamber.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order! I ask the member for Sandringham to resume his seat.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — It is a privilege to join in this debate and to make a number of clear-cut comments. Family-friendly sitting hours constitute only one of a number of broken Labor promises. We could go back through the mists of time to the promise to build the Scoresby freeway toll free. We could go to a number of federal promises in relation to FuelWatch, Grocery Watch, the economic — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the member for Sandringham that we are debating the state budget, not the federal budget. I ask him to come back to the state budget.

Mr THOMPSON — I was just illustrating the wider point of the failure to fulfil political promises. In terms of the state budget the shadow Treasurer made a very good and very wise contribution in this place on 6 May. At that time in *Hansard* a number of charts and graphs were presented which illustrated the economic position of Victoria. A very important factor that affects most families across Victoria is the widening gap between the growth in earnings and housing prices. Home affordability is a critical factor that affects the quality of life across Victoria. Where there is a wide discrepancy between average weekly earnings and the cost of a home, young families have to work triple time to meet the cost of their mortgage and child-care commitments and have sufficient resources left over to

meet their other commitments and responsibilities. This means that for many young families who are paying exorbitant prices for their first home there is not the same capital reserve with which to undertake restumping, reblocking, replastering, kitchen renovations and the other measures most people would confront as they enter the first home market.

The second issue I would like to draw attention to is the massive increase in revenue raised by this government. Payroll tax has gone from some \$2.4 billion in 1999–2000 to a projected revenue growth of just under \$5.2 billion in 2013–14. Then there is the example of the massive uplift in land tax. On the radio today a Surrey Hills person with a mother in a nursing home was complaining about her mother's obligation to meet land tax commitments when her mother is in enforced care. Because the lady's mother does not live in her principal place of residence she is obliged to continue to meet the land tax costs on her property. Property prices have gone up, but the obligations of Victorians to pay land tax on their property holdings have not been adjusted on the ad valorem scale. In 1999–2000 land tax was just under \$400 million a year in Victoria; by the year 2013–14 it is going to be up near the \$1.4 billion mark, a massive uplift in revenue.

Then there is the example of the effect of stamp duty on first home prices. In addition to people paying for their first home there is the increase in stamp duty. Stamp duty revenue has gone up from some \$1.3 billion or so in 1999–2000 to a projected \$4.3 billion by the year 2013–14. There is also the example of continuing growth in payroll tax, which has gone from some \$2.4 billion in 1999–2000 to a projected level of just under \$5 billion in 2013–14. So the story rolls on — the story of this massive uplift in revenue raised by the Brumby government, revenue which has not been wisely spent.

Then there is the debt rollercoaster, which has moved from just over \$5 billion in 1999–2000 to a projected level of some \$31 billion in 2014, with a corresponding obligation to make interest repayments during that time. As a consequence of that increased level of resourcing to meet interest there will be less money to meet the recurrent budget expenses across the portfolio areas, including the important portfolio areas of health, education, public transport and law and order.

As I think back over the last period of time there are a number of things that come strongly to mind, including the words of a parent whose son was slashed across the face. He was gravely concerned about the breakdown of community safety and law and order in the southern part of Melbourne. When he approached me to see

what could be done to increase the level of police and to increase enforcement options, he remarked that the reason he was taking action was that he did not wish to be the next parent who had to unzip a black body bag. He made that comment in the context of there being a 70 per cent increase in violent crime in Victoria during the tenure of the current Labor government.

The Liberal Party has proposed a solution of more than 1600 police to be recruited in the largest recruiting drive in Victoria's history, as well as protective services officers being placed on railway station platforms between 6.00 p.m. and the last train to bring about a stronger level of community safety. If that policy were in place presently, we would not have had the incidents at the McKinnon and Gardenvale railway stations over the past week where people were bashed and assaulted. There has been a lack of respect for the law in those circumstances. But if there had been a presence of trained protective services officers and more police, then there would have been a higher level of community safety on the public transport system and public confidence in the system. If one reviews the level of violence and assaults on the streets, one finds a manifestation before one's eyes of the reality of this 70 per cent increase in violent crime across Victoria in the last decade.

In terms of the expenditure of resources in this state, I have parents in my electorate who have children who attend local schools. The parents want a good educational journey within the state system for their children, but they have seen the run-down condition of some school sites in my electorate, where there has been virtually no significant resourcing over the last decade. This is in sharp contrast to the level of funding in marginal Labor electorate seats within the sand-belt area. There is a palpable anger in my electorate among those parents who want a worthy educational journey for their children.

There is a strong correlation between the built form and educational outcomes for students. That is lacking in a number of bayside schools. It is my strong belief that more can be done, should be done and will be done under a future Liberal government in ensuring that there is adequate infrastructure and that the extraordinary maintenance backlogs are removed.

In terms of public transport an overlap of factors, including poor planning, inadequate infrastructure, increasing patronage, delays that occur at stations and union disputes, has caused a major disruption to the travelling journeys of many railway commuters in recent years. Those commuters have texted me, emailed me and made appointments with my office; they have

pointed out that it is not a very pleasant thing to wait on the Richmond station platform because of successive train cancellations in the middle of winter and that it is not a very good thing to be jammed into a train where the conditions are unregulated and are contrary to the best health interests of commuters.

I have travelled on trains to the city when there have been cancelled trains up the line, and I have seen people who are intent on hopping onto trains to get to their destination. This illustrates the fact that the Labor Party has failed to plan for the development of infrastructure in public transport, water supply and metropolitan roads to cater for the growth in demand that has been anticipated and predicted. This is a situation that has been writ large across the metropolitan public transport network.

In terms of the issue of health there was a senior person in my electorate who lined up one day for back surgery which had been delayed for 12 months. He rearranged his personal arrangements and went to the hospital with his wife for major back surgery, and he was staggered to spend 4 hours in the waiting area expecting to be operated on shortly and then to be told they could not do it and that he had to go home. Some weeks later they rescheduled the surgery, but he sustained an infection that set him back literally months in addition to the 12 months delay between the time the surgery was first needed and the time the surgery was undertaken. This again is an example, which has been writ large across Victoria, of the delays in surgical procedures and the juggling of waiting list times.

There is also the example of waste across the state and federal levels. There has been a waste of money regarding smart meters. They are smart for whom? The development and rollout costs have doubled. If you add the cost of the increase in the rollout cost for smart meters to the cost of the myki delays, the computerisation upgrade at the Office of Housing, HealthSMART, the ultranet of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Project Rosetta and the conveyancing online project, you get literally billions of taxpayers dollars that have been squandered.

This represents a massive level of failure in service delivery which, if translated in dollar cost across to my Sandringham electorate, would mean a new hospital, a new secondary college, upgraded facilities in terms of needed community infrastructure and many more initiatives that could improve the welfare of Victorians.

There have been a number of concerns raised in my electorate in recent times that have come to the fore.

We have a minister who is advocating increased levels of cycling along Beach Road, which is in contradistinction to the words of the coroner following the death of James Gould in Mentone, when he expressed major concern regarding the pattern of behaviour of cyclists. The cycling code of conduct advocates 20 cyclists in a pack. There is pictorial or movie representation on my website at the moment of a number of instances where the road law is being contravened — cyclists going through red lights, cyclists riding in numbers beyond the recommended number, the number of cyclists riding more than two abreast and so on.

Rather than promoting a decrease in the volume of traffic so as to prevent the risk of significant danger to cyclists, in order to promote the welfare of cyclists and improvement in cycling safety, it is important that a stronger approach be taken to law enforcement and community education so that cyclists can ride; they can gain the benefit of their individual circuits and individual journeys, but at the same time those journeys can be undertaken in safety and with respect to other road users.

Then there is the issue of public housing, where recently in my electorate a young mother of five children was kicked out of her public housing unit with no provision made for her to go to a place thereafter with her children. She has been separated from her children for several months now, and the government has failed to step in and redress a circumstance where a mother does not have the opportunity to care for her young family. That stands as a continuing disgrace.

Then there is the issue of traffic lights in the local area, where more needs to be done to improve safety. With the increase and uplift in commuter traffic across Melbourne, there has been a corresponding and massive increase in the demand for intervention measures across roads in my electorate. Bay Road, Beach Road, Bluff Road, Reserve Road and Balcombe Road all have volumes of traffic that make it difficult for the elderly and numbers of students going to school to cross roads in safety.

If one counts the volume of money wasted by the Bracks and Brumby governments in failed and delayed projects and translates that money to what otherwise could have been provided in community infrastructure for the electors of Sandringham, much more could have been achieved.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) — I rise to happily speak in support of the Appropriation (Parliament 2010/2011) Bill. Budgets provide a very useful insight in terms of

the vision and priorities of governments. There are a number of really important initiatives in this budget that will directly and indirectly benefit the people I represent and the western suburbs generally.

Before I speak more specifically to some of those initiatives, I believe it is incredibly important that we consider this appropriation bill in the context of the economic climate that our state has been in over recent years.

It is an important context in which to consider the economic performance of our state as well as the Brumby Labor government's capacity to deliver an investment in jobs, in infrastructure, in health and in community services, because it was not long ago that the chill winds of the global financial crisis (GFC) reached our shores. We saw, and we continue to see, incredible and deeply unfortunate economic meltdowns in many parts of the world once thought economically stable. There is no doubt in my mind that the economic and social consequence of the global financial crisis will continue to be part of our international, economic and social history for many years to come.

Victoria's economic performance in the context of the GFC is not something that we should gloss over. In last year's budget the Brumby Labor government provided strong economic and social leadership in providing a buffer for our community and our industries against the horrendous impact of the GFC.

The significant lift in infrastructure investment was to secure Victorian jobs and the Victorian economy against the global financial crisis. This was an investment that was bold, it was decisive, and it was absolutely necessary. Sadly it was not welcomed by the opposition, which somehow did not have the capacity to understand, or the gumption to admit, that the government's economic agenda was about protecting and growing employment and ensuring not only that our economy could withstand the threats posed by the GFC but also that our economy was fertile and sustainable for the purposes of future economic growth.

We need to reflect upon what are the consequences of that are for the 2010–11 budget. It means that the Victorian government can better support families and family life by generating employment. This is a government that has helped generate and secure over 90 000 Victorian jobs, and we know that over 92 per cent of all full-time jobs created in Australia over the past years were created in Victoria. We know in the west that this investment been secured and enhanced through not only things like supporting the building of the Toyota Hybrid Camry at the Altona plant but also

the government's work with BAE, a project that has already created 400 jobs in Hobsons Bay.

But when it comes to securing people's jobs there is always more to do, and that is why this government has pledged to create and secure another 30 000 Victorian jobs by injecting \$9.5 billion into job-creating infrastructure.

I know that one of the most important things to the communities I represent is job security and ensuring that we continue to generate employment opportunities, and the infrastructure investment that the appropriation bill enables stands as an incredibly important assistant in maintaining this important economic momentum in the state.

This bill enables a competitive business environment with further reductions in business costs. It includes not only the incredible infrastructure investment; we also see a 3.5 per cent cut in WorkCover premiums, and may I say this is done at the same time that we have reduced workplace injuries and have not cut support for injured workers. We have cut payroll taxes, which will further enable Victorian businesses to remain competitive and to create even more jobs.

Another important angle of the government's strong economic management means that this government can now significantly lift its investment in the services that are deeply valued by the communities that I represent — and that includes things like new and improved transport services, roads, ongoing education investment, delivering more police to improve community safety, and a record investment in health. It is this investment in health that I would particularly like to focus on.

An amount of \$4 billion is no shy sum when it comes to investment in Victorians' health, and in fact there is a reason that this is called a record investment — because it has never been done before. Our government's commitment to improving the health of all Victorians is evidenced by this commitment. It is something that I, as a government member, am incredibly proud of.

This investment builds on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reforms. It demonstrates the ongoing commitment not just of the state government but of the federal government to not just building the key infrastructure to provide top-notch health services; it not only provides funding to improve those services, but it has grappled with and sought to resolve the incredibly difficult problems — the problems around health administration, accountability in respect of health services and what is the most effective and efficient

funding model of health provision. It has done so in a way that has been focused on improving the vital health services that Victorian families need.

For better or for worse I am incredibly familiar with the challenge of providing health services and the challenge for health services of providing responsiveness in an emergency department context. I am familiar with the frustrations that patients and their treating doctors feel about elective surgery. However, I am completely and utterly reassured by the evidence that demonstrates that in this regard Labor governments have always tried to invest in a way that responds to the needs of our community.

The investment that the state government has recently secured from the commonwealth — and may I say record investment — will result in more responsive emergency departments. This is not just a pithy assertion. There will be 150 000 patients that will be treated more quickly because of this government's investment. Under the 2010–11 Victorian state budget this government will ensure the capacity to treat an extra 50 000 patients in our emergency departments in 2010–11.

Anyone who has paced the waiting room of an emergency department, hopefully awaiting the call of their name, will know the relief this investment will bring to those having to make use of emergency departments and to the hardworking staff of our emergency departments. I have two young children and I have all too frequently been sitting in the waiting room of an emergency department, whether that has been for swine flu, asthma, croup, gastro or more than my fair share of concussion. It does seem to me and to those who have young children —

Mr Mulder — I hope that is not you!

Ms HENNESSY — I was referring to my children. I often reflect that young children are the Petri dishes of illness.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Ms HENNESSY — My children do have a tendency to jump off tall and dangerous things, and so we have seen lots of broken legs and arms as well. My family and I have spent our fair share of time in emergency departments, anxiously sitting alongside many other anxious parents and prospective patients, worrying about how long it will be before we are seen. I take great comfort from the fact that our government is committed to reducing this wait, and I am very hopeful it will significantly improve the experience for all concerned.

Similarly we all know the frustrations and the impacts on quality of life that lengthy waits for elective surgery can produce. The government's work with its federal counterpart has meant that over the next four years almost 34 000 additional patients will not have to wait as long. I know this will be an incredibly huge relief for those in the communities I represent, their treating doctors and the staff of Victorian hospitals. This additional support is a significant source of comfort.

This budget also makes a further investment in providing elective surgery sooner to 9000 patients. Again, this is yet another investment that will significantly enhance the quality of life of patients awaiting elective surgery. It will also bring significant comfort to their treating practitioners. Further to this investment the government has underscored its commitment to continuous improvement in our health services with an investment provided in this budget that makes outpatient services more efficient and effective. This government understands that waiting for an appointment for a specialist service can slow down the journey to good health, and this is a journey that we want to expedite. This has been somewhat affected by the workforce pressures that the whole of the country is experiencing in regard to particular health specialties, but it is an investment contained in this budget that in 2010–11 will deliver an increase in outpatient treatments by 32 000. This investment will help lift the effectiveness and accessibility of our health services. It again demonstrates our willingness to continuously seek to improve our health services.

We have done this not only by investing in this budget in health services but also in health capital. We have heard a lot about this in speeches on this bill, but in the western suburbs of Melbourne what we welcome with open arms is the government's provision of \$90.5 million for stage 3 of the Sunshine Hospital redevelopment. This investment will enable the transformation of Western Health's Sunshine Hospital campus. It will enable the establishment of a teaching, tertiary and referral hospital, and it will be an incredibly important anchor for health services in the west.

Much has been written and said about the incredible health workforce challenges that we face and will continue to face as a nation. If members of this house have digested and followed recent reports of the Productivity Commission or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, they will have found illuminating evidence of what the future might look like in terms of workforce demographics and economic dependence. This is a national problem that I am pleased Labor governments are confronting.

The issues around the health workforce are particularly challenging in the west, but the provision of stage 3 funding for Sunshine Hospital made in this budget will enable Western Health to advance its vision of a teaching, training and research facility. It will enable greater teaching and recruitment of more health professionals in the west, and the on-flow effect on medical research is incredibly important. It will enable us to build and develop a health workforce and to develop and implement more innovative and effective models of care.

The upshot of this investment is it will deliver more accessible, more responsive and more patient-centred models of health-care services — those that are done in partnership with the community. It is an investment about which I am extremely proud, because I know it will fundamentally make a difference in the lives and lifestyles of the people of Melbourne's west. For this reason alone I commend the bill to the house.

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — I rise this evening to speak on the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010. It could be said that each budget is an opportunity for a government to determine the legacy it will leave. In defining the Brumby government's legacy it must be said that it is riddled with failure and mismanagement. This year's state budget was yet another let-down for Victorian families and another reminder of what this government has failed to achieve. Despite 11 years in government and record revenues of more than \$340 billion, the Brumby government will leave this state with a legacy of economic mismanagement and neglected infrastructure and services. Even after this record income the 2010–11 Victorian state budget shows that state debt will increase to \$31.7 billion by 2014.

We are starting to approach the debt levels experienced under Cain and Kirner with this government's budget forecast for 2014. This government's legacy is one of deteriorating infrastructure, failing services, massive debt and wasted opportunities. The opportunity to make productive investments in this state, to upgrade infrastructure such as public transport and roads, and to deliver critical improvements to services such as law and order, health and education in a state budget have again been missed. This budget, much like the government that presented it, is bereft of vision.

For the families of the Western Port area the 2010 state budget was a very brief read. It demonstrated no vision and no leadership. There was an opportunity in the 2010 budget to deliver improvements to the basic services that Western Port families need. Instead, the problems in our community were again completely

ignored by this government. It is time the Brumby government became accountable for the waste that the Victorian people have been subjected to and for its abject failure to improve basic infrastructure and services.

For evidence of Brumby government neglect one need look no further than the issue of law and order. Victoria has the lowest number of police per head of population of any state and spends less on police than any other state. The Western Port area is a perfect example of this government's failure in the area of law and order. Whilst the Western Port community was able to thwart the misguided and irresponsible plan by this government to close the 24-hour Hastings police station overnight, there are still widespread problems with law and order. The hardworking local Hastings police officers do their very best to protect their community, but they are understaffed, underresourced and stretched beyond breaking point — and they receive no support from this government.

What was the Brumby government's solution in this year's state budget to the law and order problem? It was a ripped-off, inadequate version of the coalition's policy on policing. A conspicuous omission from the government's law and order plan was a commitment to match the coalition's promise of 940 Victoria Police protective services officers on all metropolitan and regional rail stations from 6.00 p.m. until the last train to protect commuters. The Stony Point line is included under the coalition's policy and would have those officers at each station. Victoria has a serious problem with violence and other crime. It needs a government that is serious about law and order and one that has a serious law and order policy of zero tolerance and tougher sentencing reflecting the Victorian community's expectations.

The Brumby government's commitment to health was equally disappointing. There is a consistent need amongst communities in Western Port for additional investment in health care to be made by this government. Every family has the right to be able to access affordable medical services, be they doctor, dentist or allied health professional services. For years the communities of the Hastings electorate have been poorly serviced by the health industry, yet the Brumby government has again chosen to ignore the problem. The 2010 budget provided the perfect opportunity for this government to get serious about health-care investment, yet we see another contribution to its legacy of health-care failure. This is a government that is content with delivering one-third of the 1000 hospital beds that are needed according to the Australian Medical Association, despite the fact that Victoria

already has the lowest number of hospital beds per head of population in Australia.

The state government has ignored another opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of Victorians with a disability and those who care for someone with a disability. The Brumby government has been warned again and again about the implications of refusing to fund a sector that is trying to support so many families. I have raised the issue of supported accommodation in this place before. Despite the deficiencies being well known to the state government, in the budget it has not demonstrated any intention to take significant action on this issue. Over the last year only one additional place was created in supported accommodation services. The end result of this lack of government support is a decrease in the quality of service provision and the amount of care that is able to be provided. There are families, not only in Western Port but throughout the state, that deserve real action from their government to alleviate the strain associated with caring for a loved one with a disability. It is a disgrace that this government would so blatantly ignore some of the most vulnerable members of our society by refusing to take action on this vital issue.

Another shocking example of the state government's failure to provide basic services to Victorians is the fact that the Somerville community has had to wage a campaign over many years just to have its secondary college completed with the addition of years 11 and 12. The government has ignored this pressing need in Somerville for years. Last Friday the coalition made a commitment to complete Somerville Secondary College by providing years 11 and 12 and — lo and behold! — on the following Monday the Brumby government flip-flopped and adopted the coalition policy. This is the 63rd coalition policy that the Brumby government has copied, and it is continuing its obvious attempt to emulate the me-tooism of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

The school community has worked tirelessly, initially to prevent the land on which the school now stands from being sold, then to have the school built and to have it grow from its initial years 7–10 as a campus of Mount Erin Secondary College to being a stand-alone school, and now it will be a complete secondary college. I offer my sincere congratulations to principal Chris Lloyd and his staff, school council president Deb Hollands and her committee, and parents, students and the Somerville community for their tenacious and ultimately successful fight.

On Friday, 4 June, I had the honour of visiting Somerville Secondary College, along with the shadow

education minister, to make the announcement that a coalition government would ensure that next year there will be a year 11 at Somerville Secondary College and that in 2012 there will be a year 12 at the school. Continuing the Brumby government's me-tooism, the Minister for Education returned from her junket to China last weekend, found out about the coalition's announcement and had copied it by Monday. She is obviously a very efficient minister! She was back in the country for only a few hours when she did a backflip and copied coalition policy. It is a sad state of affairs when after 11 years in office the Brumby government has become so lazy and arrogant that it will only do what the community so desperately needs when the opposition forces it to do so.

The accessibility of reliable public transport is a vital need for the communities of Western Port. The safety and serviceability of train stations on the Stony Point line and throughout the remainder of the state have deteriorated to such an extent that many people simply will not use train services, particularly at night. It is unacceptable that Victorians should feel deterred from using public services for which they pay because of the violence, general lawlessness and vandalism that are now so prevalent throughout our community.

There is also the question of serviceability of public transport. The government has failed to install the five sets of boom gates that are desperately needed on Bungower Road and Park Lane, Somerville; Urquhart Crescent; and Disney Street and the main HMAS *Cerberus* entrance in Crib Point. The intermittent failure of the remaining boom gates on many of the other crossings on the Stony Point line is also causing great safety concern.

The only strategy that the state government has offered to the people of Western Port to improve public transport has been the bungled rollout of the flawed and wasteful myki system. Not only has the rollout of myki been riddled with delays and cost blow-outs but now the myki infrastructure on the Stony Point railway stations, which just sits there unused, has become an ongoing target of vandalism.

The budget also provided an opportunity for the state government to invest in local infrastructure projects that would benefit my community enormously. The government has ignored the issue of road and traffic management infrastructure in Western Port for too long. The community of French Island desperately needs its roads upgraded. Locals are forced to travel on roads that are unsafe. Once again this area has been forgotten by this government in this budget.

Then there is the community of Baxter, a quiet village that — if this government has its way — will soon have a 1000-metre long and up to 15-metre high overpass thrust upon it as part of Peninsula Link. The community is calling for the underpass that formed part of the initial community consultation to be implemented rather than an overpass that will effectively cut the town in half. The community rallied on Sunday, 6 June, calling for the state government to stop ignoring its pleas for an underpass. But again there is no intention or plan to invest in needed infrastructure.

Baxter residents are also justifiably outraged by the lack of pedestrian crossing facilities in the town. At one end of the village, both children and adults are required to take their lives in their hands to access Baxter Park across busy Frankston-Flinders Road and at the other they have to run the gauntlet of Baxter-Tooradin Road to reach the shops or Baxter Tavern.

There are many communities in the Western Port area that urgently need pedestrian crossings to ensure the safety of all who use our road network. In Balnarring, residents need the installation of two pedestrian crossings. Firstly, a crossing is required over Frankston-Flinders Road between the shopping centre and Balnarring hall. A second pedestrian crossing is also needed on Balnarring Road between the shopping centre and the church. A roundabout is also urgently needed at the intersection of Frankston-Flinders, Balnarring, Stumpy Gully and Balnarring Beach roads in Balnarring. The provision of this basic traffic management infrastructure would do a great deal of good for commuter safety.

A crossing is also urgently needed in Somerville over Eramosa Road West to ensure that pedestrians are able to safely access the Centro and Somerville Plaza shopping centres without having to risk their lives on this busy thoroughfare. It is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured when crossing this road, particularly given the number of senior citizens and families with small children that need to cross that road.

The state government has had 11 years to make a real and visible difference to the communities around Western Port. Rather than investing in the infrastructure that is required to improve basic services, the legacy of this state government has been a litany of broken promises and disappointment. There have been so many opportunities for decisive action on many of these issues and each time the government has fallen short. The Brumby government has had a choice to make these key improvements or to continue to leave Victorians unsupported. The choice has become apparent: rather than a legacy of fundamental

improvements to our services, this government will be remembered for 11 years of inaction and an unacceptable level of state debt.

When Labor was thrown from power in 1992 Victoria was on the verge of bankruptcy, had deteriorating infrastructure and failing services. When it returned to government just seven years later, this Labor government inherited a state that was again the leader in most, if not all, fields across this nation and had an economy that was the envy of the rest of Australia. Many of the people that caused the disaster under the Cain and Kirner governments are still involved with this government and its policies. It should be no great surprise to anyone that the same people doing the same things will eventually achieve the same result. It has only been the rivers of gold delivered by a well-run national economy and the state government's addiction to bigger and bigger taxes that have, to date, prevented this big spending, wasteful, incompetent government from doing it all again. History has shown that with Labor, it is always only a matter of time.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — I rise to congratulate the Brumby government on the 2010–11 budget. It is a budget unashamedly directed at job creation; it is a budget for jobs and certainly a large budget for jobs in the South Barwon electorate, which I will address in the latter part of my speech.

It is a budget that will create and secure jobs for Victorians right across the state — right across urban, regional and country Victoria — a budget that builds on Victoria's remarkable job creation record over the last 18 months. In last year's budget, as other speakers have said, only 35 000 jobs were predicted to be created in Victoria in that 12 months. Over the last 12 months nearly 92 000 new jobs have been created in Victoria. This represents 92 per cent of all full-time jobs created in Australia in the last year, and they are in Victoria. That is quite a remarkable achievement and one that the commentators have certainly pointed out. On top of that, in regional Victoria, where I live and which I represent, over 26 000 regional Victorians have moved into work in the last year, representing nearly a 4 per cent increase, whereas everywhere else in the world and indeed many parts of Australia have been experiencing job losses.

The Brumby government has made the right decisions and the right investments for Victoria. This budget is one that builds on our record of prosperity and investment. In 2010 the budget will secure an additional 30 000 Victorian jobs next financial year by injecting around \$9.5 billion into job-creating infrastructure. It builds on a record investment in infrastructure, which

includes \$6.4 billion on roads and public transport and \$277 million on school financial stimulus packages. A reduction in payroll taxes is set to benefit 31 000 businesses. The Jobs for the Future Economy action plan has been allocated \$175 million, while \$91.2 million is allocated to areas of skills development like TAFE, \$44.7 million is invested in the tourism industry, and there is \$13.4 million for small business. I would like to mention some of those job-creating investments in South Barwon.

I bring to the attention of the house the front page of the *Geelong Advertiser* of Tuesday, 4 May, which has the heading '\$77 million ring-road vow' and the front page of the *Geelong Advertiser* of Wednesday, 5 May, which has the heading 'We get a new hospital'. They are two examples of social infrastructure and, importantly, job-creating infrastructure both for the broader area of Geelong and for my area of South Barwon in particular. It was announced in the budget that we will get a new hospital, and I must inform the house that that has been exceptionally well received, not only by health professionals but also, importantly, by the broader communities that this southern hospital will service — areas from Torquay across to Barwon Heads and the Bellarine Peninsula and inland to areas such as Grovedale and Waurm Ponds.

We have allocated some \$33 million for the purchase of land around the Armstrong Creek area as well as, importantly, six new intensive care beds and expanded acute capacity at the Geelong Hospital. Some \$13 million of planning money has been allocated to secure a site. Certainly the hunt for a site for a southern hospital in my electorate of South Barwon has begun. We are keen to make those announcements in forthcoming months. In respect of planning for that hospital, I am pleased that I will be chairing a steering committee which will be set up in the next few weeks to look at service delivery from that hospital. Once the site is secured the formal planning process will look at what services will be delivered from that important health facility.

That is not the only infrastructure contribution that we have made for the Armstrong Creek area south of Geelong. There is a commitment to infrastructure — \$76.9 million to connect the Geelong Ring Road to the Surf Coast Highway, which will be known as either Surf Coast link or 4C. It will be the next section of what has been an exciting project for some 23 kilometres of highway, from Corio to Waurm Ponds. It has been a resounding success. We are working well on 4A, and 4B planning has been completed. We look forward to the commencement of 4B in the coming months, and 4C is the additional piece of the jigsaw that will link a

major arterial through to the Surf Coast Highway. It is something that has been broadly welcomed. Yes, it will be one lane each way initially, but, as we will be articulating in the coming months, an overlay is currently being progressed to see major parcels of land set aside for additional lanes and intersection treatments. It will be a major arterial road that will service Geelong, the Surf Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula in the future. It is a high-profile investment in that area. It runs on the back of some \$6.5 million that was spent on the upgrade of Mount Duneed Road, including the intersection of Anglesea Road and Mount Duneed Road. The Surf Coast link is an additional link to the Surf Coast Highway. It will be signposted to direct people through to Torquay, or if they are going down the coast to Anglesea or further on, the signage will direct people to Anglesea Road.

The additional expenditure in terms of rail involves the provision of the \$4.3 billion for the regional link, which will deliver a brand-new regional line that will be separate from the lines for metropolitan commuters. That is an exciting project, which is starting to get some legs in the community.

There are some educational commitments in the budget. Importantly for me there is some \$3 million for Belmont Primary School, which will complete the development of that school. For the benefit of the house, Belmont primary is quite a significant statement by this government: it was a primary school that the former Kennett government had identified for closure; it was a school that was monstered into pursuing that particular line. I was a councillor in that ward at the time.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Thank you for those comments supporting my efforts to keep Belmont primary open, as indeed happened. Not surprisingly, though, with the bullying that came from the previous government the school lost some 60-odd children and came close to being forced to close. Thankfully it has transformed itself into a very vibrant school and, with the federal money and our money, that school has been completely transformed both in terms of its educational capacity and also from a building site to a capital site.

The other important contribution in this budget is funding for the acquisition of land for new schools. That brings me to the commitments that we made last year regarding educational provision in Torquay. We are working closely with council in terms of purchasing the old school site there, which will be for years 10, 11 and 12. In addition to that, we have committed to and

announced, as well as having gone to great lengths to plan with the Surf Coast Shire, the site for an additional educational facility in North Torquay, which will be a primary school.

Importantly that will give people choice in Torquay. In Torquay North there will be a stand-alone primary school, certainly in the initial stages, whereas in the central part of Torquay there will be a maternal and child health centre and a K–12 facility that will give people choices about where they want to send their children.

The decision was made back in August to expand the facility from the current P–9 to a P–12, and that announcement has been a resounding success. In some 10 months I have received, I think, two phone calls from people who are opposed to it.

I welcome those announcements and will be pursuing those efforts, although I know there have been some mischievous people visiting Torquay, who normally do not get around there often. They are down there stirring up the local community and suggesting that the Torquay school is a substandard educational facility. It is not hard to work out who these people are. They have never had their hearts in public education; they are very keen on selling schools, sacking teachers and undermining the public education system.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — It does sound like the Liberal Party — it is the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party has a small number of assistants in Torquay, and it is quite distasteful that a political party would use the reputation of the school, these teachers and some school kids as political pawns in what has been a very distasteful campaign to undermine the fine reputation of that school in Torquay. I urge the Liberal Party not to use that wonderful school as a political pawn.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — The member for Polwarth, who is at the table, mentioned water. Armstrong Creek will be a sustainable community, and one of the additions to that community will be the third pipe. Barwon Water is well on the way to making additional announcements about that well-deserved infrastructure for Armstrong Creek. That is where Barwon Water is going. I know the member for Polwarth is at the table —

Mr Mulder interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Polwarth will stop interjecting.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — I am keen to hear the Liberal candidate in my electorate being pulled into line by the member for Polwarth, because he needs to be pulled into line. You have slapped him about the ears in the paper, and you need to slap him about the ears again. He needs to rule out having an economic and environmental disaster in the middle of your electorate. He needs to rule it out, the member's Portarlington branch needs to rule it out and his leader needs to rule it out.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — The member for Polwarth is making noises as if he does not support it, but we know what will happen once a dam is imposed in the Otways.

The member for Polwarth needs to stand up for his electorate, rule out completely the madhouse view of the Liberal candidate for South Barwon. He has no support from the City of Greater Geelong, and he certainly would not want to go down to the Colac Otway Shire offices and meet some of the councillors or the mayor, because it would be an exceptionally frosty reception.

Water has been our strength, and whether it is the interconnector, the Anglesea aquifer or recycling, we will continue to augment Geelong's water supply. People understand that one of the policy options that has been put forward is, from an economic point of view, a yield point of view and an environmental point of view, mad — a dam in the middle of a pristine national or state park. Certainly I call on the member for Polwarth to stand up for his community and slap the candidate for South Barwon around the ears.

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — I rise to give my version of a response to the Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill 2010. I would like to call this a George Orwell budget. Members who are educated in English literature will know that George Orwell was the man who wrote *Animal Farm*. I call this budget the George Orwell budget because all seats, no matter which party holds them, are to be treated equally, but in this case some are treated more equally than others. For proof of that we only have to refer to the *Age* of 15 May and look at the article by Farrah Tomazin entitled 'Who got the fat?'. The article talks about where the budget was allocated this year.

Under the heading of 'Health highlights' it states that Labor seats received \$1.57 billion — that is billion with

a 'b'; and the coalition seats received \$53.8 million — that is million with an 'm'. That is one-twentieth of what the Labor seats are due to get.

For new schools, there was \$54.13 million for Labor, and for the coalition seats there was a measly \$8.46 million.

Premium train stations received \$83.7 million for 20 new stations, of which 18 are in Labor-held seats and three are in Liberal-held seats. This is an amazing inequity, if you like.

Of the 112 new infrastructure projects that can be localised into single electorates, 89 are in ALP seats, which is about 90 per cent.

This budget provides a very clear choice for Victorians in November. Victorians can either vote for leaders in policy development or continue to vote for a government which, after 11 years, does not hesitate to spend Victorian's hard-earned taxes on spin and politics rather than good policy initiatives. Since 2006 the Labor government in this state has taken more than 62 coalition policies, often watered them down and made them far less effective, and then adopted them in one format or another.

In 2006 the state budget was \$19 billion or thereabouts. Now it is \$44 billion, only a few years later. In that time the population of Victoria has not doubled and the services certainly have not doubled, so where has that money gone from \$19 billion through to \$44 billion?

One has got to ask: where is the money being squandered? In the past four years I have been advocating very strongly for more police in the electorate of Bayswater, both in the Knox and Maroondah police service areas, which are 30 per cent down on police members. My electorate has three 24-hour stations and I am very lucky — I have Knox, Ringwood and Boronia. Each of those stations could do with up to 30 per cent more members — front-line police members — to actually be able to serve our people and be proactive in policing, but also to be able to react to what is going on.

There are some initiatives in place, including the dedicated training workplace scheme where fresh graduates come straight out of the academy on Friday and into a station on Monday. That is terrific, but these are not additional staff; they are supernumeraries. They are only there on a rotation of nine weeks and then they are out again. We do not actually have good, constant team building at any of our police stations, or long-term strategies in place for how to reduce crime and get in touch with crime in an area.

The coalition has promised over 2200 new law enforcement officers. For the last four years that I have been in this place I have heard the government say, 'We have plenty of police. We have promised extra police. There is not a problem with crime'. Yet the recent government announcement promised 1900 new police. That was catch-up, but it did not quite catch up enough. So if there are enough, why the promise of 1900 new police? It does not quite make sense. Again, they are playing catch-up politics. Instead of doing that they should be trying to make our streets safe again. The people of Knox and Maroondah are crying out for stronger action on law and order and safety on our streets, but the Brumby Labor government has failed to take action in this area.

We desperately need, as I say, extra officers, but this government has failed to provide them in the electorate of Bayswater. Prevention is always better than cure, and I do not see that happening. It was interesting to hear the Premier this morning on the Neil Mitchell program on 3AW — he was on just after 9 o'clock speaking about the rather awful string of violent incidents over the last couple of weeks, especially around train stations and on public transport. In regards to what should happen if violence breaks out, the Premier said:

People should always call 000. They should always call the police and the police's job and responsibility is to be there without delay.

That is all very well and good except if you do not have enough people on your roster to actually have a van on duty, or if there is one van on duty and there are another two parked out the back but you do not have enough people to staff the vans. People can telephone all they like — if there are no police vans and no police to staff those vans, there is no point in calling, because they will not be coming.

An article in the *Herald Sun* dated 7 June has the subheading 'Awful truth: 45 900 assaults rung in to 000, 25 300 recorded by police'. This smells a bit fishy. If we look at Maroondah, we see that 883 assaults per 100 000 people were reported to 000. However, in the official police statistics — that is, Victoria Police statistics — it comes out as only 460. That means the statistics are 460 versus 883, so only 460 members of the public had their gripes recorded in the official police statistics. That is woeful. I do not blame the police for this. They are absolutely doing the best they can with the resources they have been given but, as I said, those resources are too few and far between.

Sentencing is a great problem and no longer reflects public values in so many circumstances. Offenders

think they can get away with crimes, because even if they are apprehended — which is difficult when you do not have enough police — they are quite confident of walking free from a court or just getting a slap on the wrist.

On 14 January this year the Leader of the Opposition announced that we would get rid of suspended sentences. The very next day the Premier and the acting Attorney-General attacked our policy, saying that we would be locking up mums and dads and that a judge is best placed to determine whether a jail sentence or a suspended sentence is appropriate. Then on 14 May, just a few months later, the government announced that it will axe suspended sentences for serious crimes by the middle of next year — another one of these flip-flops. During the last sitting week I noticed the catchcry on the other side of the house was 'flip-flop!'. The only problem is government members cannot use it anymore because we use it right back at them. They flip-flop all over the place. They come out and say one thing and then lo and behold they have a change of heart because it is a great policy put out by the Liberal Party or the Liberal-National coalition and it has been received really well by the public. Government members think, 'Me, too. I had better get in there; there is an election coming up in November'.

I want to talk about education. Bayswater Secondary College has been a source of much contention in this house. The new IT wing promised in 2006 has finally been given some funding in this budget and some in the forward estimates period. The initial promise came in 2006 but no action has been taken — not a single brick has been laid. The government has not allocated the full amount. If by some miracle we were to have this building built next year, the funding would not be there for next year. We have to ask how this government can be trusted when that funding was promised in 2006. If the government is re-elected in November this year, how can we trust the government that stage 2 of the building works will be built in another four years? Perhaps they will not be.

The recycled candidate Labor has trotted out in my electorate has said nothing about this for the last four years. He waited until he was re-endorsed and until I said something and then he came back to have his twopenny's worth. I say to people like that that you either love the electorate you are fighting for or you do not. You either believe in the things that you are fighting for or you do not, and if you do, then you are not silent. You are there for the electorate day in, day out regardless of your title and whether you are paid to do it. If you are a true community lover and advocate, then you advocate on behalf of that community

regardless of whether your party is in power or whether you hold the seat. You do it for the love of your community.

I am delighted that Wantirna Heights School has been allocated partial funding towards its relocation to Ferntree Gully. However, there is no forward estimates commitment for the additional amount needed to extend the facilities to accommodate senior school students, so I am very much looking forward to seeing what the government promises in the upcoming months. According to Autism Victoria there are something like 6000 primary school students missing out on autism aides this year alone, and that has been exacerbated by the new criteria and the new policy document that was brought out under this government. There is no plan to expand primary school intervention allocation or places at the new site, so parents are desperately frustrated and seeking my help in the electorate.

It is very lucky that the Prime Minister has been there to help out our state schools. In my electorate alone there was a \$2 million backlog in maintenance. The PM came along and bailed everybody out with the Building the Education Revolution funding. The only problem is my beautiful daughter and her children — and perhaps even their children — will be paying this debt off. I will get back to state debt in a second, because that is very important.

I want to talk a little bit about health. My constituents are still suffering from a dilapidated health system. The Premier went along and sold Victoria out. We have major problems, and they should have been solved in the last 11 years. We should not be waiting until an election year and hoping that the federal government will come along like a knight on a white horse. It has always been a state responsibility to get health care right, and for the last 11 years that has not happened. We have had waiting lists for the waiting lists. I do not quite understand the silly slogan 'A great place to live, work and raise a family'. It is true, but not if you are sick, homeless or have special needs. It simply does not ring true. If we did not have the bailout, where would we be?

Maroondah Hospital does not have enough orthopaedic surgeons. We are deflecting cases from that hospital, which has recently closed its urology unit. Some people are going off to Box Hill — and do not get me started on that hospital, which is getting about half the renovation it was originally promised.

I turn to public transport. What can I say? Today more services have been cancelled on the Belgrave line. The

line disruption alert for the Belgrave line on the Metro website says:

Line suspended — Belgrave line: both directions
Ringwood–Belgrave (damaged overhead powerlines). Bus replacement in operations, minor delays.

Surprise, surprise! The alert said that the train on the Belgrave line brought down overhead lines at about 4 o'clock, with trains not expected to resume until probably about another hour from now — at least midnight. This is disgraceful, and it is constantly happening on different lines: Hurstbridge, Frankston, Glen Waverley and now Belgrave. Our trains are more overcrowded than ever. I say to the minister that it is not okay for people to stand for 45 minutes, not when they are paying for their tickets. It just does not work like that.

There has been a distinct lack of government infrastructure. The Legislative Council Select Committee on Train Services has agreed with that. We have seen an increase in violence, and I refer back to the Neil Mitchell program this morning.

In the allocations for roads there has been no funding for Tormore Road, something I have been talking about for a long time. A bus lane has been put in on Stud Road, which is totally ludicrous. Certainly a cynic would say it is trying to direct traffic towards EastLink. Oh, EastLink. Now there! It was supposed to be a freeway, now it is a tollway. The long-term transport plan will not solve problems in any particular hurry. We still have bottlenecks at Hoddle Street and Alexandra Parade. People coming from my area are absolutely fed up.

In regard to the arts I notice that the \$6 million I have been seeking for the Victorian College of the Arts and that the VCA and the arts community have been asking for has been omitted. It is missing. Had this been a coalition budget, that \$6 million would have been provided to save the future of performing arts in Victoria.

The debt level in the forward estimates is \$31.7 billion in the next couple of years. A couple of years ago it was \$3 billion. There is no repayment plan in the forward estimates. Annual interest repayments will be \$3.2 billion. How many hospitals, roads and schools could be built with that \$3.2 billion each year? How many extra police could be trained and employed? How many children who currently miss out on aide funding and who could be given intensive early intervention could be given every opportunity to fit into a mainstream life? A lot of things are missing in this budget, but I expect they will be announced closer to

November, and 11 dark, long years of Labor will hopefully come to an end.

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — I am pleased to rise in support of the 2010–11 budget. I congratulate the Treasurer on a strong Labor budget. It is a budget that is clearly focused on jobs and the building of infrastructure in this state. There has been a lot of discussion about infrastructure and the massive investment by the Brumby Labor government. I want to focus a little on some of the smaller projects and smaller areas of expenditure.

This morning I launched a new bike path through Brunswick into Coburg, which is the continuation of Canning Street, Carlton. It is called the East Brunswick shimmy. Basically it is a route through Brunswick into Coburg that goes for about 4.5 kilometres through various streets of the Brunswick municipality. Its importance for transport is that Brunswick has the largest number of commuter cyclists in the city of Melbourne. Cycling is a major form of sustainable transport for people, and Cardigan Street is the principal route through the northern suburbs for cyclists as they head towards their jobs in the central business district.

It is important to note that the government is strongly committed to sustainable transport options. In Melbourne, particularly in the central business district, we have seen a shift away from people driving to work, to public transport, walking and cycling. The last census showed there was a decline of 5000 people a day making driving trips to work in the CBD, even though there was an increase of something like 30 000 jobs. What is happening is that more people are walking and taking public transport, but also cycling. There has been a massive increase in cycling.

The budget commits \$28 million over four years for sustainable transport, particularly bike lanes and bike paths. It is a very important area. It is a relatively small budget item, but it will have a major impact as we see cycling becoming an increasingly preferred mode of transport for people, particularly in the inner city and middle suburbs, commuting to central Melbourne.

Associated with that has been the better use of cycling with public transport. There is a program called Parkiteer, where bicycle cages have been placed at various railway stations. Basically in the equivalent of three car parking spots you can fit 26 bicycles. It is a lot more economical in terms of land use. They are now being rolled out in various parts of Melbourne and, again, there is a commitment to this initiative in the budget. When you look at the people who are using those bicycle cages, you find that 40 per cent used to

either drive or be taken to the station by car. That is 40 per cent more people who are cycling, removing cars from the road. Also, 70 per cent of the people who cycle are cycling between 1 kilometre and 5 kilometres to a railway station. That is good for their health as well as taking cars off congested roads.

More of these cages are being built; there are two at Laverton. Also, as part of the \$36 million development of the Coolaroo station the government is looking at bicycle cages. These Parkiteer stations will provide opportunities for people to take their bikes to railway stations and park them safely. It should also be pointed out that 20 railway stations are being upgraded to premium stations. That is an \$83.6 million commitment in the budget. There is obviously a desire to increase cycling opportunities to ensure that we integrate cycling with railway stations. This is a relatively small but important amount of expenditure that clearly shows a strong commitment to cyclists by the Brumby Labor government.

We are also seeing the rollout of a lot of sustainable transport initiatives as part of the \$38 million Victorian transport plan. The one that most affects my electorate is the purchase of 50 new trams and the construction of the tram maintenance and storage facility in Preston. Fifty new trams are important to my electorate because it has five tramlines. At the moment we are seeing increased congestion, particularly in the morning peak, as more and more people are using trams to get to work, to get to school or to get around. We desperately need these new trams. As I said, there is a commitment in this budget to 50 new trams, the first of which will be in service by 2012 or 2013. As I also said, the electorate of Brunswick is very much a tram-centred area, even though a significant railway line also runs through it.

A number of members have spoken about the \$4.3 billion for the regional rail link. That is a huge investment in rail, the biggest in the rail network since the building of the city loop. Its principal significance is that it will make for better delivery of rail services to Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and to other regional centres, but it will also improve metropolitan services by taking regional trains off metropolitan lines in the west, removing some of the congestion in our rail system, thereby increasing the capacity not just for people travelling from regional areas but also those travelling from the western suburbs. This is a massive improvement to rail in the western suburbs of Melbourne, an area that desperately needs good public transport with the outer west now amongst the fastest growing areas of the city. The budget also provides for new railway stations at Tarneit and Wyndham Vale. Again, these are important initiatives.

The other feature of the transport budget is the continuing rollout of the new trains. As members of this house know, 38 new X'trapolis trains are being brought online over time in Melbourne and they will make a very big difference to a train system that has been growing at a phenomenal rate over the last decade. No doubt it will continue to grow and will need the extra capacity and extra rolling stock to allow that to happen.

We have also seen in this budget not only a commitment to infrastructure but greater collaboration between the commonwealth government and the state government. Part of that has been due to the economic stimulus package which has been a significant feature. We can see that with not only the regional rail initiative, which is very heavily funded through commonwealth infrastructure funding, but also other programs. There is the \$1.7 billion in partnership with the commonwealth government to boost social housing. That is 5000 new housing units that are desperately needed and will be an important stimulus for jobs. There is at least one very significant development in my electorate, which is providing long-term permanent accommodation for people who currently find themselves homeless. It is a very significant investment, but with 5000 units being built statewide no doubt there are significant investments in virtually every electorate in the state.

This government's continuing partnership with the commonwealth government has seen the rebuilding and modernisation of schools, including not only government schools but also Catholic schools. What it means in the electorate of Brunswick is a reinvestment in a large number of relatively small schools. One of the characteristics of Melbourne's inner suburbs and certainly of the Brunswick-Coburg-North Fitzroy area is that there are a lot of little schools — very good schools; schools that are very much appreciated in the community; schools that kids and families can walk to. Certainly they have done very well out of this commitment by Labor governments to the modernisation and rebuilding of schools. We have a strong commitment to schools and a strong commitment to training places.

In the budget there is also funding for new parks. The most significant would be the Murray River red gum forest parks — \$38.5 million over four years for the four new national parks. It is a very significant initiative of the Brumby Labor government to create these new river red gum parks. There is money now to provide for that. A significant amount of money — \$6 million over four years — has also been provided to improve park facilities, trails and recreation opportunities. The government is very strongly committed to building

infrastructure both big and small through the state of Victoria.

We should also note that this is a very strong budget and one that comes out of a period of global economic crisis, which Victoria has largely avoided. Australia has done incredibly well compared to the rest of the world — you just have to look at reports coming in from Europe now and the United States over the last couple of years to see that. Victoria has done very well. In that period we have seen the Victorian and commonwealth governments provide very strong public investment. That has sustained the economy at a time through both a credit squeeze in private investment and the lack of confidence in the private sector.

We saw a very significant contraction. There was a big risk of a major recession in the state of Victoria and in Australia. What we saw was a quick public intervention, a strong investment by both levels of government, and we avoided a recession. If we recall the comments made by the member for Scoresby last year, they were very much about the Victorian economy heading towards a recession, and he was saying we would find ourselves in enormous difficulty. That did not take into account the importance of state investment. State investment in that period made the difference. The effect of the difference was to protect jobs and the lives and wellbeing of Victorian families. Private investment had been impacted through the global economic crisis, and we have seen the role of investment and expenditure that has been taken up by the public sector through the various stimulus packages, through the investment in social housing, in schools and in infrastructure.

We are seeing the continuation of infrastructure investment in this budget. It was estimated that in 2009–10 a record \$7 billion was going to be spent on infrastructure investment in Victoria. Looking on to the years 2010 to 2013 an average of around \$4.4 billion is expected to be expended on infrastructure. There is an immense amount of building going on.

I have tried to highlight some of the big investments like the new regional rail, but also the smaller investments in cycling and in sustainable transport which are making a genuine difference. They are changing the behaviour of Victorians and making a significant impact on the way the city functions.

The highlight of the budget is the increase in health-care services and investment, partly funded through the agreement with the commonwealth. It is a major investment in health services, particularly in

regional Victoria, where we have seen improved facilities including the rebuilding of the Bendigo hospital, but also investments in the Warrnambool, Ballarat, Alexandria and Geelong hospitals. This is a huge, historic and unprecedented investment in terms of health care and our hospital system. Again it is a result of the collaboration of two Labor governments — Victorian and commonwealth.

In terms of this budget we have seen a strong commitment to jobs as we come out of the global economic crisis. Victoria continues to run at full pace; it does well and experiences strong economic growth as the rest of the world pulls out of the crisis. We have gone through very difficult times. We have seen very strong leadership from the Premier of Victoria, but we have also seen very strong leadership from the federal government. What it has meant for us in Victoria is that we have largely avoided the difficulties and the impact of a major economic crisis which continues to ravage the world.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr MERLINO (Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs).

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Sewerage: Portland West scheme

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — The issue I wish to raise is for the Minister for Water, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with the West Portland Sewerage Action Group and to provide state government funding to reduce the massive landowner contribution costs for the multimillion-dollar west Portland reticulated sewerage scheme.

There are 127 properties in Portland West that are directly affected by the plan to introduce a reticulated sewerage scheme into the area. Despite most of the properties and homeowners having spent thousands of dollars installing their own septic and environmentally acceptable sewerage systems, the community largely supports the need for a reticulated sewerage scheme for health reasons, environmental benefits and to create opportunities for further development of the area.

However, there are very real concerns about the cost of the proposed scheme for individual homeowners and the lack of government assistance for the scheme, given its wider community benefits. The benefits are for the broader community, not just for the individual landowners.

The first stage of the scheme will cost landowners from \$7286 to \$74 752 per property, depending on property size. In addition each homeowner is required to pay an additional \$3000 to \$5000 for their own on-property plumbing costs. These costs are exorbitant for ordinary working families with mortgages and for older people on a fixed income or Centrelink payments. Many of those people live in the Portland West area.

When the scheme was proposed initially the Brumby government refused Portland West access to the country towns water supply and sewerage program that other country communities had access to and which would have capped the water authority charges to \$800 per property. Then the Premier's office wrote to a local Portland West resident, saying:

... West Portland will be eligible to make an application through this program ...

referring to the Small Town Water Quality Fund. But in May 2009 the application for funding under this program was rejected. Again, in late 2009 Wannon Water applied for the second round of funding under this scheme, but recently it has again been advised that its application has not been funded.

The reasons given are varied. One was that Portland west was an extension of Portland — that it was not a separate town. Then it was advised it was too large to qualify, then that it was too small to qualify! What it needs is some clarification of why it has been denied access to government assistance in relation to a scheme that will deliver significant environmental, health and community development benefits for this region.

The West Portland Sewerage Action Group needs to meet with the minister and seek an explanation for these three knock backs in relation to funding under the government schemes and to seek financial support to assist these struggling land owners, these struggling families, to meet the higher costs of this very important scheme.

WestLink: community consultation

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — My request for action is for the Minister for Roads and Ports and concerns WestLink and consultation around the WestLink project. The WestLink project is important to

the Victorian transport plan. It is part of a plan that sees the west being considered for the first time in major transport upgrades. There is the West Gate alternative route, which the member for Williamstown and I are certainly very supportive of seeing implemented as soon as possible.

There is also, as I said, WestLink — a very important component of the Victorian transport plan, which will alleviate the traffic burden in the inner west that has resulted from the population increases in the two growth corridors of the west. The quality of life of the people in the inner west will be impaired if we do not do both the West Gate Bridge alternative and the WestLink project.

My concern is both for the constituents in the electorate of Footscray, who will bear the brunt of the impact if we do not build WestLink, and to ensure that consultation properly occurs with the community. This will ensure that the alignments, which are to be released soon, are done in a genuine and detailed way with the community so that we can get the best outcomes for the community. We need to ensure that community members are listened to when it comes to the kind of lives they will lead as a consequence of the increased population in the west.

The west is a great place, and it is getting even better, but I do request that the minister take action to ensure that the Linking Melbourne Authority and the WestLink group undertake genuine consultation with the community to make sure it can fully engage in the process. The consultation to date has been great, but the alignments are coming out, and it is very important that the community is engaged. I know that the vast majority of the people of Footscray want to see the best alignments possible, which will increase their quality of life in the inner west.

They also understand the growth occurring in the west both in jobs and in population. We want to see the west grow and thrive, because we know if the west grows and thrives, the rest of Victoria will also grow and thrive. I look forward to the minister meeting his commitment to the people of the inner west and ensuring that there is a comprehensive consultation once the alignment details are out and that the community of the inner west can be engaged in that process.

Rail: Shepparton–Numurkah–Cobram service

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I bring a matter to the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is his further consideration of the

reinstatement of the passenger rail service between Shepparton, Numurkah and Cobram. This particular line has had a chequered career. Whilst it operated in the 1970s, it was closed down in the late 1970s or early 1980s. It was reinstated by the Labor government through the 1980s and was again disbanded through the 1990s, despite my opposition, expressed at that time and in more recent years as requests to the current government seeking consideration of its reinstatement.

This has led to representations I have made to the former and current ministers for public transport suggesting the minister undertake further investigation into the reinstatement of this passenger rail service. The issue has gained a lot of momentum in the Cobram-Numurkah area in my electorate. Last year I presented to Parliament a petition signed by over 6000 people requesting that the government consider reinstating that line.

I have received support for this action from a number of people and organisations, including the Shire of Moira. I have received particular support from Nicholas White of Cobram, who has done a fair bit of analysis on this particular issue. He wrote to me recently, and I want to quote a couple of paragraphs from his letter because he summed up the issue fairly well when he said:

What exacerbates this for us, I believe, is the fact that this government, through Mr Pakula, has moved on from its tired excuse of a redundant report from 2000 for our passenger train feasibility study and is now attempting to silence us with its rhetoric about the Australian Rail Track Corporation's inland rail study.

The government is now waiting for this report. He further said that he had contacted a number of organisations in Numurkah and Cobram — 22 in fact — seeking their support with meetings in those two centres. In the last part of his letter he wrote:

As always, your ongoing support and commitment to this important issue is greatly appreciated and no doubt you share the frustration and disappointment with the inaction of the government despite our efforts demonstrating the viability and validity of a reinstated service. It's interesting that in all the correspondence to date, the government has made no mention of the patronage explosion on new and improved services across the current V/Line passenger rail network.

I seek from the minister further action in reviewing the whole process. The reinstatement of this passenger rail service should be considered on the basis that it will be a once-per-day service going from Shepparton through Numurkah to Cobram in the afternoon or evening and coming back the next day, in conjunction with the current bus service provided to support the people in the Cobram-Numurkah area.

Schools: cyberbullying

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park) — I raise an adjournment matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The matter I seek her action on is to ensure that her department works with school communities to counter the growing trends in cyberbullying amongst young people. I do so noting the Victorian government's strong commitment in this area and its approach to building partnerships with school communities, the commonwealth government and with community groups such as the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and the National Centre against Bullying to develop approaches to better educate, inform and counter this growing trend.

This partnership approach was highlighted by the government's support for the recent National Centre against Bullying bi-annual conference held in Melbourne under the title 'Navigating the maze — cybersafety and wellbeing solutions for schools'. The conference heard that as part of their antibullying efforts all Victorian schools have to develop bullying and cybersafety policies. Schools are encouraged to take a whole-of-school prevention approach to bullying and cyberbullying, and in instances where this occurs in schools they are urged to use methods such as restorative practices and other mediation methods.

But they need to do more. In relation to cyberbullying — and to be precise we define that as the use of digital and online forums and other tools to bully others in a repeated and deliberate manner — schools have access to a range of professionals, both within and outside the school environment, who can play a role in supporting schools to manage instances of cyberbullying. The conference also learnt that whilst these professional supports are necessary, the real solutions lay in engagement with students, parents and the wider community on the issue. In this regard I point to the successful national pilot project involving some 150 schools, many of which were Victorian, and the strategies to counter the trends of cyberbullying that that project revealed. The pilot showed that there are no easy solutions in this area.

I ask the minister to make sure we do not ignore the evidence that those who bully and harass go on later in life to disproportionately deal with social issues and other problems that can lead to violence and dislocation from the broader community, as well as the evidence of lifelong pain and intimidation for those victims of bullying, both cyber and otherwise. No-one wins from cyberbullying. The efforts of the Victorian government to date have been admirable, and I look forward to them being built on in the future in partnership with the likes

of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and the National Centre Against Bullying.

Building Our Industries for the Future program: departmental evaluation

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I raise an adjournment matter with the Minister for Industry and Trade, and the action I seek is for her to make available the benchmarks and measures used by her department to gauge the effectiveness of the programs, initiatives and actions detailed in the government's manufacturing and industry plan Building Our Industries for the Future.

This so-called action plan was released by this government in November 2008, 700 days after the then Minister for Industry and Trade announced he was going to be introducing a raft of measures to support manufacturing and industry. The final document contained a number of previously announced proposals and was extensively padded out with virtually every page of the document containing a half-page glossy photo.

The document proposed in various forms to assist businesses, implement initiatives, support development and identify opportunities, all of which are laudable aims if they are actually achieved. It is a year and a half since this document was introduced, and it is useful to revisit its contents to see whether the goals set by the government have been achieved and to examine how the government is measuring the effectiveness of its so-called plan for the future.

It is impossible to gauge whether the government's plan has achieved anything, because the current Minister for Industry and Trade has steadfastly refused to explain how any of the actions contained in the document are monitored. Over four months ago I put questions on notice to the minister regarding the effectiveness of the various actions stated in the document. Those questions have been ignored by the minister in a display of arrogance that has become typical of this government.

The Auditor-General made it clear recently that the government's performance measures were mostly irrelevant or inappropriate, there was a significant deficiency in the government's reporting and there were limited ways the government could measure the effectiveness of its funding. The lack of monitoring around the actions stated in this industry document only proves that the statements made by the Auditor-General are sound, despite the reactionary claims by the government that he was being negative and biased.

This government has a history of issuing glossy documents as an excuse for a photo opportunity instead of focusing on finding solutions to support various sections of the Victorian community. This Labor government has shown its lack of commitment to industry in general, and in particular to the manufacturing sector, by refusing to appoint a dedicated minister for manufacturing and by taking a revolving door approach to the position of Minister for Industry and Trade, with the Premier's fourth choice for the position now being in charge.

I ask the minister to release the relevant benchmarks and measures for *Building Our Industries for the Future — Action Plans for Victorian Industry and Manufacturing*, and I suggest that a refusal to do so will show that this document is nothing more than just a Labor stunt.

Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay: funding

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs. I am pleased to see him at the table this evening.

The action I seek from the minister is that he consider favourably an application from the Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay for funding under the Victorian Multicultural Commission's buildings and facilities improvement grants for the installation of shade sails at their premises on Collins Avenue in Altona North.

The shade sails, which have been kindly donated to the Maltese Association by its neighbour, Eastona Park Primary School, are to be installed at the rear of the premises where the Maltese Association has its bocce pitches and children's play area. I have come to appreciate that the Maltese community members are passionate about their bocce, and they play all year round. The installation of the sails will provide protection from the elements, allowing them to play in comfort regardless of the weather.

The Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay was created in 1992 to address a need to provide members of the local Maltese community with a place where they could gather together to celebrate cultural events and engage in a range of activities such as sports, seminars, dances and dancing lessons. It also met a need to make available important information on medical, legal, social security and immigration matters.

In speaking about the Maltese community in Hobsons Bay it would be remiss of me not to mention Joe Attard and the valuable contribution he has made not only to

the Maltese community but to all migrant people of the Altona North area. I am aware that the minister met Joe Attard at a function they both attended in my electorate early last year. For his great leadership and volunteer work Joe has been recognised on numerous occasions. He was named the Premier's Senior Citizen of the Year in 1989 and the Hobsons Bay Citizen of the Year in 2008.

The Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay has adopted the motto 'Keep active and live longer'. Having visited it on numerous occasions, I can verify that the local Maltese community is a vibrant, thriving and engaged group of people who are active in getting the most out of life. The installation of these shade sails would be one further measure to assist the association, and as such I encourage the minister to look favourably upon its application to fund this project.

Buses: Mornington electorate

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — An efficient and frequent public transport system is something that should be available to all Victorians. In the last 10 years extensions to the services that have been provided have nowhere near met population growth, particularly on the metropolitan fringe. In most areas of the fringe we have almost no trains and no trams full stop. We are forced to rely on bus services that are not always the best.

I raise this evening for the Minister for Public Transport the lack of convenient bus services for residents in the Mornington electorate. The action I seek from the minister is that he review the coverage and frequency of bus services in the electorate with the objective of developing a bus service plan that adequately meets the needs of the communities of Mount Eliza, Mornington and Mount Martha.

We have had 10 years of substantial growth, particularly in the area that is routinely referred to as the area inland of the highway — in other words, the area to the east or south-east of the Nepean Highway and the established towns. While there has been some adjustment to the services — I am certainly not complaining about that — in large part the underserved areas remain as poorly serviced as they have always been, particularly in the Mount Eliza and Mornington North areas.

Discussions with Grenda, which is the provider of the services have suggested that a trial would be the best way to determine demand. In the Mount Eliza area there is no service at all east of the Nepean Highway, which leaves large developed areas and a large number

of properties up to perhaps 2 kilometres from the nearest bus stop. One option might be to extend the service along Wooralla Drive and Tower Road, which is a route currently used by some school services. Similarly, demand in the East Mornington area is particularly high in the area north of Mornington-Tyabb Road, and it is expected that there will be rapid growth in that area in the immediate future. There is currently no bus service in that area at all.

Another matter is overcrowding. Improved rail patronage has led to increased demand for bus services. The current timetable provides a service on the hour, with one additional service in the morning running north and one additional service in the evening running south. Consequently there is overcrowding, and that acts as a disincentive to use of public transport. I urge the minister to give serious consideration to developing a service plan that matches the needs of the community.

Small business: Energise Enterprise festival promotion

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — I rise in the house tonight to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Small Business. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that Victoria's small business festival, Energise Enterprise, is widely publicised to make certain my constituents in Forest Hill can take advantage of the many events that make up the annual festival. As has been widely publicised recently, Victoria weathered the effects of the global financial crisis better than any other state in Australia. The theme of last year's Energise Enterprise festival was helping small business owners and operators navigate difficult economic times. Thanks to this government, Victoria has navigated through these difficult economic times so well that I hope that the theme of this year's festival will be something that encapsulates how small business owners and operators can capitalise on the opportunities that are beginning to emerge.

It was fantastic that last year more than 350 events took place around Victoria and more than 38 000 people attended these events during the month of August. The Forest Hill electorate is home to many thriving small businesses, and I know that many small business operators in my electorate took advantage of the seminars, information sessions, workshops and networking events covering topics ranging from tax issues to marketing. There are also a number of new small businesses that have recently opened their doors in the area, and as many small businesses have found, there are enormous obstacles. I visited one such business last week to discuss with the operators the wide-ranging and varied assistance available to

business owners who are just starting out. In particular there is the Victoria business centre in Vermont, which is a great state government initiative. The centre is an authority on all things related to business, with friendly staff who are always willing to help wherever they can. The minister and the government know how important small business is, which is why this year's state budget saw a cut to the payroll tax rate to ensure Victoria's businesses can capitalise on opportunities and continue to create jobs for Victorians this financial year.

The Energise Enterprise festival is yet another great initiative of this government designed to help small businesses. My desire is that every business in the electorate of Forest Hill and across Victoria should become aware of this festival. I commend the Minister for Small Business for supporting the growth of the Energise Enterprise festival, and I urge him to ensure that it is widely promoted and publicised in my electorate of Forest Hill and across the state.

Rail: Mooroolbark car park

Mr HODGETT (Kilsyth) — I wish to raise a matter of importance with the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to intercede and complete the land swap negotiations between VicTrack and the Shire of Yarra Ranges, which when completed will result in additional land being available at the Mooroolbark railway station for VicTrack to upgrade and improve the car parking facilities there. This will deliver not only additional car parking but could include a second access point to the site, which would greatly improve safety for vehicles entering and exiting the car park and enhance traffic movement in and around this congested site during peak hours.

I draw the minister's attention to the lengthy land swap negotiations that have taken place between VicTrack and the Shire of Yarra Ranges. VicTrack owns a parcel of land in Healesville that the shire requires and the Shire of Yarra Ranges owns the parcel of land abutting the existing car park at the Mooroolbark station. Negotiations have been going on for nearly two years for the transfer of these parcels of land between the parties. That this process is taking so long to be finalised is a cause great frustration for the local community, for Mooroolbark traders, for commuters, for shoppers and for Shire of Yarra Ranges staff.

I have raised this matter numerous times in this Parliament, but the Brumby Labor government continues to ignore the issue. What will it take to get the Minister for Public Transport to get off his backside and address this problem? The Mooroolbark railway station car park is full by 7 to 7.30 of a morning.

Commuters are forced to look for alternative car parking. Some are able to park on vacant land in Station Street, Mooroolbark, while others are forced to park in side streets such as Wynyard Drive, take up other parking at the rear of shops in Brice Avenue or risk parking long term in short-term car parking spaces. This takes up trader and staff car parking and results in shoppers who are unable to find a car park disappearing down the road to alternative shopping centres.

Fortunately a solution is readily available, and I have put forward a plan in this case, but to date the Minister for Public Transport and the Premier have ignored the need for urgent action. It is a no-brainer, but the Brumby government is just lazy and incompetent. It will not get off its backside to implement the plan that I have put forward to deliver this valuable community project. The local community is fed up with the minister's inaction, as land which could easily be used for additional station parking and car park access continues to lie vacant. This is an unacceptable situation. A simple solution is readily available, and the inaction is the result of utter laziness on the part of the government. The terms — 'delivering', 'outcomes', 'finishing off' and 'completing projects' are lost on the Brumby Labor government.

This issue has been ongoing for far too long. I will continue to stand up for my local community and demand ministerial intervention to fix this problem once and for all by doing the right thing and finalising this land transfer deal so that the Mooroolbark railway station car park can be upgraded.

Buses: Doreen

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for him to have his department investigate the tweaking of existing bus routes to serve the new estates in the rapidly growing suburb of Doreen in my electorate.

I want to thank the minister and his predecessor for their commitment to the expansion of bus services in my electorate, in particular through the Whittlesea bus review, which consulted widely with the community and resulted in the funding of many new services in this growing area, including the route 520 and 572 services which connect Doreen and Mernda to Greensborough, South Morang, University Hill and all destinations in between. These services operate seven days a week until 9.00 p.m. The government has an objective, which is supported by bodies like the Australian Conservation Foundation, of 90 per cent of communities within the

urban growth boundary having access to bus services and/or train stations.

I am pleased to say that this is largely being delivered in my electorate, but I am constantly vigilant, as new estates come on stream and grow in my electorate, to ensure that there are ways we can deliver access to public transport to these new estates. I thank the minister for seeing firsthand the number of families that are moving to my electorate. Today we saw the release of a report by the Housing Industry Association indicating that Whittlesea North is the fastest growing area in the country, with \$480 million worth of housing starts. That shows it is a really great area in which to live, work and raise a family, and it will be even better if we can ensure that those families have bus services close to them, which is what many estates in my electorate enjoy. I urge the minister to have his department look at expanding those services to these new estates.

Responses

Mr MERLINO (Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs) — The member for Williamstown raised an application by the Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay for a grant through our Victorian Multicultural Commission's buildings and facilities improvement grants, specifically for shade sails for its bocce courts.

As many members of this place, particularly government members, will know, we are very proud of our multicultural grants program, which covers the whole gamut of work on the ground in which our multicultural communities participate, whether it is our festival and events grants program, our multifaith and interfaith harmony grants program, organisational support grants, senior citizens grants or the building facilities and improvement grants that the member for Williamstown raised. Those grants have increased from \$750 000 when we first came to office to \$4.6 million in this current financial year, and that figure will increase to \$5.6 million, which is a sevenfold increase in our multicultural grants program.

The member for Williamstown mentioned the excellent work of Joe Attard from the Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay, and I indeed recall meeting Joe. From memory it was at the Italian Social Club in Williamstown when I was there to present a number of grants to community organisations from that region. Joe is a great leader in his community — not only his Maltese community but the broader community — and I can indeed recall meeting him and having a good chat with him.

I can assure the member for Williamstown that I will take into account his strong support for this application from the Maltese Association of Hobsons Bay. I thank him for supporting our multicultural communities in the west, and I am pleased that this application is not only in support of the Maltese association but also in support of a great sport like bocce. I will take his strong support into consideration in the latest round of the buildings and facilities improvement grants.

I will ensure that the other matters are raised with the relevant ministers for their action and response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 12.00 a.m. (Wednesday).